

**Watertown School Committee
Minutes
April 3, 2017**

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

I. Roll Call

Mr. John Portz, Chairman, called the April 3, 2017 meeting to order at 6:00PM. 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: 6:00 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

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

IV. High School Student Advisors

Ms. Julia DuNoyer reported on recent events at Watertown high School such as the student art exhibit, *Shrek* the musical, and parent-teacher conferences. She also reported that the school had raised \$500.00 for the Jimmy Fund. She said that Aurora Fiddler and Emma McGoldrick were awarded first place in the Will McDonagh Writing Contest.

Mr. Isaac Gibbons reported that in April, the music program would travel to New York City. He said the Mr. WHS Contest and Lip Sync Battle were upcoming fundraisers. In regards to spring sports, he said the cheerleading team had recently won the North Division Championships.

V. Action Items – Discussion and Vote: Superintendent Contract for Dr. Deanne Galdston

A motion was made to approve a contract for Dr. Deanne Galdston.

The motion was seconded.

The Chairman noted this contract is effective for three years beginning July 1, 2017. The contract awarded Dr. Galdston a \$175,000.00 salary for the first year, with the possibility of annual performance-based increases.

A roll call vote was taken.

Sideris: Yes

Miller: Yes

Foley: Yes

Yusem: Yes

Hsü-Balzer: Yes

Portz: Yes

Guidotti: Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Deanne Galdston thanked the School Committee, the Watertown community, and her family for their support and enthusiasm regarding her superintendency. She said she “can’t wait to get started on the work” ahead.

VI. Public Hearing

A. Presentation of FY18 Proposed Budget

Dr. John Brackett, Interim Superintendent, said that his recommended FY18 budget would be presented at this evening's meeting and on April 6, 2017 the School Committee would reconvene to vote on its approval. Dr. Brackett thanked Ms. Mary DeLai, Interim Director of Business Services, for her tireless efforts in collaborating with staff to create the FY18 Recommended Budget book.

Dr. Brackett said that the FY18 budget priorities include enhancement of teaching and learning, closing the achievement gap, social-emotional learning, community engagement, and facilities/infrastructure. FY18 budget drivers were said to include maintenance of class sizes, adjustments to staffing to accommodate enrollment shifts, meeting of collective bargaining agreements, expansion of professional development offerings, enhancement of special education programming, focus on students' social-emotional learning needs, support of technology shifts, and support to the new leadership team.

Ms. DeLai presented the FY18 preliminary budget summary, the total of which was \$45,751,858.00, a 5% increase over the FY17 budget. She noted the majority of the growth is attributed to the salaries and compensation of WPS staff, but that tuition and transportation for special education out-of-district placements was also an area of growth. Ms. DeLai summarized the budgetary changes, the changes from level service to the preliminary budget, and the preliminary budget by cost center.

B. Public Comment

A member of the public asked how Watertown's peer districts have been determined. She also asked how the budget was categorized and if it could be broken down into further categories such as Special Education.

A member of the public said that the FY17 budget had been lauded as effective and innovative; he said that more data and more detail do not equal better information and insight. He said that the FY18 Recommended Budget Book is full of data and charts but that it does not answer the fundamental question of how students will be served at the current or improved levels with fewer bodies in each classroom.

A member of the public asked why the FY18 budget for vocational education is \$35,635.00 lower than the FY17 budget if the number of applications to Minuteman Vocational High School is expected to rise.

A member of the public asked for clarification on the budgetary numbers listed on pages 55-56 of the FY18 Recommended Budget Book.

A member of the public, a parent of children attending Hosmer Elementary School, said she and other Hosmer parents are concerned about staffing cuts and class sizes at the school.

C. School Committee Discussion

Ms. DeLai clarified that peer districts were chosen on a basis of cost per pupil.

A School Committee member asked if spending priorities were pre-determined if there was to be additional available funding from the town. Dr. Brackett responded that priorities would likely be determined if and when additional town funds became available.

A School Committee member asked how an increase in student enrollment and subsequent class size increases would be addressed within the FY17 budget. Dr. Brackett responded that the District will continue to monitor enrollment numbers, both actual and projected, and will utilize its new centralized registration to keep classes within recommended guidelines.

A member of the School Committee asked the Town Council President to clarify if there were

A member of the School Committee thanked the School Department for its efforts to create such a comprehensive budget. She said she appreciated that the budget maintained adequate funding for existing programs such as the fine arts.

A member of the School Committee thanked the WPS leadership team for their hard work in creating the budget. She said that she appreciated the “deep dive” that the administration took into past budgets, making changes that were necessary though not necessarily easy. She said she shared some parents’ concern regarding a cut of two teachers at Hosmer Elementary School but ultimately supported the School Department in their decisions.

The Chairman noted the budget’s strong support of the educational community, including Special Education and relatively low class sizes.

A School Committee member said she hoped the committee would choose to partake in professional development as a team using funds allotted to the committee.

VII. Public Forum – Session I

The principal of Hosmer Elementary School said that high-needs students account for 46.9% of the student body at the school. He said that he would respectfully request his teaching staff not be reduced as his student enrollment figures had not decreased.

A member of the public said she highly recommended the public attend one of Dr. Brackett’s Superintendent Coffee Hours. Dr. Brackett said the next scheduled Coffee Hour was on April 26, 2017 at 9:00 AM.

VIII. Teaching and Learning Showcase: Report on Early Literacy Institute and Progress from Social-Emotional Roundtable

Dr. Theresa McGuinness said she and a team of WPS staff had been meeting biweekly to address the present and future of Watertown’s students’ social-emotional learning (SEL). The group was said to be researching and studying available resources with the intent of determining ways to enhance SEL within the district.

Dr. McGuinness said that in recent weeks she and a team of WPS teachers and administrators had visited WGBH to meet with Harvard Graduate School education experts who helped them, along with multiple other districts, to determine strengths and opportunities of early literacy programming in WPS. She said the district had just implemented the beginning steps to improve the initiative. She said that in two weeks, the team would have a follow-up meeting to continue professional development in the area.

IX. Action Items – Discussion and Vote:

A. Vote on “School Choice” Program

A motion was made to abstain from participation in the School Choice program for the 2017-2018 school year for reasons of space, class size, and financial equity.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Process for Identifying High School Mascot

Dr. John Brackett presented a draft of a process by which a mascot could be chosen for Watertown High School. He said that the school and its athletic teams have been known as “The Raiders” but a mascot has not been associated with this team in recent years. Dr. Brackett recommended a process to choose a mascot that would begin with an announcement seeking community members’ input; submissions of ideas would be collected and examined by a carefully chosen Selection Committee who would select two to three submissions to recommend to the School Committee for adoption of one mascot with public input.

A School Committee member said she approved of the process as drafted, but questioned what sort of timeline for the process would make sense for the district. The Chairman said he would be in favor of beginning the process “sooner rather than later.”

A School Committee member said she hoped the selection committee would be inclusive of a broad spectrum of community members and not just the Athletics Department.

A motion was made to move forward with the selection process as outlined by the Superintendent, with a timeline for the process determined by the next School Committee meeting.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

C. Approval of Overnight Field Trip – Camp Sunshine in Casco, Maine

A motion was made to approve an overnight field trip for a group of 11th and 12th grade students from Watertown High School to visit Camp Sunshine in Casco, Maine from October 6, 2017 to October 10, 2017 and from February 21, 2018 to February 25, 2018.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. March 22, 2017 Special School Committee Meeting

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

E. Approval of Gifts:

1. Carolyn Parker

A motion was made to accept a donation of a violin from Ms. Carolyn Parker to Watertown Public Schools.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

2. Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. – Six (6) Donations

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$2,125.00 from the Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. for the Student Book Award at Hosmer Elementary School.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$1,958.00 from the Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. for Lego We-Do 2.0 at Hosmer Elementary School.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$1,000.00 from the Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. for Watertown Week at Watertown Middle School.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$895.00 from the Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. for the Decodable Book Library at Hosmer Elementary School.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$600.00 from the Watertown Community

Foundation, Inc. for “Picture Writing” at Hosmer Elementary School.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$5,000.00 from the Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. from the Watertown Community Foundation, Inc. for Project-Based Learning at Watertown Public Schools.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

3. Watertown Democratic Town Committee

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$1,000.00 from the Watertown Democratic Town Committee for Watertown Middle School’s trip to Washington, D.C.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

4. Murphy Sisters Foundation, Inc.

A motion was made to accept a donation of \$750.00 from the Murphy Sisters Foundation, Inc. for Watertown High School’s pre-prom meeting.
The motion was seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

X. Reports

A. Lowell Principal Hiring Update

The Superintendent reported that Ms. Stacy Phelan had been chosen to fill the principal position at J. R. Lowell Elementary School effective July 1, 2017. The School Committee Chairman welcomed Ms. Phelan aboard.

B. FY17 Monthly Budget Update

Ms. Mary C. DeLai, Interim Director of Business Services, reported that as of March 31, 2017 the District projected a fiscal year-end balance of \$361,717.00. She said that variables that may impact the year-end balance may include unsettled collective bargaining agreements and retroactive salary adjustments, unanticipated out-of-district special education placements, unanticipated additional staffing, unanticipated medical/extended leaves of absence, an unanticipated increase in daily substitute teacher usage, unanticipated stipends, and further revenue shortfalls. Ms. DeLai recommended that any unused Operating Budget balance by the end of FY17 be utilized to pay tuitions that have been charged to the FY17 circuit breaker, allowing for a stronger reserve entering FY18.

C. Enrollment Update

The Superintendent reported on the last month’s changes to student enrollment numbers across the District. As of March 31, 2017, the total number of students enrolled in the District was 2,665, an increase of five (5) students over the prior month.

D. Subcommittee Report: Budget & Finance

Dr. Candace Miller, Chair of the Budget & Finance Subcommittee, said there had been recent meetings of the subcommittee on March 20, 2017 and March 22, 2017. Materials were said to be listed online.

E. Personnel

Mr. Craig Hardimon reported on the last month’s personnel changes within the District.

XI. Public Forum – Session II

No member of the public spoke.

XII. Reports

A. Chairman's

The Chairman said the School Committee's summer meeting schedule was forthcoming.

B. Superintendent's

The Superintendent brought attention to Hosmer Elementary School's recent International Day; he highlighted a document that had been created by students and teachers to record ways of saying "family," "friends," and "love" in multiple languages.

He said that Pat Ferdinand, girls' basketball coach, had just been recognized as Coach of the Year by the Basketball Officials Association. Additionally, the team had received the Division 2 Sportsmanship award.

XIII. Next Meeting

The next School Committee meeting, to include a vote on the FY18 budget, was said to be scheduled for April 6, 2017. The next monthly School Committee meeting was said to be scheduled for May 1, 2017.

XIV. New Business

A School Committee member asked if the School Committee would consider remote participation in meetings.

XV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 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](#)