

A Caring School Community Dedicated To Excellence

**Regular Meeting
Regional School Unit No. 38
Board of Directors
Maranacook Community High School
March 19, 2014
Minutes of Meeting**

Members present: Chair David Greenham, Vice Chair Lynette Johnson, Michael Apolito, David Guillemette, Stephen Hayes, Jason Morgan, Marie Rodriguez, Bonnie Simcock, Madeline Snow, Richard Spencer
Members excused: Russell Evans, Melissa O'Neal, Jessica West
Administrators: Superintendent Donna Wolfrom, Principals Jeff Boston, Dwayne Conway, Pia Holmes, and Cathy Jacobs, Finance Manager Brigette Williams, Director of Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction Nancy Harriman, Technology Director Jan Kolenda, Math Integration Specialist Sarah Caban, Literacy Integration Specialist Barbara Bourgoine, Special Education Director Ryan Meserve, Adult Education Director Steve Vose

1. Call to order: Chair Greenham called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Consent Agenda:
 - a. Approval of Minutes of March 5, 2014
 - b. Approval of out-of-state travel Futures Without Violence Program, Washington DC, April 7-10, 2014
 - c. Acceptance of Donations
 - d. Acceptance of teacher resignation due to retirement – Elementary Art, Dona Seegers

Request was made to vote on the Consent Agenda items separately.
MOTION by S.Hayes, second by R.Spencer, to accept the minutes of March 5, 2014 as presented.
Motion Carried: 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention (Morgan)
MOTION by L.Johnson, second by R.Spencer to approve the out of state travel as outlined in item 2b.
Motion Carried: 9 in favor, 0 opposed
MOTION by R.Spencer, second by J.Morgan to accept the donations as outlined (Item 2c.)
Motion Carried: 9 in favor, 0 opposed
Madeline Snow arrived at 6:35
MOTION by R.Spencer, second by L.Johnson to accept the retirement of Dona Seegers with regret.
Motion Carried: 10 in favor, 0 opposed.
3. Citizens' comments: none
4. Additions/adjustments: none
Chair Greenham reported that a rally will be held at the State House on Monday, March 19 opposing cuts to general purpose aid to education. He asked members to attend if possible.
5. Action/Discussion/Informational Items:
 - a. Consideration of Release of Health Center Funds:

Superintendent Wolfrom provided a review of the \$36,000 reserve for the Health Center, outlining the options available for releasing the funds so they can be used toward the FY 15 budget. She met with the Health Center Advisory Committee and they were in agreement that the funds are not needed for the Health Center at this time and should be released. To do this, the Board needs to vote to recommend the release of funds so that it can be added as a warrant article at the Annual RSU 38 meeting or at a special RSU 38 budget meeting. She recommends the board vote to release the funds for consideration as a warrant article at the next RSU 38 Annual Meeting.

MOTION by B.Simcock, second by R.Spencer to recommend the release of \$36,000 held in a reserve for the Health Center to be added as a warrant article at the RSU 38 Annual Budget meeting. Discussion followed.

Motion Carried: 9 in favor, 1 opposed (Rodriguez)

b. School Law for Board Members Workshop:

Superintendent Wolfrom noted a School Law workshop for Board Members is coming up on April 30 in Bangor and May 1 in Portland. Any members interested in attending should contact Donna Foster.

6. Budget Workshop:

a. Updates: Superintendent Wolfrom provided the following updates:

- Revised enrollment projection chart for FY15 for elementary schools. Registration for Mt. Vernon kindergarten is now 27 so will be looking at the possibility of splitting the 27 students into two classes. Elementary enrollment projection is up 25 students. In response to the question several weeks ago about the State recommendation/requirement for class sizes, Superintendent Wolfrom reported it is 20:1 for kindergarten; average size shall not exceed 25:1 for grades 1-8. Currently we are well within those ranges and will continue to monitor it closely.
- Summary of budget reductions from Version 1. With the report that the health insurance cap will be 9.5%, and based on our experience rating being much better than last year, the budget amount for health insurance was reduced from 10% to 8%. Due to student needs in special education Ryan Meserve has reduced a special education self contained ed tech at the high school, and due to Donna Seegers' retirement, Donna Wolfrom met with the elementary principals and they believe art can be reduced by one-half day. In reviewing schedules, they believe the art programming for Wayne Elementary students can be accomplished in the morning without any reduction in art instruction.
- The second draft of the school summary budget shows a zero percent increase (actual decrease of \$28,025), but keeping in mind that Phoenix Academy will no longer be part of the RSU 38 budget. In reality this budget is still 122,000 above last year.
- Version 3 of the preliminary revenue sheet. With preliminary figures received from the State, the revenues show an increase of \$291,678 over last year. With these preliminary numbers we now have a shortfall of \$327,858.

b. Deliberations, follow-up and decision making – administrative recommendations:

Superintendent Wolfrom reported that following the March 5th meeting, she met with Al MacGregor and Brigette Williams regarding the proposal to change the middle school sports program to an intramural program. They developed an alternate proposal that would cover all of that money. Cuts include reducing the secretarial support in the high school front office to 4 hours per day and to raise the high school activity fee to \$75 and the middle school activity fee to \$50. They also talked about putting a system in place that holds people accountable for paying those fees. This proposal would reduce the local dollar revenue budget by \$3,500.

MOTION by B.Simcock to consider Option B and increase the activity fees as outlined. The motion was seconded by R.Spencer. Discussion followed. Concern was raised that there is still a ways to go in the budget work. Chair Greenham added that at this point the Board is not recommending a budget. The Board may need to revisit the big picture as they move forward. B.Simcock added that the families do have the Awesome Bear Society and Maranacook Education Foundation to help families that need assistance.

Motion Carried: 9 in favor, 1 opposed (Hayes).

Superintendent Wolfrom reported that the Board was provided with revised projected elementary enrollments for FY15 and there is concern about overcrowding at the elementary schools. The art and music rooms may need to be used as classroom space in some of the schools in the upcoming year. The A-Team has been studying several options for saving expenditures, using the lens of what's best for students and referring to the guiding principles. When the administration looked at the proposal which is being proposed, they felt it supported all these things. It provides the opportunity for a group of students to have access to increased programming such as chorus, band, accelerated math classes, possibly foreign language, increased Gifted and Talented services, increased opportunities for physical education and art, access to expanded media services for research purposes, access to participation in drama experiences, and expand the learning and social experiences with a larger group of students their own age. Teachers would have the opportunity to work as a team and possibly teach in their specialized areas of expertise and be able to coordinate content

curriculum and share resources. Students and teachers would work in a self contained grade level wing with a grade level lunch and recess period. There would be no impact to the transportation budget and it relieves overcrowding due to increased enrollment in the elementary schools. It saves \$63,000 in the FY15 budget. No one would lose their job, but it would cut 2 teaching positions, and the proposal meets all our guiding principals. Superintendent Wolfrom and the Administrative Team propose having a 5th grade wing at the Maranacook Middle School, with 22-23 students per class. They believe this is a win:win situation. Superintendent Wolfrom stated they do not expect a vote tonight, but recommends the board discuss this proposal, and regard it as a way to reduce expenditures while providing opportunities for students.

Discussion followed. Question was asked about how the United Arts (UA) program would work for students. Principal Jacobs responded that currently grades 6, 7 and 8 each has UA for 7 weeks, the schedule would be reduced to 6 weeks and the 5th grade would probably get one trimester each of art, music, and possibly foreign language.

What would this mean for Wayne Elementary? Wayne would probably go from a proposed combination grade 1/2 and grade 4/5 to a combination grade 3/4. Wayne Elementary needs to remain open; there is no room at the other elementary schools for those students.

It was noted that once feedback is received from the community that they know this is not a short term solution because at some point it could create a space problem at the middle school. Principal Jacobs responded that based on upcoming class enrollments, next year's 5th grade class is the largest class currently in the elementary schools, so this shouldn't become a problem.

Chair Greenham commented that you can't ask people to be creative and think outside the box and not expect any changes. He commended the Administrative Team for all the work they are doing to develop a budget and for coming up with this proposal.

Further discussion ensued regarding the opportunities for the students, suggestions for other scenarios such as having the first floor a 5/6 type environment. At this time the administrative team would like to pursue the plan as presented with the 5th grade being self contained in a wing of the building.

The building principals were asked about their thoughts about the culture of the schools as they are now and whether this move would affect it in any way.

Principal Holmes stated that although they would miss the 5th graders and it would put more work on the teachers left behind she honestly feels it is a good move. There is a space issue in both of her schools and the opportunities outweigh any concerns that she would have.

Principal Boston added that with any change there is a sense of loss, but is looking at this as new opportunities that would be a good fit and good opportunity for the fifth graders; must look at what's best for the kids.

Principal Jacobs added that the middle school would love to have the 5th graders and it would enhance the culture of the school.

c. Board Questions:

Superintendent Wolfrom reported that the administrative team is continuing to brainstorm and work on this.

d. Citizens comments regarding budget:

John Harker, Mt. Vernon resident provided written testimony (attached) and asked the Board to consider his ideas as a way to obtain better outcomes for the money the communities are investing in education.

e. Board discussion: none

7. **Adjournment: MOTION** and second to adjourn at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna H. Wolfrom, Superintendent/Secretary
Recorded by: D.Foster

School Budget Testimony
March 19, 2014

John Harker
Citizen of Mount Vernon

Last month I gave you an emotionally charged, impassioned plea to look for ways to reduce the food service budget while improving student participation in the program. Thank you Donna and Donna for capturing my suggestions accurately through my blubbering. I assure you I am an emotional blubberer, but not a blubbering idiot.....no comments please.

Yes, I was upset last month. I could have paraded a hundred students in front of you who would only ask for a nutritious hot breakfast or a more nutritious lunch and a nutrition program that would REALLY help them understand what food choices and patterns of eating would help them be healthier young adults.

Changes that would save money could also be used to improve student nutrition education, leading to less obese students who would also come to school better able and ready to learn.

And I really think it is time to RETHINK when we have breakfast and lunch in elementary and middle school. Research has proven that having breakfast in the classroom and having lunch AFTER recess is more beneficial to our children's readiness to learn.

Why do we keep ignoring those facts in our educational programming? When are we going to do the hard work of making radical changes, based on new information on what really gets our kids ready to learn, especially the ones that need the help more than others? I think these issues should be put on the table when renegotiating employment of food service directors and health educators.

It is my understanding that research has also shown that intramurals in middle school are preferable to varsity sports, helping ALL students become more active. It's also disheartening to me that we would fund co-curricular activities to the tune of a third of a million dollars, mostly for salaries and benefits ,,,,,,and shortchange those nutrition programs that will lead to better scholastic outcomes for all children. My question is: Could we not find savings in co-curricular activities with parent volunteers replacing stipended positions?

Tonight I want to make an impassioned plea related to the upcoming union negotiated agreement that will impact this budget and perhaps the budget for the next two years. It is inconceivable to me that we continue the old practice of negotiating 60% of our budget for THREE years hence, in the back rooms and under the cloak of secrecy, until the deal is sealed. Learning that the co-curricular salaries and benefits that make up

75% of THAT category are also negotiated in this way makes my head spin. I would like this process to be transparent as you deal with the negotiations. At least let us see the results of the negotiations BEFORE you vote on the contract, so we can interact with our respective board representatives to discuss our views.

It looks like the current proposed RSU #38 budget is going to be over a **million dollars more** than in 2011. Staff numbers are lower than in 2011, Student numbers are lower than in 2011, and employee salaries and benefits are higher (\$301,636) than in 2011.

You know, I would be happy to increase funding for the teachers if we were getting better outcomes. However, school outcomes are still not improving compared to high performing schools. It continues to dishearten me that **only 53.8% of our students are proficient in reading and only 51.5% are proficient in math. (MHSA 2012-13). In addition, 19.4 % of our students are NOT graduating high school.**

I can only hope that you, as a board will vote down any contract that increases salaries for at least the next year. And I hope for a freeze in step increases until a legitimate performance appraisal system is put in place. Merit should be based on performance. Period.

In regards to benefits, I would like to see the personnel benefits get into parity with the benefits of the people in our community, their employers. For your information, it is estimated that 81% of our townspeople have private pay which is much more expensive than that of our teachers. In addition, 7% of our taxpaying citizens are uninsured but may still have to pay for our teachers who are well insured. I think there is room for negotiating those benefits to bring them in line with what their employers, the citizens of the community, are paying. I am asking you to bring this line item into parity with the townspeople's benefits, NOT the benefits of other teachers in other communities. That could save thousands of dollars.

So how can we get better outcomes for the money invested. Don't you think it is time to do some things radically different than what we have been doing? The athletic director has given you radical ideas for bringing back intramurals into middle school. THAT is the type of thinking that I believe needs to be advanced to save money and get better outcomes for our student's health, welfare and readiness to learn.

I have also given you some radically different ideas for student nutrition, making union negotiations transparent, bringing benefits into parity, and tying performance to merit. Change the strategic plan to bring these efforts to fruit faster. Don't blame it on the state. Take the initiative yourselves.

Here are a suggested list of cuts:

Food Service \$50,000to be made up with student community service, and donated food.

Co-curricular \$150,000.....to be made up with volunteers.

Benefits.....\$50,000 have family benefits paid for by the employee or some other negotiated amount.

Wage freeze or rollback of raises of \$100,000

Gifted and Talented....\$100,000.....it is time to focus on kids at risk.