

**Washington West Supervisory Union Executive Committee**  
**"Official" Meeting Minutes for September 9, 2015**  
Harwood Union School Library

**WWEC Board Members Present:** Doug Mosle (Fayston), Dale Smeltzer (Harwood), Garrett MacCurtain (Harwood), Kate O'Neill (Moretown), Eve Frankel (Waitsfield), Rob Rosen (Warren), Jason Gibbs (Waterbury-Duxbury), Alex Thomsen (Waterbury-Duxbury)

**Other Board Members Present:** Susie Daley (Fayston), Heidi Spear (Fayston), Jill Ellis (Fayston), Kitty Friedman (Fayston), Rosemarie White (Harwood), Deb Hunter (Harwood), Gabe Gilman (Moretown), Alycia Biondo (Warren), Michael Ketchel (Warren)

**WWSU Administrators:** Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker, Sheila Soule, Donarae Dawson

**WWSU School Principals:** Jean Berthiaume, Stephanie Hudak, Amy Rex, Kaiya Korb, Denise Goodnow, Tom Drake, Lisa Atwood, Duane Pierson

**Staff:** Brenda Hartshorn (Moretown teacher, Duxbury resident), MJ Wright (teacher in WWSU, Waterbury resident)

**Other:** Holliday Rayfield (Fayston), Serena Fox (Waitsfield), Ashley Woods (Warren), Jen Watkins (Warren), S. Blaire Scaglione (Warren), Rebecca Tring (visitor from CA), Laura Caffry (Waitsfield), Beth Schoerkopf (Warren), Kerry Newton (Warren), Rachel Goff (reporter), Carl Lobel (Warren), Asah Rowles (Warren), Kyle Ellis (Fayston), Matthew Howes (Fayston), Pam Dow (Moretown), Jon Potts (Warren), Jenifer Przysinda Patterson (Warren), Meredith Jaroby (Warren), Marie Schmokel (Warren)

- 1) Eve Frankel called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. and asked board members to introduce themselves.
- 2) Public Comment – Eve noted that due to public request in advance of the meeting, to her as chair, a public comment period was being provided at this meeting. Several members of the public commented on the following issues:
  - a) Varied concerns regarding school climate fostered by the Superintendent and requesting an anonymous survey on these issues regarding working relationship between Superintendent and staff;
  - b) Concerns about climate survey that needs to be anonymous and who evaluates the comments;
  - c) Frustrations about the coverage of these complaints in the Valley Reporter and lack of coverage of what's happening in the schools, also appreciation of the hard work the Superintendent is doing;
  - d) Question about what would be next and how a climate survey request would be handled.

Eve then suggested that the request for a climate survey could be put on a future agenda; it is not on the agenda for this meeting. There was discussion about how to proceed, and how members of the public could provide their input. Lastly, Brigid Nease provided some comments giving her perspective on the issues brought up regarding her leadership.

- 3) **Review and Change Executive Committee By-Laws to increase membership for Act 46 Work** - Eve reviewed the purpose of this issue as discussed at the June meeting. The purpose of this suggestion had been to make sure there was a voting member from each district, and to try to spread the workload, for example, if there were subcommittees established. It was pointed out that changing the by-laws requires a full WWSU Board vote and also that having more members could make obtaining a quorum even more difficult. The goal is to have more people from each board involved. Another idea suggested was to encourage all board members to attend a couple WWEC meetings a year to develop familiarity. There was discussion of meeting warning

issues, the desirability of having full WWSU board meetings to accomplish the goal, and/or the possibility of having carousel meetings (all boards meeting the same night, along with the SU board) as a temporary solution. The plans re Act 46 work would also impact the meeting needs. It was agreed to revisit this issue later in the meeting.

- 4) **Financial Report** - This was passed out by Michelle Baker at the meeting, titled "WWSU - Financial Status at a Glance June 2015". This was a pre-audited report and showed a WWSU general fund balance on June 30, 2015 of \$11,500. The second part of the report showed the WWSU Special Revenue Funds, some of which are pass-through funds per state requirements for financial reporting.
- 5) **Approval of WWSU Credit Card** - Michelle presented the need for a credit card, something that WWSU does not have, noting that current financial transactions make this type of payment option necessary for some situations. She asked that one be authorized in the name of Brigid Nease with a \$3500 limit and according to the procedures currently in use in each of the member district schools (which are in the name of the principal at each district). **ACTIONS:** Rob Rosen moved to authorize a credit card as presented above by Michelle. Doug Mosle seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Rob Rosen also moved to authorize the WWEC chair to sign the authorization form. Garrett MacCurtain seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- 6) **Debrief Act 46 Presentation** – Eve and Brigid asked for feedback regarding the public meeting presentation held the previous evening. The following points were made by those who had attended the meeting (board members and public).
  - a) Change would give flexibility to move resources around to meet highest needs and to ensure consistent instruction at each grade level, thinking about backwards design from the "Harwood Graduate" as a way to unpack the academic benefits as well as the financial impacts;
  - b) Financial impacts in each town are going to be important to define;
  - c) It is important to recognize that the change is not an "if", it is a given according to Act 46;
  - d) Need the upcoming VSBA information about how Act 46 provides educational benefits and addresses equality issues so that we can bring the info back to constituents;
  - e) Warren can wait to learn more about the numbers but the other towns can go ahead without Warren on the fast track as a better solution for the whole community;
  - f) Financial modeling is still very preliminary and with assumptions that might end up changing as better ones can be figured out especially regarding student enrollment projections;
  - g) Tuition payments currently going to specific schools would go to the new District budget;
  - h) Warren bond will go out this year before any change;
  - i) How to get started - same problem as last spring - and what would the sustainability model look like;
  - j) Question about how the accelerated process could actually work and whether voters would care about the money rather than local control and local boards and that Act 46 is a problem;
  - k) Culture isn't a particular school board or a school - it's a community. It's better not to frame it as a strict win-loss situation at this point;
  - l) What about learning from Warren regarding how to lower the cost per pupil in the other schools;
  - m) It's an opportunity to proceed with a "yes, if" rather than a "no, because" approach;
  - n) Why do we have to jump at the accelerated merger given the little benefit shown by the initial numbers;
  - o) Need to have all districts work together and try to build cohesion and relationships as a whole community;
  - p) Impact of Act 46 cost containment requirements are going to really impact HU and need to be considered;
  - q) Change is hard and with unknown impacts, but these are all "our" students and we should consider what we could do if we shared all the students through all the grades in terms of what we could offer them - compare with what larger districts like Burlington can offer their students, and what about looking more regionally that WWSU.
- 7) **Act 46: Outline Next Steps, Timeline** – After considerable discussion about possible action to take to start studying the issues, it was finally agreed it made sense to start work under the official study committee

process for Act 46 and to follow the motions included in the handout titled *“Getting Started: Pursuing Options and Opportunities Under Act 46”* dated 8/17/15. This requires that each local board, for the respective towns but not the union high school, take action to form a study committee and to appoint their representatives.

The upcoming meeting timeframe was then considered and the next WWEC meeting was set to be Wednesday, September 23, 2015 at 5:30, which would allow all boards to be able to have taken action on the study committee motions. It was agreed that WWEC will now meet twice a month, on the second and fourth Wednesdays.

**ACTION:** Rob Rosen made, and Doug Mosle seconded, the following motion:

- First, Establish a Study Committee: ask the five local boards representing each of the six member towns (Fayston, Moretown, Waitsfield, Warren, Waterbury-Duxbury), but not Harwood Union High School, to vote regarding sample motion #1 (*“Move to form a study committee with the other member districts of the Washington West Supervisory Union to analyze the advisability of forming a union school district under Act 46”*).
- Second, Appoint Representatives to the Committee: ask these same five local boards to give contingent approval, or authorize their chair, to appoint members using sample motion #2 (*“Move to give contingent approval to appoint – or authorize their chair to appoint – a member (or members in the case of Waterbury-Duxbury) to the study committee in order to be compliant with 16 VSA Section 706, and naming the appointed member(s) and their alternate(s)”*); with the following proportional representation reasonably aligned with number of equalized pupils: Fayston Board – 1 member, Moretown Board – 1 member, Waitsfield Board – 1 member, Warren Board – 1 member, Waterbury-Duxbury Board – 1 member representing Duxbury and 2 members representing Waterbury (a total of 7 Study Committee members).
- Third, Ex-Officio Member from Harwood: ask the Harwood Union Board to appoint one ex-officio member to the study committee, with full participation rights but no voting rights.
- Fourth, Set a Budget for the Committee: ask these same five local boards to vote regarding a budget for the committee using sample motion #3 (*“Move to authorize a budget not to exceed \$24,500 for legal, consulting and other expenses needed for the committee and to share in the cost proportionally according to the number of members on the study committee such that the cost to each local board shall not exceed \$3,500 per member”*).
- Fifth, Suggestions regarding Committee Charge: Local boards may also choose to provide suggestions regarding the work of the Study Committee, which will be considered at the next WWEC meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

- 8) **Executive Session for Superintendent Contract Negotiations** – Rob Rosen moved to go into executive session at 8:30 p.m. to discuss the superintendent contract negotiations, with board members only. Alex Thomsen seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Brigid Nease was invited to join the session at 8:40. It was agreed to come out of executive session at 8:46 with the following action taken: Rob Rosen moved to approve the Superintendent's contract renewal for 5 years as presented in executive session. Kate O'Neill seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- 9) Rob Rosen moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. Dale Smeltzer seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Dale Smeltzer