WINOOSKI SCHOOLS
We are the future.

Winooski School Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting
Wednesday, September 9, 2026, 6:00 pm
WSD Library Learning Commons or via Google Meet
Google Meet Link: meet.google.com/szx-gwkh-oee

Policy Title 1.0 Ends Statement: All students will graduate from the Winooski School District (WSD) college and career ready at a cost supported by a majority of the Winooski community. WSD students will lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community.

Attendees: ***Wilmer Chavarria*****,** ***Robert Millar*****,** ***Allyssa Ravelin*****,** ***Erik Johnson*****,** ***Elom Essiba*****,** ***Barakit Gyi*****,** ***Gabriella Dzessou*** ***Matthew Gonzalez, Sarah Haven. Virtual: Dan Harris,*** ***Katie Livermore*****,** ***Emily Bowers***

1. **Call to Order** (5 Minutes)
    a. Robert Millar calls meeting to order at ***6:02pm.***

2. **Agenda Review and Adjustments:** (5 Minutes)
    a. Robert Millar is acting as chair today, Nicole Mace is away this week.
    b. Robert Millar - Policy C10 was going to be a first read, and has been struck out on agenda.
        i. Wilmer Chavarria- It was included in the list of the VSBA policies, but there was some confusion in their wording. When we went to find the policy it wasn't there, and it's because it was created by the AOE. The AOE had not made it available to the public. We found out we could not bring it forward to the public until the next meeting.
    c. Robert Millar- Move item C7ii up on the agenda, right after Consent Agenda. It is the presentation from students who attended the AI conference in Boston

3. **Announcements and Recognition**
    a. Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept 15-Oct 15)
        i. Robert Millar acknowledges it begins on September 15th.
        ii. Wilmer Chavarria shares it is an exciting time of year in Nicaragua and Central America, it's Independence Day on the 15th. Also, it is exciting for any kid in school if you like music. It is Marching Band Day, where you do all the parades and wear new uniforms, etc. Most of Central America matches Latin America and Mexico.
    b. Budget Buddy Recruitment
        i. Robert Millar- Skip over this for right now. We will have a longer discussion on how we want to approach that this year a little later on the agenda.
    c. Other Announcements and Recognitions
        i. Wilmer Chavarria wants to thank the teachers, support staff and everyone working in the schools. Successful start of the school year. A lot of work

figuring things out, new cohorts of students and establishing routines. Very proud of what Wilmer has seen and excited what's to come.

4. **Public Comments:** This item is reserved for comments and questions on topics that are not included on this agenda. Time for public comment is included by default for each item below.
    a. Megan Hoffman, community member and parent, representing a small group of parents, shares concerns regarding screen time in schools. Requesting a committee be formed to investigate screen use. Questions for guidance shared.
        i. Robert Millar requests the questions in an email to the board, to continue conversations.
    b. Gabby Dzessou- Questions are being asked from students. Do we have money to get a mascot, preferably a Spartan? Also, the possibility of getting a high school theater teacher? A lot of kids are begging for it.
        i. Wilmer Chavarria Good questions for management rather than the board. Wilmer says the questions can go to him and his office, since he is management. We can always add a teacher, but we have to remove another.

5. **Consent Agenda:** (5 Minutes)
    a. Minutes of Meetings
        i. Regular Board Meeting: August 12, 2026
        ii. Annual Board Retreat: August 27, 2026
    b. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities
        i. Approval of Bills
    c. Policy Title: 2.7 Compensation and Benefits
    d. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Consent Agenda
    e. Elom Essiba- "So Moved."
    f. Passed Unanimously.

6. **Governance Processes (Policy Section IV):** (60 Minutes)
    a. Policy Title: 4.2.1 Community Engagement
        i. Discussion: Recent Community Activities by Board
            1. Barakit Gyi-Friendship Festival. The city of Winooski held a festival, which was very successful .
            2. Robert Millar- Welcome Back BBQ. The estimated attendance by Wilmer Chavarria was 600 people.
        ii. Discussion: Development of Charter for "Merger Buddies" Initiative
            1. Robert Millar- This was brought up at the Board Retreat. We have been selected to be on the charter with Burlington and South Burlington. Emily Bowers has been privileged with developing a charter of sorts.
            2. Emily Bowers Questions regarding the charter. Should we merge with budget buddies? We don't want one person per board member, we want to reach more people. Should we ask the budget buddy to

continue on? Do we want a specific merger buddy? Separate meetings and updates during the regular board meetings?
    a. Robert Millar They don't need to come to every meeting if we merge the buddies, but they do need to attend budget meetings.
3. Katie Livermore Concerned about budget buddy meetings and merger meetings. Emily's concerned about meetings being too long, but the board talked about it at the retreat being too many meetings.
4. Wilmer Chavarria- It doesn't need to be too formal, reflect ideas you are proposing. It is a draft for the board to see and review. Like a job description: qualifications- preferable a resident and committed to the future of Winooski.

b. Policy Title: 4.2 Board Job Description
    i. Discussion: CESA Update
        1. Robert Millar They haven't been able to accomplish a lot. A chair was appointed. The South Burlington superintendent was appointed. Discussion at the retreat as to how we, as a board, can communicate this to the public, along with the merger.
        2. Wilmer Chavarria AOE did reply a couple days ago. Working on FAQ for the field. A lot is sort of our responsibility to figure it out, leave it to the regions to come together.
            a. Erik Johnson - September 28th, next meeting.

c. Policy Title: 4.2.2 Create Written Governing Policies
    i. Action: Public Hearing and Adoption of Policy
        1. Robert Millar No policies at the adoption level for tonight.
    ii. Discussion/Action: Policy Second Read and Approval for Adoption
        1. B7 Tobacco Prohibition
            a. Robert Millar- No changes were made. Looks for a motion to approve a second read.
            b. Elom Essiba- "So Moved."
            c. *Passed Unanimously.*
    iii. Discussion: Policy First Read
        1. C2 Student Drugs & Alcohol
            a. Wilmer Chavarria asks Erik Johnson to share updates- We had an old policy, outlined similarly. Green text highlighting what's been added by the VSA, required content. Some changes marked in red that are being replaced by the green text. It is mainly around the definition for drug or any other regulated drug or controlled substance. Adding in support and referral systems and cooperative agreements, additional tiers as well as those definitions.
            b. Robert Millar We will come back to this next time, only a first read.
        2. C6 Home Study Students

a. Robert Millar- Recent update from VSBA to a required policy.
b. Erik Johnson- Currently, we have policy 5118, we are moving away from anything that is in those to procedural components. VSA policy C6 is straightforward and similar language - just an adoption of required policy, model policy.
c. Robert Millar- First read, will come back for a second read at the next meeting.

~~3. C10 Prevention of Harassment, Hazing & Bullying Policy (Required)~~

d. Policy Title: 4.8 Governance Investment
    i. Discussion: Budget Reflection and Timeline
        1. Wilmer Chavarria stated the annual plan spreadsheet has the dates and special meetings included. Access for Board members. In the past, we never included board meetings for the budget. This time there is a little green line that tells you what's going to happen every time. Wilmer continues to discuss the timeline leading to budget context presentation- showing charts, preliminary things. Nothing major is coming at us this year, it should be similar to last year. Consider this year as we may have come to a time when there isn't a whole lot to cut. We are not certainly in a position to add more things, if we ever will again. We have less and less things we are able to cut. This is the first time Wilmer is going into high school classes and seeing big classes. This is a sign that we have begun to optimize our resources in some ways, but also means there is less room to reduce resources. Next month, we will have enrollment numbers, how the fund balance is looking, preliminary numbers.
    ii. Discussion/action: Internal Monitoring Report
        1. Elom Essiba shares that she just tweaked the report a little. She added everything that has been done across educational work.
        2. Robert Millar appreciates the suggestions Elom had regarding adjustments to the actual policy, changing the amounts that were in there. They were very small for board learning.
        3. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Internal Monitoring Report Policy 4.8
        4. Katie Livermore - "So Moved."
        5. ***Passed Unanimously.***
e. Policy Title: 4.9 Board Committee Principles
    i. Internal Monitoring Report
        1. Robert Millar wrote this one. Mention of switching up, different people, different times, but wait for the chair to return. The one thing that was added was mentions regarding the student board member committee, acknowledging we use that appropriately. In compliance with board member principals.
        2. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Internal Monitoring Report on Policy 4.9 Board Committee Principles

3. Emily Bowers- “So Moved.”
4. ***Passed Unanimously.***

7. Executive Limitations (Policy Section II): (30 minutes)
    a. Policy Title: 2.1 Treatment of Students, Parents, and Community
        i. Internal Monitoring Report
            1. Wilmer Chavarria Description of compliance rationale below the interpretations and compliance conditions. Changes a little this year, added a few bullet points under evidence of compliance, straightforward with things you can quantify or see, relevant to the interpretation of this policy. The first part, Wilmer specifies that only one formal complaint has been filed regarding information and how we make information available to the public. It happened last month, we made the error of not publishing the agenda on time to the website. We were hours late posting, but everything else was done on time. We have had several minor complaints. They don't complain until it is officially addressed to the school. Not all have merit. At least 20 to 25 new procedures have been completed and disseminated, and we continue to build. Some numbers were shared: Two instances of law enforcement requesting records we denied because they didn’t meet the federal law, and didn't pass the legitimate educational interest test.We don't have our liaison officer for the time being, we have to be more careful nowadays. Updated policies for pupil rights, education records and sanctuary schools. No complaints about student privacy rights, accessibility, ensuring privacy in facilities. The FERPA documents are available during registration, public events to disseminate people's rights. Adapting liaisons to accommodate needs. Wilmer reports compliance.
                a. Robert Millar appreciates data breakdown, very easy and clear. Katie Livermore shares same sentiments
            2. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept Wilmer’s Internal Monitoring Report on Policy 2.1
            3. Emily Bowers -”So Moved.”
            4. ***Passed Unanimously.***

    b. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Conditions and Activities
        i. Discussion: Spark Center Update
            1. Wilmer Chavarria- End of the stage that the board authorized management to carry out. We were to bring very detailed estimates of costs potentially building something from scratch. Preliminary from architects, costs of renovations close to building from scratch. They still believe it would be best to renovate. Although, the costs were very similar. Asked to do a little more research because when you build something new, you are sure of what you are building and

putting in there. No surprises, that you may have with renovations that weren't studied that deeply. Estimates from the architect and contractor came back. Too high and unacceptible to us. Things are very expensive right now, not because a different contractor would have a different price. We know this will be a good investment for the future with what we are trying to do. We couldn't bring it to the Board or the public, it would be very hard to explain, hard to justify to the public. Asked contractors to go get a second opinion, they went with ReARC, the contractors that did a lot of this building. The numbers came back basically the same, comparable. The numbers are too high and it goes over the maximum number we were already imagining. We are going to have to go back to the drawing board and bring the Boards some different ideas instead. One idea is to substantially reduce space, which would reduce the capacity that we would have for the number of students we could serve at any one time. Second option, taking a look at renovation options, which the architects did not encourage us to do at first, still reducing a bit of square footage of the usable area. We have yet to explore this option. NO recommendations for the board at this time as we didn't find it acceptable. We want to provide a more reasonable option while still keeping the original idea intact. As some HVAC issues, and athletic things have been pushed back, we will have a better look and the FUND balance in a few weeks when we come back with more information.

c. Policy Title: 2.8 Communication and Support to the Board
    i. Discussion/Action: September Superintendent's Report to the Board
        1. Wilmer Chavarria shares a lesson learned from the photo of him and another teacher who is injured. Stating that he made fun of the other teacher for being hurt and two days later, he got injured. Lesson to never make fun of others but also that work continues, that's our attitude at WSD. The updates come from administration in this report.
        2. Elom Essiba comments on the girl's uniform movement, changing of girls ' uniforms not to wear white shorts.
            a. Wilmer Chavarria A lot of policies are dictated by entities. We have to ask the VPA (Vermont Principals Association) to change uniforms; Nationally, they make girls wear white to compete. We are the first state to intentionally do that.
            b. Robert Millar- It was coming up from students who were actually making the change.
            c. Wilmer Chavarria Some of the latest procedures have to do with athletics where the revamping came from student feedback from last year. Happy to report made some progress on that.

3. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept Wilmer's September 2026 Superintendent's Report to the Board
4. Katie Livermore- "So Moved."
5. ***Passed Unanimously.***

ii. Presentation: Student Senate AI Conference and Local AI Efforts

1. Wilmer Chavarria- Last meeting, something was mentioned, and a very nice article in VPR about it. Members of the Board and public wanted to hear a little bit more about their experience attending the event.
2. Nimo Ali, student- Experience there was to hear and listen about what other students thought was going on in our school and how we are handling AI use. Everyone was on different committees, separated by Students, Teachers, relationship use and Administration. A survey was shared, we received different policies from our committee that we could pick out for the action Act so we could pass it at the end. If it passed, it would go into that section of the policy. At the end we all voted if we wanted to pass it or not.
3. Shagan Yadav- Reviewed slideshow that was made, reviewing the daily agenda of what the day to day looked like at the conference. The objective was to have the view of students about AI in school. Teachers and students can use AI for good or bad, for example students using it to complete assignments. It is taking away critical thinking.A quote from the Day of AI conference, "Adults have failed you now, it is in the hands of students to create a future that is beneficial to students' education." The Bill passed 83-15 (based on the photo shown). We wanted to have something for a basis. A bill can be drafted into something better. Nationwide event, heard things from other sides of the country; There were issues that wouldn't happen here. For example, there was a state with a lot of Native Americans and how they wanted their data to be used in AI, From everyone having their names in AI, they didn't agree with. In the bill, you can have data in AI or not, by your choosing.
4. Wilmer Chavarria shares gratitude for the students and looks forward to them, hopefully, being at the table as policies like this take shape, while using the information they gained.

8. **<u>Adjourn</u>**
   a. Robert Millar looks for a motion to adjourn
   b. Elom Essiba- "So Moved."
   c. Passed Unanimously.
   d. Meeting Adjourned @ **7:16pm**

<u>Upcoming Important Dates:</u>
September 11 - No afterschool activities, Rosh Hashana
September 18 - Veggie Van Go

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September 21 - No School, Yom Kippur
October 19 - City-WSD Joint Meeting Date