

THE NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
FINAL Minutes  
March 5, 2015

PRESENT: Mike Yohan, John Fitzgerald, Jack Radner, Johanna Bartlett, Dick Baldwin, Melissa Burke, Carla Halpern, Alyssa Rulf Fountain, members; Kelley Sullivan, Principal; Robert Mahler, Superintendent; Matt Galman, U28 accountant; Karen Nelson, School Psychologist.

1. Call Meeting to Order: Mike called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
2. Public Hearings: none.
3. Approval of Minutes from February 5, 2015: Carla moved to accept the minutes and Melissa seconded. The committee unanimously approved.
4. Warrants signed:
  - Bill – 4539, 4540, 4541, 4542, 4543
  - Payroll – 417, 418, 817, 818, 881, 4170, 4180, 4181, 4182, 8170, 8180, 8513, 8810
5. Report from Mahar Representative:
  - Carla reported the New Salem/Wendell representatives attended a presentation about options for the dam – pros and cons of breaching versus repairing. The cost of repairing the dam is approximately \$20,000 more than to breach, but in terms of percentage difference, it is relatively small. There would be ongoing costs for repair and upkeep (e.g., maintenance, regulation adherence) if a decision is made to repair the dam which would not be the case if a decision is made to breach. Johanna added there are also insurance considerations of approximately \$1,000 per year and the maintenance/inspection costs are projected at \$3,500 over five years. Environmental concerns were also raised at the meeting but despite committee apprehension, a vocal group of stakeholders in the community is in favor of keeping the dam. In a five to four split, the committee voted to keep the dam. Mahar will propose paying for the dam-related expenses by floating a bond for a year – they will try to borrow \$250,000 now and more dollars later. The dam repair will be brought to town meeting for a vote. If a decision is made not to support the loan, the committee will need to identify other alternatives.
  - Dick asked about the Mahar budget – Johanna responded they were asked to bring the budget down and they were able to do so to some degree but not to the level requested. There will be voting on the budget at a 3/26/15 hearing which is open to the community.
6. Budget and Personnel Committee Report: No report. Next meeting date is 5/20/15, 6:00 p.m. at Swift River School.
7. Union #28 Committee Report: No report. Next meeting date is 5/20/15, 7:00 p.m. at Swift River School.
8. Principal's Report:
  - Enrollment - Kelley provided an enrollment report – one kindergarten student transferred out of Swift River School and two additional New

Salem students are expected to move into town in March. There have been many phone calls for incoming kids. The parents of two Wendell children who were going to school in Amherst have reported they are coming back to Swift River School in the 2015-16 academic year.

- Swift River celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school prior to February vacation. The week of March 2<sup>nd</sup> was the first full week at school (due to snow days) – kids are getting back into the swing of things.
- Abdu Sarr performed at community sing – Kelley and a number of committee members were present to see the African dance demonstrations and spoke very highly of Abdu's work in which he incorporates messages about the importance of family. All Swift River students participated during the performance.
- Personnel – the teachers are working very hard on the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). There is a group of upper grade teachers who are highly engaged in the PLCs and working with some of the lower grade teachers. It is a very transparent process and will make future work easier. The teachers will present at the upcoming curriculum day.
- Kelley talked about the new (safe) hooks in the hallways for lost and found items. Also, Larry designed a new system for students' backpacks, boots/coats, etc. in Tina Newman's 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom because there weren't enough cubbies.
- A decision was made to snow-blow the school roof after Joe Cuneo (New Salem Fire Chief) came to discuss roof collapse. Walter and Larry cleared areas of the roof where snow/ice was heaviest. Mike Yohan helped with the decision.
- Kelley also mentioned the 100-mile club is continuing to go well; there is an upcoming training on 3/17/15 for brain training; the PTO is organizing a new fundraiser; the science fair is on Thursday, 3/12/15 at 6:00 p.m.; and the MCBA book party is in Leverett on 3/6/15.

9. Superintendent's Report:

- Bob talked about the upcoming Curriculum Day in Erving during which the PLCs will be showcased. Rebecca Woodland from UMass will be presenting and Bob invited the committee members to attend. Principals are part of a PLC in the state and there will be a statewide presentation May 27-28.
- On February 18, 2015 a pipe burst at the Leverett Elementary School and flooded four classrooms. The inspector required everything that was soaked be removed. Sheetrock and insulation in some of the classrooms had to be removed down to the studs. School reopened on Monday, February 23, 2015 and on Tuesday, 2/24/2015, another pipe burst, flooding the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. There was approximately \$150,000 - \$200,000 in damage that was insured.
- PARCC is coming in March despite a one-week extension due to snow.
- The regionalization discussions are being put off until spring 2016.
- The final report on SPED/civil rights criteria is available for anyone to read.

10. Review of Expenditure Report: Matt said there is a \$180,000 budget balance that hasn't been spent. Nothing appears to be problematic. The first fixed price electricity bill came from Major Energy. Last month the school paid \$0.23/kwh for a total \$3,057, this month the bill was \$0.08/kwh for a total of \$1,021. The school has locked in oil prices for next year – 6,800 gallons at \$2.39/gallon which is \$0.90 less than last year. Lastly, a financial audit is underway for the New Salem/Wendell school district. Dennis Waller is requesting that Mike review a document that asks whether Mike is aware of any fraud. Mike asked the committee to let him know if there is anything he should report.
11. Old Business: New Salem/Wendell FY16 budget. Bob sent the budget to both New Salem and Wendell and doesn't foresee any problems. Matt mentioned the governor's initial proposal – Chapter 70 dollars went up \$2,000. Swift River continues to take in more school choice dollars than what goes out. Kelley mentioned the school is calling families that choice out to see how much time those kids are spending in town. If it's 50/50, Swift River School only has to pay out 50%. We currently have a \$250,000 cushion in case there are large, unforeseen SPED expenses.
12. New Business:
  - Swift River Education Association (SREA) negotiations are coming up during which there will be collective bargaining between SREA and the school committee. They are looking to meet on one of the following dates: March 12, 13, 17, or 19. We will need a negotiation committee to work on a teacher contract with the Teacher's Union. Johanna volunteered and members of the school committee nominated John DeWitt. Mike will contact John to ask if he agrees to be on the negotiation committee. If John declines, Mike will participate.
  - Next year's school calendar was discussed. Labor Day is late this year and the proposed school start day is 9/2/15. The teacher's contract states teachers will not return to school before the last Monday of August. It is possible to negotiate an earlier start date (late August) in order to avoid having school in session until late June in the event of another bad winter. The committee will discuss next year's school calendar at the April meeting.
  - Swift River Community Action Award will be awarded in April.
13. Policy Update: GBA – equal employment opportunity, GBA-1 – harassment policy, GBAA – sexual discrimination and harassment, and JBA – policy on sexual harassment of children were revised for civil rights compliance to include "gender identity". Carla moved to accept the policy as amended, Melissa seconded. The committee unanimously approved. IJNDB – acceptable use and internet safety policy was also updated per committee revisions. Johanna moved to accept the policy as amended and Carla seconded. The committee unanimously approved. The final vote was taken on ACAB – the most significant change was to the appeal process in page 5. Johanna moved to accept the policy as amended, Melissa seconded. The committee unanimously approved. Second reading, first vote on ADDA: CORI requirements and the wellness policy.

Johanna moved to accept the policies, Melissa seconded. The committee unanimously approved.

14. Future Business:

- 2016 Science Fair
- Scheduling a meeting with the finance committees in New Salem and Wendell prior to presenting the budget
- Standardized testing
- Longevity of personnel (discussion of changing steps in teacher contracts)
- Next meeting – April 2, 2015 (Bob will be out of town)

15. Executive Session - Carla moved to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing compliance with provisions of any general or special law and not to return to regular session, Johanna seconded. The committee unanimously approved.

16. The regular meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alyssa Rulf Fountain  
Committee Member