

**Watertown School Committee
Minutes
January 9, 2017**

**Watertown Town Hall Council Chambers
149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472**

I. Roll Call

Mr. John Portz, Chairman, called the January 9, 2017 meeting to order at 7:00PM. Present were School Committee members Ms. Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Ms. Kendra Foley, Dr. Guido Guidotti, Dr. Candace Miller, Mr. Mark Sideris, and Ms. Elizabeth Yusem. Also present were Superintendent Dr. John Brackett, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Theresa McGuinness, Director of Business Services Ms. Mary DeLai, Director of Special Education Ms. Kathleen Desmarais, and Director of Human Resources Mr. Craig Hardimon.

II. Annual School Committee Reorganization – Election of Officers

Ms. Eileen Hsu Balzer, Senior Member of the School Committee, asked her fellow members to nominate officers for the 2017 year.

A motion was made nominating Mr. John Portz as the Chairman of the School Committee.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

In discussion, a School Committee member said she felt the Committee should think seriously about its leadership going forward, and that a plan for improvements should be made to keep the Committee working on the path that has been established since the district's interim appointments were made. The Chairman said he acknowledges the significant changes and challenges of the last year and would like the Committee to reflect and determine the best path forward. He suggested a self-assessment of the School Committee.

A motion was made nominating Ms. Kendra Foley as Vice Chair of the School Committee.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made nominating Dr. Guido Guidotti as the Secretary of the School Committee.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman noted that Subcommittee assignments would be made at the next monthly meeting.

III. Student Advisors

Ms. Julia DuNoyer reported that with the end of the first semester approaching, midterms would begin soon. She said that Ski Club had just begun for the season. A recent fundraiser for the senior class at Launch Trampoline Park had been successful. Mr. Isaac Gibbons reported that most students had finished applying to colleges and those who opted for Early Action were beginning to be notified whether they were accepted.

IV. Recognition of Fall Athletic Teams

Mr. Michael Lahiff, Director of Athletics, commended Watertown Public Schools' fall athletic teams, including cheerleading, cross country, and others. Volleyball qualified for the tournament for the first time in Watertown High School's history. The golf team won the Division 3 Top Sportsmanship Award. Championship teams included football, field hockey, and boys' soccer.

V. Public Forum – Session I

No member of the public spoke.

VI. Presentation and Discussion

A. FY18 Budget Priorities

Dr. John Brackett, Interim Superintendent, reported on the budgetary priorities for the upcoming 2018 fiscal year. He said the School Committee and Administration would aim to create a strong linkage between the budget and the district's programs and values of Watertown's classrooms. Dr. Brackett said the Administration's organizational structure would be reformulated and that building relationships will continue to be crucial moving forward. He said there would be a focus on systemic process changes, a spotlight on long-term facility needs, and a focus on identifying and beginning to address achievement gaps and student learning gaps.

Dr. Brackett said that FY18 budget drivers include class size commitment, stable and diverse enrollment, staffing updates due to enrollment, collective bargaining agreements, leadership changes, expanded professional development, Special Education programming, social-emotional learning for students, and technology.

The Chairman thanked Dr. Brackett for his presentation.

A motion was made to approve the FY18 budget priorities.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. FY18 Capital Budget

Ms. Mary DeLai reported on the capital budget for the 2018 fiscal year. Ms. DeLai said that she and Mr. Stephen Romanelli, Director of Facilities, determined a ranking system that listed the priorities of, in order, life safety and health, asset preservation, operational efficiency, enhanced learning/working environments, and general improvements.

A spreadsheet detailing the capital plan for 2018-2022 was distributed to the School Committee. This information was discussed in detail by Ms. DeLai; it was said that funding for capital needs in FY18 is expected to reach \$642,250.00.

In response to various School Committee members' questions, Ms. DeLai provided more in-depth information regarding some of the planned capital projects. Funding towards technology would be spent and applied to provide necessary updates to vital 21st century teaching and learning initiatives. Repainting of walls in classrooms and hallways may be scheduled on a rotating basis, perhaps to be redone every five years. Air conditioning would be upgraded in some of the large gathering spaces within the schools for the benefit of both students and the community.

A School Committee member noted that the high school has been designated as an emergency shelter by the Town, and questioned the district's responsibility to cover the cost of an emergency generator there.

A motion was made to accept the FY18-FY22 Capital Plan.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. NEASC Report on the High School

The Chairman said this agenda item would be postponed to a later meeting.

D. Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES)

Mr. Adam Silverberg, Curriculum Coordinator of World Languages, reported on the district's FLES program. This year, he said that he worked with kindergarten teachers to form a curriculum map for Spanish instruction including Common Core standards for both literacy and mathematics. In a November assessment, over 85% of Watertown's kindergarten students could respond to seven basic Spanish prompts.

Mr. Silverberg said the district will likely discontinue offering pre-kindergarten FLES after this current school year. Spanish FLES lessons will continue in kindergarten classes and be implemented in first grade in FY18. With one additional grade added each school year, the elementary FLES program will be fully implemented in grades kindergarten through five in the 2021-2022 school year.

Some School Committee members separately thanked Mr. Silverberg for his presentation and noted the value of learning a foreign language, but also questioned both the time and funds this program may require as it expands. Other School Committee members pointed out the statistics of proven positive academic effects across other subject areas when young students are given exposure to foreign languages.

VII. Action Items

A. Motion on New Student Registration

A motion was made to return the registration of new middle and high school students to their respective school buildings.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes – December 5, 2016

The Chairman said this agenda item would be postponed to a later meeting due to a technical difficulty in completing the minutes.

C. Approval of Gifts

A motion was made to accept a gift of \$50.00 from Lueders Environmental, Inc. for Watertown Public Schools.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Reports

A. FY17 Quarterly Budget Update

Ms. DeLai reported on projected remaining budget by the end of FY17. Ms. DeLai said she expects 99.6% of the budget to be spent by the end of June 2017, leaving an unused balance of \$162,294.00. Unexpected expenditures in FY17 so far have included a higher than expected number of students attending Minuteman Vocational High School and out-of-district Special Education school placements, an unanticipated boiler repair at Watertown Middle School, and an unanticipated water heater replacement at Watertown High School, among others.

B. Enrollment

Dr. Brackett reported on the last month's changes to student enrollment numbers across the district. He noted that enrollment has begun to steady, as is expected this time of the school year.

C. Superintendent Search

Ms. Kendra Foley, Chair of the Superintendent Search Committee, said that in the coming days, staff

and community forums would occur with the intent of gathering feedback around the hiring of a permanent Superintendent. Applicants were instructed to apply for the position by January 20, 2017. It was expected that the Search Committee would select and interview candidates, providing a minimum of three finalists to go before the School Committee for final selection at the March 6, 2017 monthly meeting.

D. Facilities Master Plan Update

Ms. Elizabeth Yusem, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, said the group had met a week before to discuss major conclusions of the Master Plan Facilities Study. At the meeting, Dr. Brackett had suggested the creation of a Request for Proposals to hire an architectural firm to keep the process moving forward to determine the specific next steps for Watertown's schools.

A motion was made to authorize the Superintendent or his designee to hire a consultant for planning for the next steps in planning for the replacement and/or renovation of Watertown Public Schools' buildings.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

E. Subcommittee Reports

1. Budget & Finance – December 12, 2016

Mr. John Portz, Chair of the Budget & Finance Subcommittee, reported on the most recent meeting where there were discussions about monthly and quarterly budget updates at School Committee meetings, FY18 budget priorities, enrollment projections, among other topics.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the above-listed meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Buildings & Grounds – December 15, 2016

Ms. Elizabeth Yusem, Chair of the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee, reported on the most recent meeting where there were discussions about the FY18-FY22 capital needs and budget, among other topics.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the above-listed meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Curriculum – January 6, 2017

Ms. Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Chair of the Curriculum Subcommittee, reported on the most recent meeting where there were discussions about Math in Focus and FLES, among other topics.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the above-listed meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

F. Personnel

Mr. Hardimon reported on personnel changes within the district.

IX. Public Forum – Session II

No member of the public spoke.

X. Reports

A. Chairman's Report

Mr. Portz reiterated he would like the School Committee to perform a self-assessment, perhaps in mid-February 2017.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Brackett commended Mr. Phillip Oates for his job as Interim Principal of Lowell Elementary School so far during this 2016-2017 school year. Dr. Brackett said the search for the permanent principal would begin soon, with the position being posted in the coming days. Forums for the community and staff would be scheduled to discuss the search and gather feedback for the Principal Search Committee. It was said that after the initial pool of candidates had been interviewed and narrowed, three finalists would be chosen to spend a day at Lowell and go through another round of interviews. The principal for the 2017-2018 year and beyond would likely be chosen in March 2017.

Dr. Brackett said that, in an effort to better organize and streamline the central administration leadership structure, he recommended the Director of Business Services be reclassified and retitled to Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Operations. He further recommended that the Director of Special Education be retitled to Director of Student Services.

In regards to the possibility of later school start times for the secondary schools, Dr. Brackett suggested the formation of a task force dedicated to determining how to implement an 8:30AM start time beginning in the fall of 2018.

XI. Next Meeting - February 6, 2017

The Chairman said the next meeting of the School Committee would be February 6, 2017. A Budget and Finance Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for January 18, 2017. A Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for January 25, 2017.

XII. New Business

No new business was discussed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:34PM.

Meeting Documents:

[Annual Meeting for Organization \(Policy File: BDA\)](#)

[Election and Duties of Officers \(Policy File: BDB\)](#)

[FY18 Budget Priorities](#)

[FY18 Capital Budget](#)

[NEASC Accreditation of WHS Letter](#)

[Facilities Master Plan Study](#)

[Quarterly Budget Update: FY17 Budget Status as of 01/06/17](#)

[Update on Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools \(FLES\)](#)

[FLES Kindergarten Curriculum Map](#)

[FLES November 2016 Kindergarten Assessment](#)

[FLES November 2016 Kindergarten Assessment Data](#)

[Enrollment Report](#)

Submitted by Christie Fisher, Administrative Assistant to the Central Office