

West Bath School Administrative Unit

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2020 at 4:30 PM (Remote Meeting)

Members Present: Keith Hinds, Robert McDaniel, Joanne Powers, Ashleigh Randall, and Mary Wallace

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Patrick Bowdish, Emily Thompson

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM by Keith Hinds. A roll call attendance was taken.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Comments from the Chair:

Mr. Hinds said that he participated in a Region 5 discussion with other school boards earlier in the week. He said that he was encouraged to see that most boards are wrestling with the same challenges, and the challenge of making a responsible budget. He stated that a key take away was how prepared West Bath has been through this period of time, and continues to be a leader in this region.

He said this was the last meeting before the last day of school, and usually there is a celebratory feel, and that this year certainly feels different. He said he wished to thank the community for support, the Board of Selectmen, the town administrator, and the staff at the town hall for their partnership throughout this period of time. He said that he could not thank the parents enough and the board recognizes how difficult this has been and the engagement has been strong. He said he wished to thank staff. They have done a tremendous job. He also said that he needed to thank the students, as he could not imagine what this experience has been like for them. Finally, he said he wished to thank Patrick Bowdish who has been gone above and beyond for the district during this time period. He stated that Mr. Bowdish was instrumental in setting up remote learning, and that just watching him do on the stop support during the virtual field day was impressive and that he appreciated how Mr. Bowdish always took the extra minute to talk with students.

Adjustments to Agenda:

None

Public Comments:

Mr. Hinds said that a couple of comments had come in. There was a question about the amount of funding in the reserve account, and he wanted to confirm that there is \$60,000 in that account. He said that he had also received a question about the legality of putting an article on the warrant that would allow the board to adjust the budget after town meeting, but before tax commitment. He reported that after discussing the scenario with the school's attorney, the short answer is no, it can not be done through a warrant article. There is however, a process for a reconsideration vote which can be initiated by the school board within 30 days. Then within 15 days the Board of Selectmen would need to call a special town meeting. In order for a reconsideration vote to be valid, there need to be at least the same amount of voters, or greater, voting at the new town meeting as compared to the prior vote.

Old Business

1. Discussion of the Proposed School Budget

Mr. Hinds said that at the prior meeting, the board made significant changes to the budget. With the changes made at the last meeting, the total proposed budget is \$3,957,561.29 or an increase of 3.48%. He said that when all the revenue is factored in there is an increase to the local contribution of \$80,015.24 or 2.43%. He opened the floor for comments.

Mr. McDaniel said that the finance committee met on Monday and discussed potential modification in three areas - tuition, transportation and carry forward. He said that the superintendent had learned that there is going to be a family moving and one less student at the high school. He said that he also has read that there are more families around the country who are considering homeschooling. He said the finance committee discussed reducing the number of extra students the budget plans for, by removing 1 at the middle school and 1 at the high school, keeping 3% as the increase to tuition. It means that there would be one additional student above enrollment at the middle school level, and one above enrollment at the high school level with a 3% increase of tuition. Mrs. Thompson said that some of these hard decisions have to work in tandem with having the unanticipated expenditure reserve account. Mr. McDaniel said that this was an important detail. To make this work there needs to be the warrant article allowing for more than 5% of the cost center to be moved from one cost center to another, and the reallocation of the warrant article.

Mrs. Randall made a motion to reduce the number of tuition students by 2 students at the high school and 1 at the middle school level. Mr. McDaniel seconded the motion. Ms. Powers asked how the superintendent felt about that. She said that given the scenario where there as so many unknowns with the fall, and having the reserve account as a back up, it should work. It's a hard area, and worst case scenario is the board would have to ask for a special town meeting. Ms. Powers said that it is so hard to speculate how many students there will be at this time. Mrs. Thompson said that given the current climate, the school system is likely to see fewer students enrolling rather than more students

enrolling. Mr. Hinds said that the philosophy has changed a little, and the board is trying to lessen the impact on tax payers initially knowing that they may have to move into reserve funds or ask for a special town meeting, rather than throwing the dart and guessing now. He said he would like to minimize the impact now rather than overestimate. Mrs. Thompson reiterated the importance of not just the reserve account, but also the warrant article asking for the ability to transfer more than 5% of a cost center to another. Roll call vote (5-0).

Mr. McDaniel said that the next area that the finance committee looked at was transportation and the impact of reducing transportation by another \$20,000. Mrs. Randall asked about clarification about why transportation was able to be decreased this year. Mrs. Thompson said that it was due to a reduction in the need for special education transportation for next year. Mr. Hinds said that if social distancing on bussing is going to be a need, then more creative approaches need to be taken rather than doubling the transportation budget. Mr. McDaniel said that that might include coming to school only a couple of days per week, but not increasing the transportation line. Ms. Powers asked if the board had to follow the guidance from the CDC? Mrs. Thompson said that the answer is no. It is guidance, and then local decisions need to be made, but there's risk to not following the guidance. She also said that there's supplementary federal guidance, but it is the state guidance the board will use to make local decisions with. Ms. Powers if this plan would be an issue if the state said that students needed to attend school everyday. Mrs. Thompson agreed that if there is not a waiver on student days or a change in compulsory education rules, this would be a challenge. Mr. McDaniel said that it wouldn't be that students are only doing schoolwork for 2.5 or 3 days, but that there may be some virtual classrooms and it is all guesswork at this time. He said that the only information that the board has is the summer guidance.

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to reduce the transportation line by an additional \$20,000. Mrs. Randall seconded the motion. Mrs. Thompson said again that having the reserve account renamed is going to be a critical piece of this. Mr. Hinds said that if transportation is normal, this budget does allow us to transport sufficiently. Roll call vote (5-0).

Mr. McDaniel said that the last component the finance committee discussed is increasing the carry forward by \$20,000. This would bring the local contribution to about a 0.22% increase. There was no discussion. Mr. McDaniel made a motion to increase carry forward by \$20,000. Mrs. Randall seconded the motion. Roll call vote (5-0).

Mr. McDaniel said that he felt it was important to point out that this has happened without reducing faculty and staff and that is important for a number of reasons. It is important that since it is not known what the fall will look like, it allows the faculty and staff to be at a level that we can have the flexibility to handle what happens. It also includes nursing staff which is likely to be mandated, and if not, is prudent.

Mr. Hinds said that there is a request from the budget advisory committee to have another workshop with them. In an opportunity to give everyone a chance to weigh in and engage with them, it would be a prudent step to schedule another meeting. He asked the

board if the 10th at 6 PM worked for the board, pending the budget committee's availability? Board members responded affirmatively.

Executive Session

Mr. Hinds made a motion to to enter into an executive session pursuant to Title 1, Chapter 13, Section 405,6,A. of the M.R.S.A. for the purpose of discussing personnel issues at 5:04 PM. This motion was seconded by Mr. McDaniel Roll call vote (5-0).

Return to Regular Session

The board returned to regular session at 5:28 PM.

Public Comments

None

Set Next Meeting Dates and Locations

1. June 10th - Remote Workshop - School Board of Directors & Budget Advisory Committee Workshop @ 6:00 PM
2. June 10th - Remote Meeting - School Board of Directors Meeting following the workshop
3. June 17th - Remote Meeting - School Board of Directors Meeting @ 4:30 PM

Adjourn

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to adjourn at 5:29 PM. Mrs. Randall seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote (5-0).

Submitted by,



Emily Thompson