

## **West Bath School Administrative Unit**

### **Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

November 15, 2017 at 6:30 PM at the West Bath School

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**Members Present:** Dennis Crews, Keith Hinds, Robert McDaniel, Ashleigh Randall, and Mary Wallace

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Patrick Bowdish, Bobbie Brewer, William Brewer, David Hennessey, and Emily Thompson

#### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Keith Hinds.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **Comments from the Chair:**

Mr. Hinds congratulated Mrs. Wallace and Mr. McDaniel on the recent election. Mr. McDaniel is back for another term, and Mrs. Wallace is here for a three-year term. Congratulations!

Mr. Hinds said that he wanted to thank Superintendent Thompson for her tireless work to get the power back on at school during the recent power outage. The school was out until Sunday and it was looking very likely that school would be closed on Monday. If Mrs. Thompson hadn't put in the time and rattled the cages that needed to be rattled school would not have opened on Monday. Mr. Hinds thanked her for her extra efforts, considering she was also without power at home during this time. It was great to have the kids back to school, warm, and able to have a warm meal on Monday.

#### **Adjustments to Agenda:**

None

#### **Public Comments:**

1. Mr. Hennessey said that there was discussion at the Selectmen's meeting about trying to find a generation system to keep the refrigerator cold. He said that he was hoping that someone would talk to the town administrator or to the selectmen about that so it could be worked into the current budget cycle. He stated that the fire department lost their

generator and they are the designated shelter. They are trying to work out whether to repair it and get another one. At the same time the town should continue to work on getting something for the school and the town office.

Mr. Hinds responded that he has had several conversations with Mrs. Thompson and the individual school board members. Mr. Hennessey said to keep it in mind that something should be worked out with town buildings. Mr. Brewer commented that the Lincoln County EMA office acquired 8-12 generators. The only thing businesses needed to do was pick them up. Mr. Hennessey said that he is hoping that that board will check out any grants and EMA funding that is available through the state. There need to be some funds available.

Mr. McDaniel responded that as a preliminary today he had looked at FEMA grants, which grants to states. You have to go to the state's EMA and apply not for the emergency grant, but for the preparedness grant. Mr. Hennessey commented that it would help if the school was the town shelter. There are kitchen facilities, more room and more showers than the fire station. Mr. Bowdish said that there are things that need to be protected too, like the freezers. Mr. Hennessey said that there may be generators available that people bought and no longer need.

Mr. McDaniel responded that the other thing to think about is fuel. It's easy to get generators, but getting gas was hard because 2/3 of the stations had no power. Whether it is gasoline, diesel or propane, need to take it into consideration. Mr. Hennessey said that point was to be thinking about it as a town. Mr. Hinds said it was a great idea.

#### **New Business:**

##### **1. Auditors Report – William Brewer, CPA**

Mr. Brewer said that the the board was doing their fiduciary duty by meeting with the auditors. He said that he already has met with the finance committee. He stated that at the end of the audit they are required to give the entity a letter that is the post audit letter. It says what was done, what responsibilities were taken by the school department and by the auditors, what difficulties were encountered. Mr. Brewer said that there were no difficulties in completing the audit.

There are few estimates in the financial statements, which include the state's contribution to the Maine State Retirement accounts. It is estimated at 10.57%.

Mr. Brewer stated that in the big picture the board did a good job of controlling the budget that they have. The board listened to the auditors about setting up reserve accounts so the board can take care of expenses that they have no control over.

Ms. Brewer asked the board to visit page 7 exhibit C in the audit documents, comparing the budget to actuals for the general fund. No lines were overspent for expenditures.

Overall the budgetary authority was underspent by \$311,428. On page 6 all of the funds except for lunch funds with expenses and revenues are seen.

Mr. Brewer said that the comparison totals for last year are on this page as well. Ms. Brewer asked the board to look at page 8 at the school nutrition program. Because it is such a small school, can not really look at figures and determine meaningful information about appropriate labor and food costs. Mr. Brewer said that the board has taken a position that they want to the tax payers to help to pay for the school lunch program so the cost is less to students. Most schools do that, but then you can't really look at the numbers from an analytical standpoint.

Ms. Brewer brought the board's attention to page 5 to see the balance accounting sheet that includes all funds. The general fund column shows how carryover was assigned and what the unassigned balance is. The board reviewed the excess fund balance calculation sheet. School departments are permitted to have 3% that is undesignated. The \$3,445.30 that is undesignated is less than 3% so there is no concern about having excess funds. Ms. Brewer commented that it is amazing that in the second year the board was able to estimate it this closely. Most schools are not able to do this, even after operating for many years.

Ms. Brewer turned the board's attention to page 21 to the student activity account. She reminded the board that they should be reviewing the student activity account periodically as well. Overall, she said, the line is in the positive.

Mr. Hinds asked the board members if they had any questions. Hearing none, he asked the public if they had any questions.

Mr. Hennessey asked what the increase in expenses breakdown on the bottom of page 21 is. Ms. Brewer commented that she did not know the exact breakdown at that very second, but that it was a reconciliation between what was uploaded to Neo and what was in the balance. He asked if the transfer of expenses to the general fund was an actual transfer, or just a correction. Mr. Brewer said that there were some expenses from the Title funds that actually belonged in the general funds.

Mr. Hennessey asked what the transfer of \$60,000 was. Ms. Brewer expressed that that was for the special education transfer. He responded that he thought was for \$70,000? Mr. Hinds said that the board had up to \$70,000 approved but at the last meeting agreed to move \$60,000. Mr. Hennessey said again that he thought it was \$70,000. Mr. Hinds responded that there was not 70,000 in funds available to be moved. Ms. Brewer commented that that would have left the board with a negative fund balance.

Mr. Brewer said that most of the adjustments seen in the audit are items that weren't paid in cash, or the town hadn't received the money, so it wasn't in the report that got transmitted up. He commented that it is normal to see this type of adjustment.

Mr. Hinds said that last year the auditors gave the board a list of 4-5 deficiencies. He asked if not having that list means that there were no findings?

Mr. Brewer said that there no findings, no list of things to approve upon. Ms. Brewer said that working with the school department has been easy and that Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Donovan are open to learning.

Mr. Hennessey said that it was good to know that there were no deficiencies.

Mr. Brewer said they are really doing a good job, and that the board needs to give the staff credit for their work, but that the board should also have credit for their oversight. Mr. Hinds thanked both Mr. Brewer and Ms. Brewer.

## 2. School Calendar/Storm Days

Mrs. Thompson said that there likely will be more conversation about school closures, electricity, calendars, storm days, and emergency management over the next several meetings, and the facilities committee will be getting together to begin to make a preliminary plan for emergency power generation which will come back to the board as well, however today's agenda item was to address time sensitive calendar items. She stated that because school was closed for five days, all five storm days were used, which is stressful when it is November and winter is still ahead of you. As the week went on, people would ask first whether there is school the next day, and then would ask, how will you make all of these days up? Part way through the week the state department put out a priority notice which is included in the board packet that stated that the days that were missed because of the power outages are not just forgiven. There was some confusion about when it is a state of emergency whether days need to be made up. However, days are only forgiven if when the governor declares a state of emergency he declares that they do not need to be forgiven. This did not happen.

Mrs. Thompson explained that there is a process where in the spring after it is known what the show day situation looks like where districts can apply for a waiver to have some of the days forgiven, but districts can only apply for waivers if they can show that that they have made an attempt to add days back to the calendar in creative ways. To make days up students can attend school on Saturdays, boards can add hours to the school days in one hour increments. Five hours makes up a day. If school's have an already approved early release day, the board can add hours onto that day in hour increments. Districts can change a professional development day to a student day, but professional development days still need to be made up. Schools need to have 180 days in the calendar, with 175 being student days. Mrs. Thompson said that she provided the board with a list of the state's Frequently Asked Questions for making up school days.

Mrs. Thompson explained that she met with the faculty and they approached the situation by asking how they can make up time in creative ways that has least impact for parents and kids, but has the the best impact on teaching and learning. They came up with a variety of ideas that already meshed with how the school does business. For example, if adding an hour to the day for 5 hours creates a school day, the school has two Celebrations of Learning that are already after school, and that already adds two extra hours. She said they also looked at professional development days that we could eliminate and move to the end of the school year? They looked at our late start Wednesdays and wondered if there were days that we could have students come to school at 8:25 rather than 9:25 to add hours to the day. Mrs. Thompson said that she also put a survey out to parents asking for their feedback about what makes the most sense for them, and what they could support. Mrs. Thompson reviewed the parent survey results with the board.

She said that one challenge that the school system has is with late start time. In theory, it would be easy to add one hour to five late start Wednesdays and have school start at 8:25 rather than 9:25 and make up a day. However, West Bath can only do that if RSU1 does as well because the districts share buses. Mrs. Thompson said she spoke with Dr. Manual and while they were initially thinking they would be willing to do that, because they only missed three days of school they would like to wait until spring to see if there's a need. Mrs. Thompson said that she did speak with Bath Bus about what options West Bath might have for having elementary students ride in a few days with middle and high school students if she put an adult on the bus as well. The response was that it was not about supervision, it was that there would not be enough capacity on the bus for all of the students to ride at the same time. So there are some road blocks around late start, which is unfortunate.

Mrs. Thompson asked the board to consider these options. They could make up two days right away by looking at next Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> by making it a full day. It is supposed to be comp time for teachers because of conferences. However, there is a half day before Christmas where comp time could be moved to that would allow for teacher contractual obligations to still be met. Mrs. Thompson expressed that this is a short turn around for parents, but at the same time they are either going to be traveling for Thanksgiving and not impacted by it, or they are going to be here and may welcome having their kids in school for the full day. Mrs. Thompson said she had spoken with a few parents and they felt it was workable. Additionally, Bath Bus will be able to transport students at the regular time. If this was done next Tuesday, and added the December 21<sup>st</sup> Celebration of Learning and the June Celebration of Learning, that adds back one day.

She also asked the board to consider changing the January 2<sup>nd</sup> professional development day to a student day. The faculty feels that if the board can make this a student day the teachers are willing to have a professional development day on a Saturday to be named rather than having the students come in on a Saturday. This will add a second day back to the calendar, bringing the last student day June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Still on the table would be eliminating five late starts in January, but that can only be done if RSU1 does that. The other piece that we would take a look at later in the spring would be looking at a Saturday half day in the spring for community stewardship. There are still a few other options that can be considered as the year progresses.

Mr. Hinds asked the board what their thoughts were on option 1, having a full day on November 21<sup>st</sup>, and adding the Celebration of Learning 2 hours and counting that towards a school day.

Mrs. Randall asked if they could change their mind about June later if the time is not needed? Mr. Hinds, responded that that June hour would be needed to apply towards the five hours. Wallace said that the students are going to be here anyway. Mr. Hinds asked if there were any concerns about the short turn around for next week? Mrs. Wallace said she felt most parents will be happy with it. Mrs. Randall agreed. Mr. Hinds asked if the students are traveling they would be excused anyway? Mrs. Thompson responded that in this case they would be because the approved calendar is being changed.

Mr. Hinds made a motion to approve the 5 hours proposed to recover 1 day of school. Mr. McDaniel seconded the motion.

Mr. Hinds asked if there was public comment. There was none.

Vote (5-0).

Mr. Hinds asked the board to consider the second option, to take January 2<sup>nd</sup> and make it a student day rather than a professional development day, highlighting that teachers are volunteering to come on a Saturday, which he wished to thank them profusely for.

Mr. McDaniel said that there is a risk it could be a snow day. Since the teachers are willing to do this, it is a creative way that it causes the least amount of distress.

Mr. Crews asked what would happen if it was a professional development day but that it was a snow day? Mrs. Thompson said that if the board made no changes to the calendar and it remained a professional development day and ended up being a snow day, the professional development day would need to be rescheduled. She said that there are instances where teachers are asked to report even when it is determined that students can not. She said that she had hoped to ask teachers to report the final Friday of the power outage, but the building was cold and dark, there was no internet, and teachers would then need to leave their homes where their own generators were running, and it was just an unsafe situation all around. In short, professional development needs to be made up.

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to approve that January 2<sup>nd</sup> as a student day rather than a professional development day. Mr. Crews seconded the motion and wished to give the teachers a big thank you for being willing to do this. Vote (5-0).

Mr. Hinds said other options will be considered as the year progresses.

Mrs. Wallace said that she had a question about late starts. Could there be a way to do that if we did not provide the transportation? Mrs. Thompson said it wouldn't give everyone the same opportunity to get to school, even if it was a legal option. They are required to transport elementary students, although not high school. She said that she would be happy to ask whether this was an option and what the legal obligations are if the board would like her to. Mrs. Randall said perhaps she could survey parents regarding their ability to get their students to school if transportation is not provided.

Mr. Hinds said that his own personal position is that the schedule is tight and we may have to make up some days at the end of the year but that he requests that the district does not change how it evaluates road safety and having school or not having school during snowy conditions. He stated he did not want to risk staff and student safety.

Mrs. Thompson said again that the possibility of applying for a waiver does still stand, just not until spring.

Mrs. Randall asked if there was a cap on the number of days that could be requested in the waiver? Mrs. Thompson said that it is case by case.

### **Public Comments**

None

### **Set Next Meeting Dates and Locations**

1. Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM – West Bath School Administrative Unit Board of Directors Meeting

Mr. Hinds commented that because the November meeting had been cancelled due to power outages and this meeting had had a shortened agenda to allow for the board to meet with auditors, the regular meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup> will include the election of officers and committee assignments.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to adjourn at 7:17 PM. This was seconded by Mr. Crews. Vote (5-0).

Submitted by,



Emily Thompson