Waters Elementary School

LSC minutes for May 18, 2020

JR called to order 6:34pm

Quorum:

Parent Reps: Kirstin Bacon (KB), Chris Brannan (CB), Greg Foster-Rice (GFR), Jason Rieger (JR), Erica Smith (ES), Lydia Schmidt (LS)

Community Reps: Zach Koutsky (ZK), ~~Lauren Niedespol (LN)~~

Teacher Rep: Rielly Wall (RW), Ms. Ballasch (MB)

Non-Teacher Rep: Mr. Williams (MW)

Principal: Titia Kipp (TK)

Please stay muted, please use Chat Bar for LSC members only except during public comment. And refrain from side conversations on the chat bar

Approval of Agenda:

Motion to approve the amended agenda with addition of chair and principal reports, JR, Mr.Williams Seconded. All in favor. No abstentions or nays.

Approval of Minutes:

GFR – no minutes from the previous meeting yet due to short turnaround from 5 days ago.

Public Comment

*Please note: This period is dedicated for questions/comments that directly pertain to the 3 functions of the LSC: Budget, CIWP, and Principal Evaluation. Other questions/comments will be directed to administration (general school operations), teachers (specific classroom/grade level questions), or WatersToday (fundraising and volunteering).*

JR – no emailed comments.

Chair report

JR – want to thank Mr. Williams for his work passing out lunch. Want to thank Ms. Kipp, Ms. Alvarez for holding down the fort.

We will be voting on CIWP and Budget today

Principal Report

TK – It’s been a challenge during this pandemic. Thanks for the words of support. We continue to pass out chrome books. We are on cart number 4 or 5 now. Our technology is being put to good use. If any families still need chromebooks we still have them to be available to all of you.

Construction – moving full steam ahead. Water main work going on. Once the paint crews arrive we will be repainting the entire building. Teachers still need to come in and close down classrooms and students need to pick up their personal belongings.

We continue to have weekly staff meetings and check in with families to help them with chromebooks that might not be working. We are ensuring our staff are engaging with families minimally once a week. We are also appealing to the board for a DL position and preparing for any vacancies that we may have and are prepared so we have a teacher in place. We are going to be surveying families about returning to fall, and setting up remote registration for kindergarten and anyone new who has moved into the neighborhood so we are adequately prepared for next school year. We are working with HS on articulation meetings as our 8th graders leave and go to HS. We are meeting with counselors at Amundsen and Roosevelt to pass on info about our students. We are working with the middle school on a virtual graduation meeting soon to prepare for that soon.

JR – any questions

KB – quick question – I appreciate the articulation agreement with the feeder schools. Is there a way for that to go both ways, giving our 8th graders a sense of what to expect (skill based, etc), or a bridge for over the summer, something for the students who might be anxious about losing their last few months of 8th grade?

TK – great question. They just announced that Freshman Connection has been cancelled bc of Covid, but if you can forward me those questions I would love to share those with my colleagues. Given the current state of affairs I don’t know if they have plans for anything virtual but I know it would be great to do something.

GFR – Pavichevich just posted that she’s working on something of that nature

ES – If there’s anything we do to help facilitate the 8th grade or kinder graduation as an LSC don’t hesitate to let us know.

Old Business:

JR – I will call for a motion to vote to approve, ask for a second, then at that point we will have any further discussion as needed. I will try to timebox discussion so this doesn’t go completely out of control; and to keep things reasonable.

Approval of CIWP

JR – Ms. Kipp made some changes to CIWP based on feedback from last meeting and from Greg. I move to approve the CIWP as amended with the changes in the final draft sent around by Ms. Kipp incorporating the feedback from the LSC and community. Second from RW.

I’d like to open discussion. Ms. Kipp would you mind briefly summarizing the changes. Ms. Alzvarez will screenshare.

NA – We considered feedback from the LSC and Greg. We heard the need for more action steps to build upon our technology practices and professional learning. So in each of the Strategies we decided to include technology to improve our practices. [See attached PDF of CIWP] These align with the 5 Essentials – build on collaboration. These goals build on embedding tech skills within the curriculum. It will increase our innovation. We appreciate being able to use your skills and incorporate those.

NA – we also wanted to respond to requests to include Why in the action steps. But those are really included in the Theory of Action.

RW – when would be able to roll out the PD, before the beginning of the school year?

NA – we will provide some PD at the beginning of the school year. This will be ongoing, so we will be doing throughout the year as part of our ILT cycle. And some may come from within our school, where we have a lot of talent.

AV – we also talked about using this time in Remote Learning to pilot some programs and play in the sandbox.

RW – absolutely, we can make the best use of our time.

RW – I know the Allstate PD [?] I was going to do has been cancelled. Has it gone remote?

NA – they haven’t shared anything.

GFR – Thanks for addressing the parent and LSC feedback and incorporating these items into each Strategy.

LS – I appreciate the work the teachers put into things. My suggestion is that Ms. Kipp put together a timeline for administering and providing updates on the progress and whoever is going over this document will need to provide regular updates.

NA – We have been doing this and will continue to do it.

CB – I just wanted to point out that the 15 and 30 week updates did not happen with the frequency we needed this past year and it is important that we the LSC and the community need some more regular updates.

NA – I acknowledge that last year we didn’t keep with that schedule, it was a challenging year in lots of ways. But we did share it with the LSC in January.

CB – what was shared in January was more of an update on the upcoming CIWP and less about progress monitoring.

AV – I do believe that we spoke to our performances in the past and went through each of the goals. So I do think that it might not have been as conclusive as some people wanted but I do believe it was an accurate representation of our school.

LS - I think that’s why we need more regular updates in the future. Were there more meetings than the November and January meeting?

JR – I don’t believe that rehashing and going off on tangents on what didn’t happen, but I think we can have a separate discussion outside of this vote.

KB – I agree with you, and it's a tangent, but I think it’s worth noting that not all members of the CIWP were participants in the past. I will feel more confident voting in favor of this document knowing that the LSC and community will be more involved in the process

TK - I think its fair to say that when the organizational meetings happen and we have the full council together that the CIWP LSC Subcommittee members can meet, draft a calendar for the year, and establish the reporting out beyond just the 15 and 30 week, but I want to have that conversation with the LSC subcommittee meeting.

JR – That sounds great to put the 15 and 30 week reports on the calendar.

GFR – Agreed.

JR – any final comments/questions?

ES – I think part of the challenge of the last CIWP was that the timeline of many of the action steps was two years out, so I think that we should be mindful of setting progress milestones in the interim

JR – I will offer my comments – I know it was frustrating for the CIWP Teacher Committee and Ms. Kipp to field a lot of the questions that were offered last week. I really appreciate the community feedback that was incorporated. I think it was very valuable to have the CIWP to read over the weekend and to consider things that we could more fully understand. I’m calling a vote now because I feel like we know it better. It’s a great CIWP, the staff put a lot of work into it.

Call to a vote. I will go down the list of names.

Kirstin Bacon (KB) - Aye

Chris Brannan (CB) - Aye

Greg Foster-Rice (GFR) -Aye

Jason Rieger (JR) - Aye

Erica Smith (ES) - Aye

Lydia Schmidt (LS) -Aye

Zach Koutsky (ZK) - Aye

Rielly Wall (RW) - Aye

Ms. Ballasch (MB) - Aye

Mr. Williams (MW) - Aye

Titia Kipp (TK) - Aye

Unanimously approved for 2020-22

Approval of Budget

JR - I move that we vote to approve the FY 2020-21 Budget for Waters Elementary, CB seconds. Are there any questions?

JR – it might be helpful to project the presentation. If we need it for reference.

RW – this is a quick question – was I reading this in the right place. I’m curious about the $900

TK – That’s Imagine Learning in the 2020 Spend Down.

TK – [looking at the FY 20-21 Budget, final page] – art requires more replenishment which is why it receives $5000 not $1500 (each for drama and music). We also had some leftover money from a state aid, in the amount of $539 which we set aside for a read fund, and we had $451 leftover in Title 2 which we put into a contingency line.

LS – my question is about the second clerk position. It’s my understanding that the position has already been hired but the budget hasn’t been approved and I’m wondering why that happened.

TK – she came on in this year…

LS – so where did that funding come from…we had talked about a second clerk and I was under the impression that it was a replacement for an existing position, not a second clerk.

TK - we had a vacancy, we filled it. I had been talking w the budget subcommittee and we had talked about help from business service support center. But this is a very necessary position here at the school. Ms. Alvarez and I are not able to do what we need to do bc we have been doing all of this budget work. It’s an impossible expectation for one person to do all of the work in the office at our school.

KB – maybe there’s a disconnect between what LS and TK are saying.

TK – We had someone working in the office who was working in the capacity of a clerk but bc we didn't’ have the funding, they were being paid as a miscellaneous employee. However as Ms. Soto indicated, there was a grievance that was being filed from CTU bc there was someone outside of a clerk role doing that job. So we had to move that person into a clerk position. I need to be able to make some decisions in the best interest of our school. You may be aware that we didn’t pass an audit for our school because we haven’t got enough people to do the budgetary work.

KB – I totally understand. I see Melissa wearing multiple hats/day. I think from my point of view a little heads up and transparency would go a long way. But to hear about a position after the fact and transference of money is a sticking point for me. I think a lot of us are asking for transparency.

Soto – I think a lot of the reason this didn’t get to the LSC is because I was filing a grievance and Ms. Kipp was trying to address that situation.

KB – I think we should still go through the process. And if someone outside the LSC has a question or comment they should wait to be called upon.

ES – even on the budget subcommittee I don’t have a clear timeline of how things happened. We didn’t have a clerk for a long time. We started last school year without a clerk, then had a sub of sorts, and then that left you and Ms. Alvarez with a lot of work, then an office aide (Melissa) wearing a clerk hat but not being properly compensated for it due to ongoing investigations (which meant we didn't’ have an official vacancy). I guess I don’t know that we had an official vacancy…so I’m confused about why we didn't’ have a clerk because that’s a foundation position.

TK – I think if we are voting on the FY20 budget, I think the reality of the necessity to have the second clerk here and in the school is very much needed. There is an incredible amount of financial expectations and the funding that comes through our school is unusual for an elementary school. We no longer need to pay for training, thankfully, so that is going to come from central office if we request it. I feel like Waters is like a HS with the amount of money that will come through the school whether it be for epay, or field trips. It’s a painstaking process. And one person in this office can not do it themselves and do everything else.

CB – and that was specifically called out in the audit of the school.

ES – what you’ve described is absolutely true of a typical year at Waters. With the pandemic I would be much more comfortable with a budget that has more wiggle room for things specifically called out on the CIWP.

LS – I agree with Erica

TK - I don’t agree – with the money from the spend down this year. I think it will help give us more wiggle room.

ES – I appreciate that response and I understand that the district has to plan that we are going back. I just worry about having only $50,000 as wiggle room and I’m also worried about the amount of revenue that we will be bringing into the school, which is part of what the clerk handles. So the revenue from those programs is down and I’m being conservative. We cannot necessarily count on that revenue.

TK – Yes, we aren’t going to have our summer program because of the construction. We have enough money to get us through next school year if we are in a remote situation.

Ballasch – I’ve been at Waters quite a long time. I’ve always seen the benefit of multiple clerk staff in the office. Our school’s office is busy all day. We have parents who need interpreter, kids come in late, as well as finances. The personnel files that come into the office. It’s very beneficial to have more than one person behind the desk. I know there was talk about whether it had to be a clerk. I think so, I want it to be someone who can do that work.

ES – I’m not arguing that the need isn’t there I’m just concerned about the timing. I don’t think now this is the best expenditure and I have concerns for our students.

TK – then my argument for that is that the money we have allocated for non personnel we set aside and also the money from the internal accounts to help us next year. I’ve ben instructed by my chief to plan for coming back in the fall.

ES – I think the overall thing we are advocating for is a holistic budget that includes internal accounts which we have been asking for over time.

JR – I don’t think anyone here is saying you don’t deserve two clerks. It’s frustrating that we are fighting over scraps and no one is saying one side is right and one wrong. It’s a matter of discussion and priorities.

TK – thanks Jason, I received questions about the budget but not on this specific issue nor on the internal accounts.

RW – we have to plan for in person learning. And we need a second clerk.

KB – this is a sticking point of approving after the fact. If this is a need that has been in the community then all I ask is that the proper channels be followed.

ZK – I understand the concern about transparency, but I also appreciate the jam that Principal Kipp was put in and the new union contract, and needing more hands on the till. As the school is seeing the workload increase I think that goes along with the issues we’ve brought up as communication. Hopefully this could give Ms. Kipp and her team the ability to focus more on those issues. I understand the concern but also the impossible position that Ms. Kipp is in.

CB – I agree with Zack. You cannot pay for everything that you would like to pay for.

JR – from me and my point of view I am inclined to assume best intentions and trust that if a second clerk is needed.

LS – in reading through the CIWP and listening to comments from last week and I’m wondering if the current staffing for essentials teachers makes the most sense, particularly the half arts position from Waters Today and I’m wondering what the role …My question is whether the staffing currently makes sense and given the feedback from the community about technology indicates that we need to reconsider the allocation of essentials teachers and reconfigure that to include a technology teacher.

TK – I don’t know what to say.

JR – we cannot redesign an entire half position in this meeting. I get what you’re saying, but I honestly feel like that’s a bigger issue. I don’t see how we can

KB – I think the question might generally be assessing the needs of the school seeing that the CIWP is technology heavy.

Ballasch – I don’t see that the CIWP is that technology heavy – a lot of this was put into place to see that teachers were receiving the training to teach students with technology. Not teaching a technology class for students.

ES – I was just going to say that regarding the essentials, they do seem embedded in the CIWP other than PE and we have two PE teachers.

TK - I will say that PE was a big issue in the past. And it was a mandate from CPS. We had an opportunity to provide that and get in compliance which is why we have it. And not everything is in the CIWP.

ES – Im not arguing against PE. It’s my understanding we were in compliance with the CPS mandate bc of the one PE, calm classroom, and in-class movement activities. It’s just not clearly stated that this is a priority in the budget which is aligned in the CIWP.

NA – we do so much as a school that is not in the CIWP. This is a plan not a running lsit of everything we do. This year it is really focusing on those four strategies. It’s not meant to include everything we do as a school.

KB – going back to the budget, there is a line for half a position in the arts.

TK – the importance of the technology being interwoven and the teachers receiving that PD, which I am working on getting outside of this budget.

LS – could I ask if we received the STEAM designation, would that allow us to provide money for a position in technology at that point.

TK – it would be a STEAM position.

LS – I’m wondering when is the time to have a conversation about changes in positions.

JR – this is complex and not for conversation during a vote.

KB – that’s where this transparency is important – if there is more transparency in the CIWP process which aligns with the budget then a lot fo these questions would be alleviated because we would all be a lot more comfortable. We are being asked to make choices in the 11th hour when we shouldn’t be in this position if we had been included earlier in the discussion.

JR – I feel like there is a bit a revisionist history about technology. I hear what you’re saying about

CB – and unfortunately the budget only goes so far.

TK – and I’m trying desperately to work with downtown to advocate for what’s right and fair for our school.

JR – I’m just saying it’s not so cut and dried one way or the other.

CB – there’s a difference between technology enabled training and the students learning. And that is a difference is between a full on role. I would like there to be a clarity and direction on where the school is trying to go to. But that is independent over this budget.

GFR – I agree with both sides, I support Chris’ idea of keeping the technology enabled training for the teachers in the CIWP. I also appreciate the concerns about transparency and think that if we are indeed engaging in a longer term plan to become a STEAM school that might add back money in the budget for a Technology teacher. But we need a more comprehensive, long-term plan presented to the community so they can see and follow that plan.

Motion to approve the FY 21 Budget

Kirstin Bacon (KB) - Nay

Chris Brannan (CB) - Aye

Greg Foster-Rice (GFR) -Aye

Jason Rieger (JR) - Aye

Erica Smith (ES) - Nay

Lydia Schmidt (LS) -Nay

Zach Koutsky (ZK) - Aye

Rielly Wall (RW) - Aye

Ms. Ballasch (MB) - Aye

Mr. Williams (MW) - Aye

Titia Kipp (TK) - Aye

No abstentions. The FY 21 Budget passes with a majority.

Approval of FY20 Budget Spend Down

JR – the vast majority of the fiscal spend down has been allocated and spent already – 80% of it. That includes the technology. So in that regard there’s very little for us to vote to approve. It is our role to approve a spend down of this magnitude. We’re now in a position where we cannot do that.

KB – I don’t understand

TK – I was instructed by my Network Chief that I needed to plan for the opening of the school year and move forward with the spend down. So everyone is going through this, yes, the deadline is Friday [the 22nd of May]. I’m aware of that. But there’s a great deal of pulling for quotes, so we have been doing that. We are still waiting on curriculum requests and supply requests. We basically have allocated all of the moneys. There’s basically some approvals for paper and other supplies. The technology order has been submitted and the subscriptions and curriculum have been submitted. We have furniture requests and some other teacher requests coming in. But doing this all and getting it done in a remote setting, it takes time so my chief advised me to move forward with the purchase request.

JR – so this puts us in a position where we are put in a position to not trust you or the school. Or that the LSC is not valuable and doesn’t do anything. It sends a message that the LSC, which is put in place to have oversight and feedback from the community, is not valued. This is frustrating to me. I don’t know where it comes from. I do believe there’s a role for the LSC. We are now in a position where the LSC is made moot. I spoke to you multiple times before you made the purchase orders on Tuesday. I would have liked an opportunity to vote on this. So I would have liked to have been given this opportunity. I don’t think the Network Chief did the right thing. I understand you’re in a difficult position. But this is $140,000. It’s not a small amount. I’m frustrated. I think we could have called a vote to approve this. So I don’t see the position to call a vote.

KB – can I just ask a clarifying question – it was before our meeting on Tuesday?

JR – I wasn’t aware of the information at that time.

LS – what is the total amount of the spend down?

TK – I will read you verbatim what I was given – there’s been a lot of speculation about why we had all these excess funds. Reason for excess funds, 20th day adjustment….position bucket closing, additional funds allocated from central office. These extra funds they come, they go. But what is certain …at beginning of year we were advised not to spend the budget at start of year. Asked to wait until after CTU agreement, retroactive salary increase. Once we cleared some negatives that were in a state grant, going to a salary increase or medical benefit, we had to clear some negatives, which was done back in early or late April. According to my $195,631.98…so that is the amount we’ve bene putting into different transfer lines. This is from the teachers. So if we don’t spend them, we lose the money. After clearing negatives there was $193,484.63

JR – I think we would have approved this list. I support the list in general although we didn’t have the chance …But I have objections to spending $194,000 of the public’s money without a vote.

ES – Based on the POs, about $140,000 of the money has been spent.

TK - The balance is $67,232.82.

ES – I don’t have a good sense of what on the wishlist spend down has been requisitioned or spent. Potentially we could vote on the $67,232.82…

JR – my understanding is that the money will be spent, regardless.

KB – I asked for context from each line to understand how the teacher wish list items would be used (is it just teacher wishlist ongoing, is it for the remote learning, is it for the addition?)…

TK – I sent the documents out

KB \_ I got a vague document that shows…

TK – Is this the document? [shows one page document with about $9,0000 of spending on it]

GFR – [Speaking so not typing] This is circumventing democracy.

ES – It is frustrating when there’s a lot of time put into something and …I fully support the teacher wishlist. I think it’s important for them to have a voice.

KB – if you were told by your boss on Tuesday to spend this money it would’ve been good not to waste everyone’s time and tell us that on Thursday.

JR – We can have the discussion with the Network Chief, Segovia.

TK – what do we do now?

JR – I’m inclined not to call a vote. I suspect we don’t call a vote. I think we take this up with the Network Chief.

GFR – we need a meeting with the Network Chief.

JR – we are not going to call a vote. Public comments

Public Comment This section of public comment does not require having signed up to comment in advance. Please note: This period is dedicated for questions/comments that directly pertain to the 3 functions of the LSC: Budget, CIWP, and Principal Evaluation. Other questions/comments will be directed to administration (general school operations), teachers (specific classroom/grade level questions), or WatersToday (fundraising and volunteering).

Kevin Bacon – I’m concerned with everything that’s going on. I don’t get the sense that there’s any regret. It’s not that this money came from nowhere. It’s about systemic issues of communication and transparency and valuing the LSC stakeholders. There’s a lot of communities struggling to communicate in the midst of this pandemic. And we are not one of those. We have met twice in a week. That reflects the engagement of the community and should reflect in our support of teachers. Things like this perpetuate an us vs. them mentality. Thanks.

Ms. Soto – I know it’s late and I’m super appreciative. I know there’s some questions about the clerk. I want to talk about how it connects to the CIWP. We want to make sure the community feels connected and engaged. Part of what the clerks do is help provide coverage for the teachers, to take a bathroom break or making sure that mail gets delivered. With the mayor saying they will open the schools in Sept, it will help to have someone in the office to help us in case kids get sick and need ot be taken home. I think it’s very forward thinking.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn JR, someone seconds.