

Winchendon Public Schools



Date Approved/Released 3-20-25

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School Committee Chair R. K. M.

## School Committee Meeting

December 5, 2024 – 6:00 pm  
2nd Floor - Town Hall Auditorium

### Attendance:

D. Iannacone, J. Caitlin, Mike Barbaro, E. Marinelli, Marc Gosselin, Interim Superintendent, Liz Latoria, Business Manager

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Audio Disclosure:
4. Student Report: Murdock hosted a pep rally Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup>. Students advisory to create a schoolwide chain of things we are thankful for and making positive snowflakes spreading a positive message or phrase on a snowflake. Ending fall sports and transition into winter sports which start December 16<sup>th</sup>. Parks and Rec department is looking for volunteers for the Festival of Lights on December 7<sup>th</sup> and volunteers at the Snowball on December 14<sup>th</sup>. December 13<sup>th</sup> we are participating in Wreath Across America. Spirit week is during the week of December 16<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> which will include Sandy Hook Promises activities through out that week. Cheer is going to Nationals.  
K. Kast asked some questions about thanksgiving, and the snowflakes.
5. Public Comment: None
6. Consent Agenda: None
7. Superintendent's Report:
  - a. Interim Superintendent's Update: Dr. Gosselin, Interim Superintendent – First snow delay this morning. Thanks to B. Croteau and the DPW for clearing the roads and to the staff the made it in today. Explains the process of calling snow delays or cancellations. Winter sports beginning. Boys Basketball game tomorrow night. Travel to Boston recently and met with members of the BARR Foundation and our leadership team has been approved a grant of \$925,000 to Gardner, Worcester and Leominster to strengthen the school leadership network. Sandy Hook Promise meetings starting at the middle school next week to roll out our start with help program and start a club called Save Promise Club. H. Bevacqua has resigned, position posted. 2 new teachers at the high school. New music teacher. Hired a PT Consultant – Re-Engagement Liaison.  
DESE update for the system of support – agreed that we need to change our goal, and attended the DLT meeting. Writing is a need and will work on that in the near future. Had conversation with DESE. They are impressed, one of the better readings they been to and notes the improvement that has developed.  
Started our budget hearings with admin and has gone well. L. Latoria will go into detail.

Described the holiday activities that happened or will be happening.  
K. Kast – Wants to make sure all the activities and events are on their personal and town calendar.

**b. Budget Update: Liz Latoria, Business Manager**

FY26 Budget:

Salaries - 75% of operation budget. Explains why the salaries are budgeted for FY26 with chart and a comparison of what was budgeted for FY25. Noted half the staff in WTA is at the highest step based on their years of experience. Showed chart of FY25 percentages of personnel by job classification. 208 FT employees. Explained how the vacant para positions will be budgeted for FY26 with comparison from FY25. Substitute pay will be based on historical data and school committee approved sub rates for FY26.

Discusses how and what needs to be considered in the following for FY26 budget: the legal mandates and high school accreditation, class size, supplies, programs, contractual obligations, and fixed costs. Discussed the revenue projections.

Next steps – Continue to work with DLT to refine draft budgets. Present FY26 draft to school committee on 1/9. Will schedule community input sessions for stakeholder input after committee votes on budget.

Questions:

More discussion about Chapter 70 and Rural Aid between J. Caitlin, M. Barbaro and L. Latoria.

K. Kast – States that we have a budget expert sitting in the audience who could answer questions and requests T. Novick to come up to explain.

T. Novick explains the discussion mention above.

K. Kast – States that T. Novick will come back and present a wonderful presentation at some point and we need to schedule that. T. Novick noted that the chart they received in the budget presentation directly ties to what the state says and is correct in terms of what you need to be aware of. Notes the enrollment and inflation are the two things that are going to drive your budget (revenue) more than anything which was noted in the budget presentation.

**8. New Business:**

**a. Discuss scheduled January Meeting:** Discuss bumping the meet down a week.

Schedule Jan 9<sup>th</sup> and Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> for meetings.

M. Barbaro motion for 5-minute recess. Second by J. Caitlin. Vote unanimous.

**9. Superintendent Search Discussion:**

Last meeting listed the candidates.

M. Barbaro – Notes the applicant from Douglas does not meet our criteria for sitting Superintendent with experience. South Hadley Candidate purposely signed a one-year contract, why one year? Notes what the current Interim Superintendent has done and lists pros of what he has noticed. Motions to offer the permanent superintendent to Dr. Marc Gosselin Jr. moving forward.

T. Novick – Cautions the chair and notes she doesn't think they are posted for this conversation that was just motioned for. Also noted that they did not put in the job description that you are only wanted to receive applicants from seated superintendents. Noted the reason for South Hadley requested a one-year contract is because he lives in Nashua with his family and this was actually public information and was put into the discussion that he with the South Hadley School Committee who was very pleased with it.

K. Kast – Notes that they need to be careful on how they proceed with this motion. Wondered if anyone has a 2<sup>nd</sup> for the motion. The motion is on the floor and need to ask if there is a second.

J. Caitlin – Clarifies that we are second for a discussion.

Motion was second by D. Iannacone.

D. Iannacone – Notes that he did second the motion, but is opposed of it as we've started a process and owes it to the townspeople who have put in time and effort to search for a superintendent. Notes that he not saying M. Gosselin is not that person but we started a process and thinks it is important that they complete the process.

K. Kast – Notes to D. Iannacone that whether you agree to the process or the discussion are two different things.

J. Caitlin – agrees with what was said about M. Gosselin but agrees with what D. Iannacone said regarding the process. That it would be unprofessional of them to not see this process through. We owe it to the town, search committee and everyone involved to give everyone a fair shot.

E. Marinelli – Agrees with everything J. Caitlin said. It would be extremely unprofessional to not see this process through.

M. Barbaro – Notes by doing this we would have the confidence in the person that we have currently employed. But M. Gosselin will have the opportunity to interview somewhere else. He wants this person to stay and we can't vote on it. If they can not vote on this tonight, he wants to vote for to have another meeting next week. Believes that the current interim superintendent wants to be here. Notes that Dr. Gosselin is currently visible to the district and visits the schools and has seen other superintendents not come out of their offices and suggests that E. Marinelli understands what he is saying.

E. Marinelli – voices that she disagrees. She has only been at one district and their superintendent has been incredibly visible. Not her experience.

M. Barbaro – Goes on about how we have the opportunity to look someone in superintendent position that wants to be here and asks what would that look like to staff that have been through 2 years of turbulence.

J. Caitlin – Notes that this is something the staff asked us to do this process.

M. Barbaro – States that only some staff were apart of the process. It's ultimately the school committee decision on who that they feel should be hired. Pushes that we have someone here that wants to be here.

E. Marinelli – Notes that she doesn't know Dr. Gosselin as well as the others, but would like T. Novick's opinion on her thoughts on this and where we should be on this in terms of the search.

T. Novick – Back in the spring the school committee made a commitment for this to be completed by the time you broke for winter break and are on track with this timeline as long as we schedule the visits and interviews within the next couple of weeks. Notes that Dr. Gosselin is not on another districts list nor does other districts have our timeline thus no danger of him going elsewhere between now and Christmas.

K. Kast – Addresses E. Marinelli and states that they (School Committee) don't know Marc any more than she does. Marc came and interview and that's it. Suggest that M. Barbaro withdraws his motion due to it not being noted properly. States that she understands wanting to do thing professionally but she has spoken to people that in support of Marc. Notes that there is a process and a timeline they committed too but notes that T. Novick at the July 9<sup>th</sup> meeting there is a broad parameter when hiring a superintendent. Reads from paper "Only the two things you have to do is that you make the decision in public session (appropriately posted) and make sure the are licensed or accredited."

M. Barbaro – Withdraws his original motions and motions to have a meeting next week to vote. Notes again that he believes he has the right person and does not need to make additional work and summarizes everything that he has mention before.

E. Marinelli – Asks T. Novick her professional opinion about this situation.

T. Novick – notes the schedule of the school visits and they can not vote at this meeting but if they chose to have a meeting next week then unsure as to where that would leave them in terms of everything that has been set up and scheduled. Also notes where that would leave us with the

other finalist regarding to the conversation that took place and the finalist still have the option to withdraw. If the meeting does happen next week and the decision made not to hire Dr. Gosselin we could potentially lose the other options.

M. Barbaro – Asks T. Novick if making the interim the permanent superintendent unusual.

T. Novick – states that no it is not unheard of but doing it at the timeframe is something she has not seen in years.

M. Barbaro – Repeats his reasoning for motion. Discussion between all members of their opinions.

K. Kast – Repeats why she understands the process and being professional and explains again on her opinion as to why we shouldn't continue the process. Notes she was not at the last meeting and would've made the same motion as what M. Barbaro did tonight even though it still was not properly noted. Believes it will be disrespectful of their (the candidates) time to make them put on a "dog and pony show" and believes it will be a dog and pony show. Notes that she knows people in our district that do not want to do it. Refers to T. Novick and states that T. Novick has had issues with scheduling the in-district visits. T. Novick notes that this is incorrect she has not had issues. K. Kast motions to halt the search process and have a discussion next week. M. Barbaro seconds.

J. Caitlin – reminds everyone on what everyone went through last year with the search and reminds K. Kast on how we (school committee) wanted to be more transparent and listen to the town and listen to the people outside of people sitting in the meeting. Thinks this is not sending that message if we make that decision now. We have other people that took time into this process and owe them to follow through.

E. Marinelli – Notes that they put themselves in a vulnerable situation and because this is public, they could have people saying: why did we go through all these things? Our candidates watching and potentially this could cause them to withdraw because half of the committee doesn't believe in them or give want to give them a chance because we (school committee) think they are just going to put on a pony show.

T. Novick – Notes that this could end up in a potential legal question. The position description (approved by school committee) did not specify that you only wanted seated superintendents or people who have already had experience and make sure that is very clear that this is not what the committee voted on. K. Kast mentions they wanted 5-10 years' experience. T. Novick response with school committee voted on 5-10 years' experience in education. K. Kast notes this was 5-10 years' experience in education in superintendent and T. Novick notes that this was not the case and reads the jobs description that was voted on.

M. Barbaro notes that this was a misunderstanding.

Student Rep – D. Iannaccone asked for his opinion. He has met Marc, thinks he's a good person. He meets the students, at games, prep rallies, and notes he has not seen that in a while.

K. Kast – Asks T. Novick is the search committee wanted to give them 3 candidates.

T. Novick – Discuss in MA, you can not have just two candidates, but no number was given from the school committee on how many they should give.

Vote on K. Kast motion that was second by M. Barbaro. 3-2 vote – K. Kast(Y) M. Barbaro (Y) D. Iannaccone (Y) J. Caitlin (N) E. Marinelli (N).

Discusses the schedule of the visits and interviews with the candidates with T. Novick.

## **10. Old Business: None**

## **11. Future Agenda Items:**

- a. Regionalization**
- b. Organizational Meeting**

D. Iannaccone - Discusses a weekend food backpack program. Would like to look into. Have someone that is interested in volunteering.

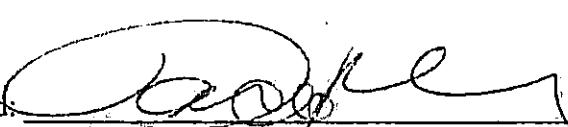
**12. Closing Member Comments:**

E. Marinelli – Says thank you and notes that there was a lot discussed tonight.  
J. Caitlin – None  
M. Barbaro – Congratulations to the cheerleaders and passing of Peter.  
D. Iaïnacone – none  
K. Kast – hoped everyone had a great thanksgiving. Drive safe

**13. Adjournment:**

M. Barbaro motions to adjourn. Second by J. Caitlin. Vote is unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted:



Darcie Morin, Payroll & HR Generalist

Documents Attached: None