

**Watertown School Committee
Minutes
March 13, 2017**

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

I. Roll Call

Mr. John Portz, Chairman, called the March 13, 2017 meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Present were School Committee members Ms. Kendra Foley, Dr. Guido Guidotti, Ms. Eileen Hsü-Balzer, Mr. Mark Sideris, and Ms. Elizabeth Yusem. Also present were Interim Superintendent Dr. John R. Brackett, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Theresa B. McGuinness, Director of Human Resources Mr. Craig Hardimon, Director of Business Services Ms. Mary C. DeLai, Director of Student Services Ms. Kathleen Desmarais, and various members of the public. Dr. Candace Miller, School Committee member, was not in attendance.

II. Adjourn to Executive Session: 6:30 PM

The School Committee adjourned to an Executive Session for discussion of strategy with respect to non-union contracts, including but not limited to the superintendent, and WEA and SEIU negotiations as an open meeting may have had a detrimental effect on the WPS' bargaining position.

III. Return to Open Session: 7:00 PM

IV. Student Advisors

Mr. Isaac Gibbons reported that students are beginning to register for AP testing and that seniors have begun to pay their class dues for end-of-year events. Ms. Julia DuNoyer reported that the varsity basketball team lost a close game to Hanover in the semi-finals.

V. Approval of Gifts

Ms. Toni Carlson, Chair of the WCA-TV Board, announced a contribution of \$40,000.00 from the Board towards the continuation of the video production program at Watertown High School.

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$40,000.00 from WCA-TV to support the video production program at Watertown High School.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

VI. Public Forum – Session I

No member of the public spoke.

VII. Action Item – Discussion and Vote on Hiring a Permanent Superintendent

The Chairman summarized the process of the search for Watertown's permanent Superintendent. The Search Committee had narrowed the decision from 31 initial applicants to two finalists, Dr. Arthur Unobskey and Dr. Deanne Galdston.

A motion was made to proceed with discussion related to the superintendency and the appointment of a Superintendent of Schools.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

Ms. Kendra Foley thanked the Search Committee and the staff who have aided the search process. Ms. Foley said that, while both candidates have been proven to be strong and qualified, she ultimately supported Dr. Galdston to fill the position. Ms. Foley referenced Dr. Galdston's exemplary leadership skills, engagement,

candor, and clarity of purpose.

Ms. Eileen Hsü-Balzer thanked the participants in the search process for their time and contributions. Ms. Hsü-Balzer stated her support of Dr. Galdston to fill Watertown's superintendency. She said that she admired Dr. Galdston's communication with and familiarity of her current staff, and expected her to foster similarly fulfilling relationships within Watertown Public Schools.

Ms. Elizabeth Yusem thanked the Search Committee for their services. Ms. Yusem stated her support for Dr. Galdston. Ms. Yusem praised Dr. Galdston's aptitude for making human connections and her ability to be a collaborator and systems-thinker.

Mr. Mark Sideris gave his thanks to the Search Committee, administration, and public for their involvement in the search process thus far. Mr. Sideris said that he supported Dr. Galdston for the superintendency, commending her focus on student achievement and her positive relationships with the staff of her current district.

Mr. Guido Guidotti thanked the participants of the search process. Dr. Guidotti stated his support of Dr. Galdston; he said that he could see Dr. Galdston remaining in Watertown long-term, bringing Watertown Public Schools from Level 2 to Level 1.

Mr. John Portz noted both candidates' experience and qualifications but said he ultimately supported Dr. Galdston to fill the role of Superintendent.

A motion was made to approve Dr. Deanne Galdston as Superintendent of Watertown Public Schools beginning July 1, 2017, subject to successful completion of contract negotiations.
The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously with one member not present for the vote.

The Chairman called for a short recess to place a phone call to Dr. Galdston, notifying her of the vote and congratulating her on the position.

VIII. Teaching and Learning Showcase – Report on District's Food Services

Mr. Stephen Marshall, Director of Food Services, presented a report on the District's food services. Mr. Marshall reported that the District was awarded the Chef Ann Grant, with a \$50,000.00 budget to fund a new service line at Watertown Middle School, a new dishwasher at J. R. Lowell Elementary School, and upgrades to the District's point of sale (POS) system. Mr. Marshall said that the District is committed to purchasing locally sourced, sustainable food whenever possible; it was said that 80% of the District's produce is procured through Russo's Market, local beef and mushroom burgers are from Arnold Meats, and fish comes from NorthCoast Seafoods. Mr. Marshall said that by September, all five of Watertown's schools would be equipped with a salad bar.

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

A. 2017-18 School Calendar

Dr. John Brackett, Interim Superintendent, provided the School Committee with a draft of the 2017-2018 school calendar for their review and approval. Dr. Brackett recommended that schools and District offices remain open on Good Friday in 2018. Though the District has historically closed schools and offices on Good Friday, Dr. Brackett recommended the change to open schools and offices that day in respect of Watertown's ethnic and religious diversity. Dr. Brackett said that staff and students who wish to observe Good Friday would have their absences excused.

Dr. Brackett noted that the overall number of half days for professional development had been limited due to feedback from the community.

Five members of the School Committee noted their support of Dr. Brackett's recommended 2017-

2018 calendar, particularly in regards to a full day of school on Good Friday. One School Committee member noted that the Watertown teachers' Unit A contract allows teachers to be absent for up to two days for religious observance without penalty of their allotted personal, sick, or bedside care days. Another School Committee member said that he would support a full day of school on Good Friday since families could individually decide which days to observe.

One School Committee member said he thought it was hypocritical to treat Good Friday and Christmas differently.

The Chairman said he would be concerned that a day of school on Good Friday could become non-functional if many teachers and staff members take the day off for religious observance. In response to the last School Committee member's comments, the Chairman said that Christmas day is somewhat different because it is encapsulated within the annual weeklong winter break.

A motion was made to accept the 2017-2018 school calendar as recommended by the Superintendent.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

B. Hiring Consultant for Building for the Future

The Superintendent announced to the School Committee that he was pleased to recommend the award of a contract to Ai3Architects of Wayland, Massachusetts for design consultation services to supplement the work of the Master Plan Facilities Study completed by SMMA in 2016. The contract was said not to exceed \$40,000.00. Dr. Brackett said that, with Watertown lacking abundant land for additional school space, Ai3 would be tasked with determining how to maximize school space for student population expected to grow in the coming years. The Chairman said there would be an opportunity for the public to weigh in before the completion of Ai3's report, as well as updates regarding the process during monthly School Committee meetings.

A motion was made to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to award a contract to Ai3 for design consulting services for the next steps in the District's Building for the Future initiative.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

C. Transfer of Unexpended Capital Improvement Funds to Preschool Expenses

Ms. Mary C. DeLai, Interim Director of Business Services, reported that the District had identified unexpended funds from fiscal years 2014, 2015, and 2016 totaling \$268,268.00. She said that the District was requesting a transfer of \$120,630.00 from the FY14 debt-funded capital projects to the FY17 capital project fund for pre-school design and construction. The District was also requesting a transfer of \$54,089.00 from the FY15 debt-funded capital projects to fund a \$54,089.00 deficit currently existing in the FY16 capital project funds account; the remaining balance of \$5,227.00 from this account would be transferred to the FY17 capital project fund to offset additional preschool design and construction costs. Finally, Ms. DeLai requested a transfer of \$32,322.00 from the FY15 capital project fund to FY17 capital project funds; of this transferred amount, \$16,089.00 would be used to offset preschool design and construction costs and the remaining \$16,233.00 would be used to partially offset a recent emergency boiler repair at Watertown Middle School.

A motion was made to approve the transfers as described.

The motion was seconded.

A School Committee member suggested a roll call vote for each of the transfers.

A motion was made to transfer \$120,630.00 from the FY14 debt-funded capital projects fund to the FY17 capital projects fund.

The motion was seconded.

A roll call vote was taken:

Sideris: Yes

Foley: Yes

Yusem: Yes

Hsü-Balzer: Yes

Portz: Yes

Guidotti: Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

A motion was made to transfer \$54,089.00 from the FY15 debt-funded capital projects fund to the FY16 capital projects fund.

The motion was seconded.

A roll call vote was taken:

Sideris: Yes

Foley: Yes

Yusem: Yes

Hsü-Balzer: Yes

Portz: Yes

Guidotti: Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

A motion was made to transfer \$32,322.00 from the FY15 debt-funded capital projects fund to the FY17 capital projects fund.

The motion was seconded.

A roll call vote was taken:

Sideris: Yes

Foley: Yes

Yusem: Yes

Hsü-Balzer: Yes

Portz: Yes

Guidotti: Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

D. Approval of Gifts:

1. Watertown Savings Bank

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$1,000.00 from Watertown Savings Banks to support the robotics team at Watertown High School.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

X. Reports

A. High School Program of Studies

Ms. Shirley Lundberg, principal of Watertown High School, reported on the school's 2017-2018 Program of Studies. Changes were made to last year's document but were mostly minor, including updated or clarified language, the erasure of some courses, and the addition of courses such as new entry-level art classes, Honors Arabic V, Transitional Algebra, and Honors Environmental Science.

A School Committee member asked for clarification between AP and capstone courses, both of which prepare students for college. Ms. Lundberg responded that AP classes are backed by the College Board and give students the opportunity to earn college credits, while capstone classes simply prime students for college.

A member of the School Committee noted a strong demand among students to add drama courses. She asked if there is a plan, perhaps within the next year's budget cycle, to add a drama program. Ms. Ludberg said that it is a possibility, but adding drama may mean cutting other electives.

B. FY17 Monthly Budget Update

Ms. Mary DeLai, Interim Director of Business Services, presented a monthly update on the FY17 budget. She said that as of February 28, 2017 there was an unencumbered available balance of \$2,191,001.00 with 95% of the budget expended or encumbered as of February 28, 2017.

C. FY18 Capital Budget Presentation to Town Subcommittee

Ms. Mary DeLai, Director of Business Services, briefly reviewed the FY18 budget presentation she had made to the Town subcommittee. She said that the Town's approval of the budget would enable a successful FY18 for Watertown Public Schools' planned capital projects.

D. Enrollment Update

Dr. John Brackett, Interim Superintendent, presented a monthly update to student enrollment numbers across the District. The number of enrolled student stayed mostly steady, with the District's total enrollment equaling 2,660, three (3) students fewer than the previous month's report.

E. Lowell Principal Hiring Update

Dr. John Brackett, Interim Superintendent, reported that the District was in the process of conducting first-round interviews to hire a permanent principal for J. R. Lowell Elementary School. He said that Forty-nine applicants had been narrowed to eight candidates. He said that two or three finalists would be invited to visit and tour the Lowell school and meet with members of the community in a public meeting.

F. Subcommittee Report: Budget and Finance

Dr. Guido Guidotti, member of the Budget & Finance Subcommittee, reported on the March 7, 2017 meeting of the subcommittee. Topics at the meeting included District administration, athletics, and technology. He said the next meeting of the subcommittee was to be held on March 20, 2017 with an agenda including discussion around curriculum, wellness, English language learners (ELLs), and foreign language in the elementary schools (FLES).

G. Personnel

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

XI. Public Forum – Session II

A member of the public said that an informational session on Minuteman Technical High School would be held on the evening of March 21, 2017 at Watertown Middle School.

XII. Reports

A. Chairman's

Mr. John Portz, Chairman, said that there would be a School Committee meeting in the coming weeks with agenda items to include the approval of the Statement of Interest for Watertown High School and the likely finalization of a contract for Dr. Deanne Galdston.

B. Superintendent's

Dr. John R. Brackett, Interim Superintendent, reported that he had heard from a number of parents and community members regarding a mascot for Watertown High School. He said he would soon be sending to the School Committee his recommendation for a process to choose a mascot.

XIII. Next Meeting

The Chairman noted the next monthly School Committee meeting was scheduled for April 3, 2017.

XIV. New Business

A member of the School Committee reminded the community to move their cars from the WPS parking lots by 6:00 AM following a snow emergency.

XV. Recess to Executive Session

A motion was made to adjourn the open session to adjourn to an Executive Session for a discussion of strategy with respect to non-union contracts, including but not limited to the superintendent and WEA and SEIU negotiations as an open meeting may have had a detrimental effect on the WPS' bargaining position. The motion was seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

Sideris: Yes

Foley: Yes

Yusem: Yes

Hsü-Balzer: Yes

Portz: Yes

Guidotti: Yes

The motion passed unanimously with one School Committee member not present for the vote.

XVI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Meeting Documents:

Superintendent's Recommended FY18 Budget

Memo: Process for Identifying a High School Mascot (Draft)

Memo: Monthly Budget Update

Superintendent's Recommended FY18 Budget Presentation

Enrollment Report