

SHARON DISTRICT BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021 - 3:30 PM
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VIA GOOGLE MEET
DRAFT MINUTE

The meeting was publicly warned in conformance with H.681 authorizing temporary amendments to Vermont's open meeting law to protect the health and safety of the public, board members, and town employees during the state of emergency declared due to COVID-19. Links were provided for public participation by videoconference software or by conventional phone.

In attendance via Google Meet:

School Board members: Don Shaw, Chantelle Brackett

Staff: Jamie Kinnarney (WRVSU Superintendent), Tara Weatherell (WRVSU Business Manager), Raymond Ballou (Technology Manager, WRVSU), Keenan Haley (SES Principal), Nicole Antal (School Board Recording Secretary & Sharon resident)

Others: Angie Carpenter (SES parent), Stephanie Gergely-Davis (SES parent), Margy Becker (Selectboard administrative assistant), Debbie St. Peter (Sharon Town Clerk), Holly Cathcart (SES parent), Elizabeth Loughran (SES parent), Melissa Zoerheid (SES Parent), Paula Duprat (Sharon resident by phone)

1. Call to Order

Don Shaw called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

3. Discussion Items

3.1 Confirm format of Annual Meeting

Shaw shared that he is still in favor of having an in-person meeting. Shaw asked Haley what his thoughts were on the subject. Haley shared that he sees some positives to have an in-person meeting, mainly having a discussion around the budget and sharing information about the budget. It would bring some normalcy. He also sees some negatives, like not having the same format as the Town, a lack of unity. Not having the vote in person would have a lesser risk of COVID exposure.

Discussions followed. Margy Becker shared that the Town Report is not going to print until early April.

Nicole Antal spoke as a Sharon resident and shared her concerns about the event's cost, enforcement of the state's numerous guidelines, and the safety for all for an in-person meeting.

Brackett proposed to postpone the decision. Shaw agreed, the decision doesn't need to happen, and will probably be taken at the next School Board meeting.

3.2 Next Steps

Kinnarney said he would have a survey by the end of the week for the voters to consider the community's voice. He will have the result by the March meeting.

Debbie St. Peter shared that she will have to have the Australian ballots ready by mid-march, so they would be prepared to be mailed to those who request it, which would need to be considered.

4. Public Comments

Shaw invited the public attending to share comments.

Gergely-Davis shared that she has learned recently that two positions at the school were cut from the budget for the next school year. She wanted to share her concerns about losing Mr. Moore and the Math Intervention position held by Mr. Paul.

Kinnarney explained that Haley and Weatherell worked on the budget together, and had instructions to build a budget from scratch, instead of building on the budget. So they made a budget that is needed to operate the school. Kinnarney also shared that the 0.2 position for Math Intervention right now is not sufficient to cover the needs, and he wants to increase that position in the future to a full-time position.

This year, Sharon is also facing a negative yield, a tuition increase at the secondary education level, and a CLA decrease. All of these impact our tax rate.

Antal asked what the yield is, and Kinnarney answered that the yield is still unknown, but the state has said to use the current one to have projections for voters. Hopefully, by voting time, the yield will be known. But Kinnarney noted that even with the current yield (\$10,998), there was still a considerable increase in the tax rate, about 19 cents for Sharon.

Zoerheid asked in the chat room of Google Hangout if Math Interventionist's position is increasing to full time. Kinnarney said that that is the hope for the future, and they are looking for grants for that position, outside of the Sharon school budget, but not right now.

As a parent, Antal also shared that Farm-To-School is something that SES has worked hard for years, and with Mr. Paul gone, would the program continue?

Antal said that for years now, since she has been recording the minutes for the School Boards, she has seen every year the budget going up, but the majority of the increase is due to secondary education, budgets that the Board has no control over. At what point, she asked, can the Town discuss if we want to continue being a sending town? Antal shared her concerns that SES is the only budget the Board has control over, and therefore is the one impacted when budgets need to be tightened.

Shaw noted Antal's comment, and shared that in all his years on the Board, revisiting the way secondary education is structured in Town is not something people have been inclined to do. This decision would need to come from the voters, and voted on, not something the Board has any authority to decide.

Cathcart, Carpenter, Loughran all added spoke supporting Gergely-Davis' comment, and each shared stories of their children enjoying Mr. Matt or Mr. Paul.

Haley assured that the Farm-To-School program is not the one being cut. That there would be changes to the Farm-To-School program, but he sees the program continuing to grow. He also explained that the position being cut is a General Ed Para, not a specific person being laid off. There is a reduction of one para, and it is decided by seniority. The preschool will still have that para in place in the classroom.

Gergely-Davis asked how that would work. Kinnarney said that at the beginning of the year,

Haley decides where General Ed Paras go. There will be a para assigned to the preschool. Gergely-Davis shared her concerns about then the upper grades losing a para position. Kinnarney also shared that one of the concerns is that they need to consider what is sustainable in the long-term in terms of budget. The per-pupil spending is close to the Agency of Education's threshold, and crossing that threshold will penalize the school's budget. It is part of the process of crafting a budget.

Discussion continued about these positions being cut. Shaw shared that this can be discussed, but because it wasn't warned, no decisions can be discussed, or even revisit the budget at this time.

5. Other
None

6. Adjourn
Brackett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:22 pm. Shaw seconded. Motion carried.