

West Bath School Administrative Unit

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2021 at 4:30 PM (Remote Meeting)

Members Present: Keith Hinds, Alexandra Jungbluth, Joanne Powers, Ashleigh Randall, and Casandra Whorff

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Patrick Bowdish, Emily Thompson

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM by Keith Hinds. Roll call attendance was taken. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Comments from the Chair:

Mr. Hinds welcomed the board members to the meeting and the new year. He said he was excited that students were able to return fully in person to school without any issues, as other districts were not able to do the same. He thanked the students, families, faculty, and staff for their care to ensure that the community was safe.

Approve/Amend Minutes of 12/10/20

Mrs. Randall made a motion to approve the minutes of 12/10/20. Ms. Powers seconded the motion. Roll call vote (5-0).

Adjustments to Agenda:

None

Public Comments:

None

Mr. Hinds reminded the public how to submit public comment during remote meetings.

Committee Reports

1. Policy Committee - No report
2. Facilities Committee - No report
3. Finance Committee
 - a. Payroll Warrants - Mr. Hinds reported that he signed the payroll warrant on 12/21, 1/4, and 1/14.

- b. AP Warrants - Mr. Hinds said that both he and Mrs. Randall signed the AP warrants on 12/16, 12/28, 1/6, and 1/20.

Superintendent's Report

1. Financial Report

- a. Mrs. Thompson reported that with 46% of the year remaining, 55% of the budget remains. She said that all of the funds that should have been associated with CRF grants have now been moved out, and reimbursements have begun to come back to the town. All of the budget lines are tracking appropriately.
- b. 20-21 Tuition Rates - Mrs. Thompson reported the tuition rates for the current year were posted about 10 days ago. The school board had budgeted for a 3% increase with no additional students. She shared a document in the board packet to show the difference between what was budgeted and what the anticipated expenditure will be pending a steady continued enrollment.

As the board prepares the next budget, she encouraged them to think about information about this rates tuition rate as atypical. She said tuition increases across the state were low (around 1% statewide) because rates are based on actual expenditures rather than budgets. Because of COVID, many larger districts had reduced expenses after March, so per pupil rates for the purpose of determine tuition is lower than normal. That may work against us thinking about next year, as expenses are up, and per pupil counts are down, so that will lead to higher rates.

- c. CRF Funding - Mrs. Thompson said that it was announced last week that CRF funding would be permitted to be carried over, rather than ending on Dec 30th as planned. Schools have until 6/30/21 to expend CRF 1, Sept 22 to expend CRF 2 and there is another round ESSERF funding coming. Allocations have not yet been provided, but that will come through the Title I allocation so that will be something likely in the 25,000-30,000 range. She also said it was announced last week that the new president has a proposed funding plan with details that are forthcoming. Mrs. Thompson said schools are awaiting rules about how COVID funds can be utilized. The funds the school received this year had to be for Covid related expenditures that were not planned for in the regular budget. Now that we are entering a new budget process, the rules may change slightly, but it is important to know they are supplemental, not supplanting resources.
- d. Anticipated 279 Information - Mrs. Thompson said that it is anticipated that draft 279s will be available to districts at the end of next week. She explained that total cost of education is up, which is what drives the state and local shares. But the funding level recommended by the Commissioner, based on the Governor's recommended budget has a mill rate that is lower than this year - 7.9 mills instead of 8.18. This is what dictates what you need to raise locally to be able to collect subsidy. She said that as a minimum receiver, it's less relevant for West Bath, but it's good data to be keeping track of. Mrs. Thompson said districts have been warned to be mindful of what we may see in future years, as home sales are increasing, which will increase state valuation in a couple of years, as pupil count is declining. She reminded the board that as a minimum receiver, West Bath's subsidy is solely based on a reimbursement of 50% of special education costs.

Mrs. Thompson also said that it was recommended by the DOE that districts pay attention to our fund balance, and try to keep it high so that districts can stabilize locally as much as possible. There's some conversation that the 3% rule for carry forward may be put on pause, but superintendents were reminded that as long as there is a plan for how to use funds over 3 years, or a plan to put funds in reserve, keeping a fund balance strong is going to be important.

Mrs. Randall asked for Mr. Hinds to pause and give an explanation of the 279 for the new board members. Mr. Hinds explained an overview of how the funding formula works and why some districts are minimum receivers. Mrs. Thompson said that she would meet with Mrs. Jungbluth and Mrs. Whorff separately to go through the formula with them.

2. District Updates

- a. Nourishing Neighbors Grant - Mrs. Thompson announced that during the school closure last year Mrs. Cosgrove had applied for grant through Albertson's/Shaws to support student nutrition in the amount of \$10,000, and the school was awarded that grant! Funding can be used to reimburse school expenses for equipment and supplies needed for feeding during the pandemic, or to support equipment and supplies needed for this year. She said she is awaiting further guidance about how specifically the funds can be used, but she'd like to thank Shaws for helping to support West Bath students, and thank Mrs. Cosgrove for submitting this grant on the school's behalf.
- b. WinterKids Winter Games - Mrs. Thompson reported that while they are in the midst of a pandemic, the WinterKids Winter Games are still taking place in a modified manner. The games are modified this year to be cohort based instead of schoolwide, and schools are not competing against each other. But the fundamental focus of getting kids active and moving outside and learning about nutrition remains in place. Additionally, there is a focus on resilience, inclusion, and community in this year's activities. The Winter games will run from January 11th through February 5th. Mrs. H and Mrs. Cosgrove are working with students during PE, guidance, and in an added block on Wednesdays. She thanked them for their willingness to make this happen for students.
- c. School Choice for 20-21- Mrs. Thompson reminded the board that the school choice window has opened, and will remain open through February 14th. 5th grade families were contacted, as well as all current participating families. Information was posted on the school's Facebook page and on the website. Placement decisions will be determined by the beginning of March. Mr. Hinds explained to board members that the withdrawal agreement states that 75% of the tuition funds for 6-12 students need to go to RSU1, which allows for 25% of students to be eligible for school choice.
- d. Quarter 2 Absence Report - Mrs. Thompson provided the board with the absence report for quarter 2.
- e. Legislative Update - Mrs. Thompson provided the board with 11 pages of more than 200 titles of proposed education legislation that is on the upcoming docket. Mr. Hinds asked Mrs. Thompson to put together a list of grants the school has applied for and received over the last year as another way to show the school's understanding of the community's financial burden and that the school is trying to

do their part to help that.

Old Business

1. In-Person Instruction Updates -

Mrs. Thompson stated that all continues to go really well at WBS. She said she was in a virtual conference on Wednesday with superintendents from around the state, and they kept discussing "when they can bring students back to school." She said that she forgets sometimes how rare it is to have the opportunity to be at school in person everyday and she feels very fortunate to be in the community we are in, and to have the support from our staff, students, and parents to work together to keep the community healthy. She reported that vaccinations have begun for the school's health staff. Both nurses, the OT, speech therapist, and social worker qualified to receive vaccinations as part of round 1A. The rest of school employees were postponed until 1B, but the process has begun.

- a. Positive Case Reporting - Mrs. Thompson said that she added this to agenda because it's not something the board has discussed before. She said that they are required to report every positive COVID case to the DOE and CDC, and schools started out reporting every case associated with the schools to the school community. Mrs. Thompson said they've just had the one, and that was what they did. She explained that last month the neighboring districts made a shift to only report out the cases that required quarantine of staff or students. They were reporting cases that had no impact, and felt that it was causing undue stress to the community to hear every time someone associated with a school was positive. And especially for a small school, it is hard to keep people confidential. Mrs. Thompson said that on the other side of that she felt that if a community was not kept up to date with cases, even if there's no quarantine necessary, an outbreak (3 cases in a 14 day period) can be a blindside. She wanted to give the board a chance to discuss how they wanted reporting to go moving forward.

Ms. Powers said that she appreciates receiving the notification as a teacher. It's nice to have the awareness of what is happening in the school, but that she understand both perspectives. Mrs. Randall said she did not feel it was necessary to report cases that do not impact the need to quarantine, as the school is doing a good job of keeping cohorts confined. Mrs. Whorff said that she agreed with Mrs. Randall, and Mrs. Jungbluth said that she did not feel partial one way or another. Mrs. Thompson said that nothing needed to change, she just wanted to make sure the board had an opportunity to weigh in.

Mrs. Jungbluth made a motion to keep the report procedure status quo. This was seconded by Mrs. Whorff. Roll call vote (5-0).

2. 5th Grade Maine Maritime Boat Building Program - Winter Plan

Mrs. Thompson stated that they had had a had a successful fall outdoors with boat building, but in November as the temperatures became colder, the glue the students were using no longer held, and then with the quarantine that followed Thanksgiving boat building was put on pause. She said that now that the school is 5 months into the school year and it seems like everyone has a good handle on all of the safety rules and requirements, she would like to ask the board to discuss the potential of having boat

building move back to the boat shop. She asked the board to reference a letter from Ms. Goulet's students in their packet. She explained the safety precautions that would be put in place, the conversations she's had with the bus company, and the feedback she received from Dr. Hanna. She also mentioned that if Sagadahoc County moved into the yellow zone, or if there was any other reason to be worried about spread, she'd want to suspend activities at the boat shop.

Ms. Powers asked about guidance for field trips. Mrs. Thompson said that the guidance said that if you are going to participate in field trips to keep it local and minimize contact. She said that she felt that it was different than sending students to swim at the YMCA, for example, where she can't control who is coming and going out of the YMCA. The boat shop would be limited to just West Bath students, the teacher, and Kurt Spiridakis. No other employees of the museum or volunteers would be permitted to enter the boat shop. Ms. Powers said that she felt that all precautions have been thought of and it would be good for the kids.

Mrs. Randall said that she is in total support of this. She said she appreciate that there was collaboration with Dr. Hanna, which feels important right now, and she also wished to thank Ms. Goulet's class for the letter to share their perspective. As a parent of 5th grader, this has been a really important part of what they have been looking forward to. If the board has the opportunity to give them that chance, she feels like they should.

Mrs. Jungbluth said that she agreed. It seems like an important right of passage for West Bath students, and if it is possible, she'd like to see it continue. Mr. Hinds said he would like to echo Mrs. Randall's appreciation to the class for writing a letter. He said that the impact to the students during the pandemic has been tremendous and the board has seen that West Bath students are responsible with their precautions. They have shown that they understand and that they will be responsible. He would like to give them this opportunity to show that they can do this. He made a motion to approve sending 5th grade students to the Maine Maritime Museum for boat building. Mrs. Randall said that she would happily second that motion.

Ms. Powers said she'd want to consider everything that was said in terms of Sagadahoc County going yellow. Roll call vote (5-0).

Mrs. Jungbluth exited the meeting at 5:10 PM.

3. Board Goals

Mr. Hinds said that the board has talked about this over the last couple of meetings. He said that the goals give the board the road map of where the board would like to see the district move in the next year. He said this is how the budget document is formed, and measures success of the board moving forward.

Ms. Powers said that she felt that COVID-19 takes precedence over everything else, and that some of the items that Mrs. Randall said earlier were good goals, and some of the items Mrs. Thompson had spoken about in regards to grants to help to support technology and facilities, and to help to mitigate the effects the virus has on staff, students, and families. Mrs. Randall said she had similar thoughts and some of the key words that she

had honed in on were to make decisions for the health and safety of the community, be adaptable, and to make informed decisions with health officials. She said this is what has allowed us to be in school 5 days per week all year. She would like the board to stay on course to be informed, but be flexible and adaptable to the situations that the district is facing. Ms. Powers agreed and said the virus keeps changing, and things that everyone thought were true are no longer the current thinking. Mr. Hinds said that he felt that these were excellent points. Ms. Powers said that with CRF grants, there was not a lot of time to make decisions about how to use the funding, but now with a little more time, the board can be strategic with the usage to invest in facilities or technology. Mrs. Randall said that she would also really like to focus on working with local representatives to take care of local issues, funding for example. Mrs. Powers said she would like to be cautious and not put too much on the plate because COVID is going to take all of the time.

Mr. Hinds recommended that the policy committee take these ideas and make a draft of a document to present next month.

New Business

1. Budget Calendar Draft

Mrs. Thompson said that she did not have a draft to share, but last year's calendar was in the board packet for reference for the new board members. She said she spoke with the town administrator, and she and Mr. Hennessey are just beginning their conversations about a calendar, but are planning something similar to last year's, with the school board needing to have a budget and warrant approved by mid April. Right now there is discussion about having all town budgets go to a referendum in June rather than to town meeting. For the school, that will depend on whether or not the same executive order is put in place that allows that to happen for school budgets. Mrs. Thompson said that she plans to meet with Kristine next week to follow up.

2. Membership in the Mid-Maine EL Collaborative (MMELC)

Mrs. Thompson reported that the director of HCA reached out to discuss some potential teaming for EL schools in Maine (the non-Portland schools) to look at both financial opportunities (grants) to apply for and some shared staff development. He's looking to form a collaborative to to apply for funding to help to support EL in schools. The members of this collaborative would be HCA, West Bath, Bath Middle, St. George, and Auburn Middle School. This group represents diverse districts in terms of student population, location, and a mixture of rural and urban schools. In addition to seeking funding, it would allow for new professional development opportunities for staffing. Mrs. Thompson said that there was no financial risk in joining.

Mr. Hinds said that the collaborative would hit 2 of the current board goals. Mrs. Randall said that she thinks it is a great idea, and that the board should keep in mind that a majority of West Bath students move onto one of those two school districts, and it's another way to maintain connection with West Bath students.

Mr. Hinds made a motion to join the Mid-Maine EL Collaborative. Mrs. Randall seconded the motion. Roll call vote (4-0).

Mrs. Randall asked if board goals needed to be circled back to for action. Mr. Hinds said technically it is still on the table, it was never taken off, so no action needs to be taken.

Public Comments

There were no public comments. Mr. Hinds reminded the public the procedures for making a public comment.

Set Next Meeting Dates and Locations

1. February 10th at 4:30

Adjourn

Mrs. Randall made a motion to adjourn at 5:28 PM. Ms. Powers seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote (4-0).

Submitted by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Thompson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Emily Thompson