

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY
Business Meeting Minutes
December 21, 2005
Approved January 18, 2006

PRESENT:

Ms. Cindy Barrett, Secretary
Ms. Kim Cowie (left at approx. 9:30pm)
Mr. Paul Fitzgerald
Ms. Karen Lofgren
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Chair
Mr. Frank O'Connell, Vice-Chair
Mr. Alan Vervaeke

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Joan Endicott, Director Pupil Personnel Services
Craig Young, Business Administrator

STUDENT ADVISOR:

Ms. Kara Cover (left prior to end of meeting)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: See sign in sheet.

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Meeting was called to back to order at 7:12pm by the chair C. McKinney. He stated that they met in executive session at 6:00pm for the purposes of collective bargaining and litigation and stated there was no intention to return to executive session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members read the prepared announcements attached to this report.

C. McKinney announced the next school council meetings:

Prescott Monday Jan 9
Florence Roche Tuesday Jan 10 3:30pm
Middle School Wednesday Jan 11 8:30am Rm 131
Swallow Union Monday Jan 23 3:15 pm

Nancy Bugbee from SpedPAC announced the next meeting on Jan 10 7pm HS library. It will be a workshop for IEPs for partents to learn about how to write an IEP. Speaker from Federation for Children with Special Needs. N. Bugbee said that last Tuesday they had a workshop on the survey and J. Endicott, A. Genovese and 10 parents attended. There was a good network of ideas. Rather than a district-wide survey they will start with a special ed parent survey. They will know more in January when SpedPAC does their presentation.

C. McKinney announced that it is K. Cowie's last day, she is moving next week. It is not an easy decision to run for school committee, we appreciate your work. C. McKinney read the plaque. K. Cowie said I think that the school committee did a wonderful job having A. Genovese and that the students and staff are very lucky to have him and she hopes that the parents appreciate him. A. Genovese said thank you and that he has lots of help.

A. Genovese presented Dr. Staub with a plaque for dedicated service for many years. Dr. Staub was appointed 09/26/67. A. Genovese listed many of Dr. Staub's accomplishments and experiences and read wonderful personal comments from Betty Ireland. Dr. Staub said this was

his first time before the school committee. He thanked the nurses, who are extraordinary in their competence and the way they help the students. He said a special thanks to Betty Ireland.

REPORTS FROM SUBCOMMITTEES

Budget and Finance- F. O'Connell said that the 12/20 meeting was cancelled. At the Joint B&F meeting we reviewed the 5 nights of budget presentations, stated that C. Young had summary documents, the NESDEC enrollment projections, details for the business manager search, bonding schedule, and sustaining technology. The next Joint meeting is Jan 26 and the next B&F subcommittee meeting is Jan 17.

Policy- K. Lofgren said that they did not meet this week. Next meeting is Jan 24 at 7pm at the HS. Please get any comments about the Wellness Policy to the subcommittee as there will be a vote. Security System and CORI will be discussed at the next meeting. They are trying to get through the first third of the policy book.

Building- C. Young stated that the Building Subcommittee has not met.

Appointment of the school physician -A. Genovese discussed the appointment of the school physician and said that he is looking at the second meeting in January to present a recommendation from Dr. Staub and Betty Ireland. A. Genovese has set up a meeting with the nurses and will hold any action until January.

Business Administrator search process -C. McKinney discussed the Business Administrator search process. We need an ad in January and it is best to have a salary range in the ad. We had a salary survey, an updated sheet was handed out, indicates a salary range of \$95,000-110,000. The School Committee would look to the Superintendent to handle the details. C. McKinney wants to iron out the details tonight. A handout for the composition for the business administrator search committee and the BA job description was distributed. The superintendent would be an ad hoc or non-voting member of the search committee. There would be a site visit to the candidate's site. The candidate would visit the district for more detailed discussions, meet more operations folks.

A. Genovese asked C. Barrett for the list of town members discussed at a personnel and negotiations subcommittee meeting. C. Barrett read that the town representatives would include BOS, FinCom, Town Accountant, Treasurer. District Treasurer was listed below. C. McKinney said that the treasurer may have time restrictions. A. Vervaeke suggested Kathy Delaney if the treasurer was not available.

In reference to only a high school principal and an elementary principal listed, K. Cowie said that the middle school is the biggest population. C. Barrett said that originally only two administrative council members were listed. J. Dillon said that he wasn't at the meeting when he was volunteered! A. Genovese noted that Peter Myerson was interested in participating.

Naming- C. McKinney said the Naming subcommittee put together a document listing all names nominated to date. Hope to post the schedule for public meetings in mid January. Looking to involve the PTO to help with logistics, advertising, trying to generate conversations about names. Naming committee will report back what consensus if any was generated. Community input will be important for the committee.

School Committee member appointment-C. McKinney said the Groton school committee members will meet with the BOS on January 3 at 7pm at Town Hall. Currently have two candidates. The BOS members and Groton school committee members will interview and vote on the candidates. The appointed member will hold the position until special elections in May. It was discussed that you pull the papers for the position that you wish to fill (i.e., 1 year, three year). A. Vervaeke requested that the school committee candidate be put as early in the meeting as possible as he and F. O'Connell have a meeting in Dunstable for the scholarship fund at 8pm.

Connect-ED-A. Genovese said that we have tested no school announcements on Connect-ED. When we return from vacation we will have a letter about a call on a certain day and time, want parents to respond if they do not get the call.

Snow Days- A. Genovese said that Steve Byrnes, the director of facilities, collects information on whether there should be school or not. They talk at 4am or 4:30am. A. Genovese said he will be right many of the times but sometimes will be wrong. He has adopted all of the kids and will treat them like family. C. McKinney offered his children to provide additional input for snow days!

MINUTES

A. VERVAEKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 7, 2005.

SECONDED BY K. COWIE.

A. Vervaeke said that we do not need to duplicate the announcements. C. McKinney said to write "see attached".

In favor: C. Barrett, K. Cowie, P. Fitzgerald, K. Lofgren, C. McKinney, A. Vervaeke.

Against: none

Abstain: F. O'Connell

Approved 6:0:1

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOALS WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 5, 2005.

SECONDED BY P. FITZGERALD.

In favor: C. Barrett, P. Fitzgerald K. Lofgren, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

Against: none

Abstain: K. Cowie, A. Vervaeke.

Approved 5:0:2

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS-None

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

High School Advisory Program (see handout from packet)

J. Dillon stated that we have used the name before but that this is a new program. Based on two documents: Breaking Ranks II(National Association of School Principals) and a NEASC Report on a two year study to expand advisory. We want each student to have an adult advocate. It is one of the 4 theme teams. The other three teams are Technology, Interdisciplinary Learning, and Looking at Student Work. Marissa Brisson, Dean of Students, and Jessie Salo, English teacher, are leading this program.

M. Brisson stated that she and J. Salo both started five years ago and they wanted to make this a personal goal. They are Theme Team Coordinators. They looked at several high schools, what is their mission. A healthy school community that is healthy both academically and socially has three strands: community service, recreation, and community conversation. Community service is not a graduation requirement at this time, it is at many high schools. It allows all students to be exposed to community service. Recreation-when working in block scheduling students said that they were very stressed. We have been meeting regularly and 2 of the 8 meetings have been dedicated to recreation. Community Conversation-is a forum for students to voice opinions other than at school council or leadership teams. A good way to bring items back from leadership team to students. The election process has been moved to advisory. The program includes students in grades 9 through 11. There is a 14 student/1 teacher ratio and 88% of the teachers participate. It is held every other Wednesday for half an hour. Grade 12 meets as the senior class in the black box to discuss topics such as transition, senior internship and project, college planning, alternative options, scholarships and financial aid, and graduation and senior activities. Meeting together allows them to form an identity as a senior class. As shown in the packet the community service projects are Pinwheels for Peace or "Whirled Peace", Loaves and Fishes Public Service

Announcement, Loaves and Fishes Food Drive. Over 1000 items were delivered to Loaves and Fishes. In a survey today the kids reported that they really felt like they had done something worthwhile.

J. Salo discussed recreation and said "We take our silly games very seriously." And described the who am I icebreaker and scavenger hunt activities.

M. Brisson discussed a community conversation project to make the HS survival guide which was described as a kid friendly version of the handbook and highlighted social events, athletics, social climate, dress code, and homecoming. The videography class has made a video for the "mystery" items in the handbook.

M. Brisson said they have surveyed the teachers twice and read some supportive quotes from the teachers. J. Salo described student feedback and said that freshmen are very supportive, juniors less positive. Many people said that they are getting to meet others that are not in their regular groups or classes.

This is the pilot year. Future goals include:

- ongoing professional development for teachers
- stipend position for an advisory coordinator
- continual assessment of the curriculum
- evaluation and assessment from both students and staff
- a permanent fixture of the calendar/schedule
- maintain low student/teacher ratio. Data shows better success at forming student-teacher relationship.

A. Vervaeke noted that he is on the scholarship fund in Dunstable and other than Boy Scouts he did not see any community service in Dunstable. He noted that there are lots of opportunities in our two towns for additional opportunities, for example for the seniors.

M. Brisson asked people to contact her or J. Salo with additional ideas.

F. O'Connell asked what would the students be doing if they were not in advisory? M. Brisson said there is a 15 minute break time between A and B block, there was some resistance to missing break.

PPS Report

J. Endicott handed out copies of her presentation "Pupil Personnel –What's Happening with Student Support Services 2005-2006" as well as a table Comparison of Schools October 05.

J. Endicott said that she would not talk about the ECC as Russ Hoyt will be making that presentation. The emphasis on tonight's presentation will be on student support services, not just special ed.

-J. Endicott discussed guidance services, guidance staff and caseload by school this year and as proposed for next year with addition of 2 FTE. J. Endicott stated that our ratios are off compared to surrounding schools. Currently Swallow Union and Prescott share a guidance counselor and that is not efficient nor effective.

-Health Services were listed by school with notation of a correction for the MS it should say nurse practitioner and not physician's assistant. Two people share the 1 FTE at Swallow Union.

-Student Support Services were described, they are provided on a contractual basis. J. Endicott listed the doctors and groups who supply services. A FT social worker (with masters) for more clinically involved cases should be on the list.

-Special education enrollment per total enrollment by school with an overall district average of 9.6% last year and 8.7% this year (October numbers) is below the state average of 12-15%

-Percentages of specific learning disabilities vs emotional disabilities by school were reviewed for Oct 04 and Oct 05. J. Endicott said that they look at the numbers to anticipate how best to meet the needs.

-The number of special education teachers by school for 04-05 and the proposed increase (0.5 FTE) for 05-06 was reviewed. It was noted that some teachers would be moved around for 05-06.

-The number of IEP's per Sped teacher was listed by school. Are the caseloads appropriate? In 05-06 the caseloads are lower except for the HS. Other than the HS the numbers are manageable. This slide does not indicate the severity of the cases but that is taken into consideration.

-The least restrictive setting was discussed along with a hierarchy of inclusionary services.

-Sped services in regular ed setting vs pull-out services was listed by school for Oct 04 and Oct 05. The goal has been to reduce pull-out and increase inclusion. Each school has taken the initiative to increase inclusion.

-site-based initiatives were discussed with more details given for each. Highlighted was that inclusion model allows better transition for special ed students, inclusion reduces isolation from curriculum, reduce stigma if do not have to leave class, weekly collaborative planning time, push in services for OT, speech and language.

-a bar graph of out of district placement numbers was shown. The majority are children with emotional needs, severe autism, or multiple handicaps.

-extended year services was reviewed. The summer program of 5 weeks is split as 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off, 3 weeks on as it was shown to have the least regression with a two week off period. The parents are told the schedule in January.

-An accomplishments slide was discussed that listed many wonderful accomplishments. R. Hoyt is part of the elementary principals meeting to prepare for kids from pre school to enter kindergarten. The HS is inviting 8th grade parents in January. The MS will do the same, don't want to wait until June for transitions.

-A special ed training slide was reviewed. It was noted that regular and special ed do MCAS analysis together to better address the special ed needs.

-A final slide of areas to improve was discussed. Communication and trust building with parents was highlighted. There will be a survey for parents to complete at the end of each team meeting. It was stated that we like the site-based service delivery but we need to be consistent how we do it.

P. Fitzgerald asked about the changing numbers of students, was this due to success with initiatives? J. Endicott said there is a gray line between IEP and 504 plan, there is a lot of movement with children that may not have a full disability. If we did differentiated instruction and could give accommodations to all students we wouldn't have as many. Intensive services at a young age reduces the severity of a disability when the kids are older. We get 100 eligibility referrals every year and 85-90% are eligible.

F. O'Connell asked if J. Endicott could talk about special education and curriculum development. J. Endicott said in Central Office Joan is close to Sue Rubel and they listen to teachers, figure out what way to adapt. S. Rubel's office looked at literacy, PAC [SpedPAC] put on a literacy exploration lecture, there was a lot of buzz in the audience about how we teach reading. We have brought a specialist to the district. Assessment and services are three tiered. Reading-Special Ed-Regular Ed teachers work together. We don't want special ed doing one thing and regular ed doing another, want to be consistent.

A. Vervaeke said that you are the 5th PPS director since I have been here 6 years. He said he is glad to see J. Endicott working in partnership with PAC. Phil Campbell brought up transitioning, glad to see that you are continuing it. Good to hear acknowledgement of topics that parents are concerned with. Glad that the survey is finally moving forward, feedback, hard data points. The thing that he sees is J. Endicott's willingness to come before the school committee and say there are areas to improve, it goes further than any presentation he has seen in the last 6 ½ years.

K. Lofgren said that it is great to see regular ed and special ed working together, good to see areas of improvement in literacy and math.

P. Fitzgerald said that over the next year it would be nice to see gifted needs students addressed as well, for next year.

Presentation Topic Sign Up

C. McKinney asked school committee members to volunteer to collect and coordinate questions from the school committee members to be given to presenters so that questions could be answered during the presentation:

K. Lofgren, SpedPAC, Jan 18 (K. Lofgren noted that they are coming to us, we are not asking them to present)

C. Barrett, Superintendent mid year evaluation, Jan 18

F. O'Connell, facility use/new facilities task force, Feb 15

P. Fitzgerald overview of curriculum, March 1

Athletic Program Presentation

D. Twomey handed out copies of his presentation and discussed each slide:

-Overview of the presentation

-athletic department goals include increase communication, offer a positive learning experience, and expand athletic programs to meet student needs. The website and student athletic guide were highlighted as ways to increase communication.

-enrollment vs number of teams from 96-97 to projections for next year were shown. In 04-05 2 freshmen soccer teams were added. We have moved from Mid Wach C to B division, with large schools.

-slides listing fall, winter, and spring sports for 05-06 were shown. D. Twomey noted that 50 boys and girls are projected for track and field.

-the number of athletic opportunities by season for boys and girls at HS and MS were shown. The calculations were made based on the historic number of players on a team.

-current user fees, district history, and comparison to area towns were shown and discussed. D. Twomey noted that North Middlesex is one of the few schools without an user fee. In FY04 GD user fees were \$225 to make up for a \$60,000 cut in the athletic budget.

-estimated revenues were shown. It was noted that the Booster Club funds odds and ends and major pieces of equipment. The basketball brochure was noted as a way to defray the cost of warm-ups.

-new teams for the proposed FY07 budget were girls JV lacrosse, girls JV volleyball. A new position was assistant track and field coach. Points in support of these items were listed and discussed.

-facilities were listed as well as noting that hockey plays at the Groton School, the ski team skis at Nashoba Valley, and the golf team plays for free at the Country Club.

-athletic programs not offered at GDRSD were listed.

-Boys and girls lacrosse was an example shown of how the program was implemented, starting with a feeder program, intramurals, JV to varsity.

-the history of the football co-op team with Ayer was shown by year and number of GDRSD participants, there has been a big increase since 2003. It was stated that Ayer could not field a team without a co-op.

-pros and cons of the co-op agreement were listed and discussed. An additional pro was the diverse population in Ayer. An additional con was that only one game is played at GD.

-slides of positives for GD having their own football and cheerleading teams as well as a number of considerations were discussed.

-an implementation plan for fall 2007 was outlined and then details including cost for each year were reviewed.

-the next step was to survey grades 6-9, monitor the implementation of a town youth football league in fall of 2006. It was noted that we have 1 year left on our 2 year co-op agreement.

C. McKinney asked if Ayer could join a co-op with GD? D. Twomey did not know.

A. Vervaeke asked if we have minimum academic standards for our athletes. J. Dillon replied that is the same as for non-athletes.

A. Vervaeke asked why do we have freshmen teams? Normally it is freshmen and sophomores on JV and juniors and seniors on varsity. D. Twomey replied that we have freshmen teams to give more opportunities.

A. Vervaeke said that Ashburnham increased user fees to \$1200, the towns passed an override, and the user fees went to 0. A. Vervaeke said that he hears a lot of support in the community for a football team and suggested that we roll up the cost for three year plan as a debt exclusion. D. Twomey replied that the problem is what are the numbers going to be?

C. McKinney said that there are more regional youth programs, are they feeder programs? D. Twomey said that unless you seek those out, it is better to have a GD feeder program.

C. McKinney said that he would support outside fund raising and would be hard pressed to divert operating budget on starting a football program. C. McKinney commented on facilities and said that the fields at the HS are not in good shape, does improvement come from the athletic or maintenance budget? C. Young replied that it is from athletic budget. C. McKinney suggested an agreement to use local youth soccer fields.

A. Genovese said there is a lot of common interest to start a program like this. It is a sport that feeds on itself, increases participation. Some kind of significant funding source would have to be raised.

P. Fitzgerald noted that he has been coaching flag football for a number of years and it is very successful and lots of kids go on to Pop Warner.

D. Twomey asked people to contact him if they are interested, said he will be gathering information, having a forum.

C. Young said that he thinks it is a task force project, a very detailed job has to be done.

ACTION ITEMS-None

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS-None

C. Barrett asked if we will go over the quarterly report next time? C. McKinney replied that C. Young will review it with B&F first.

ADJOURNMENT

A.VERVAEKE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT APPROXIMATELY
9: 50 PM.
SECONDED BY P. FITZGERALD.
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Barrett, School Committee Secretary