



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

We are the future.

Winooski School Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 - 6:30pm

Virtual Meeting

Zoom Webinar information: <https://wsdvt.zoom.us/j/92770302999>

Join by Phone: 1 929 436 2866

All students will graduate from the Winooski School District (WSD) college and career ready at a cost supported by a majority of the Winooski community. WSD students will lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community.

Attendance: Sean McMannon, Mike Decarreau, Steven Berbeco, Kamal Dahal, Tori Cleiland, Alex Yin, Emily Hecker, Liz Edsell, Media Factory (Colin), Tim Rich, Monica Stotyn, Arica Bronz, Amelia Thurston, Hussein Amuri, Kate Cappleton Sinz, Kayla Loving, Katherine Monje, Evelyn Monje, Lindsey Halman, Graham Clarke, Kate Simone, Sarah McGowan-Frejje, Jessie Baker,

1. Call to Order/Mindfulness: 6:34 pm

2. Reorganization of Board:

a. Oath of Office- Newly Elected Board Members-conducted by former member Liz Edsell

b. Election of President* Nominations: Tori Cleiland

*Motion to elect Tori Cleiland to Board President

*Approval by all 4-0

c. Election of Secretary/Clerk nominations: Mike Decarreau

*Motion to elect Mike Decarreau as Secretary/Clerk of board

*Approval by all 4-0

d. Discussion/Approval of Code of Ethics: Board Members' Code of Conduct- Policy 4.7

*Tori read the Code of Ethics: Board Members Code of Conduct. Mike summed the Code of Conduct up in a few sentences.

*Motion to approve board members code of conduct.

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*Approval by all 5-0

e. Discussion/Approval of Robert's Rules for Small Boards

- i. Board members do not have to stand or be recognized by the chair in order to speak or make motions.
- ii. Motions need not be seconded.
- iii. A board member may speak any number of times on a question, and motions to close or limit debate are generally not permitted.
- iv. A motion does not have to be pending in order to discuss a subject informally.
- v. Votes can be taken initially by a show of hands.
- vi. If a proposal is perfectly clear to everyone it may be voted on even though no formal motion has been made.
- vii. In putting questions to a vote, the chairman need not stand.
- viii. The chairman can participate in debate just as any other board member.
(<https://harkerlepore.com/articles/roberts-rules-for-small-boards>)

* Elected Board President will facilitate the rest of the meeting

*Motion for approval of Robert's Rules for small boards

*Approval by all 5-0

3. Agenda Review and Adjustments:

*Alex-update on the weighting study coalition during community engagement

4. Public Comments:

5. Consent Agenda:

- a. Minutes of Meetings
 - i. Capital Project Executive Committee Meeting: February 10, 2021
 - ii. Regular Board Meeting: February 10, 2021
- b. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities
 - i. Approval of Bills
- c. Policy Title: 2.7 Compensation & Benefits
 - i. Approve Teacher Contracts for 2021-22
 - ii. Approve Request for Benefits in Articles 10.13 and 20 for Joan Benjamin
- d. Policy Title: 2.8 Communication and Support to the Board
 - i. Superintendent Report

*Motion to approve Consent Agenda

*The discussion started with the recognition of 42 years of dedicated service to Joan Benjamin (Alex). Recognition to Steven and Liz for the community meetings and an update to the minutes from the prior month, weighting study coalition states: "we are meeting on almost a weekly basis, we hired a lobbyist." The "we" is the board (Mike). In section 6 in government processes, it said that "these two policies were developed by Liz and Steven." The district equity policy was developed by Vermont School Board Association (Tori).

*Approval by all 5-0

6. Governance Processes (Policy Section IV): Antiracism

- a. Policy Title: 4.1 Governing Style
 - i. Board Training: Board Self-Assessment and White Supremacy Culture

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*Evelynn started this training by recognizing the goal of the training which is to create understanding and language to recognize when white supremacy culture characteristics arise, develop ways to label, describe and dismantle these characteristics through accountability practice. The presentation included a slide presentation which defines culture, and a discussion of the board members. The first question was: “How would you describe the WSD Board Culture-the behaviors? The beliefs? The values? Steven Berbeco believes that as a new board member that struck him is the notion of time and how the board meets once a month and urgently tries to get business done. Tori believes there is a value of caring greatly for families and students, and wanting to center that and yet, does that come across to families and students. Alex agrees with the notion of time, but also there are subcommittees, and if I am only working once a month, there is something wrong. I agree we do a good job of understanding our end statement as a guiding light of where culture takes us. Mike believes it has been working to meet once a month as a full board, having the discussions we need to have, adding another perspective during our Anti-racism work, but with the negotiations committee and capital project committee, it isn’t just meeting once a month. The second question is: “How might the community describe the WSD Board culture?” Some of the answers included: committed, hardworking, empathetic, flexible (Tim Rich); welcoming, intimidated because of the formality (Arica Bronz); openness, and vulnerability of the board (Graham Clarke); board progression towards inclusiveness, and openness (Kamal Dahal).

*The second discussions addressed perfectionism and sense of urgency. Evelyn started by reading the definition of perfectionism and antidotes to perfectionism. The second piece discussed is the sense of urgency, definition and the antidotes to a sense of urgency. The question to the board is: “How does this characteristic (perfectionism or sense of urgency) of white supremacy operate in the WSD board externally, internally, or your own practices?” These two characteristics work well together in my experience since July where we celebrate what’s happening within the school district (Tori). When policy governess was adopted 8 years ago, one thing we do is measure the superintendent and ourselves on a variety of different aspects of how we run the business. Perfectionism is built into the structure of policy governess. Sense of Urgency-I think we are on the right path now on meeting the needs of what we need to confront with the anti-racism work but not doing it fast (Mike). What struck me with these characteristics is the short conversation between the Buddah and practitioner asking “how should I live?” The practitioner answered: “Not too tight, not too loose. Like an instrument that you play.” That’s the power of inclusive teams (Sean). The second question is: “When might this characteristic of white supremacy culture be useful? How does it benefit me/other white people?” In some ways, we need to be formal to get certain parts of the meeting done, but we are human, we are real and we need to enable some parts of the meeting to be more open (Mike). The final question is: “What would it look like to dismantle these white supremacy culture characteristics on the board? What might be some ways to hold the board accountable for each of these white supremacy characteristics? Being able to use self-assessments at the end of our board meetings to check in with ourselves, and it’s important for us to have a space to process so the sense of urgency doesn’t keep us from moving on (Tori). There has to be a sense of directness and compassion or some combination of it, we cannot work on it if we are feeling attacked. No one wants white supremacy to keep running as it hurts all of us, we need to be careful it doesn’t come off as being attacked (Arica Bronz). Don’t just look at who’s there but also who’s missing from the table (Alex).

*Update on the steering committee: There were 26 applicants; we did some outreach connecting with areas of the school district to find all those areas we needed to connect with to the greater community. The one downpiece was there were only 5 youth who applied. We hope that the youth who will be on the committee will bring a peer with them. Next steps are: to make decisions around the membership of the steering committee, and have it reviewed by all the members of the planning team. Send out information to the steering committee about the scheduling (Lindsay Halman).

- ii. Discussion: Governance Processes Training dates for March or April

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*The board would like to conduct 2 weekend trainings; one with Pedro Lynn (school board lawyer) around legal and structural pieces of governance. There will also be a follow up training with Lisa Bedinger around introduction to restorative practices and restorative leadership. The board is looking at meeting with Pedro at the beginning of April and the second meeting with Lisa on April 24, 2021 (Tori).

b. Policy Title: 4.4 Board Linkage with Ownership

i. Report/Discussion: School Safety Community Forums

*Steven and Liz conducted a series of school safety community forums (eight 2 hour meetings). We used the same slides for all meetings. The home/school liaisons helped with the meetings for non-english speaking community members. The goal was to get community feedback about specific points of a proposed school safety policy (Steven). I have concerns about the lack of focus pointed at solving racism in the policy. Racism is unsafe and knowing how much work is left, racism was almost entirely absent from the safety forums. I regret that we weren't more explicit on it (Liz). One thing I have learned after attending those meetings is, the questions we had for community members were kind of broad. Not all community members and families were aware of things happening in the schools and there was some misunderstanding when the questions were asked (Kamal Dahal). Some suggestions on ways to make it better would be: if we explained more about where we are coming from in the meeting (overall context), it might help generate a more centered conversation (Kamal Dahal).

*Sarah McGown-Freiji- I think it's incredibly important that throughout this entire process we focus on what's happening in Winooski and tailor whatever policies are made based on what's happening in Winooski. There is certainly a ground swell around the country against SRO's and in certain places it's certainly appropriate for them to not be there, but when we are talking about Winooski we need to make decisions based on what's best for Winooski.

ii. Discussion/Planning: Special Board Meeting regarding School Resource Officer (SRO) position for the 2021-22 school year

*I would like to offer the date of March 24, 2021 for a special meeting at 6:30 to make a decision around the position of the SRO. What does the board feel they need to gather information that would help inform our decision in connection with the information we have gathered since July (Tori). I think it would be helpful to administer the safety questionnaire to share with board members (Steven). I would like to advocate that city personnel, mayor, councillors, city manager, chief of police and SRO all be invited, they have not had the chance to directly address the board (Sean). We did do those two presentations, however, we have not had the opportunity to present to the full board of trustees, we request to be heard by the school trustees as you make a decision that is impacted by public safety (Jessie Baker). The safety and security policy itself does not address the SRO. It addresses the conditions within the school and within the staff. That is the ends; the means of actually getting that done, is that our decision or the directive of the superintendent and the City Manager (Mike)? I appreciate the special meeting to discuss the SRO. It's a topic that has generated a lot of very strong responses. It would be helpful for the board to have time set aside for a special meeting (Steven).

*Monica Stotyn-How were the videos that Officer Ziter was in distributed as I want to view them? It's important to make those accessible to parents and the whole community. I am wondering if there has been a meeting between Officer Ziter and WSA or Officer Ziter and the school board with a mediator for an outside influence. Has this been brought up, it's important to have a conversation between students and Officer Ziter.

*Sarah McGown Freiji-Is it possible to get a copy of the school safety forums report?

c. Policy Title: 4.2.2 Create Written Governing Policies

i. Discussion/Approval - 2nd Reading: School Safety Policy

*One of the things I was struck most by was in the reference section, it appears to me that we have all of this covered somewhere in our policies already (Mike). One thing I didn't find during cross referencing is emotional and mental wellbeing. The others tended to reference physical wellbeing (Tori). We need to change "Winooski citizens"

to “all residents.” Will the revision history be included as part of the policy so we can see the evolution? We should use positions instead of specific names (Alex). When we add a new policy, we don’t do any monitoring on the other policies in place to see if we are in compliance, we only pull them out when something has gone radically wrong. If we incorporate them right into the executive limitations, we have the added bonus to check on it every year through Sean’s interpretation and then evidence, and we get to decide, “is the superintendent in compliance with this policy” (Mike). There is no clear definition of what safety is (Steven).

*Motion to approve the second reading of the School Safety policy.

*Motion fails, 3-2

7. Executive Limitations (Policy Section II):

a. Policy Title: 2.6 Asset Protection

i. Capital Project Update

*I encourage the board to find time to go tour the project. Mike has been great at maintaining that even though we have a contingency, we don’t need to spend it all (Alex). We are still on schedule for completion of September 2022. The new middle school and elementary school will be completed by the end of the current school year to move in for August. Furniture is still a concern and getting it here on time. The new gym is in place for classroom space, we have room to move people around. Once they get inside the existing building, they did the estimates of everything they were going to do based on looking around but no walls were torn out (Mike).

8. Community Engagement (Policy 4.2.1):

a. Discussion: Recent Community Activities by Board

i. Newsletter Topics

*Steven is up for the next newsletter (Tori).

*Weighting study coalition update: It’s been a rollercoaster on whether they are going to take up S13 or not. S13 is the bill that talks about the implementation of the weighting study. Crossover, when they take up the bills for education is the 12th with the finance coming the 19th. You may see an email from me asking to write to your senators telling them it’s important (Alex).

9. Next Agenda:

*Request to revisit the district equity policy

*Reworking the school safety policy into existing policies

10. Upcoming Important Dates:

a. Veggie Van Go: April 7th & 14th, 2021

b. School Board Meeting: Wednesday, April 14, 2021

11. Executive Session:

a. Labor Negotiations

12. Possible Action on Executive Session:

13. Adjourn: 10:39 pm