

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 16
Board of Education Meeting
February 24, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

		Weighted Vote <u>Per Member</u>
<i>Beacon Falls...</i>	Christine Arnold	.7
	Ben Catanzaro	.7
	Priscilla Cretella	.7
	Erik Dey	.7
<i>Prospect...</i>	Robert Dyer	1.3
	Robert Hiscox	1.3
	Roxann Vaillancourt	1.3

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Yamin, Superintendent of Schools
Tony DiLeone, Dir. of Finance and Business Operations
Michele Raynor, Curriculum Director
Regina Murzak, Principal LLES
Derek Muharem, Principal LRMS
Jeffrey Haddad, Asst. Principal PES
Matthew Brennan, Director of Technology
Michelle Meyers, AP LRMS
Rima McGeehan, Principal PES
Sara Steinberg Forman, Asst. Dir. of SPED
Kurt Ogren, Principal WRHS

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Priscilla Cretella, at 7:00 p.m. at the District Office and by remote locations.

A. Roll Call

Roll was called and a quorum was present

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Revision/Additions to Agenda Order

The first portion of the meeting was dedicated to Budget discussion in which the Superintendent presented this year's Budget Proposal. Mr. Yamin Presented on the following: BOE goals in regards to Culture, Achievement, Communication, Fiscal, Five Year Strategic Plan, Recent History and Budget Recommendations. This year will call for a .75% increase and Mr. Yamin included details regarding his request. Mr. Yamin commented that he is confident that the Region is being fiscally responsible and factors such as reductions, enrollment, per pupil expenditure and the 5 year Budget analysis were taken into consideration. The numbers presented were DRAFT numbers.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of February 10, 2021, Board of Education Meeting (Ex.1)

A MOTION was made by Robert Hiscox and SECONDED by Ben Catanzaro to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2021, Board of Education Meeting (Ex. I).
ALL IN FAVOR (weighted vote totals 6.7) **21-013**

The Board noted that Action Item #5 would be discussed in the Executive Session.

III. COMMENT

A. Town Officials

An email was sent from the town of Beacon Falls relating to the capital non-recurring funds and will be included in correspondence at the next meeting.

B. Public Comments *Note: The BOE will not reply to comments made at a meeting. However, either the Superintendent or Board Chair will respond to a concern within five business days*

The following questions/comments were read into the minutes from the public.
Mr. Yamin addressed most with a brief verbal explanation but will also email the responses to each individual.

Tracy Hussey, of Beacon Falls, asks: what is the district doing to address the growing Needs of mental health? Have teachers had time to dive into RULER this year? Do the Pupil Personnel staff have a plan to address rising concerns of anxiety and depression due to COVID?

Mr. Yamin responded we are on track to completing one year roll out of RULER. Teachers have developed goals on SEL and goals that go around RULER. Unfortunately, we were not able to complete training last year and don't have all the tools in. We are doing social and emotional learning, and it is happening at the elementary schools. Mr. Yamin is asking his elementary and middle school principals to update parents on SEL through Schoology.

Rayae Geci, of Prospect: why is R16 eliminating school counselors? If anything, we should have more mental health support.

Mr. Yamin's response is in the statement below and will also address questions via emails.

Dr. Jennifer Bunk, of Beacon Falls, heard that the BOE is thinking of keeping WRHS at their current hybrid schedule. She believes this sets children back who need in-person learning. She also spoke to the internships and projects Mr. Staib at WRHS has helped with and was impressed by these programs.

Mr. Yamin responded he was in a meeting with the Department of Public Health and it looks like teachers will start being vaccinated as of March 1st. Mr. Yamin asked the DPH if after vaccinations will we be able to lift restrictions on social distancing and was told we will have to continue our social distancing until the end of this school year, so

WRHS will continue with their current hybrid because of space restrictions.

Andrea Lund-Teixeira, Prospect resident, asks why we are planning to cut mental health professionals when there is a budget surplus.

Mr. Yamin replied the budget surplus is from the 2019-2020 school year and we cannot use that surplus for staffing for next year. He said he will speak to the mental health concern later.

Stephanie Way, of Prospect, asks why we are planning to cut school counselors and teachers when mental health is so important.

Lisa Sizer from Beacon Falls, has a similar question, asking about cuts involving school counselors when we are in the middle of a pandemic and is reading daily about the importance of mental health and the crises students are experiencing.

Kelly Messina of Beacon Falls, commented that budget season is a time to talk about where services can be streamlined. Our teachers have been going above and beyond for our students. The hybrid model and limited in-person learning at WRHS has had a negative impact on the level of support and interaction students have in advisory. She feels the need for guidance counselors, social workers and psychologists may exceed current staffing levels. Kelly asks what is the district doing for next year in the budget to go above and beyond to provide support for our students and staff.

Allison Cameron, resident of Prospect, comments she is hearing of cuts of teachers and support staff, and wonders why when we have a budget surplus.

Mr. Yamin already spoke to this concern when he said we cannot use last year's surplus to staff positions for next year.

Gina Kindt, Prospect resident, asks why counselor positions are being cut from the budget. She commented that the social and emotional needs of students will continue long after people have been vaccinated. Smaller class sizes allow more teacher-student time. Having an extra school counselor will provide time to push into classrooms to do check-ins and teach SEL curriculum in addition to supporting staff.

Lisa Dias, Prospect resident, asks: "why is there a plan to cut teachers and counselors if there is surplus?" Mr. Yamin addressed this previously.

Carmela Avery of Prospect is also questioning about the cuts in counseling services for our students. She comments that with all that students have been through with the pandemic, let's focus on resources to help build them up and cope.

Vicki Savarese of Prospect is asking why cutting teachers and counselors is even being considered. She went on to further comment there has to be another area we can cut money from. We need more teachers, more counselors, and more attention to our kids! She suggests the Board reconsider these cuts and relayed our small community deserves small town individualized attention.

April Mishler, Prospect resident, thanked everyone for their extreme efforts during these trying times. Kids with average and special needs have been rolling with the punches with the support of our teachers, support staff and counselors. Without good mental health and well-placed support structure, we are opening ourselves up to a mental health crisis. I do not support removing any certified staff member, please reconsider this decision.

Mr. Yamin commented that many of tonight's questions centered around the possible elimination of staff. He reassured the public that the reasoning behind this was, with all things considered, this would be in the best interest of the students and Region. He relayed we have a projected enrollment of less than 2000; our estimate for next year is 1952. In the last seven years, our student population has declined by 300 students and our class sizes are still very small. We have 17 members in our Pupil Personnel population not including Speech and Language and school nurses. We have invested greatly into the mental health needs and behavioral development of our students through a comprehensive social and emotional learning program K-12, we have created "we matter initiatives", incorporated student efficacy into our instruction, expanded extracurricular activities, and reallocated resources to individualize programming to increase student engagement such as career pathways and internships. He clarified that this was not to streamline resources. There is a misconception regarding supporting students, that is not just the responsibility of one personnel classification, but of all adults directly involved with students.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Email from parent re: Board's decision not to return to full in-person learning.
2. Update to the community from the Superintendent (2/5/21 & 2/12/21).
3. Email and memo re: capital non-recurring fund expenditures.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Hiscox read the report as follows:

Balance in General Fund as of 2/10/21:	\$4,945,446.73
Tonight's invoices total:	\$361,038.82
General Fund:	\$359,986.69
Federal and State Grants:	\$0.00
Adult Ed, Other Grants, Athletic Fund:	\$1,052.13
Capital Non Recurring Project	\$0.00

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Kayleigh Budnick, Gavin Moffat)

Mr. Yamin read the report on behalf of Ms. Budnick.

VII. EXEMPLARY PEOPLE, PROGRAMS and AWARDS

VIII. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. Superintendent's Update

1. TAG After-school program revised. (Michele Raynor)

It has been decided that the current model is not meeting the needs and a new after

school model would begin. This will be an extra curricular option and the students will meet about 20 times and will prepare for and participate in competitions.

2. Class of 2021 Valedictorian and Salutatorian.

Mr. Yamin recognized Kayleigh Huk as this year's Valedictorian and Austin Roberts as Salutatorian.

B. Action Items

1. Act to vote on the surplus for the 2019-2020 school year.

A MOTION was made by Robert Hiscox and SECONDED by Robert Dyer to return the \$661,286 surplus from the 2019-2020 school year to the two towns.

A lengthy discussion ensued and a vote was taken with the following results:

IN FAVOR: Ben Catanzaro, Robert Dyer, Robert Hiscox, Roxann Vaillancourt (weighted vote totals 4.6) **OPPOSED:** Christine Arnold, Priscilla Cretella, Erik Dey (weighted vote 2.1)

MOTION PASSES (by weighted vote 4.6)

21-014

2. Act to change the 2020-21 school calendar making Thursday, March 4, 2021, a virtual learning day allowing for parent/teacher conferences on March 3rd.

A MOTION was made by Robert Hiscox and SECONDED by Roxann Vaillancourt to change the 2020-21 school calendar making Thursday, March 4, 2021, a virtual learning day allowing for parent/teacher conferences on March 3rd.

ALL IN FAVOR (weighted vote totals 6.7)

21-015

3. Act to accept teacher's letter of resignation. (H. Constantinescu)

A MOTION was made by Robert Dyer and SECONDED by Robert Hiscox to accept the letter of resignation of Heather Constantinescu, Foreign Language teacher at Long River Middle School, with appreciation, effective June 30, 2021.

ALL IN FAVOR (weighted vote totals 6.7)

21-016

4. Act to non-renew employment contracts for 2021-2022 for certified staff, due to a reduction in force.

The staff members affected are: Laura DeRienzo, Jessica Jennings, Christy Killeen, Amy LaMaine, Shannon Reed, Lauren Reid, Maria Saca, Allison Sardo, James Staib, Moira Wynne and Michelle Meyers.

MOTION was made by Ben Catanzaro and SECONDED by Roxann Vaillancourt to non-renew employment contracts for 2021-2022 for certified staff, as named, due to a reduction in force.

A discussion took place whereby the non-renewal of contracts process was explained and a vote was taken with the following results:

IN FAVOR: Christine Arnold, Ben Catanzaro, Priscilla Cretella, Erik Dey, Robert Hiscox, Roxann Vaillancourt (weighted vote 5.4)

OPPOSED: Robert Dyer (weighted vote 1.3)

MOTION PASSES (by weighted vote of 5.4)

21-017

5. Act to non-renew contract of employment of a certified staff member for 2021-2022.
To be discussed in an Executive Session.

C. Director of Finance and Business Operations Report

Mr. DiLeone reported the following: Greenleaf has completed their work. Shipman and Goodwin were contacted regarding the inquiry of our process of depositing funds into the Region's capital non-recurring account. The memo was sent to both member towns and to all Board members and has been included in the Board packet. The governor's recently released budget keeps ECS funding in both fiscal year 2022 and 2023 at the same amount as fiscal year 2021. The secondary disclosures have been reviewed and authorized.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

1. High school yearbooks.

These will hopefully be out by next week. Lifetouch will be contacted through the Region's attorney's by April.

X. NEW BUSINESS

XI. ITEMS for NEXT BOE AGENDA

XII. INFORMATION ITEMS

XIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Personnel and Negotiations Committee: **Executive Session for personnel reasons; 2/23/21 UPSEU Negotiations Meeting, D.O., 5:00 p.m.; 3/10/21 Personnel Committee Meeting, D.O. 5:30 p.m. Grievance Hearing.**
- B. Facilities and Transportation Committee
- C. Curriculum Committee: **Meeting 2/24/21, D.O., 6:00 p.m.**
- D. Policy Committee
- E. Public Communications
- F. Technology Committee
- G. Recognition Committee
- H. Liaisons:
 - 1. Schools
 - 2. Wellness Committee
 - 3. Professional Development Committee
 - 4. 2COM
- I. Parent Advisory Council: **Virtual Meeting 2/24/21, 5:15 p.m.**

A MOTION was made by Robert Hiscox and SECONDED by Robert Dyer to move to Executive Session at 8:46 p.m., to include the Superintendent, for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter related to non-renewal of a contract.

ALL IN FAVOR (weighted vote totals 6.7)

21-018

The Board came out of the Executive Session at 9:02 p.m.

A MOTION was made by Robert Dyer and SECONDED by Roxy Vaillancourt to not renew the employment contract for Amy Burns for the following year upon expiration at the end of the 2020-2021 school year and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise the teacher in writing of this action.

ALL IN FAVOR (weighted vote totals 6.7)

21-019

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Bob Hiscox and SECONDED by Rob Dyer to adjourn the Board of Education meeting of February 24, 2021, at 9:03 p.m.

ALL IN FAVOR (weighted vote totals 6.7)

21-220

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: March 10, 2021, District Office