



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

We are the future.

Winooski School Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 6:00pm
WSD Library Learning Commons or via Zoom
Google Meet Link: meet.google.com/szx-gwkh-oe

Policy Title 1.0 Ends Statement: 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.

Attendees: Wilmer Chavarria, Robert Millar, Nicole Mace, Isaiah Donaldson, Matt Gile (WSD NEA Union President), Elom Kpessa (virtual), Kamal Dahal (virtual), Ted Nelson (Vermont Appraisal Company), Rajnii Eddins (virtual), Coleman Cullinan (virtual), Quinn Iriye (virtual)

1. Call to Order of Regular Meeting:

- a. Meeting called to order by Robert Millar @ 6:06pm

2. Agenda Review and Adjustments:

- a. Robert Millar asks if there are any adjustments to the agenda
- b. **None**

3. Public Comments:

- a. Robert Millar asks if there are any comments or changes.
- b. Matt Gile (NEA president)- All NEA members, who live in Winooski, will be called to talk about the budget. He offers support in partnering with the board around the budget.

4. Consent Agenda: (5 Minutes)

- a. Minutes of Meetings

WINOOSKI SCHOOL DISTRICT, 60 NORMAND ST., WINOOSKI, VT 05404
PHONE (802) 655-0485 FAX (802) 655-7602 www.wsdvt.org

- i. Regular School Board Meeting: 1/10/2024
- ii. Special School Board Meeting: 1/23/2024
- b. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities
 - i. Approval of Bills

Robert Millar asks for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Isaiah Donaldson “So moved.”

Motion Passes unanimously.

5. Executive Limitations (Policy Section II): (60 minutes)

- a. Policy Title: 2.4 Financial Planning and Budgeting
 - i. Discussion/Action: Quarterly Financial Management Report
 - 1. Kamal Dahal- Sharing the memo that is attached. Summarize the unfavorable balance around the negative \$384,000 deficit in the general fund. Which leads to a negative 1.5% of the overall approved budget. This is due to students' needs, transportation needs, and increased cost of benefits; For example, switching from individual plan to a family plan. Increase in employees hired in FY '24 is more than those who left in FY '23. Increased expense and instructional programs because of the same region's increase in students' needs. Higher benefit, higher expense for hires in FY '24. Increase in support had to be brought in due to unanticipated transportation costs. Increased expense among our unhoused students. Increase in salaries and benefits for the support team as well. Salaries were negotiated higher than the approved budget. On the revenue side, we do have a fund balance of \$1.47 million counted as a revenue, but was approved by the board last year. The reserve fund is in the positive, around \$321,000. The projected fund balance is \$1.17 million by the end of the fiscal year. The Federal Grant report is the expected expenditures and revenues as budgeted– so nothing concerning there.
 - 2. Robert Millar asks for questions and asks for a comparison between this year and past years.
 - 3. Nicole Mace notes that in the past few years we have had anticipated surplus built in as part of the transition of the capital project financing, so there was some excess built into the budget to build us up to full payment of the capital bill, which makes a comparison difficult. Looking at it as a percentage of the budget, it is about 1.5% which is pretty good, given all the uncertainties and variables.

Robert Millar asks for a motion to approve the Quarterly Financial Management Report.

Nicole Mace makes a motion to accept the Q2 Quarterly Financial Management Report.

Motion passes unanimously.

- ii. Discussion: Budget Cycle Reflection
 - 1. Robert Millar comments that the amount of budget buddies and engagement was great.
 - 2. Isaiah Donaldson agrees that everyone committed to having a budget buddy that was engaged and showed up. Negatives- having the tax impact modeling and knowing things beforehand that we found out late in the game, that we should have had in preparation. The budget adoption meeting, Nicole drafted up her own

equation, which was great. If we only had that in the beginning it would have been helpful.

3. Kamal Dahal the complexity around different variables and modeling is a challenge. Taking all of those into consideration, we could do better. I also think we did really well. Curious about other neighboring districts, how do they do it?
 4. Nicole Mace Felt very supported during the process especially with the level of new variables this year, such as a new superintendent and new director of finance. Impressed by the level of engagement, I think we have been well served. Because of that, I wish we had looked at modeling earlier, but also understand why we didn't because there are a lot of moving parts. First and foremost focused on the district's needs to meet our end statement.. As a new board, new leadership- we did okay. I want to refine our community outreach for next year.
- iii. Action: Internal Monitoring Report Policy 2.4: Financial Planning and Budgeting
1. Robert Millar- Wilmer Chavarria report on Monitoring report 2.4
 2. Isaiah Donaldson- Looks great, easy to read and thorough. The report was highlighted as a "gold star" report at the VSBA training we attended last month. Our website was highlighted as well, in regards to how we have our policies laid out.
 3. Nicole Mace As someone who has seen and dealt with these in the past, I have no reason to question compliance.

Robert Millar asks for a motion to accept Internal Monitoring Report Policy 2.4: Financial Planning and Budgeting

Kamal Dahal- "So moved"

Passes unanimously.

**** Wilmer Chavarria asked after passing the 2.4 internal monitoring report if a student can have a moment to say a request. Robert agrees to this request.**

Alice Buhendwa, I go to Winooski High School. We are taking a test (WIDA), and were told that taking this test has funding implications with schools. Alice notes that this test isn't helping some people. She makes a note that she doesn't see African or Asian food. Alice notes that all students eat the food and all students should be able to have access to food that all students enjoy eating..

Nicole Mace Encourages administration to work with wellness coordinators and look into the wellness policies.

- b. Policy Title: 2.5 Emergency Superintendent Succession
 - i. Action: Internal Monitoring Report Policy Title: 2.5 Emergency Superintendent Succession
 - ii. Robert Millar- Asking for questions of comments.
 - iii. Nicole Mace I assume that those affected by the report are aware of their roles
 - iv. Wilmer Chavarria We are compliant because the process does exist.
 - v. Kamal gives a sense of relief, having the detailed report.

Robert Millar asks for a motion to accept this report.

Nicole Mace "So moved."

Passes unanimously.

- c. Policy Title: 2.8 Communication and Support to the Board

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- i. Action: High School Choice Capacity Limit (Memo)
 1. Wilmer Chavarria - The board every year has to set a high school choice capacity limit. There are two ways to do this: You can do up to 10% of your total high school population, or another number, whichever is smaller. To us, it is usually the 10%. Twenty students is about 10% right now. Advise to make a motion to accept these numbers
 2. Nicole Mace asks what is the capacity limit, if the 20 is for this year?
 3. Wilmer Chavarria states it is through 25 which is higher than 10%.
 4. Nicole Mace - We have the capacity to have 20 students, but we only have 4 students out, 3 students in?
 5. Wilmer Chavarria - That is correct.
 6. Isaiah Donaldson- We aren't hitting that number, what could we do or what are we implementing for the next school year to get closer to that capacity limit? For students coming in.
 7. Nicole Mace shares that these students don't come with any money. So that really won't help what we have been talking about. Students who pay tuition are a different group.

**Nicole Mace makes a motion to accept the High School Choice Capacity Limit
Motion Passes Unanimously**

- ii. Action: January-February Superintendent's Report to the Board
 1. Kamal Dahal took a moment to congratulate our Presidential Scholar students.
 2. Nicole Mace question about preschool staffing? Lack of staffing to close the classrooms 16 times. The budget we adopted, do we have concerns or a staffing model? Are we changing the way we think?
 3. Wilmer Chavarria Not enough to guarantee we won't have a shortage. We are designing the staffing structure that at least lessens the impact a little bit. The concern is still there but there are more factors. Given it is a more complete team and program, there might be a way with more hands and how you organize people as opposed to something very small, like we are having right now. In negotiation with support staff, maybe what comes of that may be more attractive to a new potential employee.
 4. School board enters a discussion over starting the school day 15 minutes later next school year.
 5. It is stated this needs to be moved to a later agenda item this Spring. To hear the discussion: WSD School Board Meeting 02.14.24
 6. The Regional Calendar was discussed. Wilmer voted on the calendar during a CVSA meeting and will translate that information to the WSD calendar.

Motion made to accept the Superintendent Reports by Isaiah Donaldson with the understanding that the change in start time for the school will be brought back in the spring and the WSD calendar will be brought to the board for review once solidified.

Motion passes Unanimously

- iii. Discussion: Act 127 Legislative Update
 1. Robert Millar -Gives an update regarding Act 127.

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2. Wilmer Chavarria if you get asked regarding our position, respond with “this decision will benefit us.” Be supportive of this bill; Major parts of this bill haven’t changed. We could see something from the senate as early as next week.
 3. Nicole Mace Act 127 is not the cause of property tax increase. It is educational funding.
 4. Kamal Dahal highlights seeing things from the perspective, hard to explain to the public when they see an increase in their overall amount.
- iv. Discussion: City-Wide Reappraisal by Ted Nelson from Vermont Appraisal Company
1. Wilmer Chavarria speaks to how people are asking how come we can’t do it like we always have? Asks Ted to replay the process for the board and members of the public.
 2. Ted Nelson- Very important, we do it the old fashioned way. Inspecting the interior and exterior of the building. We are contractors that do not work for the city of Winooski. We are about 12-14 weeks away from telling people what their properties are worth. There are 1800 properties in Winooski. It is a task to assign a value, when it has been so many years. We are about 40% owned by people who live there, the rest are rentals, commercial or industrial. Up until 4-5 years ago, values were holding well. 12-14 years of very little differentiation between value and what they were assessed for. COVID created a change in the world, people started thinking Vermont was safe, people were engaging in cash sales, site unseen, it destroyed the “grand list.” Out of 256 towns, at least ½ have been ordered to reappraise. On average, things are selling for more than twice what they are listed for on the “Grand List”. There is a grievance process that property owners can initiate.
 3. Isaiah Donaldson- What is the grievance process?
 4. Ted Nelson- There will be sticker shock to those who aren’t in tune with what their property is worth. I encourage everyone to do their homework. A sharp knife is better than a dull knife. The market has continued to change. We are hoping to bring values in form 2023, but we are seeing values continue to increase. We sent a notice. After an informal process, within 14 days, they need to develop an opinion of their process. The last reappraisal was 2007
 5. Ted Nelson & the board’s discussion can be viewed [WSD School Board Meeting 02.14.24](#)

6. [Governance Processes \(Policy Section IV\)](#): (45 Minutes)

- a. Policy Title: 4.2.2 Create Written Governing Policies
 - i. Discussion/Action: Policy Second Read and Approval for Adoption
 1. B20 Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background
 - a. Robert Millar- Looking for approval for adoption, 2nd read.
 - b. Nicole Mace - Any changes?
 - c. Wilmer Chavarria Discussion, but no changes.

Nicole Mace makes a motion to accept B20

Passes unanimously.

2. C22 Student Athletics, Clubs, and Activities

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- a. Wilmer Chavarria The board did not request changes between first and second reads.

Isaiah Donaldson Moves that we adopt policy C22
Passes unanimously

- 3. D23 Selection of Instructional Materials
 - a. Wilmer Chavarria stated that the board did not request changes but there was a suggestion to keep an eye on this and maybe have more conversation for the future for implications given the changes statewide and the conversations currently going on. We will bring back the conversation in the form of an updated policy when the time is right, but definitely in the form of administrative procedure. No changes to the policy, so it should be ready.

Nicole Mace- Move for adoption for policy D23
Passes unanimously

- ii. Discussion/Action: Policy First Read
 - 1. D22 Selection of Library Materials
 - a. Wilmer Chavarria Lots of overlap between the policy D23 above. This mentions the library. A very robust procedure is currently being reviewed. Matt Gile, has been reviewing procedures, even with some students. THIS will apply to both D22 and D23. Most of it is just to ensure we have protection against random arbitrary requests or decisions for anyone to deprive students access to quality instructional materials. Just for political reasons or just because somebody has an issue with whatever is depicted in the materials. We trust that professionals use their knowledge and expertise, and consult with national organizations in order to decide what is in our library.
 - b. Robert Millar asks if there were any additions to the VSBA model policy?
 - c. Wilmer Chavarria No. For the same reason as D23. Allow administration to create a procedure and encourage equitable practices and access to diversified materials and books.
 - d. Isaiah Donaldson and Nicole Mace share their thoughts about ensuring the students are involved and the library commission (high school students) is a good way to do that. Suggestion box?
 - 2. C70 Use of Restraint and Seclusion
 - a. Wilmer Chavarria Formatting changed a little, but the substance of the material did not. We are already compliant with this- Rule 4500 based on new state law. It is asking me to create a procedure on top of that for people to understand and go through this list of things that have to be put in writing. We are already doing all of this because we are legally required to.
 - b. Nicole Mace From a public access point, I think it is fine. I also thought there was some conversation around restraint and seclusion at the state level? I would hate to adopt a policy to have it change at the state level.

That is the problem with tying your policies to statute; When statute changes, you have to update policies.

- c. Robert Millar asks for further comments or questions?
- d. **None provided.**

b. Policy Title: 4.8 Governance Investment

i. Black History Month Presentation - Rajnii Eddins

- 1. To hear Rajnii's presentation, view [WSD School Board Meeting 02.14.24](#)

Robert Millar calls a 3 minute recess @ 7:48pm

Robert calls the meeting back to order @ 7:53pm

ii. Action: Board Member Stipends (Memo)

- 1. Robert Millar- Shares what current stipends are for board members.
- 2. Wilmer Chavarria -Discusses what average stipends are and what is being proposed for our board members.
- 3. Board members share a discussion regarding current procedures and proposed increase in stipends.

7. Community Engagement (Policy 4.2.1): (5 Minutes)

- a. Robert Millar I think we should move this to the beginning of the meeting so it isn't rushed.
- b. Isaiah Donaldson watched a fabulous video
- c. Nicole Mace Thank you to Wilmer for helping with the powerpoint presentation. February 19th, presentation at O'Brien center. Food is available at 4-530pm and the meeting starts at 5-6pm. Presentation on the night before town meeting day at the school.
- d. Isaiah Donaldson shares that CCTV will be there filming.

8. Next Agenda: (5 Minutes)

- a. Board reorganization

9. Upcoming Important Dates:

- a. Veggie VanGo - 2/16/2024
- b. Early Dismissal (No Pre-K) at 11am - 2/22 & 2/24/2024
- c. WMHS Parent Teacher Conferences - 2/22 & 2/24/2024
- d. Mid Winter Break - 2/26 - 3/5/2024
- e. Annual Meeting - 3/4/2024
- f. Town Meeting Day - 3/5/2024
- g. Regular School Board Meeting - 3/13/2024

10. Adjourn: 8:29

Robert Millar asks for a motion to adjourn

Kamal Dahal makes a motion to adjourn the meeting

Robert Millar adjourns the meeting @ 8:29pm