

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library

Business Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2005 Approved April 27, 2005

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett
Ms Judy Converse
Ms Karen Lofgren
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair
Ms Patricia Murray, 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

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: M. Gunderson, Lowell Sun; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald;
P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; J. Endicott, J. Dillon, P. Myerson, L. Zimmaro,
B. Erickson, K. Icenogle, J. Mitchell, B. Morgan-White, F. Buzan, G. Baker

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by the chair, A. Vervaeke.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Jennings announced the Groton 350th Anniversary Committee, and Mr. Lapres of the Basketball Association, sent letters thanking the maintenance and custodial staff for keeping the parking lots open during the blizzard of March 12th.

Dr. Jennings announced Tom and Anna Marie Murray welcomed their new baby and Darlene Wilkins welcomed her new daughter last week.

Dr. Jennings announced the Florence Roche play, Wind in the Willows, will be performed at the Performing Arts Center on April 8th, 9th and 10th.

Dr. Jennings announced middle school students Dayna Degen, Wajiha Chaudhry and Molly Kalter will be going to Clark University on Saturday to compete in the state History Week competition.

Dr. Jennings announced CJ Maloney will be resigning her position as Assistant Principal at the high school to take a position at the American School of Taipei-Taiwan next year.

Dr. Rubel announced the school and district report cards, required by NCLB, will be published on the web tomorrow and will be coming out via each school's newsletter. They will also be available in the school and town libraries.

P. Murray asked if they will receive MCAS results before the end of the year. Dr. Rubel said they will only get third grade reading results by the end of the year. The rest of the results are usually received at the end of September or early October. She stated the general MCAS testing schedule is posted on the website.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget and Finance - P. Murray reported they met last night to discuss the \$651,652 budget gap that still exists despite receiving new assessments from the towns last week. They did not come to any consensus

and she reminded everyone they have all ready recommended \$500,000 in cuts and using E&D to fund \$500,000. A. Vervaeke stated the School Committee will meet at 8:00 p.m. on April 13th to discuss the budget.

Personnel and Negotiations - C. McKinney reported they have not met but Unit A negotiations had their first meeting and the next two meetings have been established.

Policy - J. Converse reported they are meeting at 1:00 p.m. next Wednesday at Tarbell.

Communications - C. McKinney reported they are meeting at 9:30 a.m. on April 13th at Tarbell.

Naming - J. Converse reported they met last week and forms are available on the website, in the libraries and at the town halls. Forms are to be submitted to the Central Office by May 1st. They will meet at Tarbell on May 3rd. Newspapers and school newsletters will also have information.

MINUTES

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS: SEPTEMBER 22, 2004, MARCH 2, 2005, MARCH 16, 2005, THE WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 23, 2005 AND THE EMERGENCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 9, 2005. INCLUDED ARE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES OF MARCH 2, 2005, JANUARY 5, 2005 AND SEPTEMBER 8, 2004. SECONDED BY P. MURRAY

C. McKinney stated they have discussed combining different items into a single vote which gives them a bit of efficiency. This is known as a consent agenda. J. Converse stated a member will have to abstain from approving the minutes if he/she missed one of the meetings. With respect to the March 9th minutes, P. Murray will reflect how members voted.

In Favor: P. Murray, A. Vervaeke, C. McKinney, K. Lofgren

Abstention: J. Converse, F. O'Connell, C. Barrett

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

A. Vervaeke said they will not be accepting questions or comments regarding any of the candidates until after the Committee completes their discussion. If the Committee ends up voting on a candidate tonight, J. Converse does not feel it makes sense to ask for comments afterwards. She feels this is the only opportunity for people to make comments. A. Vervaeke stated public comment forms were available at all the forums and all but one of the interviews and believes it would have been preferable for comments to come in on the form. J. Converse agreed it is preferable but not exclusionary since this is their time to hear from the public.

K. Icenogle asked if members received Mr. Buzan's comments this afternoon and they had received them. She stated she agrees with his comments with respect to the qualifications of Dr. Genovese.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Superintendent Candidate Discussion

P. Murray read the additional public comments they received and A. Vervaeke read Mr. Buzan's e-mailed comments.

A. Vervaeke stated NESDEC Consultant Gary Baker will facilitate tonight's discussion.

Mr. Baker reviewed the steps members may consider following:

1. Member statements
2. Ten point allocation process
3. Discussion - Next Steps
4. Nomination Process and Vote

Member Statements

J. Converse thanked everyone involved in the process from the beginning and stated it is an honor for the School Committee members, as well as a tremendous responsibility, to find the person that will lead their district into the future. She thanked the administration, focus groups and Screening Committee members. She stated the three candidates have tremendous abilities and strengths and is confident each of them could ably lead the district. She feels Dr. Richard Hoffman rises above the other two with his ability to move into the district and would be a great fit. This comes from his track record as well as the way he interacted with so many people.

C. McKinney agrees with Ms Converse's statements regarding the process. He stated they now have to turn on the microscope where minute differences start to seem like huge differences. After netting out the strengths, weaknesses and leadership profile, he feels Dr. Alan Genovese is the right candidate. He feels Dr. Genovese has a strong aptitude for communication, for listening skills and engaging all the different groups in the process. He stated Dr. Genovese has budget experience and is a certified business manager and is the only candidate that has served as a school committee member and as a selectman. He sees that Dr. Genovese does not spend excess energy talking about things he cannot control but spends a lot of time expanding his circle of influence.

C. McKinney feels Dr. Genovese can get the communities to move ahead with the district as they deal with fiscal issues. If there is any perceived weakness, it might have been with Dr. Genovese's specific education vision. C. McKinney feels this is not an issue since they have such a great staff.

K. Lofgren thanked the administration, and specifically Barbara Magnuson, for their help. She stated the Screening Committee brought them three very qualified candidates. If she could take what she sees as the passionate, wonderful educator in Dr. Hoffman, the business mind and community builder in Dr. Genovese and Ms Tacconi-Moore's sense of curriculum, teaching and professional development, they would have a perfect candidate. Since there is no such thing as perfection, she stated they have to make a choice. She looked at this from every angle and supports Dr. Genovese as being the best fit because of his ability to bring nine towns together, his ability to communicate with selectmen and his business sense in moving forward.

P. Murray does not view the candidates as having a weakness but as having a place they can grow into and noted growth is a good thing. She stated they have three strong candidates and would be thrilled to sit across the table from any one of them. She was uncomfortable at the beginning of the process with not knowing anything about the candidates and formulated opinions after reading their resumes. She stated she enjoyed interviewing Dr. Genovese and was equally impressed with Dr. Hoffman, seeing him as a good listener and a team player. She and Ms Converse visited Ms Tacconi-Moore's district and stated she was overly impressed with the information they received and the qualities she would bring to the district. P. Murray stated she sees one of the district's greatest issues is funding the budget and their relationship with the communities and Boards of Selectmen is very important in that. Dr. Genovese spoke miles to that but she is not sure they want a superintendent that wants to be part of all the pieces. She is also concerned with how Dr. Hoffman would deal with the towns and build a strong relationship. With respect to Ms Tacconi-Moore, she sees a problem with her not having the name "superintendent" next to her name but stated she has incredible people skills and feels she can and will reach out to the communities. Ms Tacconi-Moore also has an educational vision and can take the district where they want to go.

P. Murray said she sees Ms Tacconi-Moore as being a strong person at the helm, who can create enthusiasm and "rally the troops". While Ms Tacconi-Moore has not had great experience with the budget outside of the curriculum, P. Murray does not think it would prove to be a stretch for her. She trusts Ms Tacconi-Moore would be a great superintendent for Groton Dunstable.

C. Barrett stated they spoke a lot last night about the successful candidate profile and stated all three have very common traits. Those items include: effectiveness as a communicator, evidence of willingness to listen, evidence of willingness to learn from others, committed to achievement and advancement in the health and safety of all the students, a friendly and engaging personality, an experienced teacher and administrator, a firm integrity and high professional standards for self and others in the school system, able

to inspire the staff and able to make decisions with student needs as the top priority and bases decisions on valid data from sound research.

C. Barrett stated Ms Tacconi-Moore has a great feeling for the curriculum and could bring some ideas to join with the current staff. She has not been a superintendent yet and while she would make a great one, C. Barrett does not think Groton and Dunstable would have the patience to wait for her to get there.

Regarding Dr. Genovese, C. Barrett sees his best characteristics as being visible in the communities and his work on the budgets. The characteristics she feels are most important are the ones she believes Dr. Hoffman has, those being educational vision and the knowledge and concern for special education. She recommends him for the superintendent's position. She noted he also has budget experience.

F. O'Connell stated he did not find a lot of weaknesses. He stated Ms Tacconi-Moore can across as very genuine, focused and extremely knowledgeable. She is not necessarily experienced in budget and community relations to the extent he believes they need.

Dr. Hoffman provided some very insightful answers during his interview and seemed to connect with the Committee. While he does not have regional experience, F. O'Connell said he does not see this as a substantial hurdle based on his other skills. Dr. Genovese referred to himself as a life long learner and F. O'Connell believes he has lived up to this, having been a teacher through superintendent, a school committee member, a selectman, is a certified business manager and is on the executive board of the Mass Association of Superintendents. He came very prepared to his interview and knew the budget and is knowledgeable about the current issues facing school district funding and is currently in a position of being able to do something about it.

F. O'Connell stated Dr. Jennings has referenced Good to Great and a great leader surrounds herself with a great team. She has done that and he feels Dr. Genovese could complement that team with his outward facing presence.

A. Vervaeke stated the last ten and a half months have been challenging. He said it has been an amazing honor to be the chairman of the School Committee and to be at the forefront of this process. He appreciates the members hard work and patience that helped make the process go smoother. He stated he wants to be inspired and motivated by any leader and has said for the last five and half years that they need to engage the communities. He stated the schools are the number one budget item in the towns yet it is like pulling teeth to get them to come to the table for a discussion. His passion is to have a candidate who can engage the communities and willingly bring them in to be proactive.

A. Vervaeke feels there is a tremendous opportunity for bridge building and this is important to him. With at least one more school to build, he stated they need a cheerleader for their budget in both towns. He stated Ms Tacconi-Moore is extraordinarily intelligent and dedicated to life long learning. He is concerned with her lack of experience with selling a budget to the town. He stated Dr. Hoffman was extremely personable and implemented a lot of good plans with early childhood education, special education and early intervention. He feels Dr. Hoffman's skills to build bridges with the towns are not yet fully developed.

With respect to Dr. Genovese, A. Vervaeke said a lot of the feedback felt he said "I" too much and not "we". A. Vervaeke said the "we" is the entire community and feels

Dr. Genovese can touch the communities. He stated it is clear that Dr. Genovese acknowledges, appreciates and values his staff and their work and is constantly seen in the schools and at events. A. Vervaeke stated Dr. Genovese is clearly at the top of his list.

Ten point allocation process

Since a majority of the members favor one candidate, this step was not needed.

Discussion - Next Steps

Mr. Baker explained this step can be used as an opportunity for members not in the majority to state their case again for their candidate to possibly persuade others to reconsider. P. Murray stated she does not want to undermine the process they set out to achieve by doing this and K. Lofgren agreed. They feel everyone has all ready stated their reasons for their choice.

A. Vervaeke asked if those in the minority have very specific reasons for being hesitant in supporting the majority candidate. C. Barrett stated Dr. Genovese's overwhelming characteristic is his budget experience. While the budget is important, she puts heavier weight on the educational vision as she feels this where they need to go to improve the district. J. Converse agrees and stated this is an educational institution and they are about education for their students. While budgets, town leaders and school committee members come and go, a superintendent, whose role she sees as the person who holds up the vision of quality and excellence for every student, is the driver of all that.

J. Converse said she is somewhat fearful of a place where they forget that and put money ahead of it. She feels a great deal of responsibility is being placed on the shoulders of the new person to fill this role and noted it takes two people to come to the table. She stated there have been numerous, forceful invitations to be a part of things and nobody can force someone to come and talk. She is fearful of reducing the conversation about their leader to whether or not he/she can get them money and create goodwill in the communities. She would like to think they all want a quality education for their children.

C. McKinney agrees with what has been said and stated this weighed heavily on his mind. He stated there is plenty of evidence that Dr. Genovese puts education and kids first, noting he brought Pre-K services into the district although he did not have school committee support. He stated the Administrative Council is the driving engine and they cannot implement a great plan without the communities' support. He noted Dr. Genovese has convinced towns to use their Stabilization Funds to fund school budgets. C. McKinney feels it is a combination of those things and not just budget.

A. Vervaeke stated the district has spent over \$800,000 on technology and Dr. Genovese has written position papers on the use of technology in the schools. A. Vervaeke noted Dr. Genovese was the most recent teacher and feels when you are an elementary school teacher, educational vision is very important because you are planting the seeds and vision. A. Vervaeke does not think Dr. Genovese is just about budgets and communication and has said he wants to be surrounded by staff.

P. Murray said they have seen a move from choosing a leader who is an educator to one who is a savvy business manager. She stated all three candidates have spectacular resumes and earned the right to come before them and be chosen as their next superintendent. She is concerned overall that they are losing sight that the most important thing is the education of the child. She is worried that a savvy business person will lead them away from what she is seeking as a parent. She feels they can find community support and the budget balance with the other candidates as well. She is a little worried about how far into the group the superintendent moves and she heard this a lot from Dr. Genovese.

Mr. Baker stated members had a very professional discussion that was very thoughtful and well considered. He noted they all said the three candidates would make fine superintendents and this is not always said in every search.

Nomination Process and Vote

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE SELECT DR. ALAN GENOVESE AS THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT OF OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT, SUBJECT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS. SECONDED BY P. MURRAY

SO VOTED BY ROLLCALL

In Favor: C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, P. Murray, A. Vervaeke, K. Lofgren, C. Barrett

Opposed: J. Converse

J. Converse asked for a re-vote.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

K. Lofgren thanked everyone who was involved in this and stated it was not an easy process.

It was agreed A. Vervaeke will call Dr. Genovese at the close of the meeting. J. Converse will call Dr. Hoffman and P. Murray will call Ms Tacconi-Moore. The Personnel and Negotiations sub-committee, along with the Committee's legal counsel and input from Mr. Baker, will come up with a contract.

ACTION ITEMS

Superintendent Candidate Selection

See previous vote

Land Vote

J. CONVERSE MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AUTHORIZE THE ADMINISTRATION TO PURSUE LEGAL COUNSEL TO TAKE BY TEMPORARY EMINENT DOMAIN, THE CUNNINGHAM PROPERTY FOR THE PURPOSES OF A LEVEL TWO STUDY ON THAT PROPERTY AND TO EMPLOY PLACES SITE CONSULTANTS INC. TO CONDUCT THE STUDY AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$8500. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY
SO VOTED BY ROLLCALL

In Favor: J. Converse, C. McKinney, K. Lofgren, C. Barrett

Opposed: F. O'Connell, A. Vervaeke

Abstention: P. Murray

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

With respect to the letter sent by Dr. Jennings to Representative Hargraves that stated the issues they are facing with their budget this year, C. McKinney would like to encourage Dr. Jennings, that when speaking with legislation, she give Committee members prior notice and preferably bring the communication forward to make sure it reflects the consensus of the Committee.

Dr. Jennings stated tomorrow the Mass Association of School Superintendents is giving the legislators the packet about the minimum increase they believe is necessary (3.74% for inflation) along with information about Charter Schools and other issues they feel their legislators need to know. As Superintendent, she stated she sends many letters to many people, including representatives and senators, and believes it is her responsibility to give them a "heads up" on a state-wide effort. She stated she reserves the right to send letters on behalf of the school district.

ADJOURNMENT:

J. CONVERSE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:20 P.M.

SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith

Recording Secretary

