

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Tuesday, March 12 2024
Virtual Meeting: Hybrid (in-person and online)
7:00 p.m.
Minutes
Zoom Recorded

Members Present

Briana Ross - Chair
Jennifer Goodale - Vice Chair
Ann Grosjean (Zoom)
Tracey Anderson
Arthur Christensen
Jon Mitchell
Samantha Sperry (arrived 7:13 pm)

Also Present

Superintendent Phil Stevens, Principal Mary Kay Tshonas, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Erin Conely, Literacy Coach Kristen Stevens

1. Call to order

Chair Brianna Ross called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Ross led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Student Representatives Report

Elijah W. and Riyanna W. from Center Elementary School gave a presentation on how they are improving the school. They also discussed positive events that were happening at the school. They discussed safety patrol training. They also discussed how the emergency drills went well in the school. Things that they said could be worked on included work on arts and writing, as well as behaviors at recess with kids keeping their hands to themselves and asking a teacher for assistance when needed.

Maren F., Lucas A., Lauren R., and Angus B. from Hall Memorial School gave a presentation discussing recent school events that they have had and things that they are doing to make a positive impact in the school. Things they would like to see improved in the school are ventilation, more outdoor time during the day, bus behavior, improving the library, and increasing awareness about racism in the school.

4. PTA Report

Carrie Rainville gave the PTA report that discussed recent events and activities happening in the schools. She also discussed upcoming events that the PTA is holding.

5. Present to Speak

There was no one present to speak at this time.

6. Chair Report

Chair Ross shared some important dates that were coming up: March 14th the Board of Finance will be discussing the proposed budget; Wednesday, April 24th is the town meeting on the budget; and the town referendum on May 7th.

7. Communications

P. Stevens stated that there was an additional email from Rick Maloney that went out to CIP and the members of the Board of Education and said he would make sure to send it to members who did not receive it.

8. Superintendent report

a. Board member appreciation month

P. Stevens noted that March is Board Member Appreciation month and thanked the participating members for their work. He also mentioned that the list names of all of the Board of Education members past and present will be framed and placed on the wall of the lower level meeting room.

M. Tshonas gave members of the Board of Education gifts that students made to show their appreciation for the work they do.

b. Staffing

P. Stevens said that they had three staff resignations. He said Sherry Kraus would be retiring again after coming back to teaching for two years in special education. Amy Lord, who was a paraprofessional, resigned and is student teaching. Natsia Chandler, a paraprofessional also resigned for a higher-paying job.

c. District health statistics and COVID protocols

P. Stevens said there have been three COVID cases since the last meeting. He said that he met with the nurses and went through their current COVID protocol and they are finalizing a drastically different plan.

d. Cyber security insurance

P. Stevens said that they have Cyber Security Insurance through Tokyo Marine. He said that there is an incident response plan in place that the administration has been trained on.

e. Upcoming events

P. Stevens went over upcoming events including the upcoming HMS art show and chorus concert on March 27th at 6:30 p.m.

f. Other

P. Stevens said he was hoping QA+M could make a presentation tonight, however, it is not ready. He said he was meeting with them this week for more information.

A. Christensen asked if there was any objection to holding a special meeting when QA+M had the presentation ready.

P. Stevens said when they are ready the Board could do that.

B. Ross agreed that it would be a good idea to hold a special meeting when the presentation is ready.

9. Financial report

a. March 2024 financial report

Attachment #1

P. Stevens said that they have not spent a lot of money because of the freeze. However, they have had to repair things like heating. There were also adjustments made to the special education budget and they now have five students for outplacement. He stated there were minor changes in transportation and staff services. Utilities and maintenance had minor changes. He said that there were some savings due to students coming back to Willington Public Schools from Magnet Schools. He also stated that they transferred \$50,000 out of the Fringe Benefits/ Substitutions portion of the budget to program 3.

b. Update on Program 3: Special Education

P. Stevens said that they have planned for 2 outplacements and there are currently 5. He said that the budget has been frozen for months except for emergency repairs. He stated that with the outplacement cost the program balance was -\$642,000. P. Stevens explained how they would cover the costs:

Excess cost payment #1	\$221,292
Excess cost payment #2	\$71,000 (anticipated)
Health insurance transfer #1	\$50,000
ARP ESSER: staffing offset	\$45,000
Afterschool grant: paras	\$3,187
Afterschool grant: WEALTH	\$7,000
Mental Health grant ESY	\$1,500
IDEA grant 22-24 staffing	\$2,697
IDEA grant 23-25 staffing	\$97,555

After this P. Stevens said that it would leave the program balance at: -\$142,769. He said that the remaining balance could be paid with the following estimated amounts.

School Choice excess	\$ 9,243	(2 students returned)
Health insurance transfer #2	\$40,000	(additional savings)
HMS pe salary excess	\$10,706	(teacher resigned)
HMS staff support specialist	\$24,746	(position not filled)
CES art salary excess	\$13,169	(new teacher)
Non-lapsing fund	\$44,905	

P Stevens said that this would leave the program balance at \$0 and only \$44,000 would have to be used out of the non-lapsing fund. P. Stevens said he sent the information to the administrators of the two schools about what they could spend but also reminded them that they had to be cautious with what they spent. He said that there are also things that they know they have to repair, but the costs need to be tracked carefully. P. Stevens said that the freeze helped, the planning helped, and things were able to come together. He said that he would continue to track this and would have an update for Board Members next month.

A. Christensen asked if moving after-school grants affected the after-school program.

P. Stevens said that it would not because he is re-working the program. He said that the current grant is \$90,000 and that they would be getting a fresh \$90,000 for next year, however, the current \$90,000 grant expires in June so they are being allowed to use the extra funding for expenditures.

J. Goodale thanked P. Stevens for the work and diligence he put into the budget and reports.

A. Grosjean asked if they had always had five outplacements this year.

P. Stevens said that they did have four and now have five and that it is budgeted appropriately for the next school year.

10. New business

- a. Special meeting minutes February 20, 2024 (rescheduled regular meeting) Attachment #2
- b. Special meeting minutes February 20, 2024 (budget workshop #4) Attachment #3
- c. Curriculum Committee meeting minutes March 6, 2024 Attachment #4

J. Mitchell motioned to approve the minutes from February 20, 2024.

J. Goodale seconded the motion.

A. Christensen suggested a friendly amendment to amend the motion to include approving the Special meeting minutes from February 20, 2024, for both the rescheduled regular meeting as well as the budget workshop and the curriculum committee meeting minutes from March 6, 2024.

J. Mitchell and J. Goodale accepted the amendment.

The motion passed unanimously.

d. Language Arts Program: Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts

P. Stevens said that the curriculum committee met and an overview of the program will be presented. He noted that the presentation can be found online. He introduced Kristen Stevens who will be giving the presentation.

K. Stevens said that the new literacy program is a State mandate for grades K-3. She stated that the curriculum still needs systematic and cumulative instruction of vocabulary, language skills and reading comprehension. It will also need an assessment and remediation system for all the tiers and special education. Another need will be systematic building on content knowledge. K. Stevens discussed the research and selection process and said that they highly recommend the program Amplify CKLA. She stated the program builds knowledge, has a widespread impact, is comprehensive, contains cumulative instruction, and it is accessible to parents and staff.

P. Stevens said the staff has been trained for CKLA and that they are ready for it.

J. Goodale expressed ongoing concerns about students' ability to stand in front of a classroom and read or speak because they lack the skill or confidence to do so. She asked if it had any impact to address those issues.

K. Stevens said that discussion is woven in daily and that the program has a great impact on that. She said that there is so much that is done well in the program and that the program leaves no stone unturned.

P. Stevens said that they have about \$90,000 in grants that will get them a three-year subscription to CKLA that could be used to budget for the program. He also noted that through another grant they can use this program for students in K-8 all at the same time. He also noted several other districts were going to use this program and that it came with good recommendations.

A. Grosjean asked if the students would mostly be reading nonfiction.

K. Stevens said that there is a lot of nonfiction, however there are fiction lessons as well. She said that there are opportunities for choice.

A. Grosjean asked if it correlated with their science and social studies program.

K. Stevens said that it does and it fits the standards.

T. Anderson acknowledged that it was a good program and seems to cover all the needed topics and reading literacy.

A. Christensen said that the transparency involved with the program was important to him and that it is good that the materials are available online so parents can see what their kids are doing. He stated he also liked that the training was already done and that is a great benefit.

T. Anderson motioned that they adopt the Amplify CKLA language program.

J. Goodale seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

e. Educator Diversity Plan

P. Stevens said that there is legislation to develop an educator diversity plan. He said that the number of teachers of color in the State was very low and they would like to find a way to get more teachers of color in the schools. P. Stevens said that he and the administrators put together a plan that suits them right now, however the State has not put out a rubric or example plan. He said that he is suggesting that the Board approve the plan tonight so they could submit it to the State and that adjustments could be made when moving forward. P. Stevens presented the plan. He said there are three sections, recruitment, hiring & selection, and retention.

J. Goodale motioned to approve the district's Educator Diversity Plan knowing that changes can be made by Superintendent Stevens.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

11. Old business

There was no old business at this time.

12. Present to speak

There was no present to speak at this time.

13. Board comment

J. Mitchell said he loves how the students come in to discuss their school.

J. Goodale said she has anxiety about the Board of Finance meeting on Thursday and is hoping everyone can go and support the budget they put forward.

B. Ross said at the last Board of Finance meeting there was some question on why the Board of Education added some things at the last minute it seemed. She said Phil did a great job explaining what was in the budget. She said that it was important to drive home how they made the budget, with bare bones, and the things that were needed.

A. Christensen shared he looked at the survey data presented last meeting. He said one of the things that he noticed was that there were a couple of questions about gambling. He said that he focused on the 8th graders and he said 21% of them said that they would not feel like their friends would feel like they were wrong if they were gambling and 23% said that it would be very wrong. He also said the survey said that their family had strict rules discouraging from gambling and 17% of them said that it was definitely not true, and definitely true was only 38.3%. A. Christensen stated that the last question was how wrong would your parents feel if you gambled, 21% said only a little bit versus 4% said it was very wrong. He said he was bringing this up because sports gambling has just become legal in the states, and this may be something to look out for kids. He stated gambling is an addiction and would like to ask everyone to keep an eye out for that.

A. Grosjean said she would like to thank Mr. Phillips for all of the after-school PE activities at Center School and said the students really enjoy it. She also thanked the students at Hall School for their thank-you gifts. She also thanked Kristen and Erin for all of their hard work.

T. Anderson thanked the staff who are retiring/ resigning for the hard work that they put in for the schools. She says that they are wishing them the best in their next ventures. She also seconded the call for people to be a part of the conversation about budgets. She said she would like to see people come out for every decision because every vote counts.

S. Sperry said it was great to see the students at the meeting and become better public speakers, and it also encourages parents to get more involved by being at the meeting.

14. Adjournment

J. Mitchell motioned to adjourn the meeting.

J. Goodale seconded.

The motion passed unanimously, meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

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TOWN CLERK