

**WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**  
**APRIL 15, 2021**  
**VIA ZOOM**

Board Members Present: L. Picard, T. Perkins, E. Holmes, T. Kilanski, J. Rokes  
Administration Present: K. Dassau, V. Carey, D. Jack, T. Taylor, I. Spencer

L. Picard called the meeting to order at 6:34pm and read the Right-to-Know meeting checklist, took roll call and all Board members advised if anyone was in the room with them. T. Perkins advised she was in the room with her husband, T. Kilanski advised his wife and daughter will be there and J. Rokes advised people would be coming and going. Other members were alone in their space.

**L. Picard MOVED to approve the 4/1/21 Board minutes; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski –yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.**

L. Picard introduced Abigail Sprague as the Keene High School student the Board would be highlighting tonight. Abbey is very accomplished in Art and has won this year's Scholastic Arts Award which will continue for judging in New York. She has also received scholarships from several colleges. The Board is very proud of how she has represented herself and the Town while at Keene High School.

V. Carey advised Abbey was an excellent student at Winchester and she always knew she would do great things at Keene High School. She is proud of what she has done. Abbey has said that she is interested in possibly pursuing Art Education in the future.

Abbey feels that Keene High School has helped her because there are so many opportunities there; they are open to anything. She feels that has helped make her successful. Everyone wants you to be successful.

L. Picard invited Abbey to a Board meeting when they are back to in-person.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – V. Carey:**

V. Carey sent out a call to families providing information she had shared with the Board regarding return to five-day in-person learning. She has spoken to the Commissioner of Education. The staff have vaccines scheduled and because it was less than a 48 hour shift, a move to in-person instruction to begin after school vacation was acceptable. Winchester will begin on May 3rd. As voting on May 7<sup>th</sup> will be at the school that will be a remote day.

The only change in the travel quarantine requirement is international travel or travel on a cruise ship.

V. Carey's suggestion is that they change the Winchester School District requirement to that of the State, which is part of the Return to In-Person School Plan.

**T. Perkins MOVED that the School Board authorize school administration to adjust the travel quarantine to match the state requirements; SECONDED by: L. Picard, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski –yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.**

The change in the Governor's Mask Mandate does not apply to schools; schools were strongly encouraged to continue with their mask policy. Mask policies are included in the School's Return to In-Person Plan. The State is still recommending that schools keep a Mask Policy.

V. Carey explained there are some places in programming that will need to be taught by teachers other than those doing in-person instruction. They have posted for an English Arts teacher and Math teacher and also an Elementary teacher; will be doing interviews. They have a time crunch. Costs will be covered by ESSER funds. V. Carey feels the Board should allow Dr. Dassau to make a decision prior to the next Board meeting. They will be part-time teachers with no additional benefits. It would be about seven weeks; will not be carried over, at this point.

After discussion, **L. Picard MOVED to allow K. Dassau to sign any contracts that come before him prior to the next Board Meeting; SECONDED by: E. Holmes, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski –yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.**

T. Perkins asked about Title One Night of Gratitude.

V. Carey explained 30 families attended; some with multiple students. There were crafts, the children were read to, families received social/emotional tips, etc. It was a good turnout for a virtual event.

**BUSINESS MANAGER – T. Taylor and D. Jack:**

**L. Picard MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest dated 4/16/2021 in the amount of \$269,959.87 and the Payroll Manifest of 4/16/2021 in the amount of \$199,496.27; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski –yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.**

L. Picard thanked T. Taylor and D. Jack for being at the Deliberative Session and for having supporting documents available.

**FACILITIES MANAGER – I. Spencer:**

\*Waiting on financial information for the ESSER Grant and intricacies to get started on the Elementary project.

\*Received free masks, wipes and gloves through the State and hand sanitizer from Aubuchon Hardware. A very large donation of 26 pallets of hand sanitizer will be coming from Walmart.

Will touch base with the Winchester Learning Center and Applewood Nursing Home to offer hand sanitizer.

T. Kilanski suggested offering it to the police and ambulance departments as well.

L. Picard gave a shout-out to Facilities for their moving and set-up for the Deliberative Session at 8:00am, held on Saturday. She asked Ian Spencer to remind the crew that the Board appreciates all they do.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – K. Dassau:**

\*At the April 10<sup>th</sup> School Board Meeting in non-public session the resignation of Ian Spencer was read. His last day will be on May 28<sup>th</sup>. He is taking time off; will be at, at least one more Board meeting.

Winchester has never had a Facilities Director in that position. They know what an asset Ian Spencer has been and the value of having a Facilities Director is. Ian Spencer has saved the School District money, has had passion and dedication for his job. They are all very grateful. He is leaving his temple; his hard work and planning have given us something to go back to. Couldn't say thank-you enough.

L. Picard hopes he will be at the first meeting in May.

Ian Spencer thanked the Winchester School Board, Administration and the whole community who has supported him over the years. He will certainly miss a lot of aspects of the Winchester School.

## **CHAIR REPORT/COMMENTS – L. Picard:**

\*Policy Committee: Met tonight – Policies JFABD and JFABE will be in the packet for the next Board meeting. Also reviewed new policy JABA. The Board will review it at the next meeting.

\*Keene High School Meeting: The next meeting will be held on 4/22/21 at 6:00pm.

Keene High School will present the report on Winchester students at Keene at the 5/5/21 Board meeting.

\*Scholarship Committee: T. Perkins is working with Christy Frazier on plans for the Winchester Scholarship Night which has been firmed up for June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The hope is to potentially have it outside.

K. Dassau advised people are interested in positions in Winchester, but when they are told the salary range, it is a non-starter. He would like to add the salary range to the post for the Facilities Manager.

D. Jack advised the current salary may not be in the current range to try to attract someone.

Ian Spencer advised the closest to his salary at the bottom of the scale was \$75,000 in Hinsdale; Especially with HVAC experience, it is very difficult to find a qualified person.

T. Kilanski can understand wanting to put the salary out, but can the Town afford it?

T. Perkins wonders if we are going to have a viable building. They are talking the next 50 years; not just now.

T. Kilanski has heard both sides.

K. Dassau advised they are just asking for a salary range for a person interested. Would use what the Board sets, so administration will have a filter. They would come back to the Board for final review.

After Discussion, **L. Picard MOVED to make the salary range for the Facilities Manager to be listed at \$65,000 to \$75,000; SECONDED BY: T. Perkins, T. Kilanski made a Friendly Amendment of \$60,000 to \$70,000 and L. Picard accepted and T. Perkins Seconded it; VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski –yes, J. Rokes – no, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.**

The Board can revisit if needed when they receive the list of candidates.

Deliberative Session: The Operating Budget in the amount of \$12,353,376.98 passed at the Deliberative Session and was moved to the ballot. This Warrant Article restores most items previously cut from last year's budget.

The Default Budget passed in the amount of 11,610,865.00 to be moved to the ballot. L. Picard advised she wasn't able to explain at Saturday's Deliberative Session that if the Default Budget passes, it would not include any of those items that were put back in with the new Operating Budget amount.

L. Picard advised the Boosters Club wanted everyone to know how very grateful they are for the communities support with fundraisers, etc. Not confident they will be able to support another full season; will concentrate on fundraising to support other things kids enjoy during the season. There are a lot of positive things to discuss regarding what was reinstated in the budget.

Discussed Article Three which was moved to the Ballot.

Discussed Article Six which was moved to the Ballot.

Article Seven – Deficit Warrant Article: This was a big topic of conversation at the Deliberative Session. L. Picard reviewed the timeline. There was a handout of supporting documents from the auditors which is on the website under School Board docs, including all audits, supporting documentation as to how the deficit came about and information regarding ACCESS funds.

L. Picard explained that the School's audit wasn't done from 2012-2016 so basically the fund balance was a guess. Money being returned to the voters shouldn't have been returned, except one time. It was not because the Board overspent, per the auditor, but there was a revenue shortfall. Reconciliation of the fund account continued until 2018 and the new Business Manager realized something was not right. Met with the auditor and found a shortfall. It was a matter of over-returning. Advised they were told by the auditor that the best way to handle this was with a Warrant Article until the deficit was paid. There will be no money returned to taxpayers until then. The School Board and the Budget Committee agreed that the best way to handle it will be to do one year at a time. She feels it definitely took the right mix of School Board members and Administration to bring forward this plan.

If the Warrant Article doesn't pass, the School will continue in a deficit and won't return money to the citizens. The School can't get loans and could be in arrears.

D. Jack advised the School can't borrow money, only the Town can borrow. His hope is with the passage of this Warrant Article the money leftover would go to reduce the complete deficit.

T. Kilanski advised information was brought to his attention regarding payments from the School to ACCESS as well as over \$88,000 that was owed from ACCESS to the School. He was advised that L. Picard made the comment that ACCESS didn't owe the School any money.

L. Picard advised she would have to review the minutes from 2018.

K. Dassau advised they did file an E&O claim for \$88,000 owed from ACCESS. The Audit will show that we are carrying that deficit. There was a return of some revenue, but we still have a \$88,000 deficit.

L. Picard explained the number that was calculated to be due to ACCESS was the 2011 number, but it was paid in 2014 and it was not correct at that time. The Board had many conversations as to how the money could be paid back. Ultimately it was decided things needed to move quickly. She wanted it understood that they never expected a return from ACCESS; that was an impossible request. The amount has been absorbed in the deficit.

L. Picard reminded the Board that May 11<sup>th</sup> voting will be held at the School. The School Board needs to have a presence there throughout the day. At the next meeting on 5/5/21, the Board needs to commit to times so she can get a list to the Moderator. If there are gaps, need to fill them in. If members can't be there they could ask a friend to fill in. There needs to be three people there throughout the day.

### **CITIZENS' COMMENTS:**

JoAnn Hobbs, Darlene Foster, Rob Bushey and Ann Bazan – Congratulations to Abbey.

E. Holmes asked about the COVID Grant that will be used to hire teachers this year. Can it be used later to hire teachers?

D. Jack will need to get back with that information. They have three different funds they are using. He thinks in three weeks, at the next Board meeting, they will be much further along and have a better idea.

Rob Bushey – Losing staff members. If the School Board doesn't look at things will lose good people. At a previous Board Meeting some members didn't want to give staff a 2.5% raise.

Michelle Calderwood asked about the Deficit Warrant Article.

L. Picard advised the deficit is the School's deficit; therefore the Town's deficit.

K. Dassau advised there is \$88,000 we don't have.

L. Picard thanked the Board for their hard work in this past year. The challenge is you can never be 100% sure who will be sitting at the table with you. Five people need to come together and connect and do what is best for the school, students and the public. Despite differences, that is what we are trying to do.

**L. Picard MOVED to adjourn at 8:16pm; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski –yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Higgins  
School Board Secretary