

Waitsfield Elementary School
WAITSFIELD BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
Minutes
September 15, 2014 7:00 PM
Waitsfield Elementary School

ATTENDEES

Board Members Present: Helen Kellogg, Ben Loveless, Eve Frankel, Christine Sullivan, Rob Williams
WES and WWSU Members: Kaiya Korb, Brigid Scheffert

CALL TO ORDER

Rob Williams called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

DISCUSSION

Audience and Written Communication: none submitted.

Board letter: Rob Williams reviewed and took input upon a draft letter to the community; the letter will be submitted to the Valley Reporter and in this week's newsletter.

Educational Legislation and political activity update: Governor Shumlin wrote a letter to Secretary Holcombe covering a broad range of topics. Several key points will inform our discussion as we move into budgeting season: declining enrollment, student/staff ratios, use of paraprofessionals and class size. In many of these areas, Waitsfield Elementary School has a strong position; we don't have the low class sizes or high use of paraprofessionals referred to in the letter. The topline is that there is a lot going on in education today. Brigid spoke to Holcombe's engagement with and responsiveness to the field. She added that the Secretary and the Governor have a strong working relationship and that by virtue of her seat on the cabinet, the Secretary has visibility to the macro issues in the state that could influence education. Brigid noted the challenge around the increase in paraeducators across the state despite the

declining enrollment. This is driven largely by the safety-oriented nature of the support being provided for social and emotional challenges. This service needs to be considered outside of and beyond education, and needs financial support from social services. Coordinated and integrated services are required from birth on to tackle the challenges kids are facing.

Board Education: Kaiya reviewed a few of our adopted policies to ensure that we all are clear on adopted expectations.

D10: Public complaints about Personnel: This policy highlights the sequence of steps that ensures the proper parties are informed and that any such concern gets due attention and grievance recourse is allowed. Kaiya also pointed out that per the negotiated agreement, any complaint about personnel needs to be handled in a very specific manner (reported to the staff member in a given period of time), providing yet another reason to follow the process outlined in the policy. .

F30-R: truancy: This policy contains procedures for responding to extended absences. The school's action plan is focused on addressing tardiness and truancy and the resulting impact on a child's learning.

ACTION

Approval of Minutes: Eve Frankel made a motion to approve the minutes for August 18th, 2014. Ben Loveless seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Non-resident student exemption request follow up: The board has approved residency for a new family assuming a house closing before September 26th, one month after the start of school. The closing date was corrected from the August minutes to September 17th.

REPORTS

Financial report: We ended the last year in the black, despite our projection of being slightly in the red, due to some preschool partnership monies that arrived. Overall, the majority of the line items were managed below budget as we worked to address a staff compensation calculation error.

Principal's report: Aside from the lost day from the municipal water main breakage, our school year is off to a smooth start. Our student body at this point is 131 students grades K-6, and 146 including preschool. A significant change in our student body is that our special education caseload has decreased by more than a third. This shift has enabled our staff to focus more fully on optimizing the learning for all students, looking particularly at supports for students who might be struggling but not special education eligible. Kaiya reminded that we also reduced a staff person (our 5 Title position) in anticipation of this decrease in case load; our special educators are now supporting EST/MTSS work. We still have 1:1 supports for students for learning and behavior needs, and are meeting those needs in increasingly efficient ways – through Andrew Ripley from the Washington County Mental Health – and beyond. A focus thus so far has been to look at the social/emotional supports we provide. We are surveying all students, not just those with the most pressing and public displays of challenges. The school is also focused on skills like organization and self regulation, in addition to the curriculum content. Liz Belknap is our liaison with the WWSU literacy work. Tom Young and Dan Greenleaf, our WWSU math committee representatives, are working to build up our local math assessments, so we are not leaning purely on SBACs. Truancy and tardy rates are exceptionally low to date. The closing by the Mad River Path occurred for the land behind the

school and the land is now the property of the school. The safe routes to school travel plan continues to be an important initiative, lead by Leslie Badger. The municipal solar project continues. Kaiya is starting to work on budgeting in anticipation of a deeper conversation in November.

Washington West Representative Report: This was the first meeting of the year and the focus was on the work plan for the year. Top priorities include shared resources (centralization of meal services, technology etc); new initiatives including individualized learning plans at Harwood; evaluation of current governance and the implications of the consolidation being proposed; collective bargaining; and curriculum equity and opportunity across the WWSU.

Superintendent's Report: Brigid provided summary of where the last year ended and where the next one began in a "state of the state" update which has been shared with board members. It will live on the WWSU website with all attachments linked as an ongoing resource. These speak to the breadth of projects and topics underway that are moving within our WWSU. Funding discussions will be a key topic going forward including the exploration of a 501 (c) 3 as a framework for supporting our schools with local resources. Brigid also noted that Harwood has a large number of new hires and resulting new energy. This year will include 3 collective bargaining agreements, which will be significant in time and energy required.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30. The next meeting will be on October 20th 2014 at 7 pm at the Waitsfield Elementary School.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Kellogg
Clerk and Secretary