

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
May 7, 2008
(Approved May 21, 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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

Brianna Riposa

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark;
See attached sign-in sheet

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by the chair, C. Barrett.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT

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

Dr. Funch announced he attended the MASC's A Day on the Hill and distributed a copy of a newspaper article that summarizes Governor Patrick's and Senator Panagiotakos's comments. He displayed the graphic used to track regional school districts' issues.

F. Buzan also attended a Day on the Hill and said the message was "loud and clear" they are still moving toward their plan to work wealth into their formula for state aid and for Groton-Dunstable, that means several more years of the towns having to make up the difference for the decreasing state percentages. He noted the lunch put on by the technical high schools cooking programs was fabulous. He and Dr. Funch agree the district needs to do year-round lobbying of the legislators.

Dr. Genovese announced Polly McGrath has fulfilled the requirements to be a Certified Governmental Accountant.

Dr. Genovese announced Principal Silverman has decided to do the reconfiguration at the middle school and have 5th and 6th grades in MSS and 7th and 8th grades in MSN.

On behalf of the committee, Dr. Genovese presented a framed certificate to Forest Buzan and Cindy Barrett and recognized them for their service to the committee and their commitment to quality education.

MINUTES

P. FUNCH MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 5, 2008.

SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

P. FUNCH MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 2008.
SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

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

Abstention: F. Buzan

P. FUNCH MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 16, 2008.
SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

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

Abstention: F. Buzan, B. Erickson

P. FUNCH MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 16, 2008 AS AMENDED.
SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

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

Abstention: B. Erickson

P. FUNCH MOVED TO APPROVE THE WORKSHOP MINUTES OF APRIL 30, 2008.
SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

(The April 9th workshop minutes were approved on April 16th. Approval of the February 6th and February 27th executive session minutes was postponed)

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

B. Erickson asked if the echo she is hearing in the room is effecting the broadcast and was advised it is not.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

MOU GDSTEM - C. Barrett advised the committee discussed the draft MOU on April 2nd and reviewed the changes, noting number 4 is a substantial change from the draft. The intent of GDSTEM is to enhance the support of, and participation in, all science, technology, engineering and math educational activities.

ECC SIP - Russell Hoyt

R. Hoyt explained this was the first year Boutwell had a School Council in place. He reviewed their five goals for 2007-2008:

1. Look at their schedule and class offerings for the 2008-2009 school year
2. Create a Vision Statement for the Boutwell Early Childhood Center
3. Identify a Co-chair for the Council
4. Review and make recommendations for the 2008-2009 ECC budget
5. Review and suggest a plan for implementing Social Skills curriculum

R. Hoyt reviewed progress on the goals and noted they completed their first four goals. Goal #5 needs to be on-going.

Policies C, D, E, F

Discussion held until Action Item

Superintendent's Summative Evaluation

C. Barrett explained the committee and Dr. Genovese agreed on the evaluation instrument in October 2007 which includes three parts: an evaluation timeline, the superintendent's annual goals and the six principal accountability areas. The purpose of the annual evaluation is to formally let Dr. Genovese know how the committee thinks he is doing on his goals and the six principal accountability areas and the results help the superintendent and committee refine or develop new goals and focus areas for next year. Individual member's comments were reviewed and statements of those comments were written for each goal as well as for each principal accountability area. She explained the nine point numerical scale that was used.

The comments for each goal and principal accountability area were read and C. Barrett stated Dr. Genovese's average scores are solidly in the satisfactory range. Educational leadership had the lowest average score and all members agreed that Dr. Genovese needs to demonstrate his educational leadership, express his educational vision for the district and lead the district in developing and instituting a Strategic Plan.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - F. Buzan reported a meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, May 13th.

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

Budget & Finance - Dr. Funch reported they met before tonight's school committee meeting. They received the third quarterly financial report and things are looking good, particularly with the savings in utilities. A balanced budget is projected for the end of the year.

Report of Director of Business & Finance

Capital Projects - Tim Sheehan reported they received 6 bids, ranging from \$69,000 to \$89,000, for the replacement of the HVAC system at the PAC. Six bids, ranging from \$17,500 to \$39,000, were received for the security systems for the schools. The two low bids will be reviewed for compliance with the specifications and vendor references will be checked. It is expected the process will be completed in about a week.

The opening of the bid for the elevator replacement at Swallow Union has been delayed until May 21st as the district needs permission from the Architectural Access Board to replace the elevator. The AAB can allow the district to replace it by right under the 1994 waiver or grant a new waiver for the width of the door and the cab. The waiver is necessary due to the width of the space available for the shaft and the elevator is large enough for a wheelchair and one accompanying adult. The existing elevator is hydraulic and the new one will be mechanical. The AAB is meeting on Monday.

End of Year Closing - A plan is being put together to close out FY08 and all Purchase Orders are to be in by June 1st.

Lunch Prices - Members had received a copy of a memo from Janice Buxton recommending an increase in lunch prices.

Athletic Fees - Mr. Twomey is recommending user fees remain at \$250 with the exception of hockey and skiing. These would increase to \$350 as these sports require renting the facilities. The athletic budget is level funded from FY08 to FY09 and virtually covers salaries. The Budget and Finance Committee was not comfortable making a recommendation to the school committee so the process will be studied further and brought back to the school committee at a later date.

Report of the Chair

Review of SC Annual Goals - The committee had a workshop on April 9th to review their three annual goals but C. Barrett said they have not had wonderful progress on them. The first part of goal one was met with the Policy sub-committee's review of policy but they were not able to work on new policies. She noted they do not have a communication plan nor did they define what they consider to be the value of a public education. She recommends the committee have regularly scheduled workshops to work on their goals. F. Buzan feels the school committee needs to find a way to not be so involved with the day to day operations of the district. He said future committees need to focus on networking at the state level and developing new policies.

Override Ballot Question/Press Release for Land Debt Exclusion - Per Ms Barrett's request, C. McKinney, in collaboration with Dr. Funch, created a draft letter/press release for the newspapers regarding the override and debt exclusion ballot questions. Following discussion, members authorized Mr. McKinney to finalize and submit a letter to the papers on behalf of the committee.

Think Tank Charge - A draft of a charge for the cost saving Think Tank Committee was distributed and reviewed. The governing policy would be BDF. B. Erickson said her idea was to "think outside the box" for creative and innovative ways for the district to save money. T. Sheehan feels the charge would work well if it is patterned after the Facilities Task Force III.

P. Carson thanked Ms Barrett for being the chair and noted her attention to detail is amazing.

Report of the Superintendent -

Extension of Transportation Contract - Dr. Genovese recommends they extend the two year option with Dee Transportation as it is in the best interest of the district. He reviewed the negotiated cost savings. B. Erickson asked if the decrease in enrollment was a factor in the savings and was told no. She thought it would be nice to have a presentation on how transportation works as people have questions about the empty buses going by and why buses are being parked out of town, thereby losing about \$30,000 in excise taxes. She noted a transportation committee could serve a purpose. Dr. Genovese advised they cannot charge a fee for transportation and noted they try to provide cluster stops whenever possible but decisions are made with safety in mind. They are not changing the language of the contract.

With respect to there being no half day kindergarten five days a week, thus minimizing transportation costs, P. Carson asked if there would be any discussion at the school committee level. He was advised this decision was based on programs desired by the parents.

F. Buzan asked if they pay fuel charges outside of the reviewed costs and Dr. Genovese advised the existing contract has a fuel escalation clause but it has not been charged to date. T. Sheehan said they cannot renegotiate the terms of this contract. The prices in the original contract were based on 22 buses and another was added in year two. The savings for 23 buses is close to \$60,000 and with the possibility of reducing the number back to 22, they will save another \$50,000. He noted there will also be significant savings to the athletic revolving fund that pays for team transportation and to the student activity funds that pay for field trips.

Dr. Funch stated they would have paid roughly 6% more next year and roughly 7% more the following year if they did not extend the contract. Dr. Genovese and T. Sheehan are to be commended for negotiating this deal. T. Sheehan noted more students ride the high school bus when the weather is bad.

Update on SPED Transportation Services - They are researching to see if it would be more cost effective to outsource the SPED transportation and by doing so, they would not have to attend to all the details of managing the service. This will be brought to Budget and Finance for a recommendation.

Prescott Waiver - The DOE has granted a waiver to Prescott and their last full day of school will be June 20th.

Transition Activities - Members had received a copy of planned transition activities for the elementary students that will insure a smooth transition for students and staff. The information is available on the website.

School Choice - Dr. Genovese is recommending the committee declare two seats each for grades five, six and eight and eleven seats for grade nine (17 total). F. Buzan asked how the elementary school choice students will fit into the movement between schools. Dr. Genovese said the guiding principals for the composition of creating a class are determined by the staff and the principals and they look at a variety of factors such as academic needs. Historically the flexibility has been at Florence Roche. C. Barrett questioned having 6th grade space available since they have the highest range of class sizes. Dr. Genovese said he is accepting the principal's recommendation. P. Carson questioned whether adding seats at the high school is a good idea with the lack of sufficient guidance counselors. It was noted they receive \$5000 per student and they receive additional money to compensate for any SPED services.

Other - Dr. Genovese reported Melanson & Heath will give their FY07 audit report at the June 18th meeting.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

P. Carson said a lot of positives came from Dr. Genovese's evaluation however, he asked a lot of people for their input and feels badly that their comments were not reflected. He feels there needs to be better improvement with community relationships and communications with the school committee. He said he heard about the middle school decision through a letter to the parents. C. Barrett said the evaluation was suppose to be based on a committee member's experience and next year's evaluation instrument needs to make it clear how they want people to get their information. She read a paragraph from the evaluation instruction sheet. Dr. Genovese reminded members it was very clear that Principal Silverman was going to make the decision about the middle school reconfiguration.

With respect to school choice, M. Mulligan asked why this is being considered with the current budget constraints since the cost per student is significantly higher than the \$5000 the district receives.

Dr. Genovese said it is an offset as they have about the same number of students coming into the district as they have leaving it. The district currently has about 42 Charter or school choice students going out.

M. Mulligan applauds Mr. Carson for asking community members for their input and asked if members spoke with the staff. C. Barrett advised the evaluation was suppose to be based on personal experience and not all members followed the same process.

With respect to the middle school transition, M. Mulligan said he was led to believe there would be district-wide continuity with respect to activities being available to students as a whole. The format of the questions and answers on the website seem to indicate Florence Roche activities will remain Florence Roche activities and Swallow Union activities will remain Swallow Union activities. He asked if there will be more parity between the two schools since Florence Roche students moving to Swallow Union will no longer have access to those activities such as the school play and after school ski program. Dr. Genovese said the principals will work with their staff and the parents to see what activities are appropriate in the coming year.

J. Keydel asked if any consideration was given to having a grandfathering clause for future fourth graders to remain at Florence Roche so they do not have to move back to Florence Roche when they become fifth graders, thus having two moves in two years. Dr. Genovese said there was a lot of discussion about this and in the end, there are no exceptions to the attendance area unless it is a programmatic decision based on the need of a student. J. Keydel said some parents feel the movement of children was a black box decision and presented as a fait accompli. He said he was asked to speak to the committee based on his gender as some people felt they were being viewed as "upset moms" and that a different gender might get a different response. M. Maguire said his daughter is transitioning to Swallow Union from Florence Roche and a number of parents have concerns. He stated students lose their support structure from faculty and fellow students and since they are unknown at the new school, are taught in a fairly generic manner. He said parents are asking for an additional fourth grade unit to be added to Florence Roche rather than Swallow Union for the 2008/2009 school year and they have been told there is probably an available classroom space. He asked the committee to think about it and bring it up in a motion at a future committee meeting. C. Barrett asked if he was representing the group that sent an email today and he said yes. She advised Dr. Genovese discussed the proposal with the elementary principals and they have made it clear they cannot support this for a number of reasons. The proposal would leave the classroom composition to chance and would not have the thoughtful process behind it. Space is not available at Florence Roche and no exceptions have been made to the new attendance area. M. Maguire asked they re-investigate the classroom space and said their exception request is based on what they find would be deleterious to their children. B. Erickson said it is important for parents to approach the transition in a positive way and the kids will be happier for it.

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

F. Buzan distributed suggested modifications from C. Barrett and Dr. Funch. He proposed they entertain a motion to accept the original changes of the Policy sub-committee presented at the last meeting. An amendment could be made to accept the other modifications which are mostly grammatical changes.

C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT ALL THE

POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE CHANGES REFLECTED IN A LIST OF POLICY SECTIONS C/D/E/F PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ON MARCH 19, 2008. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

C. BARRETT MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION BY ADDING "AND ACCEPT THE CHANGES SUGGESTED IN HER MEMO". SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

P. FUNCH MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION BY ADDING "AND ACCEPT HIS CHANGES TO THE POLICIES LISTED ON HIS SHEET, EXCEPT FOR POLICIES DJ, EEAA AND EBCF".

SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

The main motion now reads:

C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT ALL THE POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE CHANGES REFLECTED IN LIST C/D/E/F PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ON MARCH 19, 2008 AND ACCEPT THE CHANGES SUGGESTED IN HER MEMO AND ACCEPT DR. FUNCH'S CHANGES TO THE POLICIES LISTED ON HIS SHEET, EXCEPT FOR POLICIES DJ, EEAA AND EBCF. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

F. Buzan advised he will update the policies with the revision date of today. C. Barrett advised many of these policies were first approved in 1999 and they are suppose to be reviewed every three years.

VOTE: FY09 User Fees

Since four members have children who will be participating in sports next year, the Rule of Necessity was declared by the chair.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ESTABLISH THE HIGH SCHOOL USER FEES FOR THE 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR AT \$250 PER STUDENT, PER SPORT AND AT \$150 PER STUDENT, PER SPORT AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

P. Carson asked how they will make up the money since it was decided not to increase the fees for hockey and skiing. Dr. Genovese said Budget and Finance suggested they have an overall review of the athletic structure as part of the budget planning process next year and the decision was made to keep the fees the same.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

(Following discussion, it was decided a roll call vote was not needed)

VOTE: FY09 School Choice

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION FOR SCHOOL CHOICE TO MAKE THE SEATS AVAILABLE AS DETAILED IN THE MEMO. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

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

Opposed: F. Buzan

VOTE: Checks from Shaw's Receipt Program - MS, and Target

T. Sheehan advised in addition to the \$522.13 from Shaw's receipt program for the middle school, they have

previously received \$952.24 from Target for Florence Roche and \$324.99 for the middle school from Target and \$141.55 from Shaw's for the middle school. This money is deposited into special gift accounts for the schools and the principals may spend the funds through the purchase order warrant process.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING MONETARY DONATIONS: \$952.24 FROM TARGET TO THE FLORENCE ROCHE GIFT ACCOUNT, \$324.99 FROM TARGET TO THE MIDDLE SCHOOL GIFT ACCOUNT AND \$663.68 FROM SHAW'S TO THE MIDDLE SCHOOL GIFT ACCOUNT. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

B. Erickson asked if any advertising is associated with these gifts and was told no. C. McKinney asked if they are tracking the donations from Donelan's and was advised these come in as points and are exchanged for "things". C. Barrett suggested these gifts be summarized and voted on an annual basis.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

VOTE: MOU GDSTEM

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATH FOUNDATION INC. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Lunch Prices

The Rule of Necessity was declared by the chair.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL LUNCH PRICES FOR THE FY09 SCHOOL YEAR AS ARTICULATED IN THE MEMO FROM JANICE BUXTON, DIRECTOR OF FOOD SERVICES, DISTRIBUTED TONIGHT: HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER'S LUNCH - \$3.50, STUDENT LUNCH - \$2.75, TEACHER MILK - \$.65, STUDENT MILK - \$.60, MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER'S LUNCH - \$3.50, STUDENT LUNCH - \$2.75, TEACHER MILK - \$.55, STUDENT MILK - \$.50, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER'S LUNCH - \$3.50, STUDENT LUNCH - \$2.50, TEACHER MILK - \$.55, STUDENT MILK - \$.50. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

Ms Buxton's memo demonstrates prices are going up and Dr. Genovese supports the price adjustment. Budget and Finance voted unanimously to support this increase. B. Erickson noted Ms Buxton has served the district well for many years and deserves a thank you.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

VOTE: To Exercise Two Year Option - Dee Transportation

P. FUNCH MOVED TO EXERCISE THE TWO YEAR OPTION WITH DEE BUS COMPANY FOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES. SECONDED BY P. CARSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

ADJOURNMENT

F. BUZAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:40 P.M. SECONDED BY C. BARRETT
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

GDRSC 05/07/2008
Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

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With attachments