

WESTBROOK BOARD OF EDUCATION
EDUCATE, CHALLENGE, & INSPIRE

<p>WESTBROOK BOARD OF EDUCATION Tuesday, May 12, 2020 Regular Board of Education Meeting Google Meet</p>
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MINUTES

BOE Members Present: Lee Bridgewater, Sally Greaves, Zachary Hayden, Mary Ella Luft, Michelle Palumbo, Don Perreault, Mike Esposito, Kim Walker

Absent: Christine Kuehlewind

Also Present: Superintendent Patricia A. Ciccone; Business Manager, Lesley Wysocki, Administrators Tara Winch, Ruth Rose, Taylor Wrye, Madeline Illinger, Technology Director, Ben Russell, Atty. Leander Dolphin, members of the community

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Regular BOE meeting of May 12, 2020 was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Lee Bridgewater, Chair.
- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- III. **BOARD OF EDUCATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**
 - A. **CABE Student Leadership Awards:**
WMS Students, Kevin Villeda Garcia and Catalina Martinez Mora and WHS students, Madison Libertore and Olivia Hartzell were recognized as the CABE Student Leadership Award recipients. Mr. Wrye, WMS Principal, talked about the accomplishments of Kevin and Catalina and Ms. Winch spoke about the deserving WHS students, Madison and Olivia.
 - B. **CAS Scholar Leader Awards:** WMS students Olivia Palumbo and Leticia Pires were recognized as the CAS Scholar Leader Award recipients. The award winners will receive Certificates of Excellence for their accomplishments. Mr. Wrye spoke about the accomplishments of Olivia and Leticia.
 - C. **Teacher/Staff Appreciation** – L. Bridgewater, Chair, acknowledged teachers and staff for Teacher Appreciation week; especially for their efforts with distance learning.
- IV. **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT:** Jesse McGannon reported that students have adjusted well to distance learning. Technical difficulties were worked out promptly – AP

exams are beginning this week. Ian Whitehouse reported it is his opinion that seniors would like an in-person graduation ceremony when safe to do so.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chris Ehlert spoke as a resident of Westbrook, noting the overall temperature of the BOE and the bipartisan hostility. He expressed concern for the timeline on the Superintendent Search stating that the priority should be to hire a Superintendent, especially considering the need to hire two other administrators. Mr. Ehlert also implored the Board to take action on the issue of the First Selectman's request to participate as Ex-Officio on the BOE, as it has appeared on the agenda several times. Mr. Ehlert also applauded the Superintendent and administrators on what has been accomplished during these unusual circumstances.

Mr. Michael Susi expressed appreciation to teachers and administrators for their hard work and appreciation to the Board for the opportunity to participate in this meeting, and suggested that meetings continue to be broadcast live to increase transparency.

VI. ADMINISTRATOR(S) COMMENTS (See Item VIII. C)

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Policy 6172.6 – Distance Education Policy – First Reading and possible action: K. Walker, Policy Subcommittee Chair, reported that with the help of Counsel from Shipman and Goodwin, the Distance Education policy has been updated to include Covid 19 language and to merge with the current WPS policy. In the interest of approving the revisions quickly, and to establish a committee on Distance Learning, the Board was asked to vote to approve Policy 6172.6 – Distance Education Policy, as revised. Moved by M. Esposito and seconded by D. Perreault. Vote unanimous
- B. Review of Administrative Structure
 - 1. Possible action: Formation of a Sub-Committee to study Administrative Structure
The Chair, L. Bridgewater, surveyed the Board for a consensus on this agenda item. It was the consensus to create a subcommittee to study Administrative Structure; however, it was suggested to table this item and to wait to have a new or interim superintendent in place. A special meeting will be scheduled to review the RFP's as soon as possible.

The Board moved into Executive session at 7:50 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- C. Discussion of confidential attorney client privileged written memorandum (Board consideration of DCF Reporting Procedure and Concerns)
Discussion of matters that would result in the disclosure of exempt matters.
- D. Discussion of confidential attorney client privileged written memorandum Student

Expulsion Process and authority of the Board to rescind Expulsion decisions
Discussion of matters that would result in the disclosure of exempt matters.

- E. Discussion of confidential attorney client privileged written memorandum (Overview of Board policies, by-laws, statutory obligations, Robert's Rules and the Freedom of Information Act).
Discussion of matters that would result in the disclosure of exempt matters.

Moved to Regular Session at 9:35 p.m.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- A. Enrollment: Superintendent Ciccone reported May enrollment totals of 672 students, (Pre-K through 12, which includes 6 out placed students.)
- B. Science Curriculum Presentation – C. Eichler, C. Lepore, J. Ouellette
BOE members received the Science curriculum previous to this meeting from Ms. Eichler for their review. Ms. Eichler and Ms. Lepore provided a presentation to the BOE of the Grades 5-8 Science curriculum. Ms. Eichler expressed appreciation to Mr. Pennella, Ms. Ouellette and Ms. Lepore for their work on the Science curriculum. The Superintendent recommended the BOE approve the 5-8 science curriculum as presented. Moved by D. Perreault and seconded by M. Palumbo. Vote unanimous Ms. Eichler and her team were commended for their work.
- C. Distance Learning Presentation(s) – R. Rose, T. Wrye, T. Winch, M. Illinger, B. Russell
The three administrators and IT Coordinator provided a thorough presentation to the Board on our Distance Learning efforts and programming. Each administrator outlined what the teachers and support staff provide to the students on a typical day, utilizing familiar resources and assessments. Points of effectiveness included were: collaboration of teachers, co-teaching, student contact with school counselors, assistance from paraprofessionals, one-on-one teaching and with special education students, OT, PT, Teletherapy, meetings with parents and students in a virtual manner. Mr. Russell, IT Director and Coordinator, provided information on the use of Google tools, emails, etc. A staff survey shows a positive response of 74%, 17% Neutral and 9% negative (with a 6% margin of error). At the time of the survey, teachers responded that they would like more training on Distance Learning. Z. Hayden commented that there is a lot to celebrate. Superintendent Ciccone reported a survey will be going out to parents/guardians and students on Wednesday, 5/13. K. Walker appreciated the surveys and questioned how the faculty is coordinating student workload. Superintendent Ciccone responded that she has heard from parents on that topic. A parent survey will help with that and determine if teachers need to be more mindful of how we are reaching out to students with difficulties. K. Walker also talked about grading and distractions students experience at home with distance learning
- D. Graduation/Promotion(s): Superintendent Ciccone reported that there has been no final decision about what graduation will look like and that districts are still waiting

for final guidance from the Commissioner of Education. A Q & A meeting is planned for Friday at 11:00 to allow Superintendents to discuss and question final guidance. Suggestions are being collected from students/PTO's/student advisors, etc. She said anything we attempt to do must meet Department of Health guidelines. Ms. Winch and the graduation committee have been holding senior class meetings and having conversations with students. Most students are holding out for something in person but can't schedule anything at the moment. She said there can be several plans/activities. Items are being ordered in the case of a virtual celebration Communication is going on between administrators and Project Graduation. With regard to the middle school, Mr. Wrye is gathering information as well. For the elementary school there are virtual activities being planned and discussion of a virtual field trip to the middle school.

- E. Closure Orders - Distance Learning/Student Meals/Extended School Year:
Superintendent Ciccone noted that the closure orders for the rest of the academic year, also order a continuation of Distance Learning and feeding program. More guidance is planned for ESY/summer school priorities and a Q & A and written guidance on graduation.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Discussion & possible action on retention of outside attorney and/or law firm to advise the Board of Education regarding the First Selectman's role and authority relative to the Board of Education. L. Bridgewater, Chair, said this item was requested to be placed on the agenda by C. Kuehlewind. First Selectman Noel Bishop did request the item to be removed for now from the agenda; however the Chair is requesting some action on the part of the Board. She surveyed the Board and it was the consensus to follow the advice of CBE indicating the statute to which the First Selectman is referring to does not pertain to Boards of Education and the Town has no charter stating his role in authority as it pertains to the BOE. A motion was made by Z. Hayden to not allow a special exception to allow the First Selectman to attend BOE Executive Sessions as Ex-officio and seconded by S. Greaves. Vote unanimous with the understanding by M. Esposito that the First Selectman is withdrawing this item. S. Greaves commented that she can never recall a First Selectman being a part of Executive Session. M. Esposito commented he does not support a motion and that he would like a conversation with Mr. Bishop. A vote was taken: Z. Hayden (Aye), M. Palumbo (Aye), M. Luft (Aye), S. Greaves (Aye), L. Bridgewater (Aye); K. Walker (Abstain), D. Perreault (Abstain), M. Esposito (No).
Motion carries: 5 – Aye, 2-Abstain, 1 - No

M. Esposito requested a discussion on a previous agenda item and asked when the last day of school is scheduled. The last day of school on the BOE approved calendar is June 11th. Superintendent Ciccone responded graduation is scheduled for June 12th; however most likely will not be an in person event throughout the month of June. Dates for specific activities could be cancelled based on information from Dept. of Public Health and

Commissioner of Education. Again, more guidance is coming this week. T. Winch said suggestions will continue to be accepted and there is a Google doc on Class of 2020 page which is different from Project Graduation.

X. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes:

1. Regular Meeting – April 07, 2020: Moved by M. Palumbo and seconded by M. Luft to approve the minutes of April 7, 2020 with one amendment from K. Walker, which is to add M. Esposito to Item V. C as having requested a special meeting to discuss distance learning. Vote unanimous.

XI. FINANCIAL REPORTS – L. Wysocki,

- A. Approved Budget/Covid19 Implications: L. Wysocki, Business Manager, stated that she has been tracking Covid related expenses for reimbursement of 75%. Also, on the topic of spring stipends, she asked for direction from the BOE relative to sport(s) stipends. There has been some conversation of coaches working with students virtually. She provided information from CASBO survey of other districts. Results thus far: 34 responses – 22 no payments; 4 payments; 6 partial payments and 2 working on an agreement. Our district stipends for spring are comprised of 18 individuals, which includes some WEA members and amounts to \$70,693. Z. Hayden suggested appointing a committee to discuss with WEA. The Negotiations Subcommittee agreed to meet (S. Greaves, D. Perreault, M. Palumbo, Lee Bridgewater) to study the matter further. Ms. Wysocki also asked for a consensus of what direction to move in with end of year funds. D. Perreault suggested 2% to Capital Projects, additional funding to the Health Reserve and to look carefully at the needs for next year and prioritize. This was the consensus of the Board.
- B. Review of Check Listing: Board members reviewed check listings for April 2, 2020 in the amount of \$266,862.39, April 16, 2020 in the amount of \$85,037.56, and April 30, 2020 in the amount of \$67,470.32.
- C. Budget Narrative/Review of Expenditure Report. L. Wysocki updated the Board.
- D. Line Item Transfer - None
- E. Insurance Report – Ms. Wysocki reported we are in good standing with the Insurance report this year but predicts the following year may not be as promising.

XII. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Policy– K. Walker reported the Committee will meet on 5/21 to continue the review process.
- B. Long Range Planning – M. Palumbo (no meeting)
- C. Insurance - L. Bridgewater (no meeting)
- D. Negotiations - S. Greaves – Sally will call Cecilia to set up a meeting
- E. Town Energy Ad Hoc Committee – L. Wysocki referred to C. Ehlert. He reported the solar array went live and there is a certificate of operation. The Committee was charged with and proposing a procedure for requesting new light installations.

- F. PTSO Representatives –M. Luft, Z. Hayden, M. Esposito (no meetings)
- G. Superintendent Search Sub Committee
 - 1. Discussion and possible action related to RFP: K. Walker reported RFP is on Town and School websites. 5 were sent out. There have been three responses and one more is coming. A meeting will be scheduled to review the submissions.

XIII. PERSONNEL

A. Professional Resignation(s) Vote Anticipated

- 1. **Taylor Wrye** – Superintendent Ciccone reported that Taylor Wrye, WMS Principal, submitted his resignation effective June 30, 2020. *Superintendent Ciccone recommended the Board accept with deep regret the resignation of Taylor Wrye, effective June 30, 2020. Moved by Z. Hayden and seconded by M. Palumbo. Vote unanimous.*

B. Hiring and Interims – Discussion:

Superintendent Ciccone notified the Board of a possibility of a potential candidate for an Interim principal for the middle school and also an arrangement for an Interim Special Services Director.

- XIV. ADJOURN:** Moved by M. Palumbo and seconded by M. Luft to adjourn at 12:25 a.m.
Vote unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Walker, Board Secretary

Cecilia S. Lester, Board Recording Clerk