



## WINCHENDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Date Approved/Released: 3/21/24

Date Approved/Held: \_\_\_\_\_

School Committee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

School Committee Meeting August 10,  
2023 6:00 pm  
Town Hall, Second Floor Auditorium

Present: Karen Kast-McBride, Chair; David LaPointe Vice Chair; Anthony Findley Member Amanda Babinski, Director of Finance & Operations

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reading of Audio-Visual Disclosure  
Karen Kast-McBride asks if anyone is recording and is informed that one person is recording via audio only.
4. David LaPointe makes a motion to enter into a brief Executive Session under M.G.L. Ch.30A, Sec. 21 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and then to return to Open Session.  
Motion Seconded by Anthony Findley.  
Roll Call Vote: Unanimous  
Adjourn to Executive Session.  
Call Back into Session
5. Public Comment  
Karen Kast-McBride opens up Public Comment by reminding everyone of the rules regarding public comment.  
the guidelines around public comment are as follows:
  - Each attendee may speak for up to three minutes at a time.
  - Each attendee may speak up to two times.
  - All comments must be addressed through the Chair.
  - Comments are no longer required to be related to items on the agenda but must be related to items that are within the jurisdiction of the school committee.
  - The First Amendment allows broad constitutional protections to speech during this time; however, it has been ruled that free speech does not allow for any threats, fighting words or obscene content.
  - All speakers are encouraged by the court to represent their remarks in a respectful manner.
  - Written comments are also accepted and especially encouraged for any comments over three minutes. Written comments can be submitted by email or in person.
  - Public comment is not a period for discussion.

- Members of the board and representatives of the school are asked to listen and not respond to information during public comment.
- Questions and concerns raised during public comment this evening may be addressed through tonight's meeting or after this meeting in some other form.

A parent approaches to discuss the issues they have had with the bus company NRT and lack of communication despite the many issues encountered during the school year. Parent notes that NRT was to attend this meeting tonight but canceled at the last minute which seems like more of the same as what parents get from NRT for the past two years. Many parents are beyond frustrated. Parent offers all email communications with NRT and WPS to the WSC and will send them via email.

A parent approaches to ask why people who call themselves educators in WPS are allowed to tell a parent via social media to remove their child from this district simply because that parent posts the agenda and reminds parents that there is a school committee meeting with the bus company NRT. Parent has been told she should just leave the district and school choice her child out. Parent can't believe teachers and other staff are telling parents to do that. And though she is here to discuss that NRT is a major issue as a provider of transportation, she is always defending the bus drivers as they are not the issue. An example of the issues with NRT: once again the bus routes are too long (time wise) as well as the stop they fought for seven months last year being left off the list now. "Why are we back at square one again?"

The same parent then went on to discuss the problem with the athletics department in WPS and how it was lacking an Athletics Director and since there is no Principal at the Middle School, she is having problems with her middle schooler's registration in the new school she did send him to. But please know, she did that because of safety concerns in Athletics football which he excels in. Her younger child is still attending WPS.

A daycare provider testified regarding the lack of a daycare stop as previously provided despite having four WPS students in her daycare and the need for one because the children are too young to be taken up to the corner where the bus stop is. When she had called several times, she has been called a liar, was told they had GPS showing busses came by - turned out it was the other end of her street, yet she never got an apology.

A parent approaches to note that parents could put airtags in the bags to track bus routes if they choose. She actually does it because of the issues with the bus

A community member suggests that the school system have someone ride along with bus company and time out stops. As a former driver she wants the district to put in place policy in place that if the bus driver does not cross the yellow line if there is any issue with a child on the bus. If anything happens, the bus driver should stay beyond the line and radio the company, do not touch any child and only speak to them if necessary.

Karen Kast-McBride asked her to send any policy suggestions in writing to the school committee and central office. Ms. Kast-McBride then informed all members of the public that anyone can do the same with any suggestions.

A second Daycare provider testified that she spoke with NRT, spoke with Franco briefly, and then spoke with Liz Latoria at WPS Central Office regarding the extreme length of the bus routes. The bus routes are so long and busses are causing students to get to school late, which means many students aren't getting breakfast or are getting to class late and it is constant. They were dealing with it up to the last day of school. Also, would like to see everyone get in the same

room as it seems everyone is saying it is someone else's job to handle the issues. Additionally, the students who have special education services may be missing their services.

A daycare provider testified about trying to call the school when students aren't getting back until late and no one is at the schools to answer the phones after 4:00pm.

6. Consent Agenda Minutes:

Findley moves to approve the minutes for June 1, June 15, June 26 and July 13 School Committee Meetings as presented. Seconded by D. LaPointe. Vote is Unanimous.

Findley motions to move Agenda Item 9b Appointment of Director of Pupil Services up. Seconded by D. LaPointe. Vote is Unanimous.

K. Kast-McBride invites Charlotte King up to speak and asks Amanda Babinski, as Acting Superintendent, to introduce Charlotte King as the candidate for the Director of Pupil Services.

Amanda Babinski introduces Charlotte King with a rundown of the work she has done in the district to date and why she has been chosen by the hiring committee to be recommended as the candidate for the Director of Pupil Services position over other candidates. The use of a rubric and highlights of the committee's reasoning for their choice was also shared along with information regarding Ms. King.

Ms. King then introduced herself and discussed her background and experience briefly.

K. Kast-McBride opened the floor up to questions from the School Committee members:

D. LaPointe asked what Ms. King would need from the School Committee. Ms. King stated she would have better answers to this question soon so would like to get back to us on that.

K. Kast-McBride thanks Ms. King for work she has done over the summer picking up a lot of the pieces. As an aside, she thanks all the people in WPS who have helped over the summer. K. Kast-McBride then asks Ms. King several questions, one regarding her background specifically addressing an incident in the past to be transparent, several specific to special education issues in the district, cases the district is dealing with, how she plans to address the need for the SEPAC to be active, real transparent family communication and more. Also asked Ms. King to reach out to all parents as soon as possible.

D. Lapointe motions to appoint Charlotte King as Director of Pupil Services pending contract negotiations. Seconded by A. Findley. Vote is Unanimous.

7. Superintendent's Report given by Acting Superintendent Amanda Babinski which covered the opening of schools' update. Ms. Babinski made specific note that the bus routes will be fine-tuned and to please contact the central office if necessary. Included was information regarding school social dates, kindergarten information, addressing possible need for another bus, new food vendor and menus. Facilities were discussed including the chair lift, grants regarding roofing and more. Leadership team discussion along with the relief that the Interim Superintendent will be joining them on August 14<sup>th</sup>.

A. Findley asked about the fire panel issue. Ms. Babinski said they believed it was a lightning strike that caused the damage. Brian and Martin have already sent in for quotes and if the panel is not repaired expeditiously, staff will be doing safety walks until it is per the fire department and marshal's instructions. They are trying to get it addressed as quickly as possible. Mr. Findley

then mentioned that he wanted to thank all those stepping up to get everything in place for all the children of WPS.

D. LaPointe thanks Ms. Babinski and all those who have stepped up to help the district get through the summer as he appreciates all they do

K. Kast-McBride asks Ms. Babinski to explain who and how the bus routes are developed. Ms. Babinski explains how the software owned by the bus company defaults to home addresses and therefore it is why each year parents need to request changes even if it is the same bus stop each year. WPS takes the requests from parents and works with NRT, but the bus routes are determined by NRT.

K. Kast-McBride asked about the previously budgeted bus that has not been used yet and why we can't just add that to alleviate some of the longer bus route problems. A. Babinski notes that it is one of the options being explored along with others. K. Kast-McBride asks for that to be put on future agenda items for the meeting with NRT.

#### Budget Update:

Ms. Babinski explained that the ongoing issues with the Town of Winchendon rolling everything over into MUNIS is still going on due to the updates to the software. So, the budget is not as clean as it should be and is quite confusing, but the Town hopes to have it all taken care of soon. Once the Town has everything rolled over Ms. Babinski hopes to be able to get all of our accounting in a much better place than where it has been. This has also been complicated due to the proposed and then stopped "Reorganization Plan" that the FY2024 was actually based upon. Highlighted grant funding and offered to help new members learn more about the budget.

#### 8. Subcommittee Reports: None

#### 9. New Business

a. Canceled as NRT was not able to attend the meeting but will attend a future meeting.

##### c. Budget Transfer:

Ms. Babinski goes over the proposed budget transfer. A. Findley asked if we are transferring this money because of the payout made for the previous Superintendent's salary. K. Kast-McBride says yes. Ms. Babinski states it is a transfer from a non-salary line, hardware and ESSR to a salary line in order to have the money to pay a Superintendent. Mr. Findley asks if this will take away from technology (hardware) or where it is taking away from and Ms. Babinski explains that due to ESSR funding from Covid and the budgeted Reorganization not going forward we actually had excess funding to cover this expense.

A. Findley motions to approve the expense to salary transfer as presented. Seconded by D. LaPointe. Vote is Unanimous.

#### 10. Old Business:

K. Kast-McBride brings up rescheduling of School Committee Organizational Meeting to another date. D. LaPointe so moves. A. Findley seconded. Vote is Unanimous.

#### 11. Future Agenda Items:

NRT Meeting Date - suggested for August 24, 2023 with head invited.

#### 12. Closing member comments:

A. Findley reminds people that there are two open School Committee seats up for appointment so appointment so to please put their letters of interest in by Monday August 14, 2023.

D. LaPointe reiterates Mr. Findley and lets everyone know that WPS is moving forward positively.

K. Kast-McBride thanks the youngest participant in the audience who sat through the entire WSC meeting and that having a student attend during the summer is extra special. Also thanked all of the staff of WPS and the students and families of WPS for all they do.

13. A. Findley motions to meet in Executive Session under M.G.L. Ch.30A, Sec. 21 to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (Interim Superintendent of Schools) or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and to adjourn from Executive Session.  
D. LaPointe Seconded. Vote is Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted: Karen Kast-McBride  
Karen Kast-McBride