

## Wakefield School Board Meeting & Public Hearing

Tuesday, April 21, 2020, 6 p.m.

Meeting held remotely via Zoom

Minutes – Approved

**Present:** Bob Ouellette, Tracey Kolb, Sandy Johnson, Relf Fogg, Mary Collins, Superintendent Jerry Gregoire, Principal Jim Lampron, Assistant Principal Jenn Spector, Transportation Manager Brennan Peaslee, Facilities Manager Joe Williams, Business Administrator Marie D’Agostino, Student Services Director Anne Kebler, Administrative Assistant Larissa Mulkern, and others logging in included: Priscilla Colbath, Dave Lee, Peter Miller, Brittany Joy, a teacher, Gavin Kearns, Meghan Libby, Clearview TV videographer, Nicole Dolaher

**Call to order:** The meeting was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6 p.m.

**Public Hearing:** Mr. Ouellette opened the public hearing to expend \$200,000 from the Windows Expendable Trust; and \$20,000 from the School Technology Trust Fund.

Mr. Fogg suggested reviewing the contracts before any checks are cut to the vendors.

**Public Comment:** Mrs. Colbath questioned the fact that this public hearing is occurring after the contract has been awarded. The public hearing comes first, as [Trust Fund Trustee] Howie Knight has advised.

Mr. Ouellette said in the past, bids have been opened at the school board meeting or the board allowed the SAU to do that and place the information on a spreadsheet for the board’s review. In this case there was only one bid for the windows project. The board has done it in different ways. Tonight’s meeting is the public hearing with comments, and then the board will vote on it again. Additional discussion ensued regarding past practice of boards having held hearings both prior to and following bid awards and/or expenditures. Mr. Gregoire noted one example of computers purchased through capital reserve funds prior to a public hearing and noted past decisions of a board to make purchases, i.e., property, without a public hearing.

Mrs. Colbath said different boards have done it both ways, but the board was advised on how to do it correctly and it did not. She may have a question that could impact this deal.

Mrs. D’Agostino said in this case the money has not been spent. None of the agreements or contracts have been signed. The object was to decide which vendor and move forward to the public hearing. No contracts will be executive until after tonight’s meeting.

Mrs. Colbath said it doesn’t matter if it has not been signed – the board has voted. Mr. Fogg said that was his motion and he takes full responsibility for this.

Mrs. Kolb said there has been confusion and the school’s attorney has said it has been done correctly. There is a difference of opinion. Mrs. Colbath said the attorney was incorrect. Mr. Ouellette asked [administrators] to write up a procedure with all the details to list how the public hearings should be done. In response to a query from Mrs. Colbath if the windows had film, Mr. Williams said yes.

**Motion:** Mrs. Kolb made a motion to expend \$200,000 from the Windows Expendable Trust Fund, seconded by Mrs. Johnson. Members voted all in favor, roll call vote, 5-0; Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, Collins, aye.

**Motion:** Mrs. Kolb made a motion seconded by Mrs. Collins to expend \$20,000 from the School Technology Trust Fund [to purchase Chromebooks as the school is moving away from the more expensive Mac books]. Members voted all in favor, roll call vote, 5-0; Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, Collins, aye.

Mr. Ouellette closed the public hearing.

### **Board Reorganization**

- **Board Nominations**

**Chair:** Mr. Fogg nominated Mr. Ouellette to serve once again as Chair of the School Board. Mrs. Kolb seconded the nomination. Members voted all in favor, roll call vote, 5-0; Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, Collins, aye.

**Vice Chair:** Mrs. Collins nominated Mr. Fogg, seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Members voted all in favor, roll call vote, 5-0; Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, Collins, aye.

- **Board Subcommittee Nominations**

1. **Policy Committee:** Mrs. Kolb nominated by Mr. Fogg, seconded by Mrs. Collins, with Mrs. Johnson as Policy Committee alternate. Members voted all in favor.
2. **Facilities Committee:** Mr. Fogg nominated Mr. Ouellette and Mrs. Johnson back to the Facilities Committee, with Mr. Fogg as alternate, seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Members voted all in favor.
3. **Curriculum Committee:** was previously removed from board Subcommittee list.
4. **Transportation Committee:** Mr. Fogg suggested two members for this committee: Mr. Ouellette and Mrs. Kolb, with Mr. Fogg as alternate. Member voted all in favor.
5. **Capital Improvement:** Mr. Fogg nominated Mrs. Kolb and Mrs. Collins, with Mrs. Johnson as alternate. Members voted all in favor.
6. **Wellness Committee:** Mr. Fogg nominated Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Collins with Mrs. Kolb alternate. Members voted all in favor.
7. **Technology Committee:** Mr. Fogg nominated Mrs. Kolb with Mrs. Johnson alternate. Members voted all in favor.
8. **Professional Development:** Mr. Fogg nominated Mrs. Collins and Mrs. Johnson with Mr. Ouellette as alternate. Members voted all in favor.
9. **Negotiations Committee:** After discussion it was determined to break this into two committees – one for the teacher’s union negotiations and another for the paraprofessional’s union contract negotiations. Mrs. Kolb nominated Mr. Fogg for the Teachers’ Union with Mrs. Johnson for the Paraprofessionals Union negotiations committee.
10. **Budget Committee Representative:** Mr. Ouellette nominated Mr. Fogg with Mrs. Kolb as alternate; members voted 4-1 with Mrs. Johnson dissenting.
11. **Health Benefits:** Mrs. D’Agostino explained this committee was created and we had four vendors come to present health care options; a committee isn’t needed as the committee had already decided to stay with SchoolCare, which provides several options. Each group can choose whatever plans. Both contracts had an addendum to have a health committee look at different options and that was accomplished. Mrs. Kolb suggesting naming a member(s) to this committee if needed. Mr. Fogg nominated Mrs. Kolb with Mrs. Johnson as an alternate, as necessary. Members voted all in favor.

Mrs. Kebler added that we have not completed the committee for paraprofessional assessments and asked if this needed to be voted on tonight. She was in the process of creating a proposal for a temporary template for this year, with the committee reconvening to create a new

template next year. After discussion, members agreed to have Mrs. Johnson participate on this committee, with members voting in favor.

**Public Comment:** Mrs. Colbath asked if anyone had a problem with Mrs. Johnson being on this committee as she is a former paraprofessional. Mrs. Johnson said she knows the ins and outs; Mrs. Kolb said Mrs. Johnson is extremely fair.

**Consent Agenda:** Mrs. Johnson made a motion to approve the consent agenda seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Members voted 4-1, roll call, Ouellette, aye, Johnson, aye, Kolb, aye, Collins, aye, Fogg, nay.

**Minutes Approval:** Mr. Fogg made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 7<sup>th</sup> with any amendments offered; Mrs. Kolb noted a typo on page 9 which will be corrected. Members voted all in favor, roll call vote 5-0, Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, Collins, aye.

#### **Reports:**

- **COVID 19 Update**

Mr. Lampron and Mrs. Spector reviewed the highlights of a survey regarding the success of remote learning in households; 102 responded, with 75 percent positive, and 25 percent of responses reflecting challenges in the households. The feedback from some of the older students was that they wanted more routine with set course subject times, and others wanted flexibility. Mrs. Collins said she knows a letter went out to parents about some changes in remote learning, but the board didn't vote on any changes to programs or going to a 4-1 (four days of remote classroom work with one day of remediation, follow up with teachers, etc.). Mr. Gregoire noted that the topic was discussed at last meeting for the board's information – they were not seeking a vote, but rather making changes to best accommodate current challenges of remote learning. Mrs. Collins added that she received a complaint regarding changing the grading for report cards and taking away of a letter grade. The report card grading did not have to change. Some kids aspire to the [letter grade] and Honor Roll.

Mrs. Kebler said from the perspective of Student Services, this is an inequitable situation where many families do not have the ability to access remote learning as successfully as other students. It takes longer to complete assignments, and so forth. When children eventually come back to school, we need to meet them where they are. Mrs. Spector added that the guidance, the best practice, was the idea of doing no harm to students while there are so many things they are dealing with that are out of their control. Some parents are staying at home and can help their students, and others are out working. To give a failing grade is what this and other states are trying to avoid in this situation. Additional discussion ensued regarding acknowledging student who have been exceptional. Mr. Lampron said they'll go back to letter grades when the kids go back to school. Mrs. Spector said students are not learning the same way and it doesn't make sense to grade them the same way. In response to whether students who are having difficulty can repeat a grade or study at summer school, Mr. Lampron said they don't know when students will return or what the school will provide over the summer. Mrs. Kebler added that when the district leadership team met, they discussed ways to celebrate the success of the kids and our graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders; kids who have worked hard also deserve celebratory situations, but they need to think about all the students.

**Zoom Subscription:** In another COVID-19 related topic, Mr. Gregoire reported that Zoom is no longer allowing call-in to their free subscriptions; thus, he spent \$14.99 for a subscription to allow call-ins.

**End of School Year:** Mr. Gregoire reported that the Rochester School District has opted to end the school year on May 15 and forego April vacation. The State of NH has recommended remote learning continue to the end of the school year. The Governor Wentworth Regional School District is

taking April vacation, and ending their school year on June 19. At the last Wakefield School Board meeting, Mr. Gregoire recommended June 5 as a last day of school. It gives teachers five additional PD days to clean up the classrooms before the windows replacement project starts. Mr. Lampron added that feedback from the survey indicates some people would like school to end sooner rather than later. Mrs. Collins said a lot of parents have suggested June 12 as an end date; its closer to when we would originally close. She wouldn't want the summer break to be so long. Mr. Fogg said he's hearing from both sides. He agrees with Spaulding ending May 15 that leaves a lengthy summer break. He added that if there is no graduation ceremony at Spaulding, we should find a way to have a ceremony. Mr. Gregoire said Rochester is working on that, too – it's challenging not knowing where we'll be at the end of the school year, and what the fall might look like.

Generally, many teachers reported they are tired and are working longer days than usual with remote learning. Mrs. Kolb said she's ok with the June 5 last day of school date. Mr. Gregoire said whenever school ends, the USDA is reimbursing meals up to the last day of school and after that the cost to the school will be \$900 a day to provide meals. Currently the school is being reimbursed. Mrs. D'Agostino said the USDA has an extended waiver to reimburse until the end of the COVID 19 crisis or the last day of school, whichever comes first. If the school district continues to provide meals to students, we will have to pay for it.

Additional discussion ensued, with the suggestion to postpone a decision on the end day of school to the May 5 meeting; another suggestion was to poll the parents and teachers. After this discussion and public comments at the end of the meeting, the administration was directed to provide several end of school dates to parents and teachers in a survey.

- **Monthly Finance Report**

Mrs. D'Agostino said a completed meal count for March will be in the next report. Her April 2020 Monthly Report included Food Service, negative balance as of April 13 of about \$11,000; Capital Reserve Report, Monthly Financial Report with supplemental reports on health, dental, retirement benefits and salary.

Mr. Fogg asked if there was any idea yet how much the district is saving in heat, fuel and electricity costs, and whether we can get that information for next meeting. Mrs. D'Agostino cautioned that the budget that we are in wasn't budgeted appropriately in some line items, such as for water, where the rates went up and the line wasn't budgeted to cover the cost. Mrs. Kolb asked the status of the various supply lines for items like the CO detectors, alarms, website, and book purchases. Mr. Williams noted we do have battery operated sound alarms where they need to be.

## **Old Business**

- **Teachers' Contract – Plan A**

Mr. Fogg said he found Article 4 from the warrant in 2010 regarding a three-year contract with the Wakefield Education Association that noted if the article was approved, it would be in affect until a new agreement is executed [pursuant to RSA 273: A:12]. This has never been rescinded. He believes the pay scale is still in effect and the pay play is extended beyond the period that a new agreement was not approved. He said he believes the school district has money to provide step increases for the teachers, \$46,000.

Mrs. Kolb suggested tabling this to August until it is known how much money is left in the budget. She added that not all teachers are on a step – half the teachers are not on the step system and would not benefit. Teachers with 13 years or more experience are off the step system. Mrs. Johnson said this agreement is no longer in effect [the CBA expired June 30, 2019] so how could we honor a pay scale/step increase. Mrs. Johnson said she prefers to wait until she reviews the 2010 warrant articles.

Additional debate transpired among board members. Mr. Fogg said he believes that when the voters rejected the contract, they accepted the default contract and with the default contract you are

bound to the conditions of the collective bargaining agreement. He has seen no waivers of anything in those CBAs. The contract expired on June 30, 2019 but it has no replacement and until you have one, you go by the default contract, Fogg added.

**Motion:** Mr. Fogg made a motion for the Wakefield School District to grant step and longevity increases to all employees covered by the Wakefield Education Association Collective Bargaining Agreement who were eligible, but did not receive, step and longevity increases at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, retroactive to the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. Mr. Ouellette seconded the motion for more discussion.

Mrs. D'Agostino asked to speak before the board vote, expressing concerns that the board needs to look at the RSAs and perhaps get an attorney speak to the board. If the board chooses to grant the increases retroactively, the funds were not budgeted in either the current or next years budgets and we will be in a deficit. Members voted roll call, 2-3; Fogg, aye, Collins, aye, Kolb, nay, Johnson, nay, Ouellette, nay. Motion fails.

Mr. Ouellette asked Mrs. D'Agostino to work on the numbers and meet with Mr. Fogg to figure out a way to move forward. Mr. Fogg added he also wanted to hear from the WEA to see if they are willing to work on this. Mr. Gregoire added that the \$46,000-dollar amount that Mr. Fogg had referred as the amount to cover the increases did not come from the SAU. Mr. Fogg said if we take all the information that Mrs. D'Agostino has provided over the last few months prior to the vote, you can project the costs.

**Motion:** Mrs. Johnson made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kolb to extend the meeting beyond 8 p.m. Members voted 5-0, roll call: Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Collins, aye, Fogg, aye.

Debate continued over this topic. Mr. Ouellette asked to continue discussion at next meeting. Mrs. Johnson asked for information to be presented in advance of the meeting.

#### **New Business:**

- **RFQ School buses:**

Mrs. Peaslee reviewed the draft Request for Quotes for a bids for a new Type C 77-passenger school bus. The bid request adds more weatherproofing protection, such as coating on bumpers and fuel tank; a new protection plan for an extra \$500; and an additional camera that goes around the whole bus. She is looking to use a preferred vendor [list enclosed].

**Motion:** Mr. Fogg made a motion to approve the RFQ as presented by Mrs. Peaslee, seconded by Mrs. Johnson. Members voted all in favor, 5-0, Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Collins, aye, Fogg, aye.

- **Administration Nominations:**

Mr. Gregoire sought approval from the board for the following Administrative Nominations for 2020-2021: Anne Kebler, Director of Student Services; Marie D'Agostino, Business Administrator; Amy Wentworth-Godfrey, Special Education Coordinator; Jim Lampron, Paul School Principal; Jenn Spector, Assistant Principal; Joe Williams, Facilities Director; Brennan Peaslee, Transportation Director. Mrs. Collins asked if we should put a committee together to hire a new principal and vice principals. Mrs. Johnson explained these are the nominations that the SAU and Superintendent brings to the board; typically, a job search isn't done on personnel with which the administration is happy with, added Mr. Gregoire. Mrs. Johnson later added that generally there may be a search committee formed when there is an individual that will not be renewed. Mrs. Collins thanked her for the information.

**Motion:** Mrs. Kolb made a motion to approve the list of Administration Nominations as presented by Mr. Gregoire, seconded by Mrs. Johnson. Members voted roll call all in favor, 5-0, Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, and Collins, aye.

#### **Correspondence:**

Mr. Gregoire read a letter about the successful year students had this year with National History Day under the supervision of History Teacher Chris Soule: "Despite all the calamity of the last several weeks, several of our 8th graders have still been in the running to become state winners for National History

Day. I am proud to announce the results of another successful year for Paul School. Julia McCarthy got 1st place in the state for her paper “The Pink Triangle: The Silent Genocide of Gay Men in Hitler’s Germany”. Faith Merrill got 2nd place in the state for her paper on Sandra Day O’Conner called “Destiny of a Woman”. This is the second time Paul School has owned the paper category at the state competition! The last time was 2016. Hailey Belliveau, Gabby Couture, and Mollica Gould got 2nd place for the group website on the “Zodiac Killer”. Mackenzie Simmons and Sammie Gouin got 2nd place for their group exhibit on the Waco Siege. I have wanted to bust into the highly competitive junior (Middle School) NHD exhibit category since the beginning and this was the year. Andria Helie competed admirably in the Individual Exhibit category with her great project on Al Capone but did not place. The kiddos obviously had the added challenge of working remotely and did not get the chance to meet with judges in person at states as the competition was virtual. The national competition this year will be virtual too, so these students will not get the chance to head down to DC to compete with the kids from all over the country. I do hope you join me in warmly congratulating them (perhaps drop them an email? Share the upcoming Paul School Facebook post?). We would have had 7 students eligible to compete in DC this year-a Paul School record! Best, Chris Soule.” Mr. Gregoire added he learned from one of the students who won that the cost for the Washington, D.C. competition will be \$75 per student, for a total \$525. Mrs. Johnson said she will donate her stipend to cover this cost for the students, so the district does not have to pay.

**Public Comment:**

- Dave Lee said he was disgusted with the reaction of a school board member, who had left the room during a meeting on several occasions; he hopes Mrs. Johnson will apologize for childish behavior. Mrs. Johnson responded she had to go to the bathroom, and that she ‘can’t stand this town.’ Mr. Lee said she could move.
- Nicole Dolaher addressed Mrs. Johnson and said she didn’t believe she is serving the town when Mrs. Johnson said she ‘can’t stand the town.’ It’s horrible to hear and she is appalled. That is not OK to say. Mrs. Johnson apologized and said she cares about the kids. Ms. Dolaher said she understands it’s frustrating but there are other ways around it – moving forward don’t say things like that you don’t mean. Mrs. Johnson said she didn’t mean it at all. Regarding the end of the school year, we need to hear from more parents – the end dates need to be open-ended.

**Other Business:**

- **Expenditure:** Mr. Gregoire requested \$25 for the School District Report Cover winner, Piper Van Dine. **Motion:** Mr. Fogg made a motion to approve the expense, \$25, seconded by Mrs. Collins; members voted roll call, 5-0, Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, and Collins, aye.
- **Upgrade – digital access radios, \$2,640. Motion:** Mr. Fogg made a motion to approve \$2,640 for the radios including installation, seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Members voted 5-0 roll call vote: Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, aye, and Collins, aye.

**Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made at 8:47 p.m. by Mr. Ouellette seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Members voted 4-1 in favor with Fogg opposed: roll call vote: Ouellette, aye, Kolb, aye, Johnson, aye, Fogg, nay, and Collins, aye.

**Respectfully submitted:**

Larissa Mulkern  
Administrative Assistant