

NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, April 4, 2024 , 7:00 p.m. Final minutes
 Via GOOGLE MEET

Attending: Steven BLinder, Nancy Slator, Carla Halpern, Barbara Doyle, Mandy Blackbird, Miriam Warner, Beth Erviti, Anna Wetherby (minutes), Kate Woodward, members; Kelley Sullivan, principal; Jennifer Culkeen, superintendent; Caitlain Sheridan, director of finance and operations

Teachers: Kelsey Alverz, Tylor McCallumore, Laura Ginsberg-Peltz

Public: Shannon Cleveland (incoming superintendent)

A. Call Meeting to Order at 7 pm

B. Public Hearings

- o FY25 Budget
- o Other Public Hearings - none

C. Warrants – Record in minutes with numbers

U28 AP Warrants:

2822	3/20/2024	\$753.16
2823	4/2/2024	\$857.35

NSW Payroll Warrants:

419	3/14/2024	\$96,911.31
420	3/28/2024	\$95,292.80

U28 Payroll Warrants:

819	3/14/2024	\$29,695.30
820	3/28/2024	\$30,518.27

Monthly Deductions:

8190	3/14/2024	\$105,943.06
8200	3/28/2024	\$105,095.61

NSW AP Warrants:

6001	3/29/2024	\$702.81	Non- Check batch - FSA
6002	3/29/2024	\$110.00	Non- Check batch - FSA
4062	3/20/2024	\$3,646.34	
4063	3/20/2024	\$13,169.77	
4064	3/20/2024	\$3,402.56	
4065	4/2/2024	\$4,165.37	
4066	4/2/2024	\$565.65	
4067	4/2/2024	\$39,352.85	

- o Gifts: Acceptance Vote

- Grants: Acceptance Vote - none

D. Superintendent's Report

- Transition to new superintendent
 - Created electronic superintendent transition guide including:
 - The strategic plan
 - The road map for student improvement
 - Operational efficiency report
 - Handbook
 - 2024-27 pathways,
 - School improvement plan,
 - Contact lists
 - FY25 budgets
 - Collective bargaining contracts
 - Emergency information for school closures

E. Director of Finance and Operations Report

- The budget was amended last week for the superintendent's salary- updated in budget for the public hearing
- Attended conversation with Jeffery Shapiro - challenges and procurement for small, rural communities
- FY25 Draft Budget – Discussion and Vote on the Preliminary Adoption of the Budget
 - 6.9% increase for total administration (U28 level)
 - 6.7% increase in instruction costs
 - 10.4% food service decrease
 - 3.4 % increase in plant operation maintenance
 - Fixed charges - county retirement and health insurance both have gone up by considerable amounts
 - Enchanted forest decrease - would like the program to be self-sustaining so it is not influencing the budget each year
 - 1,500 increase for improvement of fixed assets
 - Decrease in charter tuition - update number from the preliminary cherry sheets
 - 3.9% increase in the use of funding
 - Did not rely on an increase from Chapter 70 - did receive one: \$912,492 to 915,852 (an increase of 3%)
 - Level budget for school choice and E&D
 - 6.45% increase in for Wendell; New Salem had decreased due to out-of-district placement
 - Enrollment 111 (non-school choice); New Salem up, Wendell down
- Have met with Wendell and New Salem finance committees
- Tonight will be a preliminary vote, next month, the final vote before town meetings
- **Steve moves to adopt the budget as presented; Mandy seconds - passes unanimously**

F. Principal's Report

- 138 students
- Candy bar bingo was very successful; it made over \$600
- In the midst of MCAS
- Nature's Classroom trip is next week
- 1st and 3rd-grade publishing parties, well attended by families
- Family conferences started last week
- Spoke with FinComs together with Caitlin and talked about capital improvements; phone systems and classrooms need replacing
 - The door replacement quote is a little over \$100k - costs have likely gone up, and

- there is a 20-week lead time in ordering door
 - Phone \$30k - this is a priority and could be accomplished over the summer
 - PFAS cost is unknown for when the tanks need to be emptied and repacked - 10-15k estimate
- Collecting student artwork for Rabbit Run t-shirt
- 5k run and pancake breakfast for Backpack Buddies
- Book Bingo for screen free week!
- Talent Show in May
- May 23 Evening Concert - chorus and band, dinner hosted by 3rd and 4th for fundraising for trip to Boston

G. Committee Reports

- Report from Mahar Representatives
 - School choice seats - a few open
 - Science Fair in May
 - Extracting DNA from strawberries
 - Tapping maple trees
 - Projectile motion lab
 - Models of tectonic plates
 - WII bowling March Madness tournament
 - Professional Development on Mental Health Issues from CSO
 - Look at what is cost-effective and efficient for Union 73
 - Signed letter to Commoerford to support funding for rural transportation funds
 - Will vote on school choice at next meeting
- Collaborative for Education Services
 - Summer programming - an exciting new venture
 - What do we get from CES? Is there a fee we pay to be a member of the organization?
 - In-house programming for high school students is good but not applicable to U28
 - Early childhood education is only for Hampshire County
 - We are part of a lawyer retainment fee
 - Procurement for food service
- Massachusetts Association of School Committees
 - Commissioner Riley stepped down, interim commissioner Mr. Johnson
 - Massachusetts students are scoring very high in advanced placement testing
 - Time of year for nominations for executive assistant - remember to nominate Pam
 - Due July 19th
- Budget and Personnel – none at this time
- Joint Supervisory
 - Next Meeting – May 20, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.

H. April Items

- School of Choice –
 - Currently, possible K, 1, and 2nd seats open for next year
 - **Carla moves that Swift River School is a school of choice for the school year 2024-25; Beth seconds**
 - Commitment date approximately July 1, 2024
 - Receiving applications daily

- It is a difficult decision because it brings money to the school, helps the reputation, drains the surrounding communities, and the system needs to change and indicates a broken system
- **The vote is taken and passed unanimously**
- 2024-2025 Academic Calendar - Vote
 - Juneteenth will be a no-school day if school is still in session by then due to snow days
 - Feedback that school resumes on January 2 to end the year as early as possible and not take a second full week
 - October curriculum day moved to avoid a four-day weekend; does create a double three-day weekend and a three-week in between- will look at improving this in the future
 - Coordinated professional development dates with surrounding school
 - **Mandy moves to approve the 2024-25 calendar; Beth seconds - passes unanimously**
- Principal Longevity Stipend proposal –
 - Discussing a stipend for principal longevity
 - Looked at many surrounding schools, but no longevity stipend is offered apart from Mahar [\$3500]
 - Keeping an effective principal is critical to student success, and the longer they are in the role, the more effective they are
 - Will potentially attract qualified applicants when the time arises
 - Jen proposes at the rate of \$500 5 years, 750 10 years, 1500 15 years, 1750 20 years, 2000 25 years, 2250 30 years
 - Beth - wants to stay up with the current school trends, but we are getting closer to our budget caps
 - Nancy - the value of a good principal is above the financial amounts; a question regarding when this would appear in the budget
 - The matter is on the table, not decided -
 - Kate - where is Kelley in this yearly range?
 - Kelley is entering 11th year
 - Barbara - is this a common practice in the eastern part of the state? Does \$750 make a difference when the principal makes a decent salary?
 - There could be other ways to reward a principal who has stayed for a long time or consider other options
 - Caitlin - longevity is portioned throughout the school year; stipends are not
 - Kate - longevity payment does factor into retirement pay
 - Carla - we appreciate Kelley; the conversation is not a personal commentary on how she has served the community
 - Steve - supports the proposal
 - **Steve moves to accept the longevity payments as proposed; Kate seconds - in favor, 5; opposed, 2; abstained; 2**
- 2024 Swift River Community Action Award Recipient – Discussion, Nomination and Vote
 - Additional nominee brought forward from the community
 - Carla recommends one nominee honored through a different avenue
 - Committee deliberated
 - **Beth moves to award the Community action award to the committee's recommended nominee; Barbara seconds- passes with one abstention**
 - Would like to see the other nominees be honored in other ways
- Policy Update and Review:

First Reading on:

- EBCFA – Face Coverings
 - Will follow DESE recommendations as it catches up with CDC
- ECA – Buildings and Grounds Security
- GCF – Professional Staff Hiring

Second Reading, First Vote on:

- GBEB – Staff Conduct
 - There are a few proposals - expecting teachers to provide an exemplary model for students is outdated
 - Committee members expressed agreement with the email of wording taken from a charter school
 - Has the policy committee approved the recommendation, or is this the policy with unfavorable wording?
 - Can the committee have the preferred wording for the first vote next month?
 - Beth moves to take the first vote on wording shared in an email over the GBEB wording
 - Jen will communicate with the lawyer
 - Beth withdraws the motion
 - The policy committee is asked to bring forward a policy regarding teacher conduct ahead of next month

Final Vote on: Tabled until next month

- AC – Nondiscrimination Policy Including Harassment and Retaliation
 - BGC – Policy Revision and Review
 - EB – Safety Program
 - EEAJ – Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds
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- Next Meeting Date – May 2, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.
 - New Salem/Wendell Policy Committee – May 2, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
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- Wendell Annual Town Meeting – Saturday, June 8, 2024 - 10:00 a.m.
 - New Salem Annual Town Meeting – Monday, June 17, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

I. Approval of Minutes:

- March 7, 2024
 - Beth moves to approve minutes; Mandy seconds - passed unanimously

K. Adjournment

Beth moves to adjourn the meeting; Steve seconds- passes unanimously
Meeting adjourned at 8:32

* Enclosure

The listing of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.