

# **HARWOOD UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2017**

**6:00 - 9:00 P.M.**

### **HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY**

#### **Unapproved Minutes**

Present from the Board: Christine Sullivan (Chair), Gabe Gilman, Jim Casey, Garrett MacCurtain, Tom Cahalan, Maureen McCracken, Rosemarie White, Caitlin Hollister, Alycia Biondo, Rob Williams and Peter Langella.

Present from HUUSD: Brigid Nease, Superintendent and Michelle Baker, Director of Finance

Public/Press present: Madeline Hughes, Katherine Cadwell, Lorraine Wargo, Jared Cadwell, Rebecca Baruzzi, Nan Hathaway, Art Trezise.

#### **1. Call to Order**

Christine Sullivan called meeting to order at 6:04

#### **2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda:**

None

#### **3. Public Comment Including Explanatory Paragraph**

Caitlin Hollister read an explanatory paragraph on public comment. The VSBA has guided our decision and indicated that it is the recommended practice that most school boards in the state now follow. It will be available on the website and put on the board meeting sign-in sheet.

*Motion made by Maureen McCracken to have this statement put on website and at the top of the sign-in sheet for the public, seconded by Rosemarie White. The motion carried with one abstention vote by Gabe Gilman. 67.3% weighted vote (out of 72.9) in favor*

Discussion followed regarding adding public issues of concern to future agendas. When a member of the public brings up a topic at a meeting, the board may discuss it and can decide if it should be an agenda topic for a future meeting. This way, all public can provide input.

Rebeca Baruzzi – suggested new organization represents a huge change and trust is necessary for success.

Kathy Cadwell: Offered a special invitation to the board to attend an upcoming Socrates Café, featuring Christopher Phillips, author of *Socrates Café: A fresh taste of Philosophy* in a discussion of **“How do we balance freedom and security in our Democracy?”**

#### 4. Administrative Procedures for Vacant Seats:

Draft read by Brigid outlining the procedures for filing vacancies on the HUUSD board.

Discussion:

Item #7: Law allows for moving to executive session to appoint public official as long as reasons for decision are explained in open session. Board may choose not to do this, but as the option exists, Brigid will add this information for clarity.

Item #4: Brigid will amend this to say that the select board may be invited to attend the meeting and provide input or to give written comments.

Brigid will bring *final draft to next meeting for board to approve*

#### 5. Action Items

##### A. Approve Board Minutes of October 11, 2017 –

Brigid edits: Page 1 – WWSU change to HUUSD; page 2 during vote, Rosemarie voted No only (remove yes). Heading should have Minutes – not Agenda at top. Don't separate press from public. Be sure to add all people present going forward. Add to minutes Kyle Ellis, Kim Karecci (Laidlaw), Seth Henry, Pete and Sally Kulis, Rick Rayfield and Rick\_Battistoni.

*Motion by Rosemarie White to approve minutes with above corrections, seconded by Alycia Biondo. Motion approved unanimously.*

##### B. Appoint Fayston Representative to HUUSD Board (this item was moved ahead of Approval of board minutes at meeting):

Lorraine Wargo gave a brief description of her background on various boards and work experience; as well as her understanding of the conflict resolution process. She has been on private and non-profit boards, the Harwood school board, various appointments by the governor. She believes that challenges bring opportunity, believes in quality education for all children and takes public service very seriously.

Art Trezise – lived and worked in Brazil for many years, taught foreign and displaced soldiers, volunteer work for people in Harlem, taught English to Brazilians, went into foreign service, lived in Columbia and Paris. Always interested in education and values it. Have problem in Vermont because of no critical mass. Would like to attempt to reconcile differences between administrators and professionals in various areas, especially teaching process.

Jared Cadwell, chair of Fayston Select Board: Said they were lucky to have two very qualified people to put their hats in the ring. Said both candidates are exceptional participants in the local school.

Alycia Biondo: both applicants have qualifications that are outstanding. Asked if both would feel OK with extra time commitment when necessary?

Maureen McCracken: discussed the chain of command from teachers through board level. Superintendent of district is the first line of responsibility, principal responds to superintendent. Functional responsibility – managerial question goes to the correct person all during the year, instead of just at the end. Question for Lorraine Wargo: anything to share about disagreeing board members and how it worked? Lorraine's thought is that all may have differences of opinion, but should know what they all agree on and what they hold sacred. Don't have to be disagreeable and not take personally. Find common element as basis at beginning of discussion.

*Alycia Biondo moved to vote on which candidate to choose, Caitlin Hollister seconded. Vote was show of hands, unanimous.*

*Peter Langella moved to appoint Lorraine Wargo as the Fayston board representative to fill the vacancy, Caitlin Hollister seconded. All voted in favor with the exception of Jim Casey who opposed motion (weighted vote 67.8% to 11.5%). Gabe expressed that he wished to be able take both candidates.*

## **6. Discussion Items**

### **A. Board Reflections**

Peter Langella: liked having Sheila here to talk about testing. Also liked hearing from either administration, faculty or students and listening to their voices about challenges, issues, etc, as well as all the things they could bring to the table. Asked when we could expect student council reps. to attend meetings?

Brigid: The plan is to have administration provide a joint report at end of each month. There has been some difficulty implementing, so this year will probably be every other month or quarterly. Student government will discuss attending and decide a plan. As board starts to add presentations, administration and/or faculty will be invited to speak when appropriate.

Maureen McCracken: Have climate surveys been done? AOE will be bringing a tool for this, has not happened yet, a decision about the tool will be made at end of year by administrators. Maureen thinks it sets baselines and discusses trends so it should be done as soon as possible

### **B. Work Group Reports: Facilities, Negotiations, Communications, and Community Engagement**

**1. Facilities** – Rosemarie White report: update on Warren Elementary School project. Final walk-through will be on Monday – project essentially complete. Kitchen was all set to start meals but a new freezer compressor was needed. Michelle Baker is doing great job on financial piece, insurance, etc. Group met in Fayston and saw the new maker space.

*Action item:* Moretown parking lot drainage issue. Town applied for and received a grant to replace the catch basin and piping. The town re-applied for the Stormwater Mitigation Grant for the Parking Lot. The grant requires a 25% match, half of which HUUSD agreed to provide. This requires \$54,315.50 each from the town and school district. HUUSD had originally approved \$44,729.68.

*Rosemarie White made a motion to increase original agreement of \$44,729.68 to \$54,315.50 – a difference of \$9,585.82, seconded by Alycia Biondo. Motion passed unanimously.* Proposals for solar arrays at Harwood have been put on hold for time being. This is something that might be able to be done in conjunction with future bond project.

**2. Negotiations:** Brigid requested a motion from the board to ratify the new four-year teacher agreement, which includes a four-year contract, a two- year opener clause on health insurance because of legislative requirements. Committee will be established to focus on workday equity, difference in language in minutes of day and preparation time. Moving from 3.75% increase, coming in with 3% in each of the 4 years of the contract. Health Insurance – 1<sup>st</sup> 6 months, will be the old system 86/14 split. In Jan 1, it will be at 81/19, then 80/20 in FY 19.

Committee did work on own without incurring any legal fees. Some school districts spend as much as \$65,000 on negotiations. Updated personal leave and professional development with better language which clarifies what's allowable and what's not. Harwood severance package grandfathered teachers from 2007 back; all teachers (including WWEA) eligible for new severance plan moving forward. Brought together into one contract, negotiated merged medical/dental plan, sabbatical and workers comp. Moving forward work towards parity.

Have 2 categories regarding benefits with everyone aligned - union/nonunion support staff, teachers and all administrators.

Teachers have ratified contract. They need to sign up for health insurance and board has to vote tonight in order for that to happen in time.

*Alycia Biondo moved to ratify new 4 yr. teacher contract, Tom Cahalan seconded. Christine Sullivan, Jim Casey, Garrett McCurtain, Tom Cahalan, Maureen McCracken, Rosemarie White, Caitlin Hollister, Alycia Biondo and Rob Williams voted in favor. Gabe Gilman and Peter Langella abstained. Motion passed with weighted vote of 68.1% in favor (11.2% abstain).*

**Communications Working Group:** Peter Langella: Document was sent to board yesterday. Met last Friday, document was a draft plan for a series of communications going out. Few themes: study group, Pre-school Q and A coming from board? Are we asking administration to do this? Is there enough time? Time line might be more appropriate in February or March. Maureen McCracken liked idea of putting out these things. Have other channels for where these can go? Next meeting November 3<sup>rd</sup>. *Alycia Biondo moved to approve communications plan pending change to pre-k, seconded by Caitlyn Hollister. Unanimously approved.*

**Community Engagement:** Report by Alycia Biondo: Excited about how the Community Engagement issue is coming up all over the state. Brigid reported that this was the topic at the Lake Morey conference. Brigid brought back all the information from the conference. One of the main recommendations is that it is important to know what the intent is, to have a singular issue and use multiple methods to get the word out. Next big issue is the budget. Also talked about Maureen creating community calendar with Google Docs, listing all meetings in various towns. It could be a calendar board could use. Would be able to edit and add items.

Future meetings: try to meet 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed of month in Harwood library at 4:30

Peter Langella shared CVU idea of including a forum and a survey around the budget – suggest early engagement. This survey contained four simple questions. Discussion followed:

How would we do a survey like this? How to get it out to everyone? Forum could be any day in December – committee to come with plan at next meeting?

Need to look at HUUSD November and December meeting dates and put in minutes:

Meeting dates: November 8, 15 and 29. Hold all three in case all three are needed.

Hold three dates in December: December 6, 13, and 20

Brigid suggests first looking at budget on the 15<sup>th</sup>, along with the annual enrollment data  
Plan is to inform and educate about what ADM

Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup>: continue with budget discussion. Brigid will start redesign by writing a white position paper showing a 20 to 30 year sustainable plan. This is not necessarily the plan that will be adopted but it will be a start. If not this plan, what's the alternative? Why or why not? Will ask for input and next steps.

November 8<sup>th</sup>, to include old and new business. Determine date for training on OML.

December meetings – hold Dec 6 (make Val Plan at this meeting), 13 and 20. Val will be at the 13<sup>th</sup> for half of the meeting.

Feb 21 – Val at meeting.

Board needs to complete budget by January - must be warned 45 days before town meeting vote.

### *C. Superintendent Report –*

Brigid discussed the landscape in state of Vermont as board begins budget process. Referred to Secretary Holcombe's emorandum: closing achievement gap, educational funding and policy landscape. Description of student to teacher ratios and how they impact spending statewide. Have micro schools - Table shows VT has the lowest ratio. These influence school funding schools. Equity, quality was discussed. Two large components facing board: .08 added to tax rate from state because of short fall; along with health insurance premiums going up 10%. Cry now from districts that have not merged. Merged districts like HUUSD promised 5% tax cap as protection.

Discussion followed – may be faced with freeze at the FY17 level, forced with .08 and increase in health insurance without raising taxes. How to maintain quality and equity while staying within the budget constraints? Peter Langella suggests that we send a powerful united voice to the legislators.

How do we redefine ourselves? Bigid feels that we owe it to the community to talk about the hard discussions of redesign; be committed to take journey together.

### *D. Director of Finance Report*

Michelle sent written report. Not all of the insurance and billing issues have been settled for Warren school. Working to insure HUUSD costs are as low as possible

### *E. Board Orders:*

Rosemarie White made a motion to confirm Board Warrants #1092-1103, dated 10/11/17 – 10/18/17, totaling \$1,501,697.55. Jim Casey seconded. *Motion unanimously passed.*

**7. Other Business**

Peter Langella working with the Rowland Foundation and planning to go to Harwood to collaborate with the Harwood fellows on the staff. May be influencing building level change. Does anyone see a conflict of interest here? Brigid would like to talk with Lisa Atwood, Peter and the team. Would have access to Learning plans of children, FERPA, etc. This can be worked out but need to look at scope of the work. Caitlin Hollister also shared that some of her work supervising student teachers could be viewed as a conflict of interest.

**8. Executive Session (if needed):**

None needed.

**9. Adjournment**

*Rob Williams made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Tom Cahalan. Motion passed unanimously.*