

# NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, June 6, 2024

Swift River School – 7:00 p.m. Draft Minutes

Attending: Carla Halpern, Mandy Blackbird, Kate Woodwatd, Barbara Doyle, Nancy Slator, Beth Erviti, Steven Blinder, Anna Wetherby (minutes), members; Corrina Wcislo, interim superintendent; Caitlin Sheridan, director of finance and operations; Lindsay Rodriguez (attending remotely)

Teachers: Jennylou Powers, Mandy Higgins

A. Meeting called to order at 7:02

B. Public Hearing

SERA recognizes Carla's departure from the school committee with flowers, cake, and very kind words

C. Warrants – Record in minutes with numbers

- Gifts: Acceptance Vote - no gifts
- Grants: Acceptance Vote - no grants

## U28 Accounts Payable:

2826	5/15/2024	\$568.30
2827	5/29/2024	\$1,354.04

## NSW Accounts Payable:

4073	5/15/2024	\$3,970.97
4074	5/15/2024	\$1,309.36
4075	5/15/2024	\$4,426.60
4076	5/29/2024	\$1,250.00
4077	5/29/2024	\$4,118.46
4078	5/29/2024	\$36,944.00

## NSW Payroll:

423	5/9/2024	\$100,165.20
424	5/23/2024	\$94,228.60
425	6/6/2024	\$94,200.06

## U28 Payroll:

823	5/9/2024	\$29,822.16
824	5/23/2024	\$29,720.71
825	6/6/2024	\$29,603.28

## Monthly Deductions:

8230	5/9/2024	\$109,503.26
8240	5/23/2024	\$103,735.98
8250	6/6/2024	\$103,047.27

D. Superintendent's Report

- Update
  - SES has hired a new principal, Anne Diaz
  - LES community event for finalists for principal
  - Director of Student Support Services final interviews
  - Executive assistant position posted

E. Director of Finance and Operations Report

End-of-Year Transfers - Vote

- 16,275 from local to revolving budget for food services
  - Beth moves we vote to transfer said amount for the local budget to the revolving account; Mandy seconds; passes unanimously
- Busy time at all the schools with all the searches
- Challenges, especially regarding health insurance
  - Rural aid has helped
  -

#### F. Principal's Report

- Submitted in writing
- There is a possibility that if SRS doesn't move forward with the bryt program that we will be looking at 2 or 3 out of district placements in the very near future
- Support systems in Franklin county are very limited and scarce

#### G. Committee Reports

- Report from Mahar Representatives
  - There was a special meeting for the budget
    - The town of Orange is asking the school committee to cut a significant portion of the budget
    - 1.1 million between Mahar, Petersham Elementary, and Orange Elementary
    - No one attended the public hearing
    - Did not vote to cut that much
    - Passed 600k in budget cuts
    - Some staff are not being replaced
    - Used rural aide to pre-purchase custodial supplies
    - Had to remove the school recourse officer position
      - Hoping to reinstate the position later
      - Is position is funded through the school budget or the police budget?
        - Believed that at least 50% of the resource officer position is reimbursed to Mahar from the police department
    - Cuts to IT that would not impact the students
    - Not a permanent solution
    - Looking to increase enrollment as the number has not returned post-COVID
    - The assessment for Wendell and New Salem has gone down slightly
    - Need to make the school more attractive to families and have people see the value of the school for the community and will attend the meetings
    - The cuts occurred over two meetings: 400k and 130k. Asking to cut an additional 176k from Mahar alone
      - Are the cuts to offset the potential closing of the libraries?
        - Unclear at this point
    - The next Mahar meeting is on June 13th
    - The towns have a representative at the Mahar school committee taken from the elected school committee members of each
- Collaborative for Education Services
  - Signed Garza to a new contract
    - Highly regarded
  - Graduating students from the two high school equivalent programs
    - Parents and members of the school committee are welcome to attend the ceremonies and celebrate the success of the students
- Massachusetts Association of School Committees
  - A reminder that the summer institute on July 12th through 14th
  - Roles and best practices for negotiation and hiring
  - Very informative Day on the Hill
    - The director of DESE was in attendance

- Good time with the staff person of Commerford, Jared Freeman
- Budget and Personnel – none at this time
- Joint Supervisory
  - Tremendous thanks go to the central office regarding the work they have done over the past 6 weeks with all the hiring and transitions
  - Thanks to Corrina for stepping in as interim superintendent
  - The deadline for nominating Pam is June 30th

Next Meeting – September 2024

#### H. June Items

- BRYT program – Update – Vote (if needed)
  - Focusing on the mental health of students to create a platform for academic success
  - Looking at potential staffing needs to implement the program
  - FY 25 - full coverage of program through grant
  - FY 26 - less grant coverage for training but still covering the FTE positions
  - FY 27 - local funding only
    - 1000 to gain access to the programs and PD
    - 500 for materials and supplies
    - Staffing costs are fully the responsibility of the school budget
  - Work with the other school to create a streamlined plan and not cause redundancy
  - What if we cannot afford the 70k for the clinician?
    - If the program is working, we will see the impact, and taking away the support will negatively impact the students who were being supported
  - There would be a designated space for the program to take place
  - Would there be redundancy in staffing?
    - There will be overlap, but it has been identified that the level of staffing is necessary
  - Hope to hire additional full-time staff
    - Unclear if the grant covers the benefits as well as the salary
  - All students will receive Tier 1 - specific students will receive Tier 2 and 3 services
  - If in year three, could the school bill Medicare for the services?
    - Only if an IEP dictates the service
  - Hiring clinicians is very difficult in the current environment
  - The timeline for implementing the program is a little unclear
  - Could this help with out-of-district placements and potentially save the money of the towns?
    - Hopefully, but it is unclear at this point
  - There are 37 students identified as needing Tier 3 level services - this program would only serve 5
    - BRYT will look at areas of need. Their process has an additional need for data points
  - There would be an onboarding process with the family and creating a detailed schedule
    - There is a combination of direct service, classroom time, check-in times
  - A vote is needed to begin working with BRYT officially
  - We cannot vote on an MOA until we see it
    - The MOA would not commit us to year 3
    - Not voting would delay the opportunity and possibly lose the funding for the staffing
    - Wendell is at a very high budget level already, and adding upwards of 14k for health insurance is not feasible - it is putting the school on a dangerous fiscal cliff
    - Would a person with a higher degree and entitled to a higher step level would the program cover more than 67k
    - If the 10k is not needed for materials and supplies, that money can be used in other ways through the program
    - One staff position would come from within the Swift River community
    - BRYT staff would be doing the training

- Owing to the lack of movement for voting, it seems the committee is not interested in pursuing adopting the MOA
- Beth is the vice chair and will have the ability to call a meeting over the summer
- Request that Lindsay communicate with the entire committee regarding the information about insurance and other questions
- Lindsay will look into partial BRYT support and if there is mapping for that
- The committee will attempt to meet later in the month, potentially with the end of the month JSC

○ Policy Update and Review:

Second Reading, First Vote on:

- GBA – Equal Employment Opportunity
- HA – Negotiation Goals
- HB – Negotiations Legal Status

Steve Moves to vote on all policies in one vote; Beth seconds - passes unanimously  
Beth moves to pass the first vote on the above policies; Barbara seconds - passes unanimously

Final Vote on:

- EBCFA – Face Coverings
- ECA – Buildings and Grounds Security
- GCF – Professional Staff Hiring

Beth moves to vote on all policies in one; Mandy seconds- passes unanimously  
Beth moves to take the final vote on the listed policies; Mandy seconds - passes unanimously

Second and Final Vote on Deletion of Policy:

- GBA-1 – Harassment Policy
- GCFA – Step Placement Policy
- GCKA – Policy on Adjustment to Teaching Assignment

Beth moves to vote on all policies in one vote; Mandy seconds - passes unanimously  
Beth moves to delete the policies listed above; Steve seconds - passes unanimously

- Next Meeting Date – September 5, 2024 – 7:00 p.m. (Reorganization Meeting)
- New Salem/Wendell Policy Committee – October 3, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
- 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:

- May 2, 2024

Beth moves to approve May 2 minutes; Barbara seconds; passes with one abstention  
Round of applause for Anna's minute-taking

J. Adjournment

Beth moves to adjourn; Mandy seconds - passes unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50