

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
November 3, 2004 Approved Nov. 17, 2004

PRESENT:

Ms Judy Converse
Ms Karen Lofgren
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair
Ms Patricia Murray, Interim Secretary
Mr. Frank O'Connell
Mr. Alan Vervaeke, Chair

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Mary Athey Jennings, Superintendent
Mr. Craig Young, Business Manager
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

Student Advisors:

Erica Schroeder and Mike Fredrickson

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: M. Konjoian, Lowell Sun; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald;
R. Flynn, K. Icenogle, C. Scafidi, C. Lickteig, B. Lefebvre, J. Cooper, S.
Peyton, M. Kimpton, S. Tully, B. Erickson, O. Smith Schuman, J. Dillon, CJ
Maloney, J. Peyton,
P. Bourgeois, J. Gilmartin. J. O'Loughlin, R. Manley

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by the chair, A.
Vervaeke.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Jennings announced the middle school play Guys and Dolls will be held at
the Performing Arts Center on November 5th and 6th at 7:00 p.m..

Dr. Jennings announced a public hearing will be held in the Black Box Theater
on the Dress Standards Policy on November 15th at 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Jennings announced the open house and dedication of the new Middle
School building will be November 18th from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Citizens,
staff and professionals who consulted through the project will be recognized
and thanked for their hard work.

K. Lofgren announced SPED PAC will hold a Basic Rights workshop in the high
school library on November 9th. It is put on by the Federation for Children
with Special Needs and is designed to help parents and guardians become
more effective partners with the school. People will have the opportunity to
meet Joan Endicott, PPS Director, on November 16th.

A. Vervaeke announced he received notification today that Jeanne Niemoller resigned from the School Committee effective November 2, 2004. Her resignation letter was read.

A. Vervaeke stated interested parties wishing to be appointed to the School Committee may send a letter of interest to the Board of Selectmen. The term will run until May.

M. Fredrickson announced the boys and girls varsity soccer teams made Districts. The boys will be playing at Nashoba Regional tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. and the girls will play Prouty at Groton Dunstable on November 6th at 6:00 p.m.

M. Fredrickson announced there will be a Halloween Dance on Friday night at 7:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater.

M. Fredrickson announced the National Honor Society induction will take place in the Black Box Theater on November 9th at 7:00 p.m.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Building Committee - C. Young reported they do not have a final answer on whether Groton is interested in saving the farm house on the Smith 1 site. The low bidder for demolishing the building has agreed to hold their bid for another thirty days while Mr. Prendergast and Mr. Vervaeke pursue saving the structure.

Personnel - C. McKinney reported they met on November 1st and members were provided with draft minutes. The committee is in the process of looking to interview applicants for the Treasurer's position and interested parties can contact the District office by next week. They met with Dr. Jennings to discuss her goals for the year. They have received four proposals from attorneys to serve as the Committee's general counsel. He asked if the School Committee has delegated authority to the sub-committee to bring forward a recommendation and it was agreed the Committee has done so. The School Committee is meeting tomorrow night to interview superintendent search firms.

Budget and Finance - F. O'Connell reported they will be meeting in a couple of weeks.

Policy - J. Converse reported they will be meeting at Tarbell from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on November 10th to plan the two public hearings. She noted their minutes of October 31st indicate what they are looking at and how the hearings will be structured.

A. Vervaeke reported he and three Committee members attended the MASC conference last week and he voted on the Resolutions as directed by the Committee. C. McKinney said he will write a summary of what he learned at various workshops and distribute it to members.

MINUTES

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2004. SECONDED BY J. CONVERSE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2004. SECONDED BY J. CONVERSE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

B. Erickson congratulated Mr. Vervaeke for having the courage to admit mistakes have been made in the process for naming the facilities. She stated if they cannot trust the process, then often times they cannot trust the outcome of the process. Speaking for herself and people of her generation, she stated they would like to be a part of the process and that this is not just a school issue. She stated it is unfortunate that names were brought up in public and feels it would be appropriate to have something named for Ms Stoddard. She feels Ms Stoddard and the Kendall family are owed an apology for this being brought out in public.

R. Flynn read a letter on behalf of the National Honor Society and GDAY requesting late busses be included in the FY06 budget process. Having late busses available would allow more students to take advantage of sports, clubs, homework help centers and would decrease the amount of time a student spends unsupervised. Having late busses would also take pressure off parents having to arrive at the school at a specific time.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Block Scheduling

Principal Dillon stated a public forum on block scheduling was held on October 21st.

Principal Dillon reviewed the history of block scheduling from 1995 - 1997. He stated a Restructuring Team was convened with a focus on alternative scheduling. A pilot program was implemented during the spring of 1996 by double blocking one period per day and the program was evaluated through surveys of students and staff. He noted over 85% of the students wanted more double blocks. The state's Time on Learning mandate of 990 hours was addressed through the School Improvement Plan. There was faculty consensus on a model for 1996-1997 which was a four day cycle - they double blocked three periods on days one and three and had a traditional schedule on days two and four.

The Restructuring Team made a recommendation to the faculty to go on an Accelerated Block Schedule for 1997-1998 and a forum was held for parents. The faculty unanimously voted to approve this Accelerated Block Schedule and a recommendation was presented to the School Committee. Professional development was provided to all staff on "How to Teach in a Double Block".

Principal Dillon reviewed MCAS (2000 & 2004), SAT(2000 & 2003) and AP scores and stated that while the scores are encouraging, he does not want people to think this was the motivation for moving toward double block. Prior to 1997, 22 credits were required for graduation and students typically took five and a half to six classes, with one study hall, in a traditional schedule. Required credits were progressively increased to 27. Senior Project started as an elective course for seniors and is now a graduation requirement.

Enrollment in the Senior Internship Program has dramatically increased, with seventeen students enrolled in a full semester internship. These students had completed all their graduation requirements prior to their second semester in senior year. Principal Dillon reviewed new course offerings since the inception of block scheduling. He stated teachers now teach six courses and study halls were eliminated.

Principal Dillon reviewed survey results from parents, students and staff which identify the four least effectives and the four most effectives in block scheduling. Copies of the surveys were distributed to members.

F. O'Connell asked what they do with the survey now and J. Dillon said they have made some changes after looking at the results. He noted they offered psychology for the first time this year and one hundred forty students signed up for the class. For students who have a difficult time focusing for a long period in classes such as math and English,
J. Dillon stated the block has been split into two forty-five minute blocks.

C. McKinney asked J. Dillon if he is claiming a causal relationship between block scheduling and increased scores and J. Dillon said no. He showed the scores mainly for the math because this is the area where many people were convinced they were going to have lower scores. He is not saying block scheduling results in higher test scores.

A. Vervaeke said it was stated that students will reach the point of having three full years of math and he asked how many years they will have had for ELA at the same point and

J. Dillon said at least two years. A. Vervaeke asked how a student gets constant, reiterative learning if they are only taking English for half of the school year.

P. Bourgeois said they are committed as a school and whether or not they are in an English class, students are expected to read and write at their grade level in every class.

P. Murray said she learned a great deal at the public forum on block scheduling and was disappointed more parents did not attend. She has heard concerns that a student is essentially done after 3 1/2 years, there are worries about what happens to the "average" student and there is a concern

that students are being sent home with less homework. Ms Murray said it was nice to hear from the students.

K. Lofgren asked how they got the survey to the parents and J. Dillon said they were distributed at the open house, sent in a newsletter and the third time they were sent in the mail.

High School Council Discussion

Peg Bourgeois, who is retiring in January, introduced members of the Council. A video, celebrating respect, achievement and the act of celebration at Groton Dunstable was shown. The video was constructed by Jim Kurdzso. The Leadership Team sent out surveys to the whole school asking about episodes of respect, pride within the school and celebration within the school. Members of the Leadership Team gave responses from the mass of responses that were submitted.

CJ Maloney recognized Ryan Manley for his commitment to community service. As part of Homecoming, Ms Maloney said they did this survey but they also had staff who "Caught the Wave" in outrageous beach attire and School Committee members also played along. She stated they have tremendous school spirit and are proud of what they do. The Groton Dunstable/Ayer Panther football game was held here for the first time, they had a tailgate party, a very successful dance with maximum capacity and held a mock vote. Following the video, Ms Maloney stated it represents what goes on everyday and is about the culture they actively promote. She invited Committee members to come to the high school and experience what goes on and to "shadow" them again.

C. McKinney encouraged everyone to shadow. M. Fredrickson said the video is a perfect depiction of their school and noted the spirit grows every day.

Naming of Buildings

A. Vervaeke stated he would like the Committee to clearly define the process they will be utilizing as they move ahead. Dr. Jennings presented a process in the spring where a naming sub-committee would bring recommendations to the School Committee for action. He stated he stands by his statement of four weeks ago.

J. Converse read a prepared statement. She stated four weeks ago the Chairman announced he was going to disband the Naming Committee because, according to his reading of policy, the committee should not exist. She did not believe he has the authority to unilaterally dissolve an ad-hoc committee and requested this be discussed at a school committee meeting. While tonight's discussion may be whether or not the Chair has the authority to disband the Naming Committee or whether or not the entire Committee should vote to disband the Naming Committee, J. Converse feels they need to look at what policy is for the School Committee.

J. Converse stated they write policy, often implement policy and have to

judge whether or not the policy was correctly implemented. She stated policy is not law but is rather a guideline. She noted there are no specified consequences for breaking a policy other than a policy that says they can, in the case of not abiding by a policy, choose to amend, defend or uphold, whatever that may look like. She feels the Chair's decision to do this alone also breaks a policy (EDB - Responsibilities and Duties of the Chair) in addition to a policy that states "all policy decisions will be settled by an official vote of the Committee sitting in formal session".

J. Converse stated she feels she must warn the Committee of the problems they will encounter if they demand every policy be followed as though it is law. She referred to other instances of "policy breaking" that should also be addressed.

When a policy is broken, J. Converse suggested they do better next time. When they broke MGL regarding Executive Session Meetings, she noted the DA told them to learn from their mistake and to try harder next time. She stated disbanding the Naming Committee is a slap in the face to those who gave their time, energy, research and discussion and stated they do see it that way. She also feels it is a cop-out to the political pressures that are deliberately undermining the integrity of their working together.

J. Converse said she strongly disagrees with Mr. Vervaeke's comment to her that "policy is everything". She stated people are most important as are trust, being able to rely on one another and being able to work together.

C. McKinney sees addressing, in a structured way, challenges on policy as being an issue and stated this may be a role for the policy sub-committee. He stated the other issue is whether or not the Naming Committee was properly formed. He feels they are not looking at the dissolution of a committee but at a committee that was formed in a manner contrary to what policy dictated. He stated policy has not been followed and there is clear indication that the process has not been public enough to this point. He feels it is better to start over again.

K. Lofgren sees policy as a guideline and asked why they have them if they do not adhere to them. She believes policy is one of the most important things the Committee does and stated it charts their overall course of action on where they want to head and where they want to go. She feels they need to treat policy respectfully.

Dr. Jennings stated policy is there to guide the administration to implement it. The policy for the naming of facilities was adopted by the School Committee at the same time as the policy for memorials and are closely intertwined. She stated the policy for "Naming Schools, Facilities and Portions Thereof" (FF) clearly states the superintendent is to bring to the School Committee the process that will be used. She noted the School Committee approved this process on March 16th. The five steps were read by

Dr. Jennings and she stated incoming Chairman Vervaeke appointed Ms

Converse to work with her. She stated the School Committee and the public were aware of it and they went out to implement it and noted that at no time between March 16th and the time that the recommendations came forward, did anyone find a flaw with this procedure. She feels people would have cried foul if the process was so flawed and illegal.

Dr. Jennings stated Ms Stoddard has asked that her name be withdrawn from consideration and stated there is now only one name before the Committee. She feels

to put down the people who served on these committees is unfortunate and feels their efforts should be recognized, commended and continued in some form. C. McKinney read Ms Stoddard's letter.

A. Vervaeke stated when he made his comments four weeks ago that he was clear to thank everyone involved in the process. He stated he does not have a vested interest in any names brought forward and sees his concern as being the integrity of the committee, the process and how the process casts a light or a shadow onto the names brought forward. He does not believe anyone's name has been defiled through the process.

He stated Policy FF says "An ad hoc committee appointed by the School Committee Chair may (emphasis added) be utilized to facilitate the process." Since the recommendation was made to use a naming committee, that committee was to be appointed by the Chair. He continues to trust that things brought forward are done in a manner that follows their policy. He stated questions came up regarding there being no minutes of the sub-committee or postings of their meetings. A. Vervaeke stated they are responsible for the enforcement of policy, as is the administration. He never said the process was illegal but said he felt the process was tainted. He stated he would be happy to add new proper members to the sub-committee and if they want, they can bring the same names forward. He stated it is not about the names, it is about the process. He does not feel his previous statement dissolved the sub-committee. His intent is to follow policy and assign people to the sub-committee and fully engage and involve the public. He feels there is a huge amount of importance and respect that goes with putting a person's name on a building. He stated he will leave the decision up to the Committee as to whether they accept things as they are.

With respect to the process, P. Murray stated she expected more than two names to come forward. Regardless of how one feels, she stated they cannot discount the people who worked tirelessly. She agreed there were flaws and that it can be said policy was not followed but feels a simpler thing is to say let's look at it again, keep the group intact and perhaps add a member from Groton and one from Dunstable. She does not believe choosing a new group of people will resolve the issue.

K. Lofgren believes the chairman has said he would like the current members to stay on the committee and that he would appoint a few more members, engage the communities and start over. A. Vervaeke agreed his original statement asked the current members to remain involved.

Dr. Jennings asked A. Vervaeke why he would not have the administration continue to work on this in cooperation with the citizens. He said the administration is part of the district and he did not want the community members to feel disenfranchised. He also feels the sub-committee made a determination of how the sub-committee was going to be created, who was going to be on it and how it was going to do its business. He feels some decisions were made that needed to come back to the School Committee. Per policy, he does not believe the chair or the superintendent should be a member of an ad-hoc committee.

J. Converse stated the chair did not bring this back to the Committee but rather made an announcement that he was going to disband a committee that did not exist. She stated he does not have the authority to do that on his own. She stated they are four months into the process and noted the chair scheduled them to present in front of the Committee, has been aware of their meetings and heard discussions in executive session. To say they do not exist and that their work does not matter is a slap in face.

F. O'Connell stated that some policies are based on law, some are state law and some are created to guard their own behavior. He agrees they should stick to them as consistently as possible. If they had talked about this a couple of months ago, he stated it would not have escalated to this point. He stated mistakes happen and feels they need to be identified early and then fixed. If the sub-committee needs to be appointed by the chair per policy, he said do so and move on but he would like those previously involved to stay. Most of all, he wants everyone to be treated respectfully and professionally.

Ms Schuman stated she was a member of the Naming Committee and twenty names were brought forward and there were representatives from Dunstable. They discussed what would be meaningful to middle schoolers. She stated they have an outstanding person in Groton who has withdrawn her name because of the way the politics have happened.

J. Converse would like the policy sub-committee to come back with some recommendations on how to approach policy breaking and how to reconcile those situations. She said she would like to request Dr. Jennings come back to the School Committee in two weeks with a recommendation of what she sees moving forward based on what she has heard tonight.

A. Vervaeke suggested they discuss the specific criteria they want the Naming Committee to use and the specific make up of the committee at their December 1st meeting. Dr. Jennings has brought them the process and feels it is time for the Committee to define their expectations and move forward. P. Murray recommended they keep the current Naming Committee together and add some people from Groton and Dunstable. F. O'Connell trusts the work of the committee and stated he does not need to see multiple names.

A. Vervaeke said they can ask the sub-committee to bring forward the criteria they feel they should act on. J. Converse asked if the School Committee will judge whether the Naming Committee's criteria is appropriate and then they will use it to evaluate names.

A. Vervaeke said they have to add to the committee and they can ask the School Committee to approve the criteria the Naming Committee recommends.

Members of the public interested in being part of the existing Naming Committee are asked to submit their names to the superintendent's office. The sub-committee and/or chair can bring a recommendation to the Committee for their approval.

Maintenance Report

C. Young provided an update on the \$97,500 approved for FY2005 maintenance projects and noted most items have been completed or are currently in progress.

The painting of the Union Building, the installation of a walkway at the Boutwell playground, carpet replacement at the Performing Arts Center and roof repairs at Swallow Union and the PTYC were accomplished through the use of building maintenance funds or outside sources.

P. Murray asked if \$15,000 is still needed for deferred maintenance projects.

C. Young said this amount would address some of the deleted items such as carpeting at Swallow Union and Florence Roche as well as lavatory renovations at the PTYC. They may try to get some of these things done through the existing maintenance budgets or through some additional funding.

A. Vervaeke asked if using students from trades classes at Nashoba Tech is still an option. C. Young said it is difficult to utilize student labor to a great degree but some projects do work. He noted it is a teaching environment and said it would work if the district's needs fit the Tech's abilities and schedule.

ACTION ITEMS

C. Young stated they received bids for the purchase of \$10M in BANs. This sale is a rollover of the \$10M BANs currently maturing and the term of sale is for one year.

It is expected the district will receive SBA funding of the MSN project prior to the expiration of these new BANs and in the fall of 2005, they will likely bond the middle school project and retire these outstanding BANs.

C. McKinney asked the difference between a premium and a prorata premium.

C. Young said a premium is interest income up front and is treated as a prepaid expense. The prorata interest is the amount of money it will cost when the bonds mature and will be carried in next year's budget request.

VOTE: Sale of BANS for Middle School North

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE BIDS FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES FOR OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL NORTH BUILDING PROJECT AS RECOMMENDED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TREASURER AND THE DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE, AND THAT THE BIDS BE AWARDED TO THE LOW BIDDERS AS FOLLOWS: \$5,000,000 TO FLEET NATIONAL BANK AT 1.98% NET INTEREST COST AND \$5,000,000 TO PARKER HUNTER AT 1.9803% NET INTEREST COST, AND TO APPROVE THE VOTE PROVIDED BY ROPES & GRAY, OUR BOND COUNSEL. COPY TO BE ATTACHED WITH THE MINUTES OF THIS MEETING. SECONDED BY J. CONVERSE

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

VOTE: District Goals

Dr. Jennings stated the Strategic Planning Vision Team brought forward three goals for the next three years. If approved, the action teams will begin working on action plans to implement these goals.

1. Successful student development: To support the development of the whole student.
2. Buildings/Facilities: To provide and maintain facilities which serve the needs of students and fulfill the district's stewardship responsibility.
3. Staff: To retain and support quality staff.

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT THE DISTRICT GOALS AS PRESENTED BY DR. JENNINGS. SECONDED BY J. CONVERSE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

C. Young stated the BAN documents need to be signed by the treasurer, the chair and School Committee secretary. With Ms Niemoller's resignation, the Committee does not have a secretary. A. Vervaeke appointed Ms Murray as Interim Secretary until an election can be done with a full Committee.

C. McKinney feels there was limited time to ask questions about block scheduling and requested there be more discussion at a future meeting. He would also like the program book and information on block scheduling and what courses are taken to be given to Committee members.

C. McKinney read a statement relative to yesterday's elections. He stated Massachusetts may have had one of the most paradoxical elections because voters turned out in record numbers to simultaneously vote for change and the status quo. He stated a great majority supported their incumbent state legislators. While the legislature enacted the SBA reform that begins to address funding for schools, C. McKinney believes they enacted just enough to get by in this election. He stated the legislation asked to be re-elected on the promise of reform and noted citizens have 734 days to ask them to make

good on this promise. He stated they should ask them to manage their budgets and return any surplus revenues to the taxpayers. C. McKinney hopes the re-elected state legislature watched the President's speech and agree it is time to work with the Governor, rather than against him.

A. Vervaeke announced they will be interviewing four superintendent search firms tomorrow night from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater.

ADJOURNMENT:

J. CONVERSE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:08 P.M.

SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary