

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
April 16, 2008  
(Approved May 7, 2008)

### **PRESENT:**

Ms Cindy Barrett, Chair  
Dr. Forrest Buzan, Vice-Chair  
Peter Carson  
Dr. Paul Funch  
Mr. Chuck McKinney  
Mr. Frank O'Connell

### **ABSENT:**

Ms Berta Erickson

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent  
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance  
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:**

Rafael Glod

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; K. Stone, S. Silverman, B. Dinsmore, M. Branco, J. Mitchell, L. Laverdure, J. Sjoberg, A. Wright

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 23B-3. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:00 p.m., with no plans to return to executive session, and was called to order by the chair, C. Barrett.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT**

#### **Groton Sustainability Commission**

Leo Laverdure stated there is an article on Groton's town meeting warrant recommending a permanent Sustainability Commission be formed for Groton. They feel it would be a helpful resource to the schools. Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable communities are stewards of their resources and environment, contribute to a high quality of life and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

He explained a Sustainability Commission's purpose is to focus and integrate the town's efforts to become a measurably sustainable community by, among other things, raising awareness on sustainability concepts and trends, providing materials and advice for town plans, policies and operations and proposing specific sustainability measures and actions, including energy efficiency. He reviewed the Commission's goals and measures as well as some of the challenges that will be addressed. The Commission would like to have a liaison from the school committee and will probably meet once a month.

Members advised Mr. Laverdure of the many energy saving practices that have been implemented in the district. Dr. Rubel sees lots of potential links to the curriculum and feels the science curriculum leadership would be interested in being involved as well as the GDSTEM.

R. Glod read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

**MINUTES**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 9, 2008, AS AMENDED, AND THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 2, 2008. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Approval of the executive session meeting minutes of February 6, 2008, February 27, 2008, March 5, 2008 and March 19, 2008 was postponed to the next meeting.

The May 30, 2007 minutes did not include the FY08 Operating Budget Vote.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THEY AMEND THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 30, 2007 BY ADDING THE FY08 OPERATING BUDGET VOTE: F. O'CONNELL MOVED THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2008 OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$29,186,799. THE AMENDED MINUTES WILL REFLECT THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY BERTA ERICKSON AND THE ROLL CALL VOTE WAS UNANIMOUS WITH ALL MEMBERS PRESENT. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

Dr. Genovese advised the capital vote had all ready been passed by the towns and only the operating budget was reduced.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Dr. Funch advised there were two articles in the Lowell Sun this week, one featuring Swallow Union third grade teacher Nancy Murphy as Teacher of the Week and the other featuring the middle school food drive for Loaves and Fishes.

K. Stone announced the GDEF grant celebration will take place at the MSN library on May 15<sup>th</sup> from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The new MSN mural will be unveiled.

**PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION****GDEF - Grants**

GDEF received 15 grant applications totaling \$44,582 and they were able to fund \$24,012. Two of these, totaling \$4,750, were supported by a grant for Integration of the Arts through the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation. K. Stone highlighted the funded programs and the list will be posted on the district website.

P. CARSON MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO VOTE ON ACCEPTING THE DONATION FROM GDEF. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

P. CARSON MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE DONATION OF \$24,012 FROM THE GDEF ORGANIZATION FOR FUNDING PROGRAMS DESCRIBED IN THE FALL 2008 GRANT DESCRIPTIONS, CYCLE 10.

SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

C. McKinney noted the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation has been very generous and supportive and feels it would be appropriate for the district to find a specific way to reach out to them and tell the Foundation how much they appreciate the work they have done to partner with the district. Dr. Genovese will send a letter and a representative will be asked to attend a future meeting.

**MS Differentiated Instruction**

Principal Silverman stated that classrooms across the nation consist of diverse learners. Differentiated instruction is the practice of modifying and adapting instruction, materials, student projects and assessment to meet the learning needs of students. Teachers recognize that all students are different and require varied

teaching methods. He noted that students are aware of their own diversity and that of others.

S. Silverman reviewed the many teaching strategies that take place in a differentiated classroom. He stated differentiated instruction does not happen every day such as when the class is learning new material. They are going to put a lot of effort into getting all the teachers trained over the next few years in how to differentiate effectively and efficiently to better meet all the needs of the students.

P. Carson asked how this impacts teacher prep time. S. Silverman said teachers need common planning time and since they do not have enough, many of them use the time to do interdisciplinary projects. They are looking to revamp the entire schedule in the future to give teachers more common planning time. While training on differentiated instruction has been provided over the years, Dr. Rubel said it has been voluntary training after school. The kind of training Mr. Silverman is speaking to brings it to a different level as it becomes systemic.

F. Buzan asked if colleges are teaching these methods and was told yes. He asked if students coming from differentiated instruction will be prepared to go into a college lecture hall. S. Silverman said yes, provided they have a multi-approach education where they are learning organizational skills, how to take good notes and can work and think independently. Students need to know how to apply knowledge. He noted instruction at the high school may change to a more traditional, college oriented instruction.

Dr. Funch said the exciting message is there is an opportunity to show students it is fun to learn. S. Silverman said students need to be engaged and they will learn better. F. Buzan asked how technology plays a role and S. Silverman said technology should be embedded in almost everything they do as many students will use technology as a learning tool to demonstrate mastery.

### **MS Configuration**

Principal Silverman said they are thinking about having the fifth and sixth graders in MSS and the seventh and eighth graders in MSN with minimal travel between the buildings. He has met with faculty council, the school council and the grade level teachers separately, as well as with the paraprofessionals. A parent open forum was held on Monday. They are looking at this reconfiguration based on parent, student and teacher feedback, research data, grade appropriateness and scheduling of classes.

MSN currently houses six grade 6 classrooms, five grade 7 classrooms and nine grade 8 classrooms. MSS houses ten grade 5 classrooms, four grade 6 classrooms and four grade 7 classrooms. Right now there are about 100 more students in MSN. With the current configuration, some teachers and students in grades 6 and 7 feel divided. The configuration also causes difficulty in developing a professional learning community and does not foster collaboration of the staff. A large percentage of the students must continually change buildings for Integrated Arts, SPED or additional services and this results in a loss of learning time.

B. Dinsmore reviewed the five year enrollment projections which are based on actual enrollment and should they go with the reconfiguration, she noted there would be 465 students in MSS and in 473 MSN next year. They will gain more rooms in each building.

The advantages of the new configuration were reviewed and they include grade 6 and 7 students becoming part of a unified grade level team, grade 6 and 7 teachers being able to develop more collaborative teaching opportunities and unified grade levels will enhance the development of professional learning communities. There will also be more opportunities to implement flexible scheduling, interdisciplinary teaming and advisor/advisee programs. There will also be a savings on fuel consumption with less students traveling between the buildings.

S. Silverman explained Turning Points is a model only for middle schools and Turning Points schools are model schools. It costs a lot of money to become a Turning Points school but even if they do not become one, they can reap the benefits of having Turning Points coaches come in as 90% of their professional development is during the school day while the kids are in class. A Turning Points model deals with curriculum, instruction and assessment and focuses on improving student learning and establishing caring, supportive environments.

Coaches help schools plan the effective use of common planning time, provide assistance to teachers in improving curriculum, instruction and assessment and supports staff in building and sustaining professional learning communities.

The successful results of Turning Points schools were reviewed. S. Silverman stated the 5/6 building and the 7/8 building will remain a true middle school, implementing the Turning Points model of teaching. He stated middle level education is not about configuration but is about effective programs and practices that are developmentally appropriate for young adolescents. He thanked GDEF for giving them \$5500 to allow them to bring in coaches for at least five days.

F. O'Connell would like to hear the components of the Turning Points plan Principal Silverman would like to implement and what the investment and potential return would be. F. Buzan asked when a decision about the reconfiguration will be made and was told it will be made after April vacation. He asked if there are any costs or savings associated with this change. S. Silverman said they will save on heat with the door not opening as frequently but the reconfiguration is not being done for financial reasons. The decision will be based on what is good for the students. M. Branco said they will maximize services, better their programs and have positive curriculum impacts. There are some concerns with MSN having better technology and MSS having better science labs and these areas will be looked into.

P. Carson asked how the administration will change and if they will be in one building or both. S. Silverman said they are starting to talk about this but he promised his staff he would not make a decision until he has spoken with everyone. P. Carson asked if extracurricular activities are grade specific. M. Branco said they have some age appropriate after school activities. The administration wants to firmly say it is one middle school, uniquely housed in two buildings.

Dr. Genovese attended Mr. Silverman's presentation and said he was asked who was going to ultimately make the decision. He replied that he supported the principal's efforts and felt it was Mr. Silverman's decision.

Members were presented with a copy of Turning Points 2000.

### **Policies C, D, E**

F. Buzan distributed copies of the policies with the changes that were made and reviewed the changes. He noted the subcommittee tried to make the policies consistent by adding hyphens and changing "department" to "district" where necessary. C. Barrett said Policies DBJ and EEAAA need more work outside of the subcommittee. Since Dr. Funch had several comments on the policies, he was asked to give them to Mr. Buzan so the committee can vote on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Policy** - No report

**Personnel & Negotiations** - C. McKinney reported they have not met.

**Budget & Finance** - A meeting was scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on April 25, 2008 at Tarbell.

**Report of the Director of Business and Finance** - T. Sheehan reported three Invitations for Bid, the project for the building security systems for all the schools, the replacement of the HVAC system at the PAC and the elevator replacement at Swallow Union, were published in the Central Register today and should be advertised in today's Lowell Sun. Dr. Genovese noted the source of funding for the HVAC and elevator will likely come from E & D and the cost is estimated at \$80,000 to \$110,000.

T. Sheehan reported they are trying to finalize the computer lease/purchase agreement.

**Report of the Chair** - C. Barrett reported their next workshop is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on April 30<sup>th</sup> at Tarbell. They will be discussing the results of the superintendent's evaluation. Members were given the evaluation document and they are to be returned to her by April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

With respect to the Florence Roche playground, C. Barrett reported the installer recommends the shade umbrella not be chosen and she will entertain a motion under Action Items to withdraw acceptance of the café umbrella and to accept the gift of a single post style shade umbrella.

With respect to the vote on the FY09 budget taken on March 5, 2008, Dr. Funch discovered a 2/3rds vote is required for the operating budget and they had a majority vote. They will re-vote under Action Items.

### **Report of the Superintendent Superintendent's Self-assessment**

**Goal 1: Raise the level of achievement for all students** - Dr. Genovese provided a written compilation of things happening at various levels to improve student achievement and stated it is a collective effort of the Administrative Team, teachers and support staff. He said it was a very successful year and this goal will remain a focus of the district.

**Goal 2: Prepare for EQA and prioritize findings** - The team was successful in completing the preparation, review and visitation process. The technical report will be used in the strategic planning process.

**Goal 3: Revisit and revise Strategic Plan** - Dr. Genovese believes significant progress has been made in putting together the pieces that are critical for inclusion in a strategic plan. The new administrators and principals have a year or two under their belts and developing a five year plan will be more productive. This goal is in progress and well positioned to "hit the ground running" in September.

**Goal 4: Integrate the new Administrative Council members into a successful high performing team**  
The EQA was an excellent example of the team uniting their skills and talents to accomplish a goal and get results and developing a strategic plan will be another unifying experience. Dr. Genovese will schedule time this summer to continue their team building efforts. This goal is in progress.

Dr. Genovese highlighted many of the successes this year for students and staff. He noted the EQA report validated their journey to academic excellence.

A member had requested information on the number of administrators that have retired or resigned from the district and Dr. Genovese distributed a list put together by Ms Mitchell that covers 1994-2005 and 2005-2008. J. Mitchell was not able to compile the requested information on the teaching staff but stated there was an exodus of teachers leaving in 2003-2004 when an override was needed and they could not take the chance of not being employed. The list of the positions was reviewed and it was stated they do not have a hiring problem nor do they have an overall retention problem.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

None

### **ACTION ITEMS**

The secretaries ratified the three year contract last week and C. Barrett noted it took just over a year to finalize it. J. Mitchell said the secretaries are hard working individuals and they were happy to give them a contract that is equitable and comparable.

### **VOTE: Ratification of Unit C Contract**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE RATIFY THE UNIT C CONTRACT AS OUTLINED IN THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT DISTRIBUTED TO THEM TODAY. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**VOTE: Policy C/D/E**

Postponed to May 7, 2008 meeting.

**VOTE: FY09 Budget Adoption**

Since they are a regional district, a 2/3rds vote is required and the vote taken on March 5, 2008 was a majority vote.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2009 OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$31,267,561 WITH A DEBT SERVICE AND INTEREST IN THE AMOUNT OF \$4,625,713 FOR A TOTAL BUDGET OF \$35,893,274.  
SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

Despite his concerns on what is missing in the budget, P. Carson said he will vote in favor of the motion as they need to encourage the towns to support the small override. Dr. Funch also originally voted against it as he did not feel it was adequate for the district's needs based on last year's cuts but agrees they are asking for a small override and they need people to support it. F. Buzan originally voted against it as he felt they were not prepared to go before town meeting at the time and while he still has concerns, will support the motion. He said they need to lobby their state representatives and the Governor to adequately support them and noted Dunstable taxpayers will ask when the overrides will be expected to stop.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

**VOTE: Florence Roche Playground Shade Umbrella**

C. Barrett stated this single-post style umbrella will involve cutting through the asphalt, removing potentially contaminated soil, installing the pole and resealing the surface. The café style umbrella had a platform that rested on the asphalt and the playground consultant felt the single post style was a better fit for the use of the area. The pole is permanent but the umbrella can be brought inside.

P. CARSON MOVED THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE WITHDRAW THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE GIFT OF A CAFÉ STYLE UMBRELLA MADE ON MARCH 19, 2008 AND MOVED THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE GIFT OF THE SINGLE-POST STYLE SHADE UMBRELLA FROM THE FLORENCE ROCHE PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS: THE FLORENCE ROCHE PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR 1) THE INSTALLATION OF THE UMBRELLA UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES AND GROUNDS, 2) THE PROPER TESTING AND PROPER DISPOSAL OF THE SOIL ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENT OF PROTECTION GUIDELINES, 3) THE RE-SEALING OF THE ASPHALT SURFACE AND 4) ANY OTHER RELATED EXPENSES. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

F. Buzan asked if Mr. Sheehan or Mr. Byrne have any concerns with the maintenance or installation.

T. Sheehan said no and they are pleased with how the playground committee has conducted themselves in terms of installation of the other aspects of the playground.

**In Favor:** C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, C. Barrett, P. Carson, P. Funch

**Abstention:** F. Buzan

Dr. Genovese advised he and T. Sheehan are negotiating with Dee Transportation beyond the three year contract and they may have a recommendation for the committee in May.

**ADJOURNMENT**

F. BUZAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:55 P.M. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

With attachment