

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON  
JOINT MEETING  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2011 – 7:15 P.M.  
Town Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Auditorium**

Present: Robert M. O’Keefe, Chairman  
Elizabeth R. Hunt, Vice Chair  
Keith R. Barrows

James M. Kreidler, Jr., Town Manager  
Linda A. Daigle, Executive Assistant

Absent: C. Jackson Blair

School Committee Members:

Present: Michael Barbaro, Chairman  
John McDonough  
Chris McDonald  
Michael Niles  
Christina Barbaro, Student Representative

Brook Clenchy, Superintendent  
William Frangiamore, Business Mgr.

Absent: Crystal Murphy

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List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Memo dated 10/28/11 to School Committee from Chairman Barbaro regarding the Toy Town Boiler Project (attached)
- Pupil Enrollment Form week beginning Oct. 24, 2011 (attached)

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Chairman O’Keefe called the Joint Meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. This meeting aired live on local cable access channel 8.

Toy Town Elementary Boiler Project Update:

School Committee Chairman Mike Barbaro thanked the Selectboard for coming this evening and wanted to update them on this project. He said the Boiler Project Building Committee met on Tuesday for the last time. The Mass. School Building Authority (MSBA) part has been completed and signed off. During the final part of the project, flaws were found in the building. Toy Town was built on a swamp and continues to leak water. The new boiler systems sit lower than the old ones. There is a need to go out to bid for an additional \$15,000 to \$18,000 to have the floor cut and install drainage to prevent water damage to the boilers. He informed the Board how fortunate Winchendon was to be one of the first school programs to go under the green program. We were lucky to get the tank removed and the emergency tank funded by the state. A lot of money has been saved. The contingency funds they put away have now changed due to that. Contaminated soil from the removal of the old tank was another cost not covered by the MSBA. It came in at \$8,000.00, Barbaro thought, and could have been very costly. The Town initially authorized the School Committee and the Boiler Committee \$600,000.00 for this project and we will come under that by a substantial amount of money. The

reimbursement rate from the state was 61.95% which equals \$337,000.00. Hunt inquired about the reimbursement wondering where it would go. The Business Manager said it would go into the Town's general fund. Hunt asked the Town Manager how those funds would be allocated. Kreidler replied we voted to do the borrowing with the understanding we would get reimbursed from the state. We would pay our note with this. Barrows asked about the last paragraph referencing the installation of a water drainage system and the water collecting in the boiler area and a cost of \$16,500.00 to repair it. His question was is in the procedure whether it would be allowed funding with the remaining \$30,000.00 because it seemed outside the scope of the original borrowing. He asked if it would need to be a separate article or if the remaining monies could be used for this. Kreidler replied it would depend on how the article was written and how the town meeting voted. He offered to review the language and if ambiguous, would consult with town counsel. If the language is narrow and doesn't contemplate this type of work, it would have to wait for a subsequent town meeting, not the one coming up in a couple weeks. Barbaro said we had an initial bid but the floor had to be redesigned and we have to go out to bid again because it will go over the 5%. The Business Manager said the school wanted to share this information with the Board of Selectmen. It will be determined whether to proceed with this if we can change the initial bid or utilize the current bid at \$16.5. If we can, we'll proceed to do it; if not, we'll start this article all over again through vote at Town Meeting and if approved, going out to bid through Chapter 149.

End of Year Report/Audit Updates: Frangiamore announced it's done, the Town Accountant has signed off on it and it has been sent to the Dept. of Education. Hunt asked the Business Manager to speak about this audit which is for 2010. Frangiamore said there were five issues to be addressed and provided the following update:

1. The student activity account deficiencies have been corrected over the last couple weeks. Each school has its own checking account, the town has a depository account for all revenues for the student activity accounts and Charlotte, the Town Accountant, has set up three accounts to pay the schools out of the student activity accounts.
2. Procurement and how we bought food in the past was corrected in the summer of 2010. This year we went out to bid for food, received various bids and awarded based on the lowest, most responsible and eligible bid.
3. The lunch application verification process has been corrected and complies with the bureau's regulations.
4. Personnel files have been gone through and the necessary changes the Dept. of Education wanted to see have been made.
5. Payroll processing and the question about the deductions have also been addressed. We contacted Munis and the Town Accountant to generate payroll deduction reports. Everything is better and deductions are more accurate now. He added there is a good working relationship between the school and the town.

Hunt was concerned about the comments on Page 12 of the audit where the School Committee hasn't submitted final reports by the due date and asked if the state gave them unrealistic due dates. Frangiamore stated, in terms of the grants, yes in FY10 there were deadlines missed. In FY11 they did a much better job on getting the information and submitted grant reports on time. He explained how there was a change in how the grants were going to be reported using the online systems. The software the DOE supplied was different and we are much more familiar with the program now. Hunt concluded that she sees them moving in the right direction, maybe not at the speed she would like to see but complimented them for what they have done.

Budget Update: Frangiamore said the budget is balanced, we have a small projected surplus and right now the FY12 budget is in good shape; we are in the black. Hunt inquired about the individual that has been contracted to assist in the financial end at the school. Frangiamore replied he is a consultant helping with the yearend report. Frangiamore explained how the Munis accounting system is designed for towns, not schools, and it was cumbersome to take data from Munis and put it in a spreadsheet to match the DOE spreadsheets. When you know Munis, it's manageable. If you don't, it takes a bit more time. This position is to provide assistance and that he was being trained through this consultant and has received a high degree of cooperation from the Town Accountant as well. Hunt asked where the funds were coming from to fund this position.

Supt. Clenchy replied we wanted a nice continuum and he came highly recommended and has proven to be valuable to us in many ways. He is a seasonal employee and we have the money for it. Frangiamore said he has learned each year and may need assistance again next year. It is critical the information in this report is accurate. Supt. Clenchy added if we feel there is a need for this next year, then yes they would do it again next year. O'Keefe said there are two requirements; accuracy and being timely. If you need outside assistance to get the work done, to comply with the requirements of the Committee, the DOE and for the people of Winchendon, then continue to use him. Barrows said the issue is around sensitivity and appreciates what was said but the voters at the Special Town Meeting will be asked to transfer \$80,000.00 to cover unemployment and we are paying an outside consultant \$150,000.00. He is being critical on account of the taxpayers. Is it a learning curve issue or a resource issue? We need to make sure we are resourcing properly. Frangiamore stated it is a resource issue having to do with the complexity of the software. Kreidler offered on Barrows point, whether a resource or learning curve, the Business Manager sees it as a resource issue being the software. Munis is widely used in the Commonwealth, after a learning curve, you figure it out. It is a new resource; it's learnable and knowable. It should be a learning curve and the amount should diminish in time. Munis was not a requirement of the School's Business Manager's position.

Student Enrollments: Supt. Clenchy said Gail Smith, her secretary, keeps track of this, and offered it's a random number, not something we can tie into. When we talk about projections, our area we are seeing declining enrollment within the Greater Gardner school area. It is widespread. She said it is hard to project; we don't know and cannot predict with nothing being consistent. The Boards discussed the decline in enrollment and School Choice and ways to resolve why people are leaving. McDonough felt strongly that the fix is very simply more money provided to maintain the quality of education for this community. Many kids leave because of a decrease in programs, decrease of faculty, decrease of services that people could get in other communities. He fully believes what we do now is 100% dependent on what we do with education. He cares about kids and cares what is going to happen in this country. The erosion is universal. O'Keefe agreed stating this community has not seen a tax increase for the schools pass, other communities are also receiving a decrease in state aid and asked if that was the only solution, more money to keep our kids here. McDonough replied yes, the whole culture is going to change. It is our responsibility, everyone, to redevelop and sense that we want our kids to be the best educated kids in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. O'Keefe said money is the large part; we are not going to get the money. What do we do, are we going to lose? McDonough said more erosion, more displeasure and more people will bail out of the system. Discussion was had on some of the changes the school has made with reducing the users fees, the Murdock Trust and Robinson-Broadhurst funding. Virtual High School was briefly mentioned as another form of instruction. Cindy Landano explained School Choice and the cost associated. O'Keefe suggested the school use an independent consultant to conduct a survey on why students leave and try and do a better job of doing more without additional funds. Clenchy said she appreciates what O'Keefe is saying. She mentioned in the new budget we didn't cut programs like music, art, physical education because we know kids want this. We made other cuts. McDonald wanted to add exit interviews believing they would be useful. He felt it wasn't necessary to have more money for programs that you could invent programs and be smarter. You get so blocked in with how things have been done and forget to think beyond the walls, beyond the music room, beyond the gymnasium. We need to start moving, leveraging and thinking creatively. Think outside the box and have something unique in Winchendon.

Barrows agreed with both McDonough and McDonald and said he had two comments: One, no one got the money; overrides won't pass and we are not the only town. Winchendon has solid educators, good facilities, and competent leadership. The commitment is there, the foundation is rock solid. The question becomes do we continue to move along with anecdotal data or gather empirical data? What can we affect change on, what's related to athletics, what relates to reputation? Is there a funding component? Secondly, around core programs that need to be provided - is there a perceived quality issue, is someone not being challenged enough? He stressed the need for empirical data. Clenchy thanked Mr. Barrows for his comments stating everything he said she agreed with. One thing you will see with the DES review coming out in the next year is we are getting credit for self-reflection of the culture in Winchendon schools right now. We had to do some hard searching a couple years ago. What is the core of our problems in terms of education/academics in

Winchendon? I knew we had to begin with our elementary. Barbaro mentioned Winchendon was one of the first schools to be labeled underperforming and the only school district to come out of it. We continue to make change and progress. Niles said we need to put a financial perspective on the whole thing. The bottom line is if we took every student that should be here in Winchendon, its 439 kids, that's \$2.4 million dollars; we should be fighting for that money and those kids. If we salvage half, it would impact our budget.

Kreidler said it's interesting there is not a thing anyone said tonight he would take an exception to. One point missing though is the more global perspective that we are dealing with the worst recession in our lifetimes and concurrent with that recession the largest spread in wealth and where money lives. There is something to be said, money does make it easier; the unfortunate thing is, money is far away from here tonight. If you look at the social economics for the Town of Winchendon, we are as far away from it as you will find. We are the ones fighting. We have a higher obligation in society; it's actually an international crisis. Let's look further away, higher up in the food chain. Is there a Mr. Smith that goes to Washington type of movement that needs to happen? There is a constitutional obligation to education that exists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Is it being met? He would love to see a subcommittee formed of some of the folks that are engaged and care; how do we do it differently and where is the pressure point. Barbaro said the state has shelved a subcommittee to look at educational spending two years ago. Kreidler said we know the system is broken and one of the traps is getting inside and fix it rather than sit back and say the premises is cooked. Let's not play with it and do something different. Clenchy wanted to go on record and agree with what the Town Manager said.

Transportation Update: Frangiamore said we have a new bus company and mentioned concerns with the communication they had with them as well as performance issues with one of the drivers. The bus company has listened and has been responsive. Communication is much better now, technology has been fixed and as of last week or two, the bus service has been meeting our expectations. We continue to monitor the quality of the bus service and management has responded to us.

Special Town Meeting:

Barbaro informed the Boards that the School Committee has budgeted the \$145,000.00 listed in Article 2 of the warrant. Kreidler explained the \$145,000.00 more was spent on school related expenses than the school had paid when the books had closed on June 30, 2011. The School is just paying that back.

The student selectman seat was brought up. O'Keefe explained the Board decided they would fill two spots to sit on the Selectboard as Student Selectmen. One seat would come from the public schools of Winchendon and also Monty Tech and the other from the private schools, namely the Winchendon School and asked them to submit a letter of interest to the Board of Selectmen. Barbaro mentioned there were a couple students from the Student Council that were interested. Supt. Clenchy offered to follow-up on this.

New Business: n/a

Adjournment: Barrows moved to adjourn; Hunt seconded. By roll call vote of all aye, the Joint Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Daigle  
Executive Assistant