

Wakefield School Board
Tuesday, February 4, 2020
6 p.m., Paul School Library
Minutes – Approved

Present: School Board Chair Bob Ouellette, Vice Chair Tracey Kolb, and members Sandy Johnson, Jen McCawley, Relf Fogg; Superintendent Jerry Gregoire, Business Administrator Marie D’Agostino, Facilities Manager Joe Williams, Principal James Lampron, Asst. Principal Jenn Spector; Administrative Assistant Larissa Mulkern; Guests/Public: SAU 64 Superintendent Earl Sussman, SAU School Board members Douglas Shute, Peg Hurd, Emily Meehan, SAU 64 Director of Special Education Robert Qua, Douglas Shute, and DonnaMarie Currier, Lisa Burrows, Nute Middle/High School Principal Jan Radowicz, and Jennifer Leavitt of Nute High School; Travis Corriveau of Milton, Jim Miller, ClearView TV

Call to order: Mr. Ouellette called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Milton School District Presentation

Milton School Board Chair Vice Chair Doug Shute made introductions followed by a presentation led by Vice Chair Peg Hurd whereby the district encouraged the Wakefield School District to send its graduating 8th graders to Nute Middle/High School. This could be done gradually. Bussing would be closer. A petitioned warrant article recommends that the Milton School District seek to send its students out of district, and the school board’s response was to establish a committee to enter discussions with other school districts to determine the feasibility of sending Milton Middle and/or High School students to another school district and options for receiving students from other districts.

Superintendent Earl Sussman said his 51 years of experience has been with smaller schools; other districts, such as Barrington, have three schools to choose from when its students leave 8th grade. Many parents and students choose to go on to a smaller high school when they leave a small school; parents do what is in the best interest of the child. The trend in education is school choice, where students can go wherever they want. Moving on to a smaller school provides an opportunity for students to play a larger role in that school community. Regarding special education, Mr. Qua said as a small school, staff is constantly coming up with creative solutions to keep students in district. And regarding school sports, he said it’s fun to be in a smaller division – the middle school boys baseball team made the playoffs last year. No one is cut from sports programs. Ms. Currier added many staff members – 21 -- either graduated from Nute or have children that attend Nute. The total student count, kindergarten through grade 12, is currently 501.

Wakefield Board members and administration asked questions including:

What’s the building capacity? It is big enough to absorb incoming 8th graders? Mr. Sussman said the school has capacity for more students; if the agreement came to that stage, it would include assurances the student(s) would have a seat for the remainder of their class time at Nute.

What would be the tuition? The tuition would be based on the number of incoming students and once a bond is paid off the cost go down by \$2,100 per pupil. Current staff levels could absorb incoming students the first two years; then new staff would be hired. The estimated cost mentioned at the meeting was: 10 students = \$16,912; 20 students = \$15,848; 30 students = \$14,911; 40 students = \$14,708.

Mr. Fogg asked if Milton was open to working with a partnership to build a new school on school-owned property on Rines Road, a Career and Technical Education type of school with open enrollment that could offer education in green technology and be self-sustaining on tuition. Mr. Shute

expressed interest in working with the Wakefield on this. Mr. Sussman added that public funding for school buildings is not approved for charter type schools, but this would be a regional charter specialized school.

Public comment: Tara Sue Meyers commented on the school district budget presentation and the deliberative session. She said she was shocked there was no supplemental documentation and no executive summary to guide people through it. Mr. Gregoire pointed out all the documentation that had been provided, and school board members explained the budget process with the budget committee and interaction with teachers and administrators on planning.

Consent Agenda: Mrs. Johnson made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kolb to approve the Consent Agenda (AP and Payroll manifests), members voted 4-1 in favor with Mr. Fogg opposed. Mrs. McCawley asked Mr. Fogg why he always votes no on the Consent Agenda. Mr. Fogg responded that if there is one item that he doesn't agree with on then it's easier to say no to the whole thing; whether he likes it or not the Consent Agenda will get passed. Mrs. Johnson noted that if there is one item that is questioned on the Consent Agenda, that item can be taken off and discussed separately.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Fogg made a motion to approve the minutes of Jan. 22 and nonpublic minutes of Jan. 7 with any amendments offered. Corrections were made to both minutes. Members voted all in favor of the motion 5-0.

Superintendent Report

Mr. Gregoire reviewed the highlights of his report, including work on the deliberative session – he thanked administrators and staff. He updated progress of the Leadership Team, noting that it is close to a decision on which assessment tool to use, an update on the lifting of the state moratorium on building aid for schools. If a building plan were to be developed it appears that new money (\$32 million) will be available for new projects in 2022. This would require an application process with a detailed plan for the proposed project. Mrs. Levesque has been working with PowerSchool, School Messenger and Mainstay to utilize technology to inform and remind parents and families about school lunch debt. Automated calls will go out in February

Regarding the potential availability of state building aid for schools, Mrs. D'Agostino said the feasibility study would be the required first step for proceeding with any request for school building aid. Mr. Fogg invited board members to present ideas for a secondary school in Wakefield; he envisions a school teaching about green energy, etc. The property has 56 acres, 20 of it for a parking lot. The school would be an opportunity to draw students from other areas.

Mrs. Johnson recalled that the district went ahead and bought the land without first gauging interest from other surrounding communities. Looking ahead, the district would have to explore that interest from those communities. Mr. Fogg said it's a good idea for the board and the district to take an active part in making suggestions and submitting ideas that would fit the use of the property.

Mrs. D'Agostino, who worked with the district in Somersworth on a tri-city CTE (Career & Technical Education) agreement, said for the state to continue funding, the district must prove the school is not duplicating curriculum. Mr. Fogg said if it is geared to green energy, that is something that is unique and could work here. Mrs. Kolb said the first thing we'd have to do is figure out our own school's energy inefficiencies – we must clean up house first. Mrs. McCawley said given the difficulty with the school

district budget, there are some suggesting we send all our students out of town. We should put this on a warrant article to gauge interest.

New Business

Deliberative Session follow up: Mrs. D’Agostino reviewed the updates to the school district budget that resulted from the Deliberative Session and the Budget Committee’s updated votes on its recommendations on some warrants. The new school district budget is \$11,269,924. The school board had originally recommended this 4-1, and the budget committee had recommended it by a vote of 7-1. At the end of the [deliberative session] the budget committee modified their recommendation to 9-1 since there were more members voting at this meeting. The budget committee also modified their vote on Warrant Article 7, to appropriate \$250,000 for the windows (Paul School); this was modified to \$180,000 and the budget committee changed their recommendation on Saturday to recommend this 10 – 0. Warrant Article 10, \$40,000 to replace the gym floor was modified to \$50,000. The Budget Committee re-vote to recommend was updated to 9-1. There was a change to language in Article 14: it will now read: ‘shall the Wakefield School District.

Mr. Ouellette asked for an update on expendable trust funds. Those are included in the monthly reports, noted Mrs. D’Agostino.

Mrs. McCawley asked about the possibility of purchasing technology with other schools for a bulk discount. Mr. Gregoire said with some vendors the school already gets a discount. He’ll investigate.

Facilities Committee follow up

Mr. Williams asked for approval on an RFP for mechanical and plumbing.

Motion: Mr. Fogg made a motion to approve the RFP, seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Members voted all in favor 5-0.

Mr. Williams reviewed an expense for the replacement of electrical outlets, which need to be done to get rid of extension cords. The amount for electrical work to replace 20 outlets is \$2,750.

Motion: Mrs. Kolb made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$2,750 for electrical outlets, seconded by Mrs. Johnson. Members voted all in favor 5-0.

Mr. Williams discussed the cost estimate for Door Fob Access/rebuilding software; the board had previously approved \$5,000 to work with the IT company to upgrade the Windows 7 computer which controls security, to Windows 10. There are additional costs involved to rebuild the access panels. Discussion ensued and the consensus was Mr. Williams would investigate it further and bring numbers to the next meeting.

Policies

Readings were conducted for the following policies:

- a. First Reading: EHAB – Data Governance & Security
- b. First Reading: EHB – Data/Records Retention
- c. First Reading: GBCD – Background Investigation & Criminal Records Check
- d. Revision: GBAA – Sexual Harassment – Employees/Staff

Mr. Gregoire and the board also discussed updating policy JFACC – Tuition Expenses for Wakefield Residents. The change could be made to allow 9th through 11th graders, perhaps already attending Spaulding who wish to go elsewhere, to enter the lottery and fill any extra slots not awarded to an eighth grader. Mr. Gregoire will update the policy and bring it back to the board.

Motion: Mrs. Johnson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kolb, to continue the meeting beyond 8 p.m. Members voted all in favor 5-0.

Other Business

Standards: Mrs. McCawley said since the public forum the board hadn't discussed moving forward with educational standards. She advocated preparing students for testing requirements and realigning the curriculum to match the timing of the tests. Mr. Gregoire asked for clear direction from the board before aligning standards to assessment tests. Extensive discussion ensued.

Motion: Mrs. McCawley made a motion to direct the Administration to begin immediately reviewing each grade level to make sure students meet or exceed the minimum levels required from New Hampshire standard tests. Members voted 3-0-2, with Mrs. Johnson and Mr. Fogg abstaining.

Censure: Mrs. Johnson said she was upset by disparaging comments made by Mr. Fogg at the deliberative session; she said the comments violated policy BCA regarding School Board Member Ethics. Mr. Fogg said he had made the comment, that the former superintendent told him the most difficult part of the job was convincing the school board to follow the law. He said it was a difficult board to deal with if you don't agree on certain issues. Mrs. Johnson said the way it was said was offensive and courtesy and decorum were not present. Discussion ensued.

Motion: Mrs. Johnson made a motion to censure Mr. Fogg violating policy BCA, seconded by Mrs. Kolb. Discussion ensued. Members voted 2-0-3, with Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. McCawley voting in favor, no nay votes, and Mr. Ouellette, Mr. Fogg and Mrs. Kolb abstaining from the vote; the motion failed.

Superintendent Evaluations

Mr. Ouellette said all evaluations are in and will be discussed at the next board meeting, where he'd like to talk about issuing a new contract for the coming year.

Public comment

Mr. Miller complained that when he recently called the SAU office with a question for the Business Administrator, no one called him back. Mrs. D'Agostino said her time is limited and that she responds to questions via email.

On another topic, Mr. Ouellette said someone asked him if the drawings for the school district annual report could be put on social media.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Kolb, seconded by Mr. Fogg, and voted all in favor at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Larissa Mulkern
Administrative Assistant