

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

The Finance Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room in the School Administration Building, 47 Main Street, Ellington, CT 06029.

Attendees:

Board of Education Members: Mr. Michael Purcaro, Mrs. Kris Picard-Wambolt, Mrs. Liz Nord, Mrs. Jaime Foster, Mrs. Tracey Kiff-Judson (phone)

Administrative Team Members: Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools (phone), Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance & Operations, Mr. Tim McCluskey, Athletic Director, Ellington High School, Mr. John Prunier, District Manager Whitsons, Ms. Lindsay Cowles, Ellington's Food Service Director Whitsons, Mr. Paul Bretton, Superintendent Intern

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mr. Purcaro at 4:00 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1. *Proposed Donation – Athletics*

Mr. McCluskey notes that an anonymous person would like to give a donation of \$25,000 to the Ellington High School Track and Field program. A prepared list of potential items was shown and discussed by the committee. Mr. Purcaro asks to see a final list.

Motion: To recommend that the Board accept with gratitude the donation of \$25,000

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1st. J. Foster

2nd. K. Picard-Wambolt

2. *Health Care – Passage Plan Rates*

Mr. Greenleaf explains that the Passage Plan is a limited network option that saves 10% on the total premiums. In order to incentivize employees to switch into this option, the administration is looking for the Board to approve a reduction in premiums of 2%, and 10% contribution towards the deductible, put in an HSA.

Mr. Purcaro explains that in his conversations, this is similar to the old-style "gate-keeper" plan. He states that he is in favor of this model, as long as it is an option.

Mrs. Nord asks about how the network may change over time. Mr. Greenleaf responds that it shouldn't be dissimilar from ConnectiCare's overall network, as they negotiate with providers all the time. This will be followed up upon by Mr. Greenleaf.

Motion: To recommend that the Board that they adopt a model of 2% reduction in employee's share of the health care premium and a 10% contribution toward the deductible.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. J. Foster

3. *Review of Federal Paid Lunch Equity*

Mr. Greenleaf explains that Federal Paid Lunch Equity is a rule requiring that paid lunch prices are on par with the subsidies received from USDA. This federal rule is meant to ensure that Ellington is not using money generated from reimbursement on free/reduced meals to keep prices low for paid students. The district is already required to pay roughly \$7000. Mr. Greenleaf explains that lunch prices need to be raised by 25 cents for 2019-2020. This would be the first time in five years, whereas other districts move by smaller increments every couple years.

Mr. Purcaro states that he has a serious concern about how this is communicated to parents. Mrs. Foster echoed the concern, as the increase could be tied to Whitsons, which would be unfair. Communication should state that this is a federal requirement leading to the increase. Mr. Prunier states that a large increase will hopefully prevent the need to come back time and time again. Mrs. Kiff-Judson notes that the increase of 25 cents is consistent with past practice.

Mrs. Foster asks about the impact of premium meals on the calculation. Mr. Greenleaf states that we're still going to need the increase, due to how far behind we were at the start of the school year.

Currently, Ellington has a lower price across the board than many surrounding communities. Even with the increase, the district will be in-line with or lower than surrounding communities.

Mrs. Nord asks about the difference in food cost and portion sizes at each school. Mr. Prunier explains portion sizes are set by the federal government. Prices differ at the schools based on the menu concepts.

Motion: To recommend that the Board that they approve a 25 cent increase in lunch prices for the 2019-2020 school year.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. L. Nord

4. *Review of CSDE Healthy Food Certification Program*

Mr. Greenleaf reports that this is a yearly update to the Healthy Food Certification program. It consists of three motions, one to participate in the program, one to exempt food items sold outside the school day, and one to exempt beverage items sold outside the school day.

Mrs. Foster states that she is opposed to the exemptions that reduce the standard of healthy food. Other board members state concern regarding doing this unilaterally without speaking to the booster clubs. Others had concerns about forcing the choice upon consumers.

Mr. Greenleaf, Mr. Prunier, and Mrs. Cowles state that they will work to develop marketing material for the booster clubs to look at in order to leverage Whitsons purchasing power to reduce cost, while having healthier items. This would be a softer way into the exemption in future years.

Motion: To recommend that the Board participate in the Healthy Food Certification program.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1st. J. Foster

2nd. K. Picard-Wambolt

Motion: To recommend that the Board of Education approve the sale to students of food items not listed on the state statute provided the following conditions are met: 1. The sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2. The sale is at the location of the event; 3. The food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. L. Nord

Vote: Ayes: M. Purcaro, K. Picard-Wambolt, L. Nord, T. Kiff-Judson. Opposed: J. Foster. The motion passed.

Motion: To recommend that the Board of Education approve the sale to students of beverages not listed on the state statute provided the following conditions are met: 1. The sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2. The sale is at the location of the event; 3. The beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

Vote: Ayes: M. Purcaro, K. Picard-Wambolt, T. Kiff-Judson. Opposed: J. Foster, L. Nord. The motion passed.

5. *Review of 2018-2019 Whitson's Financials to-date*

Mr. Greenleaf presents on the financials through March 2019. From a total revenue perspective, we are on target to slightly better than the budget. This is in part due to the highest average daily participation in five years.

Costs are anticipated to be slightly higher than the budget. However, Whitsons is willing to partner with us and put their management fee on the line, if projections hold. With that, the budget is on track for the 2018-2019 school year.

Mr. Purcaro asks about the profit margin for Whitsons. Mr. Prunier states that the management fee is the profit, there is nothing built in on food costs or labor.

Mrs. Foster states that she took a tour of the facilities and was happy with the change overall. Mr. Prunier states that this has been a successful transition year, that he's been working with our team to modify concepts.

6. *Review 2019-2020 Whitson's Projected Budget*

Mr. Greenleaf states that next year's budget projection looks better next year with, increased participation at roughly 3.6% factored into the budget. There is also an impact of raising lunch prices, although as stated previously, that move is required under Paid Lunch Equity. Although the budget holds 3.6%, the goal for the district is at minimum 5%.

Mr. Prunier states while the program can grow, each year it cannot sustain the same growth rate. This year had 30% growth in breakfast meals which is not something we'd expect to see in year 2.

Mr. Greenleaf states that next year would be a guaranteed \$10,000 operating surplus for next year.

The meeting adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Michael Purcaro, Finance Committee, Chair