

Wakefield School Board

Monday, March 23, 2020

6 p.m. – Meeting held remotely via Zoom

With public access provided at the Paul School Library and videotaped in a live feed

Minutes – Approved

Present: Chair Bob Ouellette, Tracey Kolb, Sandy Johnson, Relf Fogg, Mary Collins, Superintendent Jerry Gregoire, Facilities Manager Joe Williams, Transportation Director Brennan Peaslee, Director of Student Services Anne Kebler, Business Administrator Marie D’Agostino, Administrative Assistant Larissa Mulkern, Clearview TV videographer Ted Taylor

Call to Order: Mr. Ouellette called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Ouellette welcomed newly elected school board member Mary Collins to the board.

The re-organization of the School Board will be held off until the next public meeting as the public must be present. He announced this remote meeting is being held due to emergency circumstances – the COVID-19 pandemic. ***This meeting is being held in accordance with compliance with New Hampshire’s Right to Know Law (RSA 91-A) in light of COVID-19 concerns and issuance of Executive Order 2020-04.*** Mr. Ouellette added they will be suspending the public comment portion of the meeting. An amended agenda has been sent out, as each item must be recognized as essential and imperative. All votes shall be roll call votes.

Consent Agenda: Superintendent Gregoire said the board does need to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion: Mrs. Kolb made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fogg, to approve the consent agenda. Members voted 4-1 in roll call vote: Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Collins, aye, Fogg, nay.

Superintendent’s Report – COVID-19 pandemic

Mr. Gregoire noted that discussion of his report is allowed as it is related to response to the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlights:

- Teachers should be commended for creating and planning remote learning programs, going from zero to 60 in a short period of time. Teaching is being done remotely, with the lower grades working with paper. What it looks like today may change, but overall this experience makes our school better and more flexible with the way we deliver instruction.
- Pay for hourly personnel: The Governor extended the directive to remote learning by a week to April 3; the school board had previously voted to pay hourly personnel through March 27, so this extension needs to be addressed.
- Distributing meals to children: We have worked out a system to make sure families get the food they need; he commended the Lovell Lake IGA for also providing food and has suggested they may cover dinners or weekend meals. Meals are being distributed at the Paul School, Greater Wakefield Resource Center in Union, and from the East Wakefield Fire Station. Café Services is doing a super job.
- The NH DOE has indicated that the directive to remote learning may be extended so districts should plan this, perhaps to the end of school year. The pandemic is having a bigger impact on schools than had been planned on. Mr. Gregoire added if we are directed to ‘shelter in place,’ essential personnel will be allowed to be at work.

- Computers have been loaned out to students who need them. The families have been very appreciative for all the school is doing.

Mr. Ouellette, who has been out a few mornings assisting with food distribution, commended the crew for doing a fantastic job.

Mr. Gregoire added he met with the town's emergency management/safety personnel today and provided them with the same information and update he is giving the board. He is keeping apprised of news from the Governor's Office.

In response to a query from Mrs. Kolb on whether there were any updates on assessments, Mr. Gregoire said as of right now the state is not planning on cancelling assessments. The NH DOE will evaluate this on April 3; the NH DOE commissioner is not confident we'll return to school to the end of the school year.

Mrs. Kolb asked how Special Education was doing.

Mrs. Kebler said all of our Special Ed teachers have scheduled consults with each of the teachers that work with; they are providing direct services to students remotely. We've had some parents ask us to not to put anything else on our plate. Mrs. Wilson is monitoring all student with a 504 plan, or who may be homeless or in need. Some students are struggling to get access to technology.

Old Business

Hourly pay/employees: Mr. Gregoire noted that previously, the school board voted to pay hourly personnel through March 27; he would like to see hourly personnel paid through this crisis, to the end of the school year. Employees are keeping busy, working remotely, and all paraprofessionals have been assigned classrooms to provide remote support.

Motion: Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kolb, to authorize hourly employees to continue getting paid, based on their service to the school district, to the end of the school year. If the crisis continues to the end of the school year, the board can review this matter again. Roll call vote, 5-0; Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, and Collins, aye. Motion passed.

Teacher Contract – Plan A: Mr. Gregoire raised the question as to whether this agenda item was imperative, under the rules for remote meetings in emergency circumstances.

Motion: Mr. Fogg made a motion to assert the ratification of Article 18.6, on page 14 of the Teachers' Collective Bargaining Agreement. Mr. Ouellette seconded the motion for discussion. Mr. Fogg said Article 18.6 of the current CBA states each teacher will receive a step increase after a year service to the school district. [The Article is inserted here as a courtesy to readers: "18.6 A teacher who completes a year of service shall be moved up one step on the salary schedule. However, upon recommendation of the superintendent and subject to approval by the school board, a teacher may be held at step because of unsatisfactory job performance."] Mr. Fogg added that the salary scales were frozen when the new contract didn't pass with voters; that doesn't mean that Article 18.6 is waived. Article 18.6 is in effect with each signature on the contract. He said he was frustrated with folks saying they had no contracts and no increases – the article is very clear. It says they 'shall' receive a step. It also states if administration should bring to the school board an evaluation to be decided upon, its only because the administration would be saying perhaps this particular employee does not deserve a step. The salary scale was frozen, but that does not negate the Article 18.6, he added. Some teachers are not

aware of Article 18.6; some folks appreciate the idea of keeping a contract a contract. I could never see the school district going against the word, 'shall.' The pay scales are frozen, and the money is still in the budget, \$188,322 unencumbered. Mr. Fogg believes the Article should be assertively ratified.

Mrs. Johnson said, referring to the contract in front of her, that the CBA ended a year ago and is not in effect, so that salaries are frozen. The contract ended June 30, 2019.

Mrs. Kolb said she received input from the attorney and the salaries are indeed frozen; the attorney suggested three options: 1. We can't do this because its bargaining in bad faith, 2. The district will need to obtain voter approval, and 3., if we consider paying bonuses is there sufficient surplus to pay bonuses and what are the amounts. She added the voters and the Budget Committee voted no. And Mr. Fogg voted no. She is confused. No one would like to give the teachers a raise more than me but we have to do it legally. No means no and that's what the Budget Committee said.

Mr. Fogg asked what contract the teacher nominations are based on? Mr. Gregoire said those were an agreement that they are employed, and they get paid. The agreement is what they sign – not everybody signed the contract (the Collective Bargaining Agreement.)

Mr. Fogg said the current CBA is what the agreements are based on – you can't adhere to some parts of the CBA and not others. Mr. Gregoire said when a new contract was not passed, we adhere to what is called the 'status quo' law – everything stays frozen, everything stays the way it is. The pay stays where it is and there is no movement on steps; there's no provision for them to move forward in pay. Mr. Fogg disagreed, saying Article 18.6 does give that provision and states, 'shall.' Mr. Gregoire said steps are based on years of experience. For example, if an experienced teacher is hired and their last year was at step 6; we're obligated to give them step 7.

Mrs. Kolb said not everyone is on a step; a step means how many years of experience a teacher has, regardless of how long they've been in Wakefield. Steps end after the 13th year of service. We have many teachers here that are no longer on the step system. Once you are off the step system, without any cost of living increase, everybody off the step system does not move up. She noted that not all teachers are on a step and under Mr. Fogg's proposal not all teachers would get a raise. Mrs. Johnson said the agreement is no longer valid as step increases are part of the CBA and the CBA is no longer in effect. Attorney Mike Elwell said we would be breaking the law, this would be unfair bargaining, it breaks all kinds of labor laws.

Mr. Fogg said the voters rejected a contract with different salary scales; this salary scale, because it expired on June 30, 2019, is frozen.

Mrs. Johnson said the CBA and the Memorandums of Agreement are two different entities. The CBA is no longer in effect; the memorandum of agreement is an agreement to work with no step increase. Step increases are part of the CBA.

Mrs. D'Agostino added that teachers signed the intent to employ [2019-2020] with the same steps that were in in 2019. The budget that was approved for 2020 did not include any increases for teachers except for track changes. The only increases reflect in the default budget was the salaries for paraprofessionals because they had a warrant article that was approved in the community. They are the

only ones that got salary increases in FY20. The \$188,000 is not in savings that should have gone to teachers; its due to savings in tuition for Spaulding High School students. There is nothing budgeted this year or next year, she added. She agreed with the attorney's advice regarding the raises; there was a no vote to go back to the table for a second meeting before the next school year. The only way the school board can do an increase to teachers would be to have discussion with the board and not involve the union because they you are negotiating and you can't negotiate without going to the community.

Mr. Ouellette said he thinks this topic should be discussed further at another time. He rescinded his second of the motion. Mr. Fogg rescinded his motion and asked that it be placed back on the agenda in the future. In a consensus, Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Kolb were against putting this back on the agenda prior to June 30. Mrs. Collins said she would like to explore the topic further; she doesn't have the Articles in front of her. Mr. Ouellette favored putting this back on the agenda to see what they can come up with. It's good faith to try to get something for the teachers.

Teacher Nominations

Mr. Lampron said the evaluations were done and the teachers who were not being re-nominated were contact. The list of nominations and non-renewals was emailed to board members and staff during the remote meeting as they were inadvertently not included in the board packet. The list of tenured teachers was 25 and the non-renewals were 19. The list of non-continuing contracts includes Angela Boston, Melissa Catauro, Lisa Dubois, Jessica Fortgang, Trevor Frost, Lori Jerram, Mykaela Murphy, Aaron Nason, Meghan Nason, Cathy Olson, Diane O'Neil, Rebecca Roberts, Catherine Tewell. The list of continuing contracts include Tracy Bemis, Sharon Bonnevie, Peter Boucher, Jeff Boynton, Jessica Cormier, Laura Courts, Julie Crowley, Elayne Ellis, Kathryn Frothingham, Elizabeth Hadzima, Kimberly Hastings, Penny Huckins, Jaclyn Jakubec, Gavin Kearns, Meghan Libby, Jean Nelson Buck, Mark Perkins, Lauree Royle, Heidi Smith, Kristin Soule, Christopher Soule, Noelle Taylor, Michael Tritter, Debra Wilson, Lisa Wunderlich, Valerie Young. The contracts are due by April 15.

Once member reviewed the nominations list via email, members made a motion.

Motion: Mrs. Kolb made a motion to approve the list of continuing and non-continuing teachers, seconded by Mr. Fogg. Roll call vote, 5-0; Kolb, aye, Ouellette, aye, Fogg, aye, Johnson, aye and Collins, aye.

School Calendar 2020-2021

Mr. Gregoire noted one difference for next year's calendar is the start of the school year, with four days of Teacher Workshops prior to the first full day of school. Staff felt having four days in the beginning was a strong way to start the school year.

Motion: Mrs. Kolb made a motion to approve the 2020-2021 school year calendar seconded by Mr. Fogg; members voted roll call vote 5-0, Kolb, aye, Ouellette, aye, Fogg, aye, Johnson, aye and Collins, aye.

Purchasing

Mr. Gregoire requested authorization for purchases up to \$2,500 in the event the school needs something related to dealing with COVID-19. He is not proposing unfreezing the budget. Discussion ensued about the dollar amounts and purpose.

Motion: Mr. Fogg made a motion to allow the Superintendent to use discretionary buying power for anything related to COVID-19 up to a dollar amount of \$1,750. Members voted roll call vote 5-0, Kolb, aye, Ouellette, aye, Fogg, aye, Johnson, aye and Collins, aye.

Other Business

Mr. Gregoire proposed scheduling another board meeting; an update on remote learning is expected on April 3, whereby an extension is anticipated.

Mrs. D'Agostino asked about how the board would approve manifests. One suggestion was that the school board can assign two members to sign manifests, or as many as you want; in an emergency circumstance a quorum is not required. Members discussed whether to have a remote or physical meeting. Mr. Gregoire noted it may be premature to schedule a physical meeting; gatherings of no more than 10 are allowed during this time per the Governor's emergency order. Mr. Gregoire asked if we hear before April 3 that we are going to be extended with remote learning, is this something the board wants to discuss on how to move forward? A remote meeting can be called with 24 hours' notice if they would like to meet before that time. Members agreed on planning to meet again remotely on April 7. The March 26 meeting that was previously considered as a follow up was cancelled.

Adjournment: Mrs. Kolb made a motion to adjourn at 7:19 p.m., seconded by Mrs. Johnson. Members voted roll call vote 5-0, Kolb, aye, Ouellette, aye, Fogg, aye, Johnson, aye and Collins, aye.

Respectfully submitted:
Larissa Mulkern
Administrative Assistant