

1 **Westford School Board meeting minutes**

2 **December 5, 2011**

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4 **Board Members present:** Allison Weinhausen, Martha Heath, Mark Drapa, Marilyn McConnell

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6 **Administration present:** Judy DeNova, Mike Deweese, David Wells, Grant Geisler

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8 **Visitors:** David Brisson, Nick Nichols, Jeff Williams, Eliza Anderson, Rosemary Shea, Lise-Anne
9 Cooledge

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11 **Principal's report:**

12 Congratulations to students who are part of the district music festival. Julie Miller, thanks for
13 culture club work.

14

15 Statistics for behavior:

- 16 ○ Mark had a question about reporting structures for bus
 - 17 ■ teachers, bus drivers, students, parents
- 18 ○ Marilyn asked about issues of non-compliance
 - 19 ■ Non-compliance issues are more skewed towards specials classrooms versus
20 regular classrooms.
- 21 ○ Martha asked about the difference between an incident report and something being
22 included in the school's overall data.
 - 23 ■ Students on a behavior plan are recorded, but not added to these statistics.
- 24 ○ Martha asked about the higher number of suspensions. Are these in line over the
25 long term? What is the pattern?
 - 26 ■ David felt it was within the normal range
- 27 ○ Marilyn asked if there are any perspectives from the teachers. Are they on the same
28 page for these procedures?
 - 29 ■ Some teachers make greater use of the planning room and behavioral system,
30 others manage it more in their classroom. Students behave better for regular
31 teachers in general.
- 32 ○ Mark asked for more data about resolution practices of discipline problems in the
33 school. For instance, number of trips to planning room, number of plans written,
34 number of calls to parents, etc. Also, is there comparative data to other schools?
 - 35 ■ More data is available and will be provided, also, it is probably possible to pull
36 similar statistics from other schools.

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38 **Visitors to be heard:**

39 Lise-Anne Cooledge presented a letter from a group of parents concerning bullying and the
40 discipline/communication system that is in place to deal with it. She has had instances where
41 procedures were not followed with disruptive behavior. Her hope is that the school can provide
42 skills to promote a healthy learning environment and enable students to grow their learning
43 skills. She is asking for an examination of the situation and policy, and is offering help in the
44 process.

- 45 ○ Nick Nichols spoke of a similar situation several years ago. He was not satisfied with
46 the resolution of the previous situation and was looking for a more significant
47 solution for this one. He was concerned that the promised change was not
48 implemented effectively.
- 49 ○ Martha asked for clarification if this issue was taken up at the SU level prior to
50 coming to the school board. A meeting had been set up but had not taken place.
- 51 ○ Rosemary Shea asked for the reaction time to be sped up for incidents, especially
52 when a child is negatively affected by the situation in the meantime.
- 53 ○ Allison asked if this was a continuation of previous year's problems, or is this a new
54 set of unrelated incidents. Lise-Anne answered that she believes it is a continuation.
55 Eliza Anderson expressed that she would like parents to find out about misbehavior
56 immediately. Nick Nichols reiterated that this was an issue that he became aware of
57 two years ago.
- 58 ○ Rosemary Shea asked if there was any correlation with discipline issues and
59 classroom size.

60

61 **Traffic planning committee:**

62 David presented the findings of the driveway/traffic safety committee. The previous pattern
63 trial with drop off at the far end of the school was considered good, but the issue of supervision
64 and no line-of-sign to the office is an issue. It is believed that visitor parking is ample. New
65 signage is planned (one-way), and concrete planters will be used to separate the roadway from
66 the sidewalk. Enforcement of the traffic pattern will be stepped up. The committee
67 recommends no other improvements until larger funding is available.

- 68 ○ Martha asked about enforcement. David will use communication and written
69 warnings when necessary.
- 70 ○ Mark suggested reinforcing the rules of no parking in the fire lane with the students
71 during the regular fire safety programs to have the children help to change their
72 parent's habits. Also, he asked to add appropriate 'Do Not Enter' signage on the
73 visitor parking lot to make the traffic pattern clearer. Traffic by the school office
74 should only flow counter-clockwise around the school-office-visitor parking loop.

75

76 **FY '13 Budget Intro by Grant Geisler:**

- 77 \blacktriangle Provided board guidance and an overview of the education spending for the upcoming
78 year.
- 79 \blacktriangle Proposed budget of \$4,980,653, which is \$22,105 lower than FY '12
- 80 \circ No reduction in programs, reduces staffing by one classroom teacher.
- 81 \circ Suggested that FY'11 surplus be used towards capital improvements.
- 82 \circ Data on equalized pupils, district spending adjustment, and common level of
83 appraisal are pending and may result in a decrease of taxes if they remain level or
84 decrease.
- 85 \blacktriangle School Action Plan
- 86 \circ Reduction of one classroom teacher in 7/8 based on class size standards and
87 enrollment projections.
- 88 \circ Funds to support purchase of books, science inquiry kits
- 89 \blacktriangle Enrollment projections for this year were 206, with actuals being 199, and is expected to
90 decline another 8 students between FY'12 and FY'13. The drop is starting to level off
91 and leave us in the 190s for the coming years. High school was expected to be 115,
92 ended at 119. Long term enrollment is expected to be in the low 90s.
- 93 \blacktriangle Physical plant and capital plan
- 94 \circ Driveway repair and repaving, roof repair on pitched roof over the gym, oil burner
95 replacement, begin replacement of single pane windows with more energy efficient
96 windows (start with 2 of the 20 total).
- 97 \blacktriangle Budget details
- 98 \circ Salaries (37%), High school tuition (31%), and Benefits (12%) consume the majority
99 of the budget.
- 100 \circ Overall, salaries & benefits are down, special ed is down, and high school tuition is a
101 large increase, however anticipated.
- 102 \blacktriangle Questions about the budget included a discussion on rolling forward further capital
103 funds, looking at the long term tax implications on the town as the number of students
104 levels out, and staffing around special education versus the number of students with an
105 IEP, funding for science, and the early retirement benefit usage.

106

107 **School Club Request, Robotics Club:**

- 108 \blacktriangle John Doty and the school Enrichment Committee are starting a Lego Robotics Club for
109 grades 5-8. The goal of the club is to develop engineering and critical thinking skills for
110 our students. This will be funded by a combination of grants, donations, and the general
111 fund. David recommended that the board approve the request for the new club as an
112 endorsed activity. The action is scheduled for a future agenda

113

114 **LCATV and budget programming**

115 ✧ The board has the option to access public TV programming to disseminate the budget
116 information. Technical support and up to 60 minutes of airtime could be used. The
117 board will be using this form of media again this year.

118 ✧ Discussion started about what materials should be posted prior to the budget planning
119 meeting. There is a great deal of information available, and the concern is that it may be
120 presented without context. Other thoughts are that it would be good background going
121 into the budget planning. This document is traditionally known as the ‘superintendents
122 budget’, which is a draft proposal to the board as they begin the process of crafting the
123 board budget, and finally the budget to be presented for vote.

124

125 **Board Self Evaluation Outcomes**

126 ✧ Calendar mapping project to be shared in a future meeting. The purpose of this is to
127 create a resource for planning and communication of the board actions and
128 responsibilities throughout the year.

129 ✧ Community networks mapping. Seeing the groups that our community is organized in,
130 and effectively communicating with those groups to help inform the school board.
131 There is some hope to begin collection of data via a display at town meeting.

132 ✧ Debriefing at the end of each meeting to guarantee timely dissemination of information
133 for the town newsletter.

134 ○ Discussions about some of the topics that might be discussed on the budget planning
135 nights, as well as trying to understand the impact of the staff reduction. Marilyn was
136 asking if there is an opportunity to invest in new equipment. Mark and Martha were
137 asking if the one time money could be invested towards the sciences to address the
138 8th grade deficiencies in science. Marilyn asked if any additional support staff was
139 anticipated to address discipline concerns.

140

141 **Consent Agenda**

142 ✧ Martha moved to approve the consent agenda with the exception of the minutes.
143 Marilyn seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

144 ○ “Visitors present” read Mark Drapa, and should have read David Brisson.

145 ○ First executive session at 8:06 was for personnel discussion.

146 ○ Strike the line “Martha left meeting at approximately 9:00”, Martha did not leave.

147 ✧ Martha moved to approve the minutes from Oct 17th as amended. Mark seconded. The
148 motion passed 4-0

149 ✧ Future agenda items

150 ○ Robotics Club

151 ○ Differentiated instruction primer

152

153 Motion by Martha to enter executive session at 9:26 for student matters. Marilyn seconded.

154 The board exited executive session at 10:09pm and adjourned at 10:10pm.

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156 Minutes respectfully submitted by Mark Drapa