

**HARWOOD UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2017 6:00-9:30 P.M.  
HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Amended & Approved Minutes

**Attending Members:** Christine Sullivan, Jill Ellis, Peter Langella, Maureen McCracken, Rosemarie White, Garrett MacCurtain, Alex Thomsen, Jim Casey, Alycia Biondo, Gabriel Gilman, Sam Jackson, Heidi Spear, Rob Williams, Caitlin Hollister

**Administration:** Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker

**Public:** Tom Drake, Denise Goodnow, Mary O'Leary, Kim Laidlaw, Stephanie Hudak, Ray Daigle, Donarae Dawson, Kaiya Korb, Jean Berthiaume, Duane Pierson, H. K Rayfield, Beth Abbott-Koch, Jeremy Gulley, Chris Keating.

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Christine at 6:07.
2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda:

Discussion of letter from the public last meeting – should it be included in the minutes. Need to find out what the standard is.

3. Approve Meeting Minutes of 1/11/2017: Rosemarie moved to approve the minutes of January 11 as amended. Alex seconded. Motion carried.
4. Workgroup Reports:

**Rob Williams, co-chair Communications Group.** Introduced Chris Keating from the Valley Reporter – discussion of how to open discussions up to the public; Chris will add email of board members in the Valley Reporter. (He will send a test of the emails.) Timing of Wed. night meetings and deadline of the Valley Reporter on Wed morning is an issue. New Waterbury Record reporter will be coming to meetings as well. Have four publishing cycles between now and vote time to get out information.

Process: Communications Group will be drafting announcements and getting them into the publications at the correct time. People meeting to vote with Australian ballot, how to get school budget report? Michelle suggests need to get out a postcard to all residents telling where to find the budget information. Feb 9 – tell people what is in the budget, then have an opportunity for Rob to be repository for questions as they come in on line - to be posted. Michelle suggested board needs something for annual meeting – handout? PowerPoint? Decide on the presentation for the evening of March 6.

Is this group authorized to make these communications? If it is an announcement, something that has already been discussed, OK for CG to move forward. Decided that if the CG is taking an action of behalf of the board, a motion would be needed.

Christine made motion for items that are announcements, etc. CG can move ahead with this, Rob seconded. Motion carried.

**Facilities Workgroup: Rosemarie** – met last week. Visited Waitsfield School, drainage issues causing water issues. Looked at Maintenance Plan and very impressed. Talked about school – school used for many outside events. Then went to Harwood for update on track – more information next meeting. Warren school is selecting colors, etc. Next meeting Feb 8, going to Moretown.

Will board need a uniform policy about school usage? Also need to consider vision in this regard.

Talked about Warren ES construction project. No applications for Clerk of Works at this time. **Feb 8 3:30 at Moretown next meeting.** If anyone would like to join, it is a great idea to visit the schools.

**Policy Work Group: Gabe:** two meetings coming up. Choice policy –Emily took a swing at this based on Mill River’s policy. By Feb 1, will have good idea about main policies available. Existing WWSU Policy Manual in good shape. HUUSB made motion that adopt this Manual and edit policies as they are revised. Brigid getting calls from parents wanting to talk with her about choice policy. At this point, no real constraints for the HUUSD group, goal is to get and keep as many students as now have to go to Harwood.

Discussion about policies – recommended policies and by-laws. Policy stay in place until another one replaces it. Brigid will work with PWG to get all policies on the same page. Gabe will discuss these with board. Existing policies will be the template to start with. Within last five years, all boards have reviewed and voted on them.

**Motion to warn in advance of Feb 8 meeting,** WWSU policy manual (on website) for adoption at next meeting as HUUSB policies. Alex moved to do this, seconded by Jill. Motion passed, Gabe abstaining. Only things that would pertain are how we operate board business. Makes sense since attorney has recommended this.

**Brigid: Superintendent Report.** Issue of group wanting to meet in exec session instead of open meetings as required. Many other schools are doing this in open

meetings. WWSU will be filing a complaint next week (send copy of this to board?). Articles of Agreement require us to do this. If we don't have a contract in place by November, terms of health insurance will be imposed. Could have school District Attorney come to talk with board about this. Board interested in transparency and open meetings.

**Christine moved that two NEA board members should be recused from exec Session, seconded by Sam.** Garrett & Peter will defer to board, but both would like to stay – don't believe there is a conflict of interest? Gabe thinks this should be more open and left to the board to decide. Many issues come up that are conflicts present for other board members – issues such as taxes, spouses who are teachers, etc. Suggest we do not ask them to leave, may have better information to share. There may be a perceived conflict of interest because they stay in the Exec Session. Peter and Garrett abstained; Christine, Jim, Maureen and Rosemarie voted yes 35.2% – **Motion failed.**

**Final Budget:** presented by Michelle. Anticipate no new information in regard to revenue. Equalized pupil rate may well change. Discussed the Annual Meeting Warning Draft of the HUUSD. Michelle gave draft postcard showing availability of the annual report for all residents. Full report will be put together by February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Michelle reported that some of the towns are concerned about not including HUUSD information in their report. Suggest that Michelle send the postcard to have this included. CWG could draft a few letters explaining budgets, appreciating help, etc. **Alex made motion to approve post card draft seconded by Alycia. Motion carried.**

**Alycia moved to approve revised budget brought forward since last meeting, \$36,294,313. Seconded by Heidi. Christine, Jim and Garrett voted No. Motion carried**

**6. Public Comments - Kim Laidlaw – Fayston** - read article in Valley Reporter feel that values of Fayston community misrepresented, that Fayston really values small classrooms. Goal is to grow classrooms. This merger was not to have to cut but be able to sustain programs and grow them. Also important to have clarification about Fayston's cuts in last 3 years. Cut 60% literacy teacher last year. Jean to speak to this. Have thought about on-site sub because of quality of experience control. Para-educator positions, some years need more, some years less. Appreciate Fayston cost per pupil has been low. Challenging to run a small school, all have to chip in and shift. Board and Jean have had to make difficult decisions in last 3 years.

**Jeremy Gully - Waitsfield** – Respond to Kim that not very clear on reasons as to why positions should be kept. Discussion was not helpful to someone from outside. Why keep the three classrooms in Warren school? Teacher cuts hard and sad to see go. Thought the new HUUSD would work to find efficiencies – in future suggest wise to have discussion on whole class size issue outside of budget – pros and cons of small classrooms; also have no understanding of how new system would work in regard to seniority rules, how it would ripple through system. Thanks to all on the board.

**Matt Fabrino – Fayston** – sold to us as not making changes in first year. If cut teachers in first year, credibility lost. Instantaneous cuts will lose face for board.

**Board Final Say:**

**Jill, Peter suggest move forward with final vote.**

**Alex:** conflicted feelings about her vote. Role of representing all of our students as a whole, community moving together. Clear do not agree with decision to keep teachers this year, should not consider just the voices that come to the meeting, much bigger district. Will not vote on this issue next year. Next year, hope that board members will be open to doing that.

**Jim:** Equity , equality discussion. Equity getting what is needed. Fayston will have two full time teachers with nine students; Warren three teachers with small classes. World Language for CBMS and TBPS not approved (CB has only 1 foreign language teacher) – 700 kids will start high school without similar backgrounds as others at Harwood. Board would not add a language teacher where there is an immediate need. We have failed 700 students but addressed the needs of 37. Could have addressed this last week and board said no, but decided to keep the teachers with small class sizes.

**Alycia:** said board did talk with CBMS principal about that

**Heidi:** appreciate the vote in the last meeting and in particular Alex's concern. Believe that this board is perfectly capable of doing this. Did not have the correct information to do this. When education spending is lower at Fayston than at all schools, Fayston is not excessively staffed. Need to take time to understand differences and make sure that all kids are supported. Time to develop vision, plan. Issue isn't about not supporting equity. Thought district believed that language was not getting most for dollars. Takes time – right budget for now.

**Garett:** As of now, cannot support budget. Foreign language has to be done right – kids of CBMS need this now. To delay is very unfortunate. Demographics do not show that this will change next year. Go back to cutting those teachers and bring world language to CBMS.

**Maureen:** same disappointment about language. Return on investment, what are the goals of Lang Ed? Kids not getting any of it are not getting anything. Am supporting this budget because of expended conversation and even people in own district to do agree. Considered this not an increase but a level budget. Don't think picture as clear – issue is to look at student to all classroom. Equity is not equal, but look at performance indicators to consider all the factors that make equity. Didn't look at test scores. Find ways to measure how prepared students are coming into Harwood.

**Christine:** moving forward with budget. Not bringing taxpayers the best possible budget – don't believe that these teachers will make a difference. Need to consider all students in the deliberations. Better to act when it becomes necessary. This damages the good will of this agreement. I believe these students excel whether in small classrooms or larger. Addressing this reality puts us in a better position with taxpayers. Without their support, won't be able to do what is necessary for the education students should have. Harwood and creating a Pre-K-12 was the reason for coming to this.

**Gabe:** feel good about where landed. Lot to be said about Garrett and Jim's points. Different ideas of how to do this. Feel that in course of Act 46 process. Involved attrition planning, make best use of monies especially around World Language. Looking at an implementation line that costs almost as much as these two teachers. Making good use of Prof Development money? Looking at employment numbers, probably not looking at other numbers. Need to get there, no urgency in it this year. We have done what we promised. Ratios are job #1 going forward.

**Rosemarie:** Am in support of budget. Big proponent of world language, after thinking about this, need to do it right, may cost more later to fix. OK holding off for a year to give Admin teams time to put together a program that will work best. Not making drastic decisions a good idea this year. Will have lots of work to accomplish in next few months. Prepared to make hard decisions for next year. Want to see board move forward to gather information needed.

**Sam:** echo desire to have more time and look at both class size question and how to implement language piece. For the people who have voiced opinions, willingness to respond to that is valuable. Don't like idea of feeling like we betrayed the public trust. Speed isn't going to work but even the administrators are going to appreciate time to think about these issues also.

**Garett:** great that we have had community members, but all voices have not been heard from.

**Rob:** support budget. Process takes time, getting to know each other. Excited about school choice and bussing kids from the south, School Choice, etc.

7. Other Business - next meeting discussion.

**Alycia moved to approve draft warning for annual meeting with revision on March 6, seconded by Rob. Motion carried.**

Brigid suggests that discussion of board rules and responsibilities is needed. Board has asked administration to explore the issue of World Language, issue of pooling language resources and distributing a model.

Board needs to develop a model of ethics and ground rules, norms, etc to have team agreement. Suggest a retreat to do this. Rob suggested discussions of appropriate class size, world language, etc. are tasks that are needed answer the big questions.

Agenda next meeting: How to do this? Would decision be easier if board had a policy? Brigid suggests board think about what data is needed, and a timeline for this.

8. Adjourn - Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Next meeting Feb 8 and 22.

Submitted by Freya Chaffee