

Watertown School Committee Minutes April 6, 2017

Watertown Town Hall Council Chambers 149 Main Street, Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

I. Roll Call

Mr. John Portz, Chairman, called the April 6, 2017 meeting to order at 5:30PM. Present were School Committee members Ms. Kendra Foley, Dr. Guido Guidotti, Ms. Eileen Hsü-Balzer, Dr. Candace Miller, Mr. Mark Sideris, and Ms. Elizabeth Yusem.

II. Adjourn to Executive Session: 5:30 PM

The School Committee adjourned to an Executive Session for discussion of strategy with respect to WEA and SEIU contract negotiations as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the WPS' bargaining position.

III. Return to Open Session: 6:00 PM

In attendance were the aforementioned School Committee members, Superintendent Dr. John Brackett, Director of Business Services Ms. Mary DeLai, and Human Resources Director Mr. Craig Hardimon.

IV. Public Forum – Session I

A member of the public commented that the FY18 was very well researched and backed by data. She stated that her personal concern was that there need to be real-time monitoring of the impact of the changes on the children, the parents and the paraprofessionals. She wanted to make sure that the School Committee is mindful of getting feedback.

A member of the public commented that she had heard concerns from some people that had come from not knowing about the proposed changes to the budget. She recommended that the information needs to be pushed out to families and the community. She indicated that parents at the Lowell are not sure of what the changes will mean for their children and that she imagined that this would go for all schools.

V. Introduction of Staff

A. Stacy Phelan - Lowell School Principal, Effective July 1, 2017

The Superintendent introduced Ms. Stacy Phelan who will become the Lowell School Principal effective July 1. Ms. Phelan is currently a principal in Swampscott and previously been an administrator in the Lynn Public Schools. She is a graduate of Salem State University and received her CAGS from the Commonwealth Leadership Academy. The search for the Lowell principal yielded 50 applicants, 8 interviews and 3 finalists. The Superintendent outlined the search process and indicated that Ms. Phelan was also interviewed by fifth graders. He shared one comment that was telling from the fifth graders was that she was really nice and she made me relaxed and I feel I can trust her and talk to her.

Mr. Portz welcomed Ms. Phelan. A School Committee member asked about the process for assigning students to classrooms and whether that will be determined by Ms. Phelan or Mr. Oates. The Superintendent indicated it would be Mr. Oates. He also indicated that Ms. Phelan will have opportunities to visit the school prior to July 1.

VI. Action Items – Discussion and Vote on the Following Agenda Items:

A. FY18 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget

B. Contract for 2016-2019 with SEIU Local 888

C. Contract for 2016-2019 with Watertown Educational Administrative Assistants Association

D. Approval of Minutes

1. February 15, 2017 Monthly School Committee Meeting

The Chair of the School Committee requested to move the two Collective Bargaining Agreements up on the agenda which was agreed to by the Committee.

VI B. Contract for 2016-2019 with SEIU Local 888

The Chair indicated that the School Committee would be voting on two contracts, the first being the SEIU local 888, custodial staff and cafeteria staff which is a 3-year contract, continuing the previous contract, July 2016 through June 2019. This was an unusual contract as there would need to be an authorization of retroactive payment for the July 2014-June 2016 contract as well. For the 2016-2019 contract, the increases will be as follows: FY17: 2.25%, FY18: 2% and FY19 2%. A motion was made to accept the contract, and the motion was seconded. A discussion ensued about the SEIU Local 888 2016-2019 contract.

The Town Manager indicated that the School Committee would need to vote on the 2014-2016 contract for the retroactive payment as well. A School Committee member questioned as to whether a vote could be taken on the two contracts as the agenda only indicated an action of the 2016-2019 contract. A School Committee member recommended not voting on 14-16, but rather 16-19. It was determined that the School Committee would vote on both separately at the next meeting on May 1.

VI C. Contract for 2016-2019 with Watertown Educational Administrative Assistants Association

The Chair reviewed the changes to the language in the WEAAA contract as well as the salary increases which will be as follows: FY17 1.5. FY18: 0 with a step change FY 19 1.5%.

A motion was made to approve the 2016-2019 Watertown Educational Administrative Assistants Association and the motion was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously through a roll-call vote.

Roll call:

Sideris Yes

Foley Yes

Miller Yes

Yusem Yes

Hsu-Balzer Yes

Driscoll Yes

Portz Yes

Guidotti Yes

IV A. FY18 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget

Mr. Portz, Chairperson of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee, presented an overview of the Public Hearing held on April 3 and that the School Committee would take a vote this evening. The Superintendent provided a brief overview of the FY18 budget and then asked that the School Committee adopt the budget by cost center. He presented the new additions to the budget but added that the recommended budget does require reallocation of funds and reviewed the reductions. He recommended that the budget be voted by cost center in order to allow the greatest amount of flexibility to modify and make adjustments along the way.

A School Committee member advocated for one time allocations to cover non-salary budget items. She also requested clarification about voting by cost center which was explained by the Chair. A School Committee member highlighted the power in the process that occurred in the Budget and Finance Subcommittee and recommended that the public participates in the subcommittee meetings. A School Committee member shared his appreciation of the process and the generous 5% increase from the Town. He asserted that the community has to understand that the decisions have been made thoughtfully and recommended that the School Department should monitor the enrollment. He recommended that the School Committee vote the budget and then take it to the Town Council and advocate if additional funds were needed with the Town Council. A School Committee Member shared her appreciation of the thoroughness of the process. She also thanked the community for sharing their thoughts about the budget directly with her. The Chairman echoed the sentiments of the other School Committee members, acknowledging the thoroughness of the process and that the shifts in resources have been thoroughly discussed and reviewed and are based on sound decisions. He also acknowledged the 5% increase as being generous, but highlighted that a level-services budget is 4%, with significant built in costs. Further discussion ensued in support of the budget and the need to monitor its success throughout the year.

The Superintendent commented on the importance of considering students in the decisions that have been made. He has been working with principals to discuss how the changes impact buildings and how we can implement the changes in the most beneficial way possible. He also indicated that the School Department will be monitoring enrollment closely.

There was a motion to accept the Superintendent's Recommended Budget of \$45,751,858 and the motion was seconded. The Motion was approved unanimously by a roll-call vote.

Roll call:

Sideris Yes

Foley Yes

Miller Yes

Yusem Yes

Hsu-Balzer Yes

Driscoll Yes

Portz Yes

Guidotti Yes

VI D 1. Approval of Minutes

February 15, 2017 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the above-listed meeting. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Reports

VII A. Process for Identifying High School Mascot - Update

The Chair reviewed the discussion from the April School Committee. The idea would be to develop a selection committee. Mr. Portz put together a document that detailed the implementation steps, composition of the team and timeframe. Mr. Portz asked Kendra Foley and Mark Sideris to be part of the selection process for the committee. By May 1 the Mascot Committee would be identified, which would meet through May and June to make recommendations to the committee for selection.

School committee members asked clarifying questions and made suggestions to the process, including expanding the committee beyond high school students and parents. There was also a recommendation to have a professional

graphics designer to do a quick mock up and then a final one once the Committee has selected a final mascot. The Committee discussed the question of whether the mascot should connect to Raider and retain the red colors.

A motion was made to move ahead with the proposed plan and timeline for determining a mascot and the motion was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

VIII. Public Forum – Session II

A staff member at the Preschool commented that parents and teachers should be involved in the budget process, She wondered if it can be communicated to people how best to get information and get involved. Mr. Portz responded as to how to get information and how we can improve our communication strategies. A School Committee member also commented that going to the subcommittee meetings are an invaluable way to be a part of the conversation and that site councils and also a good way to learn about what is happening at the school level. A School Committee member indicated that all agendas are posted on the Town website and that people can sign up for receiving notifications about meetings that are posted. The Superintendent suggested coming to the coffees.

A community member and Hosmer parent commented that this has been a frosty budget time. He appreciated candid responses to questions. However, he did not hear about the cuts at the Hosmer. He encourages School Committee members to be more proactive. Parents don't expect a whole lot, but they appreciate three things: excellent teachers, small class sizes and the support for the students who need it. It is inconceivable to the community member and his peers that there would be cuts when there is an increase. There is no way you can cut staff and not have a negative impact.

IX. Reports

A. Chairman's

Mr. Portz asked for agenda items for the next meetings and that there may be two meetings in June for the School Improvement Plans.

B. Superintendent's

No report was heard from the Superintendent.

X. Next Meeting

Monthly School Committee Meeting – May 1, 2017

XI. New Business

A School Committee member asked if there was any update on the EDP program evaluation. Dr. Brackett indicated that it would be ready prior to April vacation.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Portz adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.