



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

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Winooski School Board of Trustees
Special Meeting
Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 6:30pm
Virtual Meeting

Zoom Webinar information: <https://wsdvt.zoom.us/j/98492073283>

Join by Phone: +1 929 436 2866

Attendance: Sean McMannon, Tori Cleiland, Mike Decarreau, Alex Yin, Steven Berbeco, Liz Edsell, Nicole Mace, Emily Hecker, Courtney Poquette, Jean Szilva, Mary Ann Debay, Rick Herbert, Allison Burlock, Kayla Loving, RAM, Karen Greene, Jessie Baker, Elizabeth Wood, Heather Win, Evelyn Monje, Graham

AGENDA

6:30pm

1. Call to Order: 6:34 pm

2. Agenda Review and Adjustments:

3. Public Comments:

*Graham Clarke: I am interested in data from the school and WPD as to what happened to safety and security incidents in the last decade. Having been a principal for the last nine years in Burlington without an SRO at a very large school and having worked in Winooski, I was blown away by how calm and safe Winooski is. This does not seem to be related to a police officer. How many arrests have there been in the last decade? How many fights have happened that only the SRO has been able to break up? How many non-trespassing orders based on incidents in and out of school has the SRO issued? I don't see the problem the SRO fixes. We are seeing on the news that safety is a huge perception and a bit of an illusion. If someone wants to cause harm in Winooski, you'll need a lot more than 1 SRO there to prevent it from happening. The police department is right down the street, the idea of the police chief farming out help, I think I read, seemed like it was a bullying tactic. I think it is incredibly irresponsible saying there might not be help on the way without an SRO. I'm really struck by what are all the other issues the SRO would allegedly address based on the reality of the last 5-8 years. I was simply stunned by how calm and peaceful the building was in my 7 months there. I'm coming from a school without an SRO that had a lot of challenges.

4. FY '22 Budget Work Session:

a. Discussion: Baseline Level Service Budget V4

*Sean started the budget presentation with the budget scenarios. It was explained that the spending decreased from 3.36% to 2.71%. The percentage of equalized pupils is down to 4.84%. Nicole explained how the budget will impact the income based taxes as well as the property based taxes. Nicole explained that if they use the \$1 million dollars in the Fund Balance it would lead to a 13% increase in homestead rates just to cover the increase in expenses in FY 23. Nicole also talked about the Capital Project Debt Service. At the end of the presentation, Sean asked the board about their reactions of the presentation.

5. Policy Title 4.2 Board Job Description

a. Discussion: Safety and Security Forums (60 minutes)

*Tori started this discussion to have the board think about the value of community engagement. Some of the values include belonging, equity, justice, openness, empathy, communication, and representation. The next question raised is “what is our vision for community engagement to gather information around safety and security?” Some answers include having a flow of communication, volume as in a number of conversations, ability to access conversations, more education on some districts without SROs, restorative justice that’s already happening (what work is happening on handling conflict), and the process of the budget.

*Public Comments:

*Mary Ann Debay (Clinical and School Psychologist): A lot of the comments that I heard have been given thoughtful consideration by the board. I am excited about the process that you were talking about in the values of engaging the school community and the community at large. It certainly is a complicated issue. As I was sitting here, I was google chatting with a student who was asking me to help him figure out how to remain safe tonight. With everything happening nationally, locally, and individually, it comes home to me that prevention and quantifying prevention is key. I was asked to speak tonight about a literature review in which information was gathered and analyzed about the role of SRO’s in public schools. This review is linked to a paper co-authored by myself and Brian Dalla Mura. I was concerned about the use of that data because it didn’t reflect the purpose of the paper which was to really review the evolution of the role of the SRO in conjunction with therapeutic responses of students in crisis. The purpose of writing was on prevention and de escalation and effectively managing acute crises. My other concern is that my name is attached to these numbers and data that happened at school. This is in no way a program evaluation, and is in no way reflective or judging what safety and security really means overall in the school or just in the role of the SRO.

*Anonymous: I appreciate Mike for stating that he is NOT taking sides. I appreciate this because, as the Board members roles are to represent the community’s needs and wants, his voice should be representative of the community engagement that must be done.

*Elizabeth Wood (JFK ELL teacher): Speaking to families of color and who have language barriers, I think it’s really important we center their voices and their experiences as we go through this process, and several of you spoke to that, but we need to make sure they have equal access to any discussions we have, interpretations, etc. We have talked about having separate forums that are translator interpreted. Community discussions and student voices need to know where the interpreters are to make sure their voices are heard. I don’t know what engagement has been done for the student body because I am in elementary school. I feel like there are other things going on in Middle and High School to make sure we hear their voices. It might be different for different kids, or different opportunities in different ways to reach out and talk about it. I have talked to families who have come from other countries and it didn’t take very long for them to have negative experiences with the WPD, it’s very surprising to hear when we

have such great reviews of our police and have great people coming into our school, our SRO. The experiences they have do not reflect the message we are being sent about the police in our community. If you haven't had conversations with families about their experiences, you need to. It's really disheartening and there's change that needs to be made here.

*Heather Win: One thing I have been a little bit concerned about is that it seems that the education forums that have been done so far have mostly been facilitated by white folks. The education piece of it mainly comes from the police department. I'm wondering, as we've heard a lot from WSA this summer about policing in schools and what that's reflective of? I'm wondering if we can have an equal weight being put on the other side of education coming directly from the WSD so that it's not weighing heavily on one side.

*Anonymous: What are the next steps? Safety and community forums dates/times? Topics to be presented on? Presenters? Will these sessions lead to a vote? Will the steering committee being discussed have a role in this? If so, how? Finally, how will we move from this phase to the next in our anti-racism work?

*Tori moved the meeting to discuss the "how" and the "what" of what we're going to be doing to engage the community on their safety. Tori requested two members to work on this engagement until the election (beginning of March). Alex suggests to reach out to the city council. Sean weighed in on this and discussed his concerns. Sean stated that to use the Superintendent and board members would be considered bias and it would be helpful to have an outside facilitator.

6. Executive Session:

7. Adjourn: 8:48 pm