



Winooski School Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 6:00pm
WSD Library Learning Commons or via Google Meet
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, Sarah Haven, Emily Bowers, Nicole Mace, Krista Parisi, Matt Gonzalez, Cheyne Racine, Elom Essiba, Laura Lee, Jennifer Metivier, Amy Chase, Judith Lance, Allyssa Ravelin*
Virtual: *Jacie Barber*

1. **Call to Order** (5 Minutes)
 - a. Robert Millar calls meeting to order at **6:01pm**
2. **Agenda Review and Adjustments:** (5 Minutes)
 - a. *None Provided.*
3. **Announcements and Recognition**
 - a. Arab American Heritage Month
 - i. Robert Millar states the importance of this now and all year, now more than ever.
 - a. Other Announcements and Recognitions
 - i. Nicole Mace Tomorrow CCV is hosting an international food festival, free to the public starting at 4pm-530pm. CCV Winooski, main entrance.
 - ii. Elom Essiba recognized the students of the school, the poetry and the essay contest, great work!
4. **Public Comments:** This item is reserved for comments and questions on topics that are not included on this agenda. Time for public comment is included by default for each item below.
 - a. *None Provided.*
5. **Consent Agenda:** (5 Minutes)
 - a. Minutes of Meetings
 - i. Regular Board Meeting: March 12, 2025
 - b. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities
 - i. Approval of Bills

- c. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the consent agenda.
- d. Isaiah Donaldson- “So moved.”
- e. ***Passed unanimously.***

6. **Governance Processes (Policy Section IV):** (45 Minutes)

- a. Policy Title: 4.2.2 Create Written Governing Policies
 - i. Action: Public Hearing and Adoption of Policies
 - 1. C1 Educational Records
 - a. Robert Millar looks for a motion to approve Policy C1
 - b. Nicole Mace- “So Moved.”
 - c. ***Passed unanimously.***
 - ii. Discussion/Action: Policy Second Read and Approval for Adoption
 - 1. PG2.6 Asset Protection
 - a. Robert Millar asks if there are any changes.
 - i. Wilmer Chavarria shares that they had one language change-adding permanently in the last one.
 - ii. Nicole Mace confirms this is not a new policy & confirmed that \$40,000 is the bid law.
 - b. Robert Millar asks for a motion to accept the second read and approval for adoption in PG2.6 Asset Protection.
 - c. Nicole Mace –”So Moved.”
 - d. ***Passed Unanimously.***
 - iii. Discussion: Policy First Read
 - 1. PG2.8 Communication and Support to the Board
 - a. Robert Millar confirms with Wilmer Chavarria that there were no changes to this policy.
 - b. Nicole Mace shares that she feels this brings up the opportunity to discuss board notification when information is shared with staff who deals with matters of public concern.
 - c. Robert Millar agrees that this is why we review policies.**To hear the discussion regarding communication and support to the board:**
[Winooski School District Board Meeting 04/09/25](#)
 - iv. Discussion/Action: Internal Monitoring Report
 - 1. Robert Millar Nicole Mace did this month’s report.
 - 2. Nicole Mace shares that she borrowed from the previous months, asked Wilmer to verify the evidence.
 - 3. Isaiah Donaldson shares that it is well written.
 - 4. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Policy 4.3 Monitoring Report
 - 5. Isaiah Donaldson- “So Moved.”
 - 6. ***Passed Unanimously.***
- b. Policy Title: 4.2.1 Community Engagement
 - i. Discussion: Recent Community Activities by Board

1. Isaiah Donaldson shared that on Friday he is attending a statewide youth gathering with a few of the ARSC youth.
 2. Nicole Mace Thanks to all the Winooski High School students and Wilmer Chavarria who came to the commission's public input session on Monday in South Burlington. Wilmer organized some students and there was a very strong presence. It is really critical that student voices be part of the conversation around what the future of our education system looks like. The commission has really started to use our time together to focus on some of the equity issues underlying each of the governors' proposals. The commission has formed three committees/working groups that will use questions from an equity impact assessment the state has developed to identify issues that need to be addressed with the reform. How do you ensure additional resources for areas with unique populations? How do we ensure that voices are heard from parents, students, and staff, and what are the structures in place to ensure that even small communities feel well represented?
 3. Robert Millar shares that there was a meeting here that was put on by the Vermont School Workers United. We had something like seven legislators that were here and quite a decent crowd. I think that was one of the biggest concerns we had. Our students here spoke up and shared. How do we make sure that our voice of Winooski is heard if we get put into a larger district?
 4. Isaiah Donaldson shares that he and Nicole Mace attended the Efficiency Vermont walk through the Winooski School District. Helpful for establishing baseline for systems.
 5. Robert Millar shares that the VSBA policy governance board monthly meeting (virtual forum), I have done that the last couple of months with good conversations. The next one is tomorrow. One of the positive things that came out of the last one, a policy governance 101 training. They have added another one and it will be held here May 4th from 9am-330pm.
 6. Robert Millar asks for student comments
 - a. Barakit Gyi shares that the ARSC has been talking about anti-DEI. The ARSC knows what has been happening. We give our full support to Wilmer Chavarria , we know he's doing his best. We put our trust and support in Wilmer and know he will ensure that our school and community won't be affected. We stand by our school's openness to hearing student voices.
 - b. Aili Olsen part of the ARSC shares about information gathering by the group and shares that they are trying to have an event to raise awareness for what the ARSC does. But removing DEI could make that difficult.
- ii. Discussion: High School Scholarship Annual Request
1. Robert Millar apologies for adding this last minute.
 2. Nicole Mace fills everyone in on the committee and how it has worked with Karen Greene leading that charge.

- a. Robert Millar shares that Karen Greene wrote a letter regarding the Scholarship/Rewards program asking if the Board wants to continue? Any changes?
 - b. Nicole Mace shares when the meeting happened last year. A statement was provided to give criteria for the scholarships. Two scholarships \$500 per scholarship and come from the board's funds. Nicole Mace and Elom Essiba share that they would be willing to remain on the committee and select applicants.
- c. Policy Title: 4.8 Governance Investment
 - i. Board Learning: Selected Book Case
 - 1. Robert Millar shares that Wilmer Chavarria gave everyone a chapter from a book to read.
 - a. Wilmer Chavarria asks everyone to share a key takeaway from the reading.
 - i. Robert Millar It talks about how many boards are reactive to responding to past problems, which quickly becomes its own problem.
 - ii. Isaiah Donaldson – Found some of the comparisons a little silly, but the thing I loved was it gives you a simple term and an example you can easily understand. For example, CEO to superintendent. The thing I want to be sure of is that we treat the school the same, as a business. Our number one goal is to help the students.
 - iii. Emily Bowers– We volunteer to help out the community and sign up to run on the board. But there is more of a niche. The responsibility we have to the students.
 - iv. Nicole Mace Governance is a unique skill set, you have to learn together as a board.
 - v. Elom Ebissa I agree with what Nicole said about us being here, but we don't see the community. That is what we are here for, the community, also getting involved in the community, volunteering where we can. Trusting our superintendent to do his work, getting the reports back to us that we needed.
 - vi. Wilmer Chavarria What is one thing you felt was missing? What wasn't addressed yet? What is a question that still remains?
 - 1. Nicole Mace Concrete examples. We don't want to be a rubber stamp.
 - 2. Isaiah Donaldson bringing it up as we learn, learn as you go. Is there a written Winooski School District version of our policy governance guidelines? Maybe a Google Doc, ever changing. Keeping the continuity alive.
 - ii. Discussion: New Board Stipends

1. Robert Millar Community was mostly supportive of our new stipends. We do have them in place. How are stipends distributed? It used to be that if you got elected in March, you would get it the following March. With a larger stipend, doing it quarterly?
 - a. Isaiah Donaldson– I agree with quarterly. If someone leaves their seat, and someone else takes over, do they take the rest of the stipend?
 - b. Nicole Mace share that the procedures that were put in place just last year are new. We should not be waiting until the end of a term if the stipend is to help with food, childcare for the board member, etc.
 - c. Robert Millar shares that he is hearing we need to update procedures for proration for unexpected departures and quarterly payments.
 - i. Isaiah Donaldson– Thanks the residents of Winooski for voting!
 - ii. Sarah Haven will update the procedures and share at the next meeting to ensure everyone is in agreement.
 - i. Discussion: Board Retreat
 1. Robert Millar I would like to, at the very least, set a date. We are early, but I'd like to begin a discussion of things we'd like to talk about.
 2. Discussion is shared about previous years being held in August. October, the year the construction was going on. Should it be before or after the leadership retreat?
 3. Nicole Mace asks for a poll to get an idea when everyone is available to set a date.
 4. **To hear the full discussion over Board Retreat plans: [Winooski School District Board Meeting 04/09/25](#)**
7. **[Executive Limitations \(Policy Section II\)](#)**: (20 minutes)
- a. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities
 - i. Discussion: Facilities Maintenance and Equipment Purchase
 1. Sarah Haven There was a purchase memo included in the School Board packet. We had budgeted \$40,000 for a truck, but after discussion and not having a truck for this long, we felt a Kubota would be more serving to our district.
 - a. Cheyne Racine- We currently have one, it is 11 years old and it's shelf life is running out. We use it to plow the walkways, egresses, etc.
 - b. Sarah Haven clarifies that she can sign for the change from the truck to the Kubota.
 - c. Board agrees that the money budgeted for a truck can be used for the Kubota which is also a more inexpensive purchase.
 - d. Isaiah Donaldson suggests looking into rebates.
 2. Sarah Haven shares that she brings information to the board that was requested regarding the Capital Project from a previous meeting regarding the Efficiency Vermont visit.
 - a. ***To hear the full discussion regarding the Capital Project Fact Sheet:***[Winooski School District Board Meeting 04/09/25](#)

- b. Policy Title: 2.8 Communication and Support to the Board
 - i. Discussion/Action: Internal Monitoring Report
 - 1. Wilmer Chavarria reporting overall compliance, some touches on the policy itself. That is why we are doing it now, timing it at the same time.
 - 2. Emily Bowers What constitutes a “gift?”
 - a. Wilmer Chavarria Almost reported partial compliance, it used to say you approve a gift above \$500. The policy itself doesn’t say you have to approve it, so I changed it to say that you have to be made aware. These things have always been reported in my reports, there is always a mention somewhere. They have been like \$10K or \$15K, like from HydroQuebec or anonymous donors for superintendent discretion. It isn’t always money, sometimes it is gifts. I always put it in the reports. Clarification was made about the discretion used to determine the value of gifts.
 - 3. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept Policy 2.8 Internal Monitoring Report.
 - 4. Isaiah Donaldson- “So Moved.”
 - 5. ***Passed Unanimously.***
 - ii. Discussion/Action: April Superintendent’s Report to the Board
 - 1. Robert Millar asked Wilmer Chavarria if there is anything he would like to share.
 - 2. Wilmer Chavarria shares that everything in the report is a highlight. The only thing is highlighting the secretary requiring certification– we have a special item for that after.
 - 3. Nicole Mace is appreciative of the CTE presentation last month and looks forward to seeing a report of the numbers. There are a lot of state-level conversations about the future of CTE.
 - 4. Robert Millar asks for more information regarding the Relocation Drill.
 - a. Wilmer Chavarria shares that it needs to be practiced once every two years. You have to move the whole school to St. Mike’s in Colchester by foot. Confident we are ready. We will reissue guidance after receiving feedback and questions from staff from initial guidance. Partnering with St. Mike’s, local law enforcement. Strategic route to minimize chance for accidents. We have a calendar with requirements for the states. We have to have an emergency operations manual, required by law.
 - b. Nicole Mace shares that buses are available for younger students, accessibility issues.
 - c. Isaiah Donaldson asks what the relocation is for?
 - i. Wilmer Chavarria shares that it is longer guidance, surplus information, staff names, etc. We don’t share it with the public. If there was a spill, or safety related concern where we have to evaluate quickly, where we don’t have time for parents to pick up students.
 - 5. Elom Essiba On April 16th, what is the State Board of Education tour?

6. Wilmer Chavarria The State Board of Education is having their meeting here at the shared gathering space. We didn't invite them, they asked if they could host at our building.
7. Nicole Mace shares that Mohamed Diop is on the State Board of Education.
8. Wilmer Chavarria shares that Mohamed is one of the very few people to represent public schools and specifically Winooski. He is a member of the Board. Looking forward to hosting it!
9. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the April Superintendent's Report to the Board.
10. Isaiah Donaldson- "So Moved."
11. ***Passed Unanimously.***

iii. Discussion/Action: AOE's Request for Mandatory Certification

1. Robert Millar As you are probably aware, there has been a lot of media coverage on this. There was a letter that went out to superintendents on Friday, making a particular request that all our superintendents of local education entities certify this letter from the Department of Ed, which still exists for the moment. This came up from Zoe Saunders. The discussion didn't make it into your packet, because Wilmer and I couldn't discuss it until Saturday. There has been some follow up since then. On Monday, Saunders reversed this, at least to some degree in terms of asking individual education entities to certify. There is still some discussion as to what the AOE intends to do. As a board, we don't really need to have the degree of discussion that we intended to have after Wilmer and I's discussion on Saturday.
2. Wilmer Chavarria shares that the change happened very abruptly. That was the best case scenario because at the point when the state decides to provide a statewide answer to that request, now at least it is on the state's court. Now they have to own whatever they do. You are not forcing the districts to sign something that might be very problematic. It surprised me quite a bit. By 3pm that day, they doubled down and said you have to do it. I tried to strategize the way I did, I needed to take a position quickly. I reached out to Nicole Mace because of her legal background and Robert Millar because he is the president. There was a sense of urgency that I needed to take a position quickly. At the same time, I needed to make it clear that there was a way for me to still comply if this is what the board wanted me to do. The board couldn't do this without an emergency meeting. So I phrased it as this is my position and I am not signing because I don't know what I am signing. I was upset that this was being put down to the district themselves. I reached out to the secretary and expressed my opinion and advised those I consulted with and reached out to the Attorney General. Still waiting for a response, but I am sure they are busy. We have not seen a draft from the state to see what their answer will be.
3. Isaiah Donaldson shares that there have been a lot of abrupt things, watching it unfold through the news, the Digger and through communication—it is just wild

now. Four days can change quickly, very fast! I appreciate the correspondence from you, Wilmer. I appreciate you not just signing things– from a policy governance standpoint as well.

4. Wilmer Chavarria shares that for clarification purposes, this goes back to what Nicole was saying. I was not asked by the Digger whether it was okay to use my words which were intended for our staff. Out of respect to our staff, who also had a lot of questions, they were reading this and needed to hear from me quickly because they wanted to know where we stood. Out of respect for them, I put out a statement that said this is where I stand as of now. I said that the board will discuss this, they will decide where they stand and will keep you updated as things develop. This was an email to our team. I knew the conversation would keep going in the state and I wanted our staff to have the information. But then, it went to the Digger, it was so early in the morning. I found out like everyone else, reading the news. I was not consulted. Seven Days consulted with me, Vermont Public did, WCAX, you name it, they asked me would you like to speak to us? That is what you would expect. But it took me by surprise and I couldn't have told Robert that this was happening. I did feel a little confused. It came so early, it also meant that it set the tone for what happened in the rest of the state. People basically put me in direct contradiction against the secretary and the state government. The first thing people hear... that's it; Even if the story has developed a lot since then people will not forget the initial reaction. I am still dealing with the effects of that!
5. Nicole Mace The conversation we had was, my sense of this needs a statewide response. If the Secretary of Education is not willing to do that then that is what our Attorney General is for and also what our associations are for. They also did a lot of work behind the scenes advocating for a statewide response. I want to express some gratitude for that. I think how this has played out in terms of messaging coming out of the secretary's office is potentially problematic for Winooski down the road. It was set up as a conflict. I think that it is tough to know we need to stand up for our values and what's right and if that means that we are painted as misrepresenting what we are doing or blamed for fallout over something, I have concerns about that. Based on that I saw happening in the Senate of Education this afternoon, that is absolutely what is happening.
6. Public Comments:
 - a. Laura Lee- I have two kids in the district, I am the PTO president, currently. I am not speaking on behalf of the PTO, I want the board to hear that I am so incredibly grateful for Wilmer's courageous leadership of the district. I understand that there may be some fallout, but my hope is that the fallout whether directed at Wilmer or the district, and I know from other folks on the PTO, I want people to show up to support Wilmer, I know some staff members feel that Wilmer's response in that letter is what makes the continue to be able to show up and due their job and do it really well– that is huge! Wilmer, how you responded could have sent a different message to staff if it wasn't responded the way you did. I am grateful for

you living out those values. If there are ways that I can support you as a parent or as the PTO, as a group for the fallout you take, we are here to do that.

- b. Nicole Mace shares that it is the board's responsibility to provide that sort of cover to Wilmer. They should not be out by themselves.
- c. Amy Chase I agree with your response 100% with what you wrote and how you responded quickly shows exactly your love for everything and your beliefs. I came from Connecticut, and this is the most diverse place I have ever seen and I love it here. The fact we are different from anywhere else in Vermont, I fell in love with Winooski. We have to have a different stance, we aren't the same. Thank you, we've got your back!
- d. Robert Millar states that this is an ongoing statewide discussion that everyone should be aware of and tuned in.

8. **Next Agenda:** (5 Minutes)

- a. *None provided.*

9. **Upcoming Important Dates:**

- a. Friday, April 18, 2025 | Veggie VanGo
- b. Monday, April 21 - Friday, April 25, 2025 | No School, Spring Break
- c. Friday, May 2, 2025 | Veggie VanGO
- d. Wednesday, May 14, 2025 | Regular School Board Meeting

10. **Adjourn:**

- a. Robert Millar looks for a motion to adjourn.
- b. Emily Bowers– “So Moved.”
- c. *Passed Unanimously.*
- d. *Meeting adjourned at 8:42pm.*