

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library

Business Meeting Minutes

May 3, 2006 Approved May 17, 2006

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Secretary
Ms Berta Erickson
Mr. Paul Fitzgerald
Ms Karen Lofgren
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Chair
Mr. Frank O'Connell, Vice- Chair
Mr. Alan Vervaeke

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Mr. Craig Young, Business Manager
Ms Joan Endicott, Director of Pupil Personnel

STUDENT ADVISOR:

Kara Cover

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: Lowell Sun; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald;
P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; K. Icenogle, Dunstable News; B. Lavin, P. Myerson
R. Hoyt, A. Steed, A. Cary, E. Lazurus

CALL TO ORDER

C. McKinney announced the GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of exploring negotiation strategies for non-bargaining personnel. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:05 p.m., with no plans to return to executive session, and was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

J. Endicott announced SpedPAC has organized an autism support group for local families in Groton, Dunstable and Westford. They will meet on Friday, May 19th from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Groton Public Library and is open to the public. Sue Loring, Director of the West Boylston Autism Resource Center, will be the guest speaker. People may contact Sarah Campbell at 978-448-3822 if they have questions. An e-mail may also be sent to their website.

Dr. Genovese announced Mr. Young is in the process of getting a date with SBA to justify why the district feels they should honor the additional costs. The date should be

during the first week of June and town officials will be invited to attend. Members will be advised of the exact date.

Dr. Genovese announced they have completed the screening process for a Business Administrator and no candidate was found suitable for the position. This will be put back out and they will continue the search.

Dr. Genovese announced there has been a lot of positive feedback about the Resolution. He thanked the Committee for being active with this and asked if there was an update on the next step. K. Lofgren read the letter she received from Governor Romney. She also looked into submitting the Resolution to the MASC for their Delegate Assembly which will be held in Hyannis. In order for a resolution to be submitted for consideration, a vote of the School Committee is required and must be received by July 1st.

A. Vervaeke said he received a mailing from the Regional Schools Committee of MASC with an invitation to their May meeting and a copy of the district's signed Resolution was attached. He suggested they may want to get the Mass Association of Regional Schools (MARS) to vote to endorse and submit this resolution. Dr. Genovese said the director of MARS took the electronic copy and sent it to all the regional school districts.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget and Finance - No report

Building Committee - C. Young reported water samples will be taken next week and they will have the results in about two weeks. If no improvements are seen, he said it will be time to rethink where they are going and will likely recommend to the School Committee that they contact a firm that specializes in water quality. He stated he is not encouraged that the additive is doing what they had hoped.

Policy - No report

Naming Committee - B. Erickson reported they met on April 27th but they did not have a quorum. They will meet at MSN on May 11th at 1:00 p.m.

Report of Business Administrator - C. Young reported he met with the installer of the gym wall crash pads today and they will be up in about a month.

He reported the House put out their final budget numbers. A memo was distributed with a copy of the spreadsheet. The Senate now has to look at the budget but the district received increases in both Chapter 70 and School Transportation Chapter 71. These increases total about \$375,000 and now offsets their undefined revenue amount of \$330,000. Although not yet passed, he is confident in the support provided by the state.

If they receive extra funding, P. Fitzgerald said he would like to have a discussion about where to apply those funds and perhaps reinstate some of the cuts. Dr. Genovese said this is great news but there are other revenue things they have to look at such as School

Choice students graduating which throws off the projection of extra income. C. Young said they still do not know what the final budget will be. Dr. Genovese noted they are still low on what they should have as an E&D balance. Budget and Finance will continue to keep an eye on the numbers and C. McKinney noted it may be September before they talk about any adjustments that might be made.
Report of the Chair - If there are no objections, C. McKinney said Ms Barrett will be the representative on the Classification Board.

Report of the Superintendent - See previous announcements

MINUTES

None

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Dr. Genovese said he may try to leave the meeting a little early in order to attend the senior sports banquet at the Groton Country Club.

C. Barrett stated she has had time to reflect on last week's middle school configuration review presentation and has some comments. She recognizes and appreciates the hard work the entire district staff has done to accomplish the many facility changes over the last few years and the staff continues to provide their children with a great education. She stated the presentation by the middle school was good but was only a snapshot of what is happening and was not a review of the configuration. They did not learn what was possible with the current configuration or what was not possible with the alternate 5/6 - 7/8 configuration or any other configuration. She is convinced it is the teaming concept that created the many positive things that were discussed and the teaming makes the configuration work.

C. Barrett believes a different configuration could work just as well since the teaming concept would still be in place. Collegiality among teachers, a strong sense of community and a strong school spirit could be accomplished with a different configuration. She believes a 5/6 - 7/8 configuration is better because it provides for an equitable experience for all students and she believes there are distinct social and emotional benefits for the children in a configuration that would not split grades between buildings. With respect to the number of transitions, she stated under a one school, two building concept, the number would be the same.

The presentation represented the view of the staff and she feels it is critical that a survey be done and the data analyzed before the end of the school year. She would like a survey for parents and one for middle school students and will assist in anyway she can.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Review of School Improvement Plans

Prescott

Principal Betty Lavin introduced members of the School Council and thanked them for a great year. Their first goal revolves around academics and the district vision is to work

towards proficiency for all students across the curriculum by 2007. They have had two major objectives over the past couple of years, one dealing with math and one with science and social studies. A new objective under this goal for next year deals with ELA to bring equity across the district in terms of a spelling program and their shared literature collection.

With respect to math, all teachers have received training and are implementing the new Investigations units and they have been working on the math Open Response questions. They saw a 3% gain from spring 2004 to 2005. New science and social studies units have been integrated into the curriculum at all grade levels and they feel they are in good shape. A district committee, under the leadership of Luke Smith, will be developed this summer. They will work with a K-2 representation to identify core materials across the district and money has been earmarked to support the new units. They will continue to work on math and will focus on the assessment piece of the Investigation units. The Sitton Spelling Program will be implemented in grades 2- 4 and the Shared Literature Collection will be evaluated and expanded. Money has been budgeted for one or two Shared Literature coordinators.

Prescott's second goal deals with the well being of the child and they are fully implemented with Open Circle. B. Lavin said she hopes to be trained this summer. They have pushed healthy snacks and cupcakes are not done for birthdays anymore. The school nurse has done a nutrition unit for each grade and logs the body mass index of each child. More physical activity is being worked in throughout the day. They had hoped a walking path around the perimeter of the playground would be a good project for an Eagle Scout but this did not come to fruition. They still hope the boy scouts will work with them and then they can start integrating the concept of calculating mileage in conjunction with field trips and the curriculum. In FY07, they will address transition issues between third and fourth grades. Fourth grade shifts to having all four academic subjects taught at the same time where third grade has social studies and science trading off each quarter. They will seek more grant funding for author visits and cultural experiences.

Goal 3 deals with the facilities and she noted the building looks great with the new roof and windows, brick walkway and refurbished flagpole. A Beautification Committee takes care of plantings. Carpet replacement and asbestos abatement is taking place on a rotation basis. A Prescott Preservation Committee has been established to pursue CPA funding for the building and they are hoping to have walk thrus with town personnel on May 10th. The Rookery has been partially redesigned with the addition of an early reader section. This summer they hope to open up the Rookery with a window/opening between the two rooms. They will continue to make town officials aware of the building needs and pursue grant funding for an architect to assess the needs of restoration and refurbishment.

Goal 4 is new for FY07 and they have reinstated their technology team to provide updated equipment and software. They plan to purchase three eMacs for the lab and

research grant funding for upgrading the lab to OS X for the older computers. She noted the parent organization purchased five eMacs for the school.

P. Fitzgerald said he would like the phrase "for all students, including gifted and special needs students" added to the first sentence of Objective A under Goal #1. He said they have the identified sub-group within the middle school that needs to improve math performance and noted the elementary school is a feeder into that. By helping the special needs students at Prescott master some mathematical skills early on, they will be able to build on them later. He stated they also need to have special activities for the gifted students. B. Erickson said she does not want to forget about the "average" student that falls through the cracks sometimes and feels every child is important. B. Lavin said they target all the students. Dr. Genovese said he does not like to use those words and would rather use "all kids". He said they own all the kids, regardless of talents and abilities, and they need to just make sure they are challenging the full spectrum of students.

F. O'Connell asked B. Lavin to explain the process followed to arrive at a goal. B. Lavin said she first works with her staff to see what areas they feel need to be worked on. They also look at where the district is focusing a lot of their energies and try to dovetail. After they get feedback from the staff, they look at what the School Council feels needs attention. A draft goal is brought back to the staff, especially when it involves them.

With respect to the walkway and internal work, C. Barrett suggested Nashoba Tech students might be able to help. B. Lavin said they are not looking for anything expensive or fancy and this could be a possibility for an intern project.

B. Erickson asked Ms Lavin what she means by more cultural experiences. B. Lavin said this would include assemblies, story tellers, authors and artists-in-residence. These will enhance and enrich the curriculum.

K. Lofgren said she has always been impressed that Prescott has a veteran come in and talk and this is important. B. Lavin feels it is important that the kids understand the importance of supporting people in the military who are protecting and supporting us.

A. Vervaeke noted not all veterans did wartime and still protected our country and are usually overlooked. B. Erickson said having programs with the senior citizens is also important.

Swallow Union

Principal Peter Myerson distributed a summary of their SIP. He recognized the members of the School Council and noted they meet monthly and are a great group. He stated they have been focusing on reading and noted it encompasses all subjects.

Goal 1/Year 1: To improve student learning by strengthening instructional practices and programs, and to use student data to assess student progress. The objective is to implement an array of strategies to reach greater levels of reading success.

P. Myerson said focusing on one theme made it more concise and attainable for the staff. He highlighted what they have accomplished. Professional development opportunities were provided and Dr. Rubel offered two great reading programs. Time was provided for teachers to analyze and discuss MCAS results. A reading information night was held for over fifty parents a couple of weeks ago and he entertained the seventy students that accompanied them.

Eight teachers attended an eight week course, facilitated by himself and K. McCarthy, that focused on the book *Strategies that Work*. Classrooms have been provided with new books to expand their collections and he is going to try to allocate a book per child every year which will build strong classroom libraries. He noted their literacy libraries are in fantastic shape.

They have an Accelerated Reading Program for the third and fourth graders. Students can take out a library book marked with an "x" and after reading it, take a short comprehension quiz on the classroom computers to earn points to use at the school store. Teachers set goals with the child. They worked hard to establish clear procedures regarding Developmental Reading Assessments benchmarks and piloted an inclusion model for the reading specialists. A Literacy Team of five staff members has been established to discuss programs and assessments they will be doing.

In FY07, they will analyze and discuss MCAS, offer a similar reading information night in the fall of 2006, form another study group that will focus on a different reading skill, strengthen the inclusion model for reading support and continue to outfit the classrooms with more literature.

Goal 1A/Year 1: To build a reading spirit throughout the school community. The objective is to create programs and opportunities to promote the love of reading.

Swallow Union had a school wide "Paws for Reading Program" that went for six weeks and was a huge success. The original goal was to place Paws around the school once and this was accomplished in one week. An attitudinal survey will be done on the program. They have researched children authors to come for a presentation and the hope is the author will spend the day. Student book reviews were displayed in the library and on the website. The Dunstable Public Library is included in what they are doing and Sue Tully presented at the reading information night. She will be involved when they do the summer reading program. April 12th was National "Drop Everything and Read Day" and they have implemented this every other Wednesday morning.

They will implement another school wide reading program next year and plan to have visiting readers.

Goal 2/Year 2: To promote friendly and open communication between school population and the general community. The objective is to develop programs, opportunities and communication links to connect the school to the community.

All teachers submit a weekly or monthly newsletter or include information in the Swallow Union newsletter. He hosted four Principal Coffees during the past two years but they are not that well attended. They aggressively contact the local newspapers about school events as the papers seldom come to the school. They are updating and enhancing their website and parent volunteers are welcome.

A new goal for FY07 is to improve student achievement in math with the objective of utilizing strategies to strengthen their students' ability to interpret and answer Open Response questions in the area of math. P. Myerson said the fourth graders have a math journal and they get one Open Response question a week and this has done wonders.

K. Lofgren asked if they have a book fair and was told yes. She said Florence Roche's parent organization gets a wish list from every teacher and this is distributed to parents for the fair. She said Swallow Union's Intergenerational Tea is really good. She has implemented "Drop Everything and Read" in her home and said this is a lot of fun. Her family had the opportunity to go to the Eric Carle Museum in Springfield and she noted they have a wonderful library.

A. Vervaeke said Dunstable has recently passed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and the Historic Preservation Committee is trying to get the downtown area, including the Union Building, designated as a state historic landmark. He noted this is the oldest school building in the district and would like to see Swallow Union embrace the Union Building as a whole.

He would like Swallow Union to add this to Goal 2 and see people come in, along with the CPA, and have an impact on the building. P. Myerson said he was not aware of the CPA.

B. Erickson suggested an evening tea, rather than morning coffees, might draw more parents. She asked what a typical Open Response math question might be and P. Myerson said it is usually a multi-step problem where students have to show how they got the answer.

P. Fitzgerald said he would like to have Swallow Union include the special needs students so they are more prepared in math when they get to the middle school and he would like to have materials available for the gifted kids so they can excel. P. Myerson said they want to expand their classroom libraries so teachers can purchase books that will challenge their high level learners.

ECC Parent/Child Group

Russell Hoyt advised members today was Pajama Day at Boutwell.

At a previous meeting, R. Hoyt had talked about the parent/child group possibly being run at Boutwell and members had questions regarding potential hidden costs. He got a copy of the Recreation Department's budget from December 2004 through January 2006. Their total costs for running (6) eight week sessions was \$2288 (\$381 per session).

He said they would have the additional cost of a crossing guard, which the Rec Department did not have, and this would add \$24. Each session would cost \$405.

The Rec Department had charged \$48 plus registration fees and they are figuring on a flat fee of \$60, without any registration fees. They would need to have a minimum of seven families for each session (\$420) and this would give them a \$15 cushion. They also talked about registering parents and having them pay the fee for the entire session before it started. He stated they would like to start a session in the fall but a session would not be held if the expenses were not covered.

P. Fitzgerald said this information alleviates concerns he had about risking a loss and noted if it does not work at Boutwell, the PTYC might be able to pick it up. The Committee can evaluate how it is going in the future.

C. Barrett asked if he has the facilitator for the group and R. Hoyt said the facilitator from the Rec Department would be interested in continuing and he has spoken with Ms Mitchell about the process. They would have to do an internal posting and she can also be considered a candidate.

A. Vervaeke said the ECC is the perfect place for parents to come with their young children and gave kudos to this program. K. Lofgren said she only sees this as a benefit and hopes it is successful.

J. Endicott said P. Fitzgerald's concerns were taken seriously and they looked at it from a day to day operation. She feels it is a win/win situation and noted they have intervention connections and they want to develop positive relationships with families. She said this is a wonderful opportunity to promote partnerships with new families.

B. Erickson asked if they could charge a higher fee. R. Hoyt pointed out this is not a drop off service and J. Endicott said this is a pilot opportunity and does not see it as a money maker. An evaluation will be done after each session and a report will be made to the Committee.

A. Vervaeke said there is nothing like this around and noted this also gives exposure to the services the district has to offer.

It is the unanimous consensus of the Committee to support this partnership.

ACTION ITEMS

Revote: Statement of Interest Including SBA Language

Dr. Genovese said the Letter of Intent will be sent to the state that explains conditions could present themselves where Groton Dunstable would need to build another elementary school. Tonight's revote is for housekeeping purposes as the state wants a vote for each elementary school that includes the name and address.

A. VERVAEKE RESOLVED: HAVING CONVENED IN AN OPEN MEETING ON MAY 3, 2006, THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF GROTON AND DUNSTABLE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CHARTER, BY-LAWS, AND ORDINANCES, HAS VOTED TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO SUBMIT TO THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY THE STATEMENT OF INTEREST FORM DATED MAY 3, 2006 FOR THE SWALLOW UNION SCHOOL LOCATED AT 522 MAIN STREET, DUNSTABLE, MA., THE FLORENCE ROCHE SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 342 MAIN STREET, GROTON, MA., AND THE PRESCOTT SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 145 MAIN STREET, GROTON, MA., WHICH DESCRIBES AND EXPLAINS THE FOLLOWING DEFICIENCIES AND THE PRIORITY CATEGORY(S) FOR WHICH AN APPLICATION MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY IN THE FUTURE: PREVENTION OF SEVERE OVERCROWDING EXPECTED TO RESULT FROM INCREASED ENROLLMENT IN ANTICIPATION OF PASSAGE OF SEVERAL 40B HOUSING PROJECTS AND OF LARGE PARCELS OF LAND BEING PURCHASED FOR DEVELOPMENT; AND HEREBY FURTHER SPECIFICALLY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT BY SUBMITTING THIS STATEMENT OF INTEREST FORM, THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY IN NO WAY GUARANTEES THE ACCEPTANCE OR THE APPROVAL OF AN APPLICATION, THE AWARDED OF A GRANT OR ANY OTHER FUNDING COMMITMENT FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY, OR COMMITS THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT TO FILING AN APPLICATION FOR FUNDING WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY
SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

A. Vervaeke appreciates ConnectED keeping him involved with everything going on and said a great deal of comfort and communication comes with this system.

C. Barrett announced they will hear SIP's from the high school, middle school and Florence Roche at their May 17th meeting. The superintendent's public evaluation summary document will also be read.

C. McKinney said he attended Candidates Night at the Senior Center last evening. He was gratified by the number people there and the good questions being asked. He noted the moderator did a great job and he thanked Paul Fitzgerald and Paul Funch for giving the community a choice. B. Erickson noted Arthur Blackman and Marion Stoddard were honored by moderator Bob Gosselin for their fifty years of service to the town.

K. Icenogle stated the CPA has not been passed in Dunstable. The vote will be taken on May 15th.

ADJOURNMENT:

P. FITZGERALD MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:48 P.M.
SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary