

**WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, April 2, 2020
Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative MS/HS-Media Room
6:00 p.m.**

Present: *Charlie Post in the Media Room, online were Jonathan Vanderhoof, Mark Legere, Brianne Lavallee and Superintendent Bryan Lane present in Media Room*

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm.

Mr. Lane calls out those who are on line to see if they have any public comment.

Mr. Adam Lavallee-Voiced the copier costs are way too high; suggests it can be reduced by \$10,000.

Mr. Bagley- speaks to his ten years of service to the district as Principal of WLC. Comments on the negativity toward WLC and in particular the middle school and indicating that teaching staff had been lost due to this. Encourages the committee to think about the needs of students and not to eliminate any teaching positions.

Ms. Susan Ballou- asked as to whether or not the members of the committee had received the documents she had sent.

Mr. Harry Dailey asked as to whether or not the board members saw the message he sent.

Ms. Joanne Dufour- seconded the comments of Mr. Bagley. Feels students are taking the brunt of the effect of the changes being proposed. Sad that teachers are looking elsewhere. Teachers are struggling and working to give the students the best education possible.

End of public input.

Mr. Post suggests going over draft of the PowerPoint for the board presentation.

Goals stated and methodology

Structural changes

- Sixth grade to FRES
- Move teacher to reduce class size in 6th grade
- Remove MS counselor, one MS teachers and the Alternative Education Specialist position

Spending reductions in:

- Supplies
- Underutilized programs
- Alignment of staff
- Curriculum
- Repairs

Areas of decrease can be supported through fund raising.

Mr. Vanderhoof goes over the spreadsheet he presented.

Reductions as presented in the document.

Ms. Lavallee- concerned about after nine years of the middle school model a drastic change would be put into place without additional study or planning. She had conferred with Dr. Heon and described that the Curriculum Coordinator position could be reduced for one year and wait for administrative changes that could take place as the current Superintendent leaves the district. If this happens, the 6th grade could stay at WLC with the teaching and

counseling staff intact. Not to collect input from the taxpayers is a mistake. The history of the board in recent years had been to not be transparent, she does not want to be a part of that in the future.

Ms. Lavallee references Mr. Adam Carragher, a citizen and school administrator in another town forwarded information to the committee about the advantages of keeping the 6th grade at FRES. The citizens want a change in the Superintendent. Next year gives the community a chance to make those changes.

Ms. Lavallee sees the advantage of keeping students at FRES but without planning this would be a mistake. Not even sure if the plan being discussed will be approved by the board.

Mr. Legere- bring the proposal to the board, if they chose not to approve this the committee will need to go back to work and bring forward another resolution.

Superintendent reads a statement from Mr. LaRoche, FRES Principal .

If the 6th grade were moved to FRES they would not be in a typical elementary school model. We would hire teachers with dual certifications or some background in area content. An example is a first grade teacher who is also certified to teach science. We would approach this as an intermediate school model where students would change for some classes but not all. An example would be that teachers would all teach reading but switch for other subjects. It even opens up the possibility of the fifth and sixth grade to have similar structure in their schedule. There are numerous possibilities.

Mr. Vanderhoof- Kids don't need a change in routine and they are used to FRES and are comfortable there. There is a great concern with not having a Curriculum Coordinator. This position creates a district wide benefit and not having it would create a step backward.

Ms. Lavallee- I do not feel that after speaking to Dr. Heon about putting the position on hold it would create a deficit.

Mr. Post- we need to get to the dollar figure.

Ms. Lavallee- I feel that to put things on pause, things can be done this year and the position can come back with administrative changes in the future. The Curriculum Coordinator is important, but just a pause for now.

Mr. Vanderhoof- We can keep the Curriculum Coordinator and do either, students can stay at WLC or go to FRES. If we don't do this, what do you want to replace instead?

Ms. Lavallee- We can reduce class size by not cutting a teaching position. When the vote was taken to combine school districts, I was promised that class sizes would stay small, they have not.

Mr. Legere- Over the past year's citizens have voiced concerns over the effectiveness of the middle school. This had come up on multiple occasions. Is this model really working.

Mr. Post- The public has told us they want cuts in the budget. Changing the model may be difficult but we need to look at structural changes. Thanks to the sharing of the Duke study and moving the sixth grade to FRES is not a bad idea.

Ms. Lavallee- It may seem that we are doing this just to cut costs. The board needs to get more opinions.

Public input

Mr. Harry Dailey part of the move was to have teachers highly qualified in their subject. Not having teachers certified in their teaching area can be detrimental to students. Look at the minutes from nine years ago, there was a lot of communication and a study group created in determining what would be best for students. There is limited exposure to electives at FRES and they would get all opportunities at WLC.

Ms. Joanne Dufour- the middle school model is well researched, looking at the teachers they are certified and have an expertise in the subjects they teach. There are teachers in the district who have Curriculum Coordinator certification and they could be used to perform this function.

Dr. Heon- goes over her statement in an email to the board.

I feel very strongly that the 6th grade should remain part of the WLC Middle School for several reasons. It is preferred that we retain all 8 middle school teachers with each teacher being certified specialists in all four subject areas (2 in each subject – math, English/language arts, science, social studies). This expertise is not replicated by people with only elementary education certification.

If we cannot retain all 8 teachers then a less desirable option, but more desirable than moving the 6th grade to FRES, is to reduce the middle school staff to 7, with a 3-person middle school configuration. Three teachers would be content specialists, then each would teach one other subject class. This is allowed in state regulations.

1. Content specialists – We could retain subject-area certified teachers for 6th grade classes. Even if we retain individual teachers through alternative elementary certification, it is best to utilize their expertise in subject areas. In the future, if the 6th grade is at FRES, new teachers may be hired with elementary certification rather than subject-area certification. Students need subject specialized teachers in order to build achievement through middle and high school.
2. Curriculum continuity – We have developed strong 6-12 curriculum continuity with competencies and grade/course performance indicators. Subject-area specialized teachers are needed to implement these. If we have only 3 sixth grade teachers, there would be support through the departments and colleagues for other subjects.
3. Student Learning Expectations – Middle school trained teachers understand the unique characteristics of pre-teen and early teen students. They can relate to them and use strategies for helping students succeed. (Keep in mind what you know or have heard about the challenges of dealing with middle school-age young people. I was often told that I was crazy to teach middle school, and teachers at other grade levels would never do it.) The middle school teaming format, including advisories, allows for close contact with students and families. Common study skills and general academic habits (effective communicator, a strong collaborator, a creative problem solver, a self-directed learner, and a responsible citizen) are reinforced among teachers.
4. Unified Arts opportunities – Students will have access to additional unified arts such as Family and Consumer Science and Tech Ed (Mr. Kane's program that now has computer-aided design & modeling for middle school students).
5. Moving on up... - Many students are looking forward to being part of the middle school after 5 years in the same building.

Mr. Vanderhoof-when the decision was made to go to a middle school model, was there a curriculum coordinator?

Mr. Harry Dailey- No that was not an option at that time.

Mr. Vanderhoof- Do you put it on pause, if we lose the position it can lose the momentum?

Mr. Harry Dailey- When I left the board we were almost there in grades K-8, moving them back to FRES it is a sacrifice.

Dr. Heon- It is important to maintain content specialists. Curriculum continuity is stronger in the 6th -12 with dept. chairs. PLC meetings 4 days per week and things are being developed. Research is overwhelming that middle school certified teachers are trained to deal with students at that level. The staff has the skill to meet the needs of students.

Unified Arts- FRES cannot offer FACS, tech education and parents have noted that these programs help for the student who is not college bound.

Many students look forward to move into the new environment. Change in environment is rejuvenating.

Mr. Post- How many schools in the area have 6th grade at MS?

Dr. Heon- Other than those who have K-8 schools, vast majority that only have 7 and 8.

Mr. Kevin Boette- Comments on the town meeting and how things occurred.

Mr. Post- This is getting off topic.

Mr. Boette- A lot of time was spent when the decision to go to the middle school was made there was concern and it has shown to be a successful model. I ask the committee to consider this.

Ms. Susan Ballou- would like the committee to not eliminate positions, make some part time and it meets the number. It would be hard for the school if some people \went to part time. Counseling department is not capable of doing the job of losing full time. Alt Ed is not tied to the MS, a good bargain as a para. It would be a shame to lose the position. It would be too much to add alternative ed onto the counselor. Moving kids to FRES will create a problem for the counselor to handle. Counseling and alternative ed are active and useful. Decreasing hours vs. positions; Curriculum coordinator in most districts are part time. Bringing on a new curriculum coordinator creates a problem with new philosophy. Changing things now could actually create a step backward. Full time can be brought back for the curriculum coordinator; can be part time. Many districts contract out curriculum coordinators. Why cut staff and move kids. The MS committee did a lot of work and the system has been working.

Mr. Post- Back to the Finance Committee. Meeting is next Tuesday; options exist. Can rework the model that was created, time is an issue.

Mr. Vanderhoof- If there is going to be angst to move kids leaving kids at WLC we can meet the dollar figure if they stay at WLC.

Superintendent clarifies.

Mr. Vanderhoof- as a parent want my kids at FRES for sixth grade. As a board member would support keeping sixth at WLC with reduction of teacher and half time counselor.

Mr. Legere- Could support the move to FRES. Have heard from parents that some want to keep kids at FRES but could support either way. Have heard from parents who don't want change but some don't want kids who leave FRES parents move. That has been said at events and board meetings.

Mr. Vanderhoof- Present both to the board and have the board decide.

200 Ms. Lavallee- feels the same. OK with daughter staying at FRES but looking at the bigger picture but would prefer
201 to keep kids at WLC and to see if the structural change is warranted through study. She voiced not having the
202 curriculum coordinator position as an option for consideration would be a mistake and does not support this going
203 forward.

204
205 Motion:

206 Mr. Legere, motion to present 2 options

207 Mr. Vanderhoof- present 2 with no recommendation

208 Mr. Post 3 aligned to move to FRES, do we have a recommendation

209

210 Mr. Vanderhoof 2nd no recommendation

211 Both motions get us there.

212 Mr. Legere, no problem with a proposal.

213 Mr. Legere amends-recommends to move 6th grade to FRES with presentation of 2nd proposal

214 Mr. Vanderhoof

215 Ms. Lavallee- no

216 Mr. Vanderhoof- yes

217 Mr. Legere- yes

218 Mr. Post- yes

219

220 Going back to power point.

221

222 Proposal will have 2 options, one as presented.

223

224 Go over the proposal.

225 Kids at FRES

226 Mr. Vanderhoof- reduction of school counselor to half time. Everything else would remain.

227

228 Superintendent is tasked to create modified spreadsheets.

229

230 Mr. Vanderhoof- Can we add to the explanation what class sizes would be?

231

232 Superintendent- Yes

233 Mr. Legere- It would be helpful to have input from the community as we move forward with this decision.

234 Can Superintendent send a letter?

235

236 Superintendent- Yes

237

238 Mr. Legere- Discussions included the future with changes in the Superintendent position. Looking to the future to
239 create options and look to create a hybrid.

240

241 Ms. Lavallee- makes more sense, can we have a slide for long term planning and thinking ahead.

242

243 Public Input

244

245 Mr. Boette- why wasn't there a member of the budget committee on this committee.

246 Mr. Vanderhoof- Ultimately the decision is made by the board, trying to keep committee small and already
247 past the time to put in the MS 22. Time was a factor.

248

Mr. Post- Budget committee members did attend meetings.

Ms. Jo Anne Dufour- Excellent math teacher stepped in on middle school team to create a successful learning environment and moving team would be a detriment.

Ms. Susan Ballou- Wants the board and superintendent to see the memo that was sent.

Mr. Bill Ryan- Get input from staff; the cuts were not designated by the vote. Someone said that this would not affect students.

Ms. Lisa Post—The short sightedness; this is more than this year. The tax payers are looking for not just this year but for the future. I think they will be back next year especially if the costs are coming back up. The committee has done a good job in creating a sustainable future. The move to FERS will not be a detriment. Don't believe that anyone could have guaranteed any could have said this was not going to affect students. In light of COVID moving kids makes great sense because kids had a lost year due to the distance learning. Staying in the building they were in will create a sense of comfort. Ok with two presentations, by doing that without complete support it will be a long meeting without a possible resolution. Hoping the committee could have been united. Important to know that this is not a flip flop plan. Stake holders are emotional about the decision and things change. That emotion should not sway the decision.

Mr. Post- Thank you

Motion to adjourn-

Ms. Lavalley- Appreciate all the work that the committee members did on creating the work sorry we didn't agree but I appreciate the work.

Mr. Post- It's a factor of getting to the number. We were going to have 2 meetings and we had five meetings. Thanked Mr. Lane for facilitating and for the getting things done.

Ms. Lavalley- motion to adjourn, Mr. Legere 2nd at 8:12pm.
Voting: 4-0, carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristina Fowler for Bryan Lane, Superintendent of Schools