

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee

Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 26, 2009

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Nessacus Regional Middle School, Dalton, MA, on Thursday, February 26, 2009, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Chivers, Conner (7:04 p.m.), Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Lacatell, Wagner, Welts, Yates and Carroll-Lombardi.

Absent: Members Darby, Goddard, Harvey and Yates

Also Present: Superintendent Donna Harlan, Assistant Superintendent James Stankiewicz, Business Manager Marge Foster, CBEA Executive Secretary Joanne Dowling, Recording Secretary Diane Koch, and Members of the Audience.

For the record, Chair Carroll-Lombardi does not vote unless noted.

ARTICLE 9596 RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Chair Carroll-Lombardi welcomed those in the audience, stated that the public hearing on the budget would be later in the meeting and asked audience members wishing to speak on the tentative budget to please wait until then. Seeing no one who wished to comment at this time, the Chair moved to the next article on the agenda.

ARTICLE 9597 STUDENT AFFAIRS

A. Wahconah Report

Chair Carroll-Lombardi reported that Wahconah students were very busy this week and she gave them the night off.

B. Yearbook Ad – 2009 Wahconah Arrow

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee votes to purchase an ad in the 2009 Wahconah Arrow, in the amount of \$500.00.

Ayes: Ten members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9598 SECRETARY'S REPORT

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of February 12, 2009

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 12, 2009, as printed.

Ayes: Ten members voting.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9599 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Warrants

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

To approve warrant No. 2009-34, in the total amount of \$569,581.94, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-34, dated February 19, 2009

PAYROLL

Operating Expense	\$509,871.05
School Lunch	\$14,988.50
Becket Washington Preschool	\$1,455.15
Craneville Homework Club	\$265.89
Federal Funds	<u>\$43,001.35</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL	\$569,581.94

Ayes: Eight members voting.
Nays: None.
Abstentions: Members Hopper and Welts
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

To approve warrant No. 2009-34D, in the total amount of \$220,787.94, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-34D, dated February 19, 2009

DEDUCTIONS

Operating Expense	\$213,865.52
FICA Expense	<u>\$6,922.42</u>
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$220,787.94

Ayes: Eight members voting.
Nays: None.
Abstentions: Members Hopper and Welts
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

To approve warrant No. 2009-35, in the total amount of 2,016,283.89, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-35, dated February 26, 2009

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Operating Expense		
Accounts Payable	\$249,417.14	
Insurance Payment	<u>\$322,115.37</u>	
		\$571,532.51
Transfers		\$76,131.96
Federal Funds		\$7,223.17
Circuit Breaker		\$19,117.38

School Lunch	\$33,000.03
Athletic Independent Gate Receipts	\$2,178.00
NRMS Student Activity Fund	\$2,000.00
WRHS Greenway Trail	\$151.53
Use of Facilities Nessacus	\$2,534.73
BTES Enrichment	\$397.50
WRHS Cross Country Revolving	\$396.00
WRHS Nordic Skiing Revolving	\$668.55
WRHS Boys' Basketball Revolving	\$633.30
WRHS Girls' Basketball Revolving	\$584.75
WRHS Hockey Revolving	\$389.75
WRHS Renovation Total	\$19,817.00
WRHS Science Lab Total	\$5,950.98
Becket School Advisory Fund	\$2,980.50
Maturing Debt - Principal Nessacus	\$805,000.00
Maturing Debt - Interest Nessacus	\$222,381.25
Maturing Debt - Principal WRHS	\$100,000.00
Maturing Debt - Interest WRHS	\$2,300.00
Maturing Debt - Principal Kittredge	\$90,000.00
Maturing Debt - Interest Kittredge	\$9,177.00
Short Term Debt - Principal	\$40,000.00
Short Term Debt - Interest	<u>\$1,738.00</u>
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$2,016,283.89

In response to a question about the Use of Facilities Nessacus in warrant No. 2009-35, Business Manager Foster told members that it was an expense and is used to pay custodial overtime for weekends and evenings. In answer to another question Business Manager Foster responded that Independent Gate Receipts was also an expense that pays ticket takers at events.

Ayes: Ten members voting.
 Nays: None.
 Motion carried unanimously.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

To approve warrant No. 2009-35A in the total amount of \$1,034.50, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-35A, dated February 26, 2009

<u>ACCOUNTS PAYABLE</u>	
Operating Expense	<u>\$1,034.50</u>
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$1,034.50

Ayes: Ten members voting.
 Nays: None.
 Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9600 COMMUNICATIONS

A. Report of the Chair

Chair Carroll-Lombardi reported to Committee members that she had no further information on the “Day On the Hill” except that the forum will be different from last year’s. As soon as more information is available she will forward it to members.

ARTICLE 9601 SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Education

Member Welts reported that the subcommittee had reviewed details of the field trips on the agenda tonight, that many of the trips are yearly events and that all was in order. Members discussed financing for the trips, what the cost to students was, how to help students that cannot afford the fees and the financial concerns if the District were to pay all expenses associated with field trips.

a. Academic Decathlon Competition, March 6 –7, 2009

MOVED BY MEMBER WELTS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight trip for Academic Decathlon on March 6 – 7, 2009, to participate in state competition, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Ayes: Ten members voting.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

b. Band and Choral Students Festival and Clinic, April 30 – May 3, 2009

MOVED BY MEMBER HENDERSON, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight trip for Wahconah band and choral students to participate in competitions in Williamsburg, Virginia on April 30 – May 3, 2009, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Ayes: Ten members voting.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

c. Apollonian Players One-Act Play Competition, Various Dates

MOVED BY MEMBER HENDERSON, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves overnight field trips for the Apollonian Players on February 27 – 28, 2009, March 13 – 14, 2009, and March 26 – 28, 2009, to participate in various competitions, recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Ayes: Ten members voting.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

2. Finance

a. Public Hearing – FY 2010 Budget

Chair Carroll-Lombardi opened the public hearing by asking Superintendent Harlan to give an overview of the budget process.

Superintendent Harlan reported the budget process began in August by working with auditors and balancing/closing out the accounts from the past year. Administrators have a two-day retreat before school begins and are asked to develop a list of needs, look over expenses, and prepare both a capital and an operating budget for their buildings and this year to also develop a supplemental list. The Superintendent with Business Manager Foster and Assistant Superintendent Stankiewicz go over those lists with the building principals and their secretaries making suggestions to level service programs and where cuts can be made if needed. The process was done without actual numbers until the Governor released his budget figures on January 28, 2009. Development of this year's budget was also difficult because of the global economy and not knowing if education would be touched by the 9C cuts. Superintendent Harlan spoke about the federal stimulus package and the amount of money CBRSD might receive from that. She cautioned counting on that money to fund the FY-2010 budget and added that the actual amount of funds received from the government would not be out until late July or August. Superintendent thanked audience members for coming to finance meetings and sharing ideas with the Finance Subcommittee. She concluded by saying the final budget adoption would be at the March 12, 2009, meeting.

Member Chivers, Co-chair of Finance Subcommittee, stated it has been a very interesting year for developing a budget. The Finance Subcommittee began with a possible \$2,000,000 reduction in the budget that would have resulted in at least thirty layoffs and educational program cuts that would have been devastating for the District. Tonight the budget proposal includes approximately \$600,000 in cuts. Member Chivers cautioned that if government funding were reduced, additional cuts would need to be made. Mr. Chivers then turned the meeting over to Business Manager Foster.

Business Manager Foster reviewed a PowerPoint presentation (attached to the official minutes) and explained that the budget is built by using the individual principals' budgets. Mrs. Foster commented that in last year's budget some areas were not broken down into line items and that in this year's budget they are. Some of the changes seen in line items are due to ongoing negotiations last year and savings the District is expecting due to retiring staff. Mrs. Foster reported a contingency of \$662, 922 in reductions is been built in for increased or decreased funding and that the total tentative budget was \$25, 843, 284, an average overall increase to towns' assessments of 2%.

Chair Carroll-Lombardi thanked Business Manager Foster and opened the floor to the audience.

Karen O'Brien, CBEA President and WRHS English teacher, wanted to know if money from the stimulus package the government is planning was already included in the budget and if not, would the District have to give back the money because the budget can not be increased later? Superintendent Harlan responded that she did not believe we would be in the position of having to give back any monies the District might see from the stimulus package. Mrs. O'Brien then asked about line 305 and why there was less than a 1% change in the FY-2009 amended budget and also why there was such a large increase for FY-2010 when compared to the original FY-2009 budgeted amount. Business Manager Foster explained the difference was due to legal fees associated with negotiations that have not been included as reductions in the line items yet.

George Bissell, Dalton, asked for a breakdown on school population. Chair Carroll-Lombardi told Mr. Bissell they would return to him as soon as they had the information.

Tom Szczepaniak, Dalton Select Board, asked about line items 105, 210 and 310. Business Manager Foster explained those line items were administrative expenses: salaries for principals, assistant principals and secretaries; travel; postage; leased equipment; and supplies for schools, special services and central office.

Domenico Suppappola, Dalton Finance Committee, told the Committee it would have been better if the overall average increase were lower than 2%. Mr. Suppappola urged the Committee to be good managers and look at both the financial and educational factors when developing a budget.

Ken Walto, Dalton Town Manager, urged the Committee to adopt the budget as proposed. Dalton struggled over the summer to find ways to reduce their budget by \$250,000. He commented that when the District increases Dalton's assessment by even 1% town services have to be cut. Mr. Walto told the Committee that Dalton was probably going to use their \$1,000,000 excess and deficiency account this year because of 9C cuts and urged the District to use their E & D as well. In response to Mr. Walto's question about the District adopting the law pertaining to retirees' health insurance and Medicare, Chair Carroll-Lombardi stated the District had adopted the law.

Terry Williams, Dalton Finance Committee Chair, echoed his colleagues in urging the Committee to adopt the budget as proposed. Mr. Williams stated Dalton had a 7% increase in their school assessment last year and with FY-2010 currently set at a 0% increase it was a wash. Last year because the other six towns voted for the budget Dalton needed to pass a \$250,000 override and the override failed. Commenting that towns are subject to Proposition 2 ½ and Dalton is facing a serious budget problem he again asked the Committee to adopt the budget as proposed.

Karen Rogers of Windsor commented that she appreciates the job the Committee does, but that Windsor's assessment would increase by 14% even with a level service budget. Ms. Rogers finds it a hard sell to the town of Windsor when the budget itself is only a 3.5% increase.

Richard Wagner, Windsor representative and Windsor Finance Committee, commented that the problem is the DOR. The DOR is saying we have more wealth in our towns than is really there. Mr. Wagner added that Windsor's neighbors in Hinsdale are also looking at an increase. The increase seems large when all the Committee has done is to level service the budget, but Windsor will find a way.

Mike Hoffman, Dalton Finance Committee, commended the Committee on the job they have done this year. Mr. Hoffman wondered if voters in the seven towns were polled if they would vote to remain part of the District. He added that it was the Committee's job to be fiscally responsible.

John Bartels, Dalton Police Chief, stated the Dalton Police Department was level funded and that meant cuts of: officers, vehicles and overtime. He stated that if the towns have to follow Proposition 2 ½, then the District should also.

Joanne Dowling, CBEA Executive Secretary and NRMS teacher, remarked that the towns are not the only ones cutting back. Mrs. Dowling stated the District had made drastic cuts three years ago when five teaching positions at Wahconah were eliminated, health education was cut, and sports and activities as well as the field trips that were approved tonight are funded by booster clubs. Mrs. Dowling finished by saying CBRSD is not the same system as it was fifteen years ago and what the towns are experiencing now the school district has already.

Stuart Sargent, Dalton Select Board, stated that at budget time it seems that everyone is against the towns and schools and said working together is important. Cuts to services can't keep happening, but everyone needs to be compassionate with their neighbors and work together.

Member Wagner took the opportunity to invite everyone to the March 4th Leadership Summit at Wahconah Country Club where people can come together and talk.

Chair Carroll-Lombardi shared the information George Bissell asked about earlier. District enrollments were as follows: Year 2001 – 2310; Year 2002 – 2316; Year 2003 – 2287; Year 2004 – 2210; Year 2005 – 2167; Year 2006 – 2141; Year 2007 – 2105 and Year 2008 – 2042.

Bill Chabot, Dalton Select Board, applauded Business Manager Foster and added that he was impressed with her pro-active approach. Mr. Chabot is hopeful that there would not be any changes between now and the final adoption of the budget on March 12th.

John, Boyle, Dalton Select Board Chair, took the opportunity to thank the Committee for their diligent efforts and for being responsive to the town's position with budget issues.

Dean Smith, Hinsdale, asked about the excess and deficiency fund and why it was listed as a contingency. Business Manager Foster responded by saying not all members of the Committee are comfortable using the E & D funds, but will if necessary.

Member Chivers explained about the \$662,922 contingency amount and that if additional funding comes through those cuts will not need to be made. He added that discussion took place on the contingency amount in the Finance Subcommittee meeting prior to this meeting and will continue to be discussed in the next few subcommittee meetings.

In answer to Member Conner's question about the number of students that choice out of the district, Superintendent Harlan responded with the following: School Choice – 158; Vocational – 68; Charter – 12 and students who choice to come to CBRSD – 77.

Chair Carroll-Lombardi thanked audience members for coming tonight and invited them to attend Finance Subcommittee meetings on March 5 and March 10.

A short break was taken from 8:21 p.m. to 8:23 p.m. to allow for the videotape to be changed.

3. Policy

Member Hopper reported that the subcommittee has not met.

4. Personnel

No report.

C. Others

1. Wahconah Building Committee

Member Henderson reported on the volunteer days at Wahconah. SABIC installed lab units in the science lab and the six science classrooms have been painted. Mrs. Henderson told the Committee that the lab would hopefully be open next week; they were waiting on lights, which had to be special ordered. An open house will be scheduled in April. Mrs. Henderson ran down a list of what has been completed thus far in addition to the science lab renovations: new classroom furniture is in place; cafeteria tables have been repaired; leaking skylights are repaired and the gymnasium floor will be refinished over the summer.

ARTICLE 9602 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

Superintendent Harlan had nothing to report tonight.

B. Recommendations

None.

C. Other

ARTICLE 9603 PERSONNEL

A. Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

Jeanna Kuzia has been appointed Title I reading paraprofessional at Craneville School, three and one-half hours per day, effective February 23, 2009. This is a grant-funded position.

Deborah Hopmans has been appointed Title I math paraprofessional at Craneville School, three and one-half hours per day, effective February 23, 2009. This is a grant-funded position.

Note: All salaries are set in accordance with current contracts.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

To move Article 9605 New Business and Article 9606 Remarks For the Good of the Committee before Article 9604 Old Business.

Ayes: Ten members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9605 NEW BUSINESS

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the addition of new business to the agenda.

Ayes: Ten members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

A. Approval of Overnight Field Trip

MOVED BY MEMBER HENDERSON, SECONDED BY MEMBER HARVEY

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight field trip for Wahconah Economics students on March 8 – 9, 2009, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Ayes: Ten members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9606 REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Member Hopper told the Committee he agreed with a statement by Mr. Chabot that Business Manager Foster's presentation was outstanding. He added that Mrs. Foster was prepared and had all necessary information with her. Mr. Hopper also thanked the members of the Finance Subcommittee for all of the time and work they had done on the FY-2010 budget proposal.

Member Henderson thanked SABIC for all of the work and months of preparation that went into the renovation of the Wahconah science lab.

After members began to comment about the best way to prepare and present the budget proposal to towns Chair Carroll-Lombardi stated that the discussion belonged in the Finance Subcommittee meeting not under Remarks For the Good of the Committee.

The Committee returned to Article 9604, Old Business.

ARTICLE 9604 OLD BUSINESS

A. Executive Session (Strategy Regarding Negotiations)

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER HARVEY

To go into executive session at 9:02 p.m. in accordance with MGL Chapter 39, 23B, "to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining...including the resolution of grievances pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement."

ROLL CALL

Ayes: Members Chivers, Conner, Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Lacatell, Wagner, Welts, Yates and Carroll-Lombardi.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

The Chair stated that the Committee would adjourn the meeting at the close of the executive session.

The Committee came out of executive session at 9:58 p.m.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER HOPPER

To adjourn the meeting at 9:59 p.m.

Ayes: Ten members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.