

1 **Chittenden Central Supervisory Union**  
2 Westford School Board  
3 October 18, 2010  
4 Essex High School Library  
5

6 **Board Members Present:** Martha Heath, Andre Roy, Marilyn McConnell, Jennifer Townsend,  
7 Allison Weinhagen (left at 9:05 p.m.)  
8

9 **Administrators Present:** Judy DeNova, David Wells  
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11 Martha Heath convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.  
12

13 **Visitors to be Heard:** David Brisson, Cheryl Ahokas, Glenn Dekes, Kathleen Legg  
14

15 **Principal's Report**

16 Jennifer Townsend asked David Wells to explain differentiated instruction and how Bill Rich  
17 will work with Westford staff over the next two years. Marilyn McConnell asked for  
18 clarification on where students need to improve regarding science scores on the NECAP.  
19 David Wells explained how staff analyzed the data.  
20

21 Marilyn McConnell asked how many families are in the school and what share responded to the  
22 parent survey. Regarding the survey, David Wells said the survey will be administered  
23 periodically in order to collect and compare data over time. Marilyn McConnell asked how the  
24 survey will be used to make changes. David Wells explained it will be used to inform steps  
25 within the School Action Plan (SAP), which is the school's program for change. David Wells  
26 wants to include parents more in developing the goals of the SAP. Martha Heath asked if there  
27 is some level of response that requires immediate action on part of the administration. She  
28 asked administration to reflect on whether some engagement with parents and students is  
29 needed to delve into the results of the survey. The board asked that this be an agenda item at a  
30 future meeting.  
31

32 *Martha Heath added the topic of the Athletic Study Committee to the agenda.*  
33

34 **Planning for November 1, 2010 Public Forum**

35 Judy DeNova noted that teacher contract negotiations generated the greatest number of  
36 comments at the September 23 public engagement meeting. She asked the board how it wants  
37 to proceed at the upcoming November 1 public forum.  
38

39 Regarding governance and consolidation, the barriers/issues seem to fall in the following areas:

- 40 • Local control, community identity, board representation
- 41 • High school choice
- 42 • Which supervisory union to belong to
  - 43 ○ Allison Weinhagen noted the previous Unified Union study suggested costs of a
  - 44 unified union would be higher than current costs
- 45 • Property ownership  
46

47 Without significant cost savings and increased opportunities for students, it is unlikely that  
48 there is much enthusiasm for unification in Westford.

49

50 Marilyn McConnell asked if there are schools that are close enough in geographic proximity to  
51 which Westford might consider sending kids or merging with. Martha Heath noted some local  
52 schools might want to merge with Westford (such as Fletcher).

53

54 Martha Heath said the chairs of the Union #46, Essex Junction, and Westford school boards,  
55 along with the Essex Town board chair and the superintendents of both school systems met on  
56 Friday, October 15, 2010. They discussed opportunities for sharing services, and for  
57 contractual relationships of those services. Other supervisory unions are interested in sharing  
58 CCSU IT services. Marilyn McConnell commented that system unification should be done at  
59 the state level (with the Department of Education).

60

61 Regarding Challenges for Change, are there public comments to pursue? Two issues seem to  
62 be: overtime work and the perception that no real cuts are being presented. Maybe cuts can be  
63 made this year, but the board needs to look forward for future, more sustainable cuts. Judy  
64 DeNova pointed out we have already spent time looking at long-term planning with class-size  
65 projections. Martha Heath noted we need to communicate to the public as the board lays out  
66 the budget and that enrollment projections may change. Marilyn McConnell asked why the  
67 Westford budget gets prepared at a different time from the Essex Junction and Union #46  
68 budgets. This is because those communities vote on their school budgets at a later date than  
69 Westford.

70

71 Regarding netbooks, the board expressed interest in the research regarding effectiveness of  
72 laptops in schools. Allison Weinhagen expressed concern with the age/number of textbooks.  
73 David Wells responded that other resources are used to meet the Power Standards. He said the  
74 textbook budget has decreased as money/capacity on digital tools has grown. This should be  
75 communicated to the public.

76

77 Regarding bidding for contracts/services, the board knows this is being done as efficiently as  
78 possible.

79

80 Regarding negotiations, key findings from the public include:

81 • Transparency of negotiations (which depends on ground rules set by all the negotiating  
82 parties). Martha Heath noted ground rules are needed to allow the board to share  
83 positions as they are put on the table. Allison Weinhagen was not in favor of open  
84 negotiating sessions. Martha Heath suggested having a board member pose a question  
85 to the VSBA board member forum asking board members statewide if they have ever  
86 negotiated in public and what the upsides/downsides were. Jennifer Townsend will  
87 manage this.

88

88 • Health insurance is another area of concern

89

89 • Salaries – community members want the board to consider the economic climate

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91

91 David Wells urged the board, in the interest of transparency, to communicate as much as

92

92 possible regarding the content of negotiations.

93

94 At the November 1 forum, Jennifer Townsend will handle discussing Challenges for Change,

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95 Andre Roy/Allison Weinhagen will discuss negotiations and Martha Heath will discuss

96 governance. Jennifer Townsend will post a message on Front Porch Forum in advance of the  
97 forum.

98

99 **FY'12 Budget Discussion**

100 Judy DeNova reviewed Grant Geisler's initial assumptions and considerations regarding the  
101 FY'12 budget. The CLA will likely remain constant. There is some decrease in transportation  
102 due to changes in special education transportation at the supervisory union level. Allison  
103 Weinhagen expressed some concern about the assumptions regarding overtime. Martha Heath  
104 asked for more detailed information from Grant Geisler regarding overtime. Martha Heath also  
105 asked for more information on "budget buddies" – Judy DeNova had discussed experience of  
106 local boards with this practice. Martha Heath asked board members to think about the budget  
107 and be prepared to discuss it further at the November 1 forum.

108

109 **Athletic Study Committee**

110 David Wells reviewed the recommendations of the Athletic Study Committee, which is to not  
111 change the way athletics are offered to students.

112

113 *Allison Weinhagen moved and Andre Roy seconded the motion to accept the report of the*  
114 *Athletic Study Committee, with appreciation for their work. The motion passed 5-0.*

115

116 **Consent Agenda**

117 The Consent Agenda consisted of approval of warrants and approval of the August 23 and  
118 September 23 meeting minutes.

119

120 The meeting minutes were pulled from the Consent Agenda.

121

122 *Allison Weinhagen moved and Andre Roy seconded the motion to approve the warrants. The*  
123 *motion passed 5-0.*

124

125 There was a brief discussion regarding the minutes and minor edits were made.

126

127 *Allison Weinhagen moved and Andre Roy seconded the motion to approve the August 23 and*  
128 *September 23 meeting minutes, as amended. The motion passed 5-0.*

129

130 **Future Agenda Items**

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- FY12 budget

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- Survey

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- Report to the Department of Education regarding merger

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135 **Executive Session: Collective Bargaining and Personnel**

136 *Jennifer Townsend moved and Marilyn McConnell seconded the motion to enter into Executive*  
137 *Session to discuss collective bargaining and personnel. The motion passed 5-0.*

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139 The board entered into Executive Session at 8:45 p.m. and exited Executive Session at 9:40  
140 p.m.

141

142 The board adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

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Minutes respectfully submitted by Jennifer Townsend