

**Watertown School Committee
Minutes
February 15, 2017**

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

I. Roll Call

Mr. John Portz, Chairman, called the February 15, 2017 meeting to order at 6:00PM. 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. Adjourn to Executive Session: 6:00 PM

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

III. Return to Open Session: 7:00 PM

The School Committee adjourned their Executive Session and returned to the open meeting at 7:00 PM.

IV. High School Student Advisors

Mr. Isaac Gibbons reported that the high school just completed midterm examinations and that seniors were beginning to hear back from colleges regarding acceptance. Ms. Julia DuNoyer reported that juniors were beginning to meet with their guidance counselors to plan for college. She said that boys' basketball had just won the Middlesex league, that girls' basketball had a good record, and that the wrestling team was doing well.

V. Public Forum – Session I

No member of the public spoke.

VI. Statement on Respecting Diversity in the Watertown Public Schools

The Chairman delivered the following prepared statement written by him and the Superintendent:

“In Watertown, we celebrate our diversity. As a school system, we are committed to protecting the right of all students and educators to participate in our learning community. Recent events at the national level regarding travel restrictions and related actions prompt us to reiterate and reassure that Watertown Public Schools is an open, welcoming, and inclusive place to learn and work. Debates in national policy continue, but we are committed to providing a safe, learning environment for all students. The Watertown Public Schools is here to serve, not to judge or exclude. We treat all students with respect, have high expectations for all, want parents to be our partners, and expect students, educators, and parents to respect the unique qualities that characterize each of us. Together, we build and support a diverse and respectful community.”

VII. Presentation and Discussion – New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Report on the High School

Ms. Shirley Lundberg, principal of Watertown High School, reported on the recent accreditation of the school by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The seven standards of NEASC accreditation were said to be core values, curriculum, instruction, assessment, school culture/leadership, school resources for learning, and community resources for learning. In preparation for NEASC's evaluation, Ms. Lundberg oversaw the creation and utilization of a Steering Committee and also Standards Committees, groups of faculty who assessed the school under the lens of each of NEASC's seven assessment standards and

gathered evidence such as student work to support each standard. In March of 2016, a visiting team from NEASC arrived at the school to conduct an assessment that lasted three days. Ms. Lundberg said that upon completing their visit and assessment, members of the visiting team made encouraging remarks regarding the “kind” nature of the community at Watertown High.

A draft report by NEASC was delivered in the early summer of 2016. There was an opportunity for Ms. Lundberg and the District to correct any factual errors. A final draft report, completed in the early fall of 2016, was made available online and distributed to the Superintendent, School Committee, Town Library, Watertown High School staff, and local press. The final draft report was presented to the NEASC Board in late October. The high school received its accreditation letter in early December 2016.

Some highlights of NEASC’s commendations of WHS included the collaborative process by which core values have been established, the culture of the school community and its empowerment and respect of students, the use of project-based learning, the common format of the written curriculum, personalized instruction, applied learning, and the integration of technology into classroom instruction. The Board expressed concern in nineteen areas regarding the school’s physical facilities. As a result, NEASC placed WHS on a warning status, requiring the school to submit a progress report by September 15, 2017 to keep accreditation.

A School Committee member said that she felt the School Department and the Town should be able to work together to fix some of the facility issues noted in NEASC’s accreditation letter. She specifically asked that the Town Council consider undertaking improvements to Victory Field and lifting certain parking restrictions near WHS so that staff may more easily find adequate parking during school hours. The Town Councilor responded that improvements to Victory Field were already being considered and that the parking issue could possibly be fixed with staff permits to park on certain nearby streets; he said that he would be contacting the Watertown Police Department for a discussion regarding parking.

A School Committee member asked Ms. Lundberg why NEASC accreditation is important. Ms. Lundberg said that the process itself was “hugely beneficial... in terms of getting educators to talk to other educators about teaching and learning.”

A School Committee member asked how NEASC’s recommendations were being prioritized. Ms. Lundberg said she would be working with the Site Council and Follow-Up Committee to determine prioritization of projects. Ms. Lundberg said that projects with budget implications would be added to the Fiscal Year 2019 budget as the 2018 budget was already nearing its completion.

A School Committee member said that some cities and towns, like Newton, have removed themselves from the NEASC accreditation process. Ms. Lundberg responded that, in recent years, EDCO Collaborative had filed criticism with NEASC regarding some of their practices, including the cost to schools for their accreditation. Newton, she said, was one town that decided to remove itself from the accreditation process while some other towns had taken a moratorium while NEASC responds to EDCO’s critique.

A School Committee member asked Ms. Lundberg if there were ongoing discussions regarding collaboration time in the high school. Ms. Lundberg said that departments within the high school have common planning time but it may be worth examining the utilization of said time.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Lundberg and the Steering Committee Co-Chairs Ms. Maureen Reagan and Ms. Adrienne Eaton for their time and efforts throughout the accreditation process. Mr. Portz said the real value of the accreditation process likely lies within the impacts that have been or will be made to improve teaching and learning at the high school.

VIII. Action Items

A. Building for the Future Update

1. Update on RFQ

Ms. Mary DeLai, Interim Director of Business Services, reported on the next stages of the District's Building for the Future initiative. In early February 2017, Watertown Public Schools posted a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking the design consultation services of an architectural firm with extensive experience in strategizing, planning, designing, and executing large-scale public school projects in the Commonwealth. The purpose of these services was said to supplement the existing School Facilities Assessment by Oudens Ello Architecture (March 2014) and the Master Plan Facilities Study by Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (December 2016) by formulating a detailed strategy in moving forward with school facilities' conceptual projects and their phasing. Submissions of qualifications in response to the RFQ were said to be due by 2:00 PM on February 24, 2017.

2. Update on Massachusetts School Building Authority Statement of Interest for Watertown High School

The Chairman reported on the District's 2017 submission of a Statement of Interest (SOI) for Watertown High School to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Mr. Portz said that more information to clarify the shortcomings of the District's 2016 submission was being sought from the MSBA before proceeding further.

3. Building for the Future

The Chairman reported on the next steps for the planning of the future of WPS' facilities. Mr. Portz said that the District would hire a consultant, one of the firms that responds to the RFQ. The consultant would be chosen by a committee consisting of the School Committee Chairman himself, Interim Superintendent John Brackett, Interim Director of Business Services Mary DeLai, Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee Chair Elizabeth Yusem, Watertown Town Councilor Vincent Piccirilli, and Watertown's Director of Community Planning Steven Magoon.

A motion was made to approve the plan as described in Mr. Portz's February 9, 2017 memorandum to the School Committee entitled "Next Steps for Facilities Planning – Building for the Future."

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Subcommittee Assignments

The Chairman appointed School Committee members to subcommittees for 2017. The appointments are charted below:

	Elizabeth Yusem	Guido Guidotti	Eileen Hsu-Balzer	Kendra Foley	Candace Miller	John Portz	Mark Sideris
Buildings & Grounds	Chair		Member	Member			
Budget & Finance		Member		Member	Chair		
Policy	Member	Chair	Member				
Athletics		Member		Chair	Member		
Curriculum	Member		Chair		Member		

A motion was made to approve the subcommittee assignments for 2017.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. Approval of FY17 Budget Transfers

Ms. DeLai provided the School Committee with a spreadsheet detailing Fiscal Year 2017 Quarter 2 budget transfer requests. The majority of the requests were said to transfer funds from the districtwide salary adjustment line to the appropriate responsibility center since salary increases for WEA Unit A members have been applied.

A motion was made to approve the FY17 Q2 budget transfer requests as presented.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

D. Approval of Reorganization Creating an Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations

Dr. John Brackett, Interim Superintendent, recommended to the School Committee that they approve a number of changes to the classifications of various leadership positions within the District's administration. These changes were recommended in the 2016 RSM Third Party Review of Schools. He asked that the position of Director of Business Services be upgraded and retitled to Assistant Superintendent, Finance & Operations. Further, he requested that this position and its compensation be "elevated... to a position which allows [the District] to recruit and retain quality candidates." He also recommended that the School Committee approve a change of title from Assistant Superintendent to Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and to approve a change of title from Director of Special Education to Director of Student Services.

A motion was made to approve the recommended administrative reclassifications and title changes.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

E. Approval of Transfer of Funds in Upit Family Scholarship

Ms. DeLai explained that the last will and testament of Marjorie Anne Upit designated 30% of the funds from the sale of her real estate holdings to be held in a nonexpendable trust managed through the town's accounting system; the interest accrued from the nonexpendable trust, kept in a separate account, has since been used to fund a \$1,000.00 scholarship bequeathed to a graduating WHS senior each year. As the accrual of interest has been unpredictable in recent years, Ms. DeLai requested the School Committee approve the transfer of \$3,000.00 from the principal nonexpendable account into the scholarship account to cover the next three years' scholarships, as allowed in Ms. Upit's will should there be a shortfall of interest.

A motion was made to approve the transfer of \$3,000.00 from the nonexpendable principal account to cover the next three years' \$1,000.00 scholarships.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

F. FY17 Capital Funds – Vote to Utilize Unspent Balance

Ms. DeLai reported on unspent FY17 capital funds expected to total \$77,544.00. At the recommendation of the Town Auditor, Ms. DeLai asked the School Committee to approve the reclassification of \$77,544.00 of costs from the FY17 preschool construction, a total of approximately \$200,000.00 charged to the FY17 Operating Budget, to the FY17 Capital Budget. This reclassification would free up \$77,544.00 in the School Department Operating Budget to cover the costs of other educational spending.

A motion was made to approve the reclassification of the aforementioned funds.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

G. Approval of Overnight Field Trip – WHS Special Education Students to White Mountains, New Hampshire

A motion was made to approve an overnight field trip for Special Education students from Watertown High School to attend “A Mountain Classroom” in the White Mountains of New Hampshire from April 11, 2017 to April 13, 2017.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

H. Approval of Minutes

1. December 5, 2016 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2016 School Committee meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. January 9, 2017 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2017 School Committee meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

I. Approval of Gifts

1. Jordans Furniture

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$1,200.00 from Jordans Furniture for Watertown Middle School.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Gartaganis Brothers Inc.

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$500.00 from Gartaganis Brothers, Inc. for Watertown High School’s robotics team.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Darren Stahlman

A motion was made to approve a gift of photography equipment from Darren Stahlman for Watertown High School’s photography program.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Hitachi Consulting

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$1,000.00 from Hitachi Consulting for Watertown High School’s robotics team.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

5. Angela Carosella and Alex Reveliotty

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$500.00 from Angela Carosella and Alex Reveliotty for Cunniff Elementary School.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Reports

A. Superintendent Search – Presentation of Names of Finalists and Discussion of Next Steps

Ms. Kendra Foley, Chair of the Superintendent Search Committee, reported on updates to the Superintendent search process. After reviewing 31 applications, 11 candidates were chosen for interviews by the Superintendent Search Committee. The two finalists for the position were announced to be Deanne Galdston, Ed.D. of Newton, current Assistant Superintendent of Billerica Public Schools and Arthur Unobskey, Ed.D. of Lexington, current Assistant Superintendent of Gloucester Public Schools.

The Chairman said that these two candidates would each spend a day touring the District, meeting with the Administration and community, and publicly interviewing with the School Committee.

Mr. Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, recommended the School Committee begin to consider the questions for the upcoming public interviews of the superintendent candidates. Mr. Portz responded that he would like to use a predetermined set of questions but also allow time for unscripted questions during the interviews.

B. 2017 – 2018 School Calendar

A draft of the 2017-2018 school calendar was provided to the School Committee for their consideration. The Superintendent recommended that the School Committee consider opening schools on Good Friday as this holiday is the only religious holiday observed on the 2016 – 2017 school calendar.

C. Cable Access Board

Ms. Eileen Hsu-Balzer, member of the Cable Access Board, reported that WCA-TV has been working to install improved cameras with live broadcast capabilities to many new locations including Victory Field and the auditorium of Watertown Middle School. Ms. Hsu-Balzer reported that WCA-TV is offering video production classes to middle and high school students. She said that the WCA-TV website is being upgraded and reconfigured.

D. FY17 Monthly Budget Update

Ms. DeLai provided the School Committee with a memorandum regarding the monthly update on the status of the FY17 budget. She said that as of January 31, 2017 the School Department had an unencumbered, available balance of \$2,537,796.00 with 94% of the fiscal year's budget expended or encumbered as of January 31, 2017.

E. FY18 Level Service Budget

Ms. DeLai provided the School Committee with an update on the development of the FY18 budget. She said that a "level service" budget was the first step in the overall process of budget development. The level service budget was said to reflect both step and cost-of-living adjustments for all current employees as well as expenditures required to provide the same level of service to the District as provided in FY17. She said that the total FY18 level service budget is \$45,332,330.00, a 4% increase over FY17.

F. Enrollment Update

The Superintendent reported on the student enrollment numbers as of February 1, 2017. He said enrollment had remained fairly stable over the last month, with K-12 enrollment increasing by five students, from 2,523 to 2,528.

G. Subcommittee Reports

1. Budget & Finance

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the Budget & Finance Committee's January 18, 2017 meeting.

The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

2. Building & Grounds

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee's January 25, 2017 meeting.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

H. Personnel

Mr. Craig Hardimon, Director of Human Resources, reported on the last month's personnel changes.

X. Public Forum – Session II

A member of the public said that the bus transporting out-of-district students to Minuteman High School is "absolutely full." She asked that the School Committee keep in mind that bus transportation to Minuteman is "not a fixed cost" and an additional bus may be required in the near future.

XI. Reports

A. Chairman's

The Chairman reported that he would like the School Committee to conduct a self-assessment.
Mr. Portz recognized Kourtney Kennedy of the Watertown High School field hockey team who was chosen as the National High School Field Hockey Athlete of the Year.

B. Superintendent's

The Superintendent recognized the Watertown Educators Association and Watertown Community Foundation for their work in support of the District's programming.

He recognized WPS' Lauren Harrison, Maryann MacDougall, and Yvonne Endara for being invited to present their "Bilingualism is a Gift" initiative at a national conference.

The Superintendent highlighted the "Safe Routes to School" program in process for Hosmer Elementary School.

Dr. Brackett said that he and Ms. DeLai had begun to discuss a partnership of the Town and the District's facilities departments.

XII. Next Meeting – Monthly School Committee Meeting – Proposed Change to March 13, 2017

The next School Committee meeting was said to be scheduled for March 13, 2017.

XIII. New Business

No new business was discussed.

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 PM.

Meeting Documents:

[Statement - Respecting Diversity](#)

[NEASC Report on WHS](#)

[WHS NEASC Accreditation Presentation](#)

[Memo - Building for the Future Update](#)

[February 2017 Request for Qualifications](#)

[2017 Subcommittee Assignment Recommendation](#)

[School Committee Policy BDE \(Subcommittee Assignments\)](#)

[Memo – Recommendation to Reclassify District Administration Positions](#)

[Memo - Report of Focus Groups for Superintendent Search](#)

[2017-2018 Draft School Calendar](#)

[Memo - FY17 Monthly Budget Update](#)

[Memo - FY18 Level Service Budget](#)

[Memo - FY17 Quarter 2 Budget Transfer Requests](#)

[Memo - Reallocation of FY17 Capital Project Funds](#)

[Memo – Upit Family Scholarship](#)

[February 2017 Enrollment Report](#)

[Hosmer Traffic Map](#)

Submitted by Christie Fisher, Administrative Assistant to the Central Office