

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
JOINT MEETING MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN / FINANCE COMMITTEE / SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 7:00 P.M.
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Board of Selectmen Members Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chair
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chair
Michael Barbaro
Amy Salter
Richard Ward

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Joanne Goguen, Town Accountant
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant

Finance Committee Members Present:

Tom Kane, Chairman
Maureen Ward, Vice Chair
Douglas Delay
Keith Kent

Finance Committee Member Absent:

Charles Cort

School Committee Members Present:

Greg Vine, Chair
Larry Murphy
Roann Demanche
Felicia Nurmsen
Seth Signa

Joan Landers, Superintendent

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- MEMO from Town Manager Re: Proposed Fall Town Meeting Schedule (filed)
 - Supt. Landers Presentation of Winchendon Public Schools 2019-2020 Turnaround Plan (filed)
 - Turnaround Planning in Our District Sept. 16, 2019 Power Point Presentation (attached)
 - Toy Town and Memorial Elementary Turnaround Plan, Academic Year 2019-2020 (filed)
 - Murdock Middle School Turnaround Plan, Academic Year 2019-2020 (filed)
 - Murdock High School Turnaround Plan, Academic Year 2019-2020 (filed)
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School Committee Chairman, Greg Vine, called the School Committee meeting back to order.

Board of Selectmen Chairwoman, Audrey LaBrie, called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order.

Finance Committee Chairman Tom Kane called the Finance Committee meeting back into session at 7:00PM.

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Chairman Vine thanked all for coming this evening. He handed the meeting over to Superintendent Landers for her presentation of the District's Turnaround Plan. The following people stepped forward for the presentation. Jonathan Landman, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the District, introduced himself. He stated he came on board with the District in January and now has a permanent role that began on July 1st. He is helping Joan with a broad

overview of the Turnaround Plan this evening. Supt. Landers introduced herself. Thad King, Principal of Murdock High School, introduced himself. Jessica Vezina, Principal of Murdock Middle School introduced herself.

1. NEW BUSINESS:

- 1.1. Presentation of School's Most Recent Turnaround Plan - Supt. Landers thanked the Committees for having this on the agenda stating this is a community process and they are very proud to share their turnaround process and plans for the schools.

Landers stated in the spring, Memorial and Toy Town Elementary developed a plan together. Murdock Middle School and Murdock High School developed their plans independently and the District Leadership Team collaborated to develop a district-wide plan. This school year we are going to go through a rigorous strategic planning process with an outside consultant so we hear the voices of everyone in the community. It's very important we create a cohesive vision of school and hear the voices of everyone. She spoke of convening leadership teams, collection of data sets with "root-cause" analyses, reflection on how to monitor and assess progress, refinement and honing of plans by smaller teams.

Landman next spoke about the four turnaround practices. He said Memorial School was not required to submit a turnaround plan but the other three were by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. They also provided guidance on how to develop these plans offering four different practices. The turnaround plans are constructed around these four practices:

Practice 1: Leadership, shared responsibility and professional collaboration

Practice 2: Intentional practices for improving instruction

Practice 3: Student-specific supports and instruction to all students

Practice 4: School Culture and Climate

Nurmsen asked how these four strategies are measured and how to know when to change course. Landman replied that each team in the four buildings is tasked to collecting data along the way on how things are going and analyzing the data and making course adjustments in all aspects of the school as it goes. The turnaround plan process requires schools to develop enormously comprehensive array of data points that you are tracking throughout the year. There are over 110 different annual goal benchmarks measured in at least two out of three, most of those are actually required by the state. Anyone is welcomed to take a look at the plans that are posted on the website. Section 7 in any of the plans, you will see the monitoring benchmarks detailed. Nurmsen commented "as long as process doesn't get away from progress." Landman said it's a big challenge for the systems to monitor all of this effectively. We are working on a way to actually move the work forward.

The four practices and the District's approach were spoken about by Mr. Landman and Supt. Landers.

Supt. Landers talked about the school's Vision Statement. Different Vision Statements have emerged from each of the schools during their turnaround planning process. She expects the Vision statement to be revised or replaced during the strategic planning process with more stakeholders involved. We want to imagine what our schools will look like three to five years from now as a consequence of the work we are doing right now in our schools. She read what she felt to be a very powerful statement taken from the School's Vision Statement: "The Winchendon Public Schools actualize the promise of education." That's the school's responsibility that we provide all students opportunities for social, emotional and academic success ensuring each graduate is equipped with the skills, knowledge and

habits necessary to persevere and realize their unique potential. They are leading the district with this focus in mind.

Landman then spoke about the District-Wide Picture: Three “Big Bets” which are the following:

1. Establish organizational structures which support distributive leadership, data-driven planning, collaboration and adult learning
2. Strengthen Tier 1 Instruction
3. Strengthen the consistency and effectiveness of our practices in support of our most at-risk learners

The presentation continued with the Superintendent and Mr. Landman giving more details of each of the four Turnaround Practices outlined below:

Turnaround Practice 1: Leadership, Shared Responsibility and Professional Collaboration:

1. Establish consistent, collaborative teaming structures to be implemented across each school
2. Support building principals’ success as turnaround leaders

Turnaround Practice 2: Intention Practices for Improving Instruction to all Students:

1. Assist building-level teams in improving instructional practice through the use of data
2. Collaborate to calibrate on and communicate a common vision of effective teaching; align instructional feedback to the vision
3. Support targeted efforts to establish standards-aligned curriculum
4. Introduce common assessments and data review protocols to inform instructional planning.

Turnaround Practice 3: Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students

1. Establish task force to review and revise existing Student Support Team (SST) protocols and tools
2. Convene guidance team to increase clarity regarding what student data to share, and how to do so to enable staff to effectively support students
3. Monitor and support effectiveness of schools’ data inquiry cycles
4. Conduct an external review of current student services operations and practices; strengthen practices to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving effective instruction and appropriate services

Turnaround Practice 4: School Culture and Climate

1. Establish task force to revise faculty, parent and student handbooks
2. Support efforts to promote a growth mindset across all grade levels
3. Take steps to elevate perceptions of the potential of our district, schools, community, families and students and find ways to better communicate our strengths and our potential to one another and the community

Supt Landers feels this last bullet, No. 3, is the most important thing to be said this evening. She’s talked to students about this very topic. Students have presented at School Committee meetings and at the opening day of school. She thought it was important for people to hear what their students wanted from the school system. They did a wonderful job. Nurmsen commented she thinks is not just what they want from the school system but from the community. Students are very proud to be members of the school district and they want their community to be proud of them. We as a community should be very proud of them and we should show them more appreciation and more

pride. Supt. Landers agrees and said we have a lot to be proud of in Winchendon and we need to communicate that working together.

Community Engagement & Strategic Planning: Inviting the Input of the Boards:

Supt. Landers said she would love to hear from the Boards their ideas of how to best engage the community in a discussion about the future of the schools. We need to have people come to the table to discuss this for the future of the community and the future of education.

Vine said he has four and a half years on the committee and it is nice to see something a little more comprehensive than they have seen before with this Turnaround Plan. He thanked the administrators and all those that have helped put together this Plan.

Barbaro also acknowledged all the work the staff put into making the Turnaround Plans. Their input is so important. This meeting tonight is a good way to let the community know how far we have come and how far we continue to move. We need input from the community, get feedback and analyze it and move forward. The biggest challenge he sees is getting parents involved who are already so busy and suggested maybe looking at some Saturdays for meetings. LaBrie added there may be alternatives to getting bodies physically in a room with today's technology for communication noting that communication is something they have been weak on.

LaBrie stated she went to all of the initial meetings and what came through to her is the true feeling that the staff at all levels are ready to step up to the plate and do what they need to make it work.

Kane congratulated all for the work they have done for this comprehensive plan and commented it addresses the right things. He is particularly impressed with the attention to developing more professional collaboration. He believes it's something that is key to improving schools in figuring out how to allow teachers to work together as opposed to isolation. It addresses culture, structural practices; all of these improvements will take time. As comprehensive and as complex it was to put these plans together, it will be ten times more so to implement the plans; but you just start with the plan and stick with it. There will be ups and downs but he thinks they have to have faith in the blue print they put together. It will take multiple years to turn the district around but you will see some significant changes in culture in three to four years. He congratulated the School for the work they have put into the Plan.

Maureen Ward echoed what Mr. Kane said saying this is a great example of the rigor you are asking from your teachers and students. She echoed there will be bumps, maybe some canyons but with the support of your Boards, your teachers and each other. What stood out for her was not only are we asking our teachers to change their instruction, to change their plan but now we will be showing them how and support them in that change. That's important, that collaborative part of it will be key. She commended them on a great job.

Supt. Landers asked to take a few moments to let her two sidekicks who are part of her support team, Mr. King, the High School Principal and Jessica Vezina, the Middle School Principal talk about their initiatives and plan. Ms. Vezina, stated the Middle School is actually entering their third year of the Turnaround Plan. She said there have been canyons and valleys and ups and downs but the school is a family and they stick together and work together and persevere. It is something we teach our kids every day and as adults we go through it. She has talked a lot about pride at meetings. She has lived in Town her entire life, has graduated from Murdock High, and couldn't be more proud of where they have come in the last few years. What they have done at the Middle School is quite different. They flipped it upside down and started from scratch two years ago. She is very excited about what

they are doing and seeing, what the kids have been accomplishing. They are continuing that in sixth grade, upping their expectations for the kids to reach. She welcomed anyone to come in and see what they are doing, to sit in a classroom, to come for a tour. They are proud of what they are doing and like to show it off to the community. Mr. King noted it is his second year at Murdock High School and is excited for the great initiatives they have going on. One of the concerns was the success rate of freshman with some of them not making it into their sophomore year. We kicked off the freshman scholar program at the beginning of this year. Freshman students learn how to be successful high school students. So far it has been a great success. Mr. King then spoke about the setup of the dual enrollment program where students can receive college credits for high school courses. They have been working with Worcester State College where professors come in and offer a different level of rigor in taking those classes. Another piece started this year is virtual High School to broaden the offerings they might have. It is an online situation with a live teacher with assignments being given. There are a lot of positive things going on at the high school this year and they are really excited about seeing the outcomes this year.

Selectwoman Anderson addressed the community engagement aspect and believes it's important the kids know their community is proud of them but there is limited number of venues for the Town. She stated she likes to go to football or basketball games but doesn't know when the home games are. The other part is to make yourself visible with a community involvement program at the school if you don't have it, so when activities like Earth Day comes up, you would see kids taking part in a community event.

Supt. Landers thanked the Board/Committee for having them and thanked her staff and leadership team for all their hard work.

- 1.2. FY19 Year End Update- Town Manager, Keith Hickey, made the Committees aware that the FY19 books were closed last week by the Town Accountant and her staff. Auditors from Roselli and Clark Associates are here this week to do the final yearend audit. He doesn't expect any surprises and feels they ended up the year very successfully. He is seeking the state to certify Free Cash for FY2019 in the amount of \$1,355,999. He reminded the committee members that they had Free Cash carried over from last year in the amount of \$285,886. He anticipates Free Cash to be certified later in October in the amount of \$1.642 million dollars and credited this to the whole team, the school and the town, who is working well together.
- 1.3. Special Town Meeting October 28, 2019- Hickey announced the Fall Town Meeting has been scheduled for October 28, 2019. The warrant opened this morning and closes next Monday at noon. He is planning on proposing warrant articles for the Fall Town Meeting most of them centering on the Town's portion of the repair costs for Central Street. Most of you are aware the State of Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation is going to be paying for most of the reconstruction project of Central St. for 2021. There are some easement expenses the Town needs to absorb and some engineering work that needs to be done. He would like to see the replacement of the 100 plus year old water and sewer lines under Central St. during the construction project. He anticipates the Town's local expense incurred with the Central St. project to be over \$700,000 based on those items. The state's portion is over \$4,000,000. He will be discussing this at the Selectmen's meeting on Monday and for the use of Free Cash that is available. He would still like to maintain the balance of \$288,000 carried forward from last year as an emergency without having to dip in the Town's Stabilization Account. Free Cash will be certified before the Oct. 28th Town Meeting and we will be able to go to Fall Town Meeting with necessary expenditures to get some of our infrastructure projects behind us.

LaBrie asked what the amount in stabilization is sitting at right now. Hickey replied that he was not sure off the top of his head and could provide the information to all three boards in the morning.

Barbaro commented that in the four years they have been sitting here, they have come out on the positive side. It is the team that Mr. Hickey built, yes, but it is the team to make it work for them. All of the Departments are very cost effective at times when they need to be. The last four years we have been able to put together enough money to pay off the Town's debt and maintain projects throughout this community. That in itself is an outstanding way we have come through this tunnel and continue to grow. He thanked Mr. Hickey and his administration and other Departments to help turn this around and be fiscally balanced.

Hickey acknowledged that everyone at the table is why they are where they are now. His four years here, the Board of Selectmen has given him and his staff the support when crazy ideas or suggestions have been brought up or very difficult issues with tough decisions have come before them. He's sure the Superintendent has the same sentiments for the School Committee. He also has relied on the Finance Committee for their guidance and communication has been a breath of fresh air. He feels very satisfied that the people he works with in this community on a day to day basis are the salt of the earth and they love this community as much as the residents do and why we have been able to work through the horrendous fiscal challenges that were here a few years ago and now hopefully gotten beyond says a lot of the community as a whole. He thanked Mr. Barbaro for his kind words but noted he is only as good as the people around him and feels very fortunate to be in the position he is in.

2. **OLD BUSINESS:** There was no "Old Business" discussed this evening.

3. **COMMENTS:**

Kane announced the Finance Committee is still looking for two new members if anyone is interested to contact the Town Moderator Coral Grout and express their interest. He appreciates the kind words of the Town Manager and echoes them saying they really do have a collaborate approach in fulfilling their responsibilities to the Town.

Hickey announced the Public Works Dept. has been working on replacing sidewalks along Grove and Lincoln. He believes Grove is done and Lincoln Ave. will be torn up and repaved this week. He apologized that both roads were not done prior to school starting as he initially said. There were some scheduling issues with the paving contractor. Front St. will begin being paved tomorrow as well from School St. to Hill. He believes there will be additional Chapter 90 supplemental appropriation in October and he will have additional suggestions later on in the year.

4. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Barbaro moved to adjourn the Selectmen's meeting, seconded by Salter. With a vote of all aye, the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Nurmsen moved to adjourn the School Committee meeting, seconded by Murphy. With a vote of all aye, the joint meeting with the School Committee adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Delay moved to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting, seconded by M. Ward. With a vote of all aye, the joint meeting with the Finance Committee adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, 
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant