

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
March 5, 2008  
(Approved March 19, 2008)

### **PRESENT:**

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

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

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

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** H. Sato, Lowell Sun; C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; R. Hyot, S. Byrne, P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; D. Twomey, P. Myerson, S. Cohen, See attached sign-in sheet

### **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 7:03 p.m., with no plans to return to executive session, and was called to order by the by the chair, C. Barrett.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

B. Erickson announced the boy scouts from Groton's Troop 3 are present this evening to learn about how the school committee operates.

T. Sheehan announced the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials has asked him to present a Quick Books workshop at their annual conference in May and to be an assistant instructor for the pivot table workshop.

J. Sheffield announced GDEF is hosting a Reach for the Stars Benefit Auction on Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Groton School. She showed one of the Amish barn stars, decorated by students at all age levels, that will be available. She announced they closed the spring grant cycle on March 1<sup>st</sup> and they received 15 applications, totaling \$44,000 in requests. They expect to announce the grants in April.

### **MINUTES**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 10, 2008.  
SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 10, 2008. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Approval of the executive session meeting minutes of February 6, 2008 and February 27, 2008 and the business meeting minutes of February 27, 2008 was postponed to the March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Troop member David Evans asked what the committee's responsibilities are and C. Barrett explained they set

policy, work on the district budget and hire the superintendent and work with him to run the school district.

A. Zimmon said he appreciates the time and effort the committee invests. He feels inadequate time was provided at their last meeting for parents to make their comments after waiting for five hours. He stated the former chair was shut down before she got to say what she wanted and he feels the committee needs to handle priority issues in a better way. A month ago, he wrote a letter to each member offering to put together a parent advisory group as the parent community wanted to help with the problem. He said they may have come up with the same solution but the process would have been better and a plan would have been done together. He stated a lot of air was taken out of the community at the last meeting and the committee passed on an opportunity.

F. Buzan advised there are two periods of questions and comments and the earlier one is rarely taken advantage of. He reminded everyone that this is a business meeting of the committee, held in public; it is not a public meeting. Dr. Funch agrees the agenda does not afford enough time for communication from the public and the committee needs to find other ways of providing a means of communication. C. Barrett advised feedback forms were available at the parent forums and all questions and comments were compiled. B. Erickson said a lot of lessons were learned and the "think tank committee" will occur in the future.

### **PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION**

#### **Overnight Trip (Baseball/Softball) - Dan Twomey**

D. Twomey said these trips are similar to other trips they have done in the past and noted the correct dates are March 28<sup>th</sup> - March 30<sup>th</sup>. They are separate trips, happening at the same time, and the games and jamborees are at different locations.

P. CARSON MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO VOTE ON THIS ACTION ITEM.  
SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

P. CARSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE TWO TRIPS ON MARCH 28, 2008 THROUGH MARCH 30, 2008 FOR THE SOFTBALL AND BASEBALL TEAMS. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

D. Twomey said the girls' basketball team is playing in the district final for central Mass at WPI on Saturday at 3:30 p.m.

#### **STEM - Gary Hoglund**

G. Hoglund explained STEM is the acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math and stated high school science coordinator Ellen Barkoff and K-8 science coordinator Dorothy Dwyer are the genesis behind this non-profit organization. It was started by educators and parents in June 2007 and is an all volunteer collaborative effort of parents, teachers and students. Their goal is to raise awareness and support STEM education in grades K-12 and to foster an industry-school-community connection.

They are governed by a Board of Directors and by-laws, are recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and their monetary support addresses the immediate needs with a rapid turnaround. He reviewed examples of their activities which include promoting area science activities and creating a community talent database. A lecture series is planned. They are close to finalizing funding for a fabrication lab at the high school. Being mindful of saturating the community with fundraising, G. Hoglund said their approach will be to appeal to the science, technology and engineering industry and to target STEM-specific community individuals, projects and grants.

Since the district does not have a policy on advertising, P. Carson asked how they will keep a business from getting recognition. G. Hoglund said they are not a curriculum influencing organization and this will be made clear to industry. He suggested they go out and find some test cases and bring them back to the committee. C. McKinney thanked him for providing that direction. Dr. Genovese does not see a problem having a small

banner of recognition that is removed when a sponsored event is over. B. Erickson suggested the company be responsible for any advertising and then the students would not be subjected to it everyday.

C. Barrett has advised them to propose a MOU and has shared applicable policies they would need to follow. A draft will be provided for their April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. GDSTEM will provide funds and/or materials to the STEM lab and a lot of it will not raise the advertising issue.

F. O'Connell asked Mr. Hoglund to bring any ideas to the committee that protect and improve the quality of education and stated this is another wonderful partnership. He asked how they will get engaged on a day to day basis and G. Hoglund said there would not be a lot of interaction with the day to day operation of the school. The Board of Directors would approve expenditures and the supplies would be given to the teachers.

P. Carson asked if there would be a procedure to review a lecture so an industry that may have a vested interest would portray a scientifically valid opinion. Dr. Rubel said she and the coordinators will be the gate keepers and they will work in concert with one another.

Dr. Funch said it is good to have partnerships with businesses and the businesses should be doing it for the kids and not the advertising. He asked how they will protect their assets from being used for operating budget needs and G. Hoglund said they have not put in their by-laws that they will not fund any budget items because they might be able to broker a deal for something.

#### **FY09 Budget- Operating Assessments FY08 and FY09**

An updated Operating Assessments document, version 3, was distributed. T. Sheehan reviewed the changes that have occurred since the \$31,755,561 operating budget was first presented in February. These include eliminating two middle school teachers, a .7 elementary specialist and a .5 kindergarten teacher. With the notification of two more teacher retirements, there will be about \$40,000 in savings in hiring their replacements and taking Prescott offline saves another \$320,000 for a total reduction of \$488,000. The proposed operating budget is now \$31,267,561.

The available funds and required funds were reviewed and the projected shortfall is \$136,989. It was noted the PTYC will be increasing their rent to cover the cost of the bonds for their new roof. Tonight's budget number shows a net reduction of 1.2 positions and they are still looking for the four additional SPED teachers.

When they began the budget process, the estimate of \$550,000 from both towns - \$443,000 from Groton and \$107,000 from Dunstable, was used. This number is not balanced as the ratio of the contributions does not agree with the ratio of the students enrolled in the district. If Dunstable were to match Groton, Dunstable would have to increase their contribution by \$20,288 and if Groton were to match Dunstable's number, Groton would be able to take \$70,609 off the table and the district would receive less than \$480,000. In the event of no override, this would trigger an additional \$70,000 in reductions. He reviewed how the \$550,000 could be balanced with both towns. Adjustments to the debt service were reviewed and the revised number is \$4,625,713.

The proposed budget is a 3.47% increase and Groton's assessment would go up 4.13% and Dunstable's would go up 3.52%. A no override budget would reflect a 3.01% increase over the FY08's budget. With the debt service, the recommendation is a total budget of \$35,893,274.

C. McKinney asked if the tax impact implication has been done as this is a very important piece of information and was told the town officials have not seen these numbers.

P. Carson is concerned the budget is not addressing all the needs and how these issues will be addressed over time. Dr. Genovese said they have a responsibility to meet the students' needs and they also have an obligation to put the budget within reach of the towns. They have tried to minimize reductions.

Dr. Funch is not clear about what is not included in the budget and the document highlighting what could be impacted with a failed override was reviewed. The Administrative Team identified \$212,000 in cuts, which would be used to identify the \$136,989 in cuts if the override failed. Because the planned contributions from the towns were not balanced, T. Sheehan clarified they came up with a list of cuts in excess of the potential shortfall. The positions on the list are in the budget and not everything on the list will be lost with a failed override. It was noted Dunstable's share of the override is about 22% (\$30,600).

Middle school Principal Silverman said they looked at class sizes across the board and the two potential cuts, in PE and Health and art, would have the least impact. Swallow Union Principal Myerson said the PPE line item, used for supplies and professional development, takes a hit every year but they would rather do this than lose a teacher but it does effect the students. Dr. Rubel clarified the budget maintains the absolute necessities in terms of textbooks, workbooks and mandated professional development as well as professional development they have committed to in terms of developing a new program. High school Principal Cohen said they have put off hiring an inclusion specialist to keep a foreign language teacher, they are not replacing technology equipment as they should and a guidance counselor is desperately needed but she cannot afford to cut another academic teacher. She noted the Resource Officer position is still missing and eliminating the stipends will impact the culture at the school.

C. Barrett asked when they will have confirmation on the balancing of the two towns. Dr. Genovese said he is trying to meet with Dunstable's Board of Selectmen and the information has been provided to both towns in the joint meeting. They have not received any feedback from Groton. She asked for Dr. Genovese's recommendation if the towns' numbers balance differently and he said they would probably have to make some reductions if they balance negatively.

Dr. Funch asked if Latin is the only potential cut without an override and Principal Cohen said they are now looking at one of the SPED positions. He asked if the .7 elementary specialist is a foreign language teacher and Dr. Rubel said when they have fewer sections of classes, you have the corresponding fewer sections needed for specialists for PE, art and music. C. Barrett noted the cuts listed in the document for the public hearing are not being suggested and they have the new potential cuts in tonight's document if the override fails. T. Sheehan clarified the additional high school cuts, as well as those at the middle school, are not currently under consideration because Prescott is going offline and the Administrative Team made the additional cuts.

Dr. Funch said last year they put together a plan to raise the bar but they did not get the override and now they are making additional cuts to academic programs and he feels they are lowering the bar. He suggested they take the deferred maintenance out of the budget and pay for anything that comes up from E & D. He cannot support a budget that loses positions and they should not be subjected to an override. The budget does not maintain the quality he expects to see in the district.

Dr. Genovese said for the most part, the budget is a level services budget and it continues to raise the bar and meets many of the students' needs. Whatever number they adopt, he wants the members to support it. He noted they are in the last year of the five year strategic plan.

F. Buzan said this is the most important vote they make and is frustrated he does not have a vision of the district's priorities and while he will support the budget, he does not know how he will sell it.

F. O'Connell reminded members that a few years ago the committee decided to make the budget reductions they felt were right and it was a disaster. They need to rely on the Administrative Team to find the right balance. While he agrees it may not be the budget to move the district forward, he pointed out they have not been successful with an override and they need to put something in front of the voters they will support.

P. Carson is concerned the override number is inadequate. C. McKinney said they are all expressing the same concerns but they need to know their role and he is confident the Administrative Team will do right by the

students with this budget. C. Barrett said she will support what Dr. Genovese and the Team recommends and while they are not adding anything, they are not losing anything as it is proposed. They know the state wants to give them less money and the towns are not ready to fill the void. B. Erickson said she will support the budget and they can tell the public that the budget is falling short.

### **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Policy** - F. Buzan reported they will be meeting next Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in the Fishbowl.

**Personnel & Negotiations** - C. McKinney reported no meeting is scheduled.

**Budget & Finance** - Dr. Funch reported they will be meeting on March 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Report of the Director of Business & Finance** - T. Sheehan reported they are working on the second quarter financial report. He is preparing Invitations to Bid for the elevator replacement at Swallow Union and replacing the air conditioning/heating unit at the PAC. They would like to sign contracts between May 15<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> and funding will be from E & D or a budget surplus.

**Report of the Chair** - C. Barrett asked Budget and Finance to consider working on the communications piece about what is a good public education and the comparative analysis and she offered in help in preparing this. She also asked them to look at Mr. Carson's request about the committee voting on line item transfers.

C. Barrett asked members to let her know when they are available to have some workshops to work on their annual goals.

### **Report of the Superintendent -**

**EQA** - Dr. Genovese distributed copies of the Executive Summary that provides an overview of the wonderful things the district is doing and advised EMAC will vote on it on Friday.

### **Initial Planning re: Prescott**

A letter regarding moving students, which will go to parents on Friday, was distributed. The timeline was reviewed and a presentation on the shared zone will be held on March 13<sup>th</sup>. C. Barrett has a list of names of those who want to be on the committee. It was noted they need a balanced perspective with parents in transition, those not in transition and those who have been through a transition process. A representative from the school committee would be welcome.

**Facilities Task Force** - P. Carson reported they are meeting tomorrow to prepare their recommendation for the April 2<sup>nd</sup> school committee meeting.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

F. O'Connell said they never thanked the Administrative Team and everyone who contributed to putting together the information that contributed to the excellent results of the EQA and said "thank you".

Dr. Rubel reminded members the ELA coordinators will be presenting Pre-K-12 literacy at their next meeting and Dr. Funch is the liaison. Gary Babin will be presenting the district technology update and F. Buzan is the liaison. Members were asked to forward any questions they may have by March 7th.

C. Barrett asked members to decide if they will be attending the MASC Day on the Hill.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **VOTE: FY09 Budget Adoption**

F. BUZAN 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.

SO VOTED BY ROLL CALL

**In Favor:** C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, C. Barrett, B. Erickson

**Opposed:** F. Buzan, P. Carson, P. Funch

Dr. Funch distributed a copy of a motion he wanted to make regarding the football program and C. Barrett advised the group's Memorandum of Understanding would be ready for their March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. The motion was not put on the agenda and a vote to place it on the agenda would need to be taken. Dr. Genovese advised the MOU was received late today and he wants legal counsel to review it. He believes the committee voting on the agreement is their stamp to run the program and Dr. Funch agreed his motion would be moot.

**ADJOURNMENT**

P. CARSON MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:10 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

With attachment