

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
January 10, 2012

Approved 01.24.12

### **PRESENT:**

Mr. Erik Dichter, Secretary  
Ms Berta Erickson  
Mr. Jim Frey, Chair  
Mr. John Giger  
Ms Leslie Lathrop  
Ms Alison Manugian, Vice-chair  
Mr. Jon Sjoberg

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

Mr. Joseph Mastrocola, Superintendent  
Mr. Gerald Martin, Director of Business and Finance

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:**

Gerrit Bolt and Gabrielle Arrighi

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Lindemer, Groton Herald; M. Mastrullo, S. Byrne, See attached sign-in sheet

### **I. Call to Order:**

#### **a. Vote to Enter Executive Session**

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. The committee unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an opening meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21a-3.

#### **b. Reconvene in Regular Session**

The GDRSC Meeting reconvened in open session and was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by the chair, J. Frey.

### **II. Pledge of Allegiance (Students from the Middle School Grades 7-8)**

Katie Ferro and Alex Philibert led the Pledge of Allegiance. Alex enjoys sports, walking in the woods looking for wildlife and is devoted to his school work. Albert Einstein is one of his role models and Alex would like to be an inventor. Katie is an eighth grader and is looking forward to high school. She plays softball, likes to dance, listen to music and is translating a children's book into sign language. She attended a student leadership program last summer that traveled to New York City, Washington D.C. and Philadelphia.

### **III. Announcements**

B. Erickson announced there was an article in the Sunday Lowell Sun about the music group going to the Summer Olympics and it talked about their fundraising efforts. She would like Mr. Savoy and the group to keep the school committee informed about how their fundraising is going.

L. Lathrop announced the next fundraiser is scheduled for February 9<sup>th</sup> and will be a coffee house with a special big band from Indian Hill.

B. Erickson announced Nate Pomeroy was the soccer Player of the Year for Groton-Dunstable. Kyle Romich and Peter Ellerkamp were also named to the Boys All-Star Soccer Team and Mr. Wisby was named Coach of the Year. Kailyn Rekos was named to the Girls All-Star Soccer Team. Brendan Hunter made the All Star Golf Team.

J. Giger announced GDAY's (Groton-Dunstable Alliance for Youth) annual book discussion for parents of teens and tweens will be on February 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the high school library. Discussion on 7 Habits of the Highly Effective Teen, the required book for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade CALM (Career and Life Management) course, will be led by teacher Jeannie Erickson.

Gerrit Bolt announced the Spanish 4 and 5 students and the Latin 5 students recently visited the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Student Council had a community service week before the holiday break. In the coming week, a Young Democrats Club will be formed at the school.

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

B. ERICKSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 13, 2011.  
SECONDED BY A. MANUGIAN

**In Favor:** J. Giger, L. Lathrop, A. Manugian, J. Frey, E. Dichter, B. Erickson

**Abstention:** J. Sjoberg

#### **V. Vote to Accept Warrant Articles**

A. MANUGIAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE REPORT OF THREE PAYROLL WARRANTS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,654,803.85 AND SIX VENDOR WARRANTS TOTALING \$1,243,835.93. SECONDED BY J. GIGER

G. Martin explained the payroll correction warrant was for one employee that needed to be done separately.

#### **SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

#### **VI. Questions and Comments from the Public**

Groton-Dunstable Educators Association President Carolyn Scafidi said she is here on behalf of the coalition of school district unions to express their frustration over the failure to address their contracts in a fair and timely manner. She said they have been working to reach an equitable arrangement on healthcare costs and programs, along with the individual economic needs of workers in the district. She is urging the committee, in their deliberations, to direct the administration to deal with the unions positively at the bargaining session scheduled for January 20<sup>th</sup>.

Lynn Mueller, Unit D paraprofessional contract manager for the GDEA, said yesterday's Lowell Sun article misrepresented how much the proposed increase in health insurance will cost the employees. While the article said most employees would be hit with a \$400 to \$600 increase, she said the increased cost for those currently using Harvard Pilgrim PPO will be \$783.08 to \$1911.59 and these are figures based on this year's premiums. She said with paraprofessionals being among the lowest paid in the district, those on the bottom of the pay scale will be looking at a 33% contribution and a paraprofessional at the top level will see almost a 21% contribution.

J. Frey thanked them for expressing their concerns and said the committee takes the commitment they have to bargain in good faith very seriously and they intend to continue to pursue that process.

#### **VII. Presentations**

None

#### **VIII. Reports**

##### **A. Subcommittees**

**Budget & Finance Subcommittee** - A. Manugian reported they have met several times in the past week.

They have met with all the cost center managers to discuss their proposed budgets and what they would like to see in the next year. She noted the managers put in a lot of time and thought to pull together the information. Their next meeting is Thursday at 8:00 a.m. at Prescott.

**Policy Subcommittee** - No report

**Personnel and Negotiations** - J. Sjoberg reported they divided up the Personnel and Negotiations policies among the members for review. He has spoken with Mr. Koocher about getting a workshop put together on collaborative bargaining. Mr. Koocher said MASC is putting one together and it should be ready in about six to eight weeks. Their next meeting is on January 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Curriculum and Instruction** - A. Manugian reported they will meet at Prescott on February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

## **B. Superintendent**

**1. High School Accreditation** - Members received a copy of the December 13, 2011 letter from NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.). The Commission has granted continued accreditation to the high school for the next ten years with contingency requirements in several management areas. J. Mastrocola thanked the staff, parents and school committee for their support during the demanding accreditation process. Attention will now shift to supporting Principal Mastrullo and the administration and faculty to meet the major initial NEASC requirements with a formal Special Progress Report due December 1<sup>st</sup> and a Two-Year Progress Report due October 13, 2013. Mr. Mastrullo will address progress in improved curriculum leadership, improved instructional practices, consistent assessment practices across all courses and curriculum alignment with local initiatives and national standards at a school committee meeting within a month.

**2. Foreign Student Program - Principal Mastrullo** - M. Mastrullo distributed information on Educatius International which is a foreign exchange company that caters to students overseas who are looking to come to the United States to attend school. He stated benefits include exposing Groton-Dunstable students, and staff and the community, to different cultures and experiences from around the world. The company does a lot of the vetting process but the district would have the final say on whom they would accept. From a business perspective, it allows the district to set a tuition rate and they have set the rate of \$13,000. He noted there are several Massachusetts schools, (Belmont, Arlington and Hopkington to name a few), that are a part of Educatius International. He stated they are looking to start with 3 to 5 students but he can envision 10 to 20 students. Students have to be English proficient must maintain a "C" average to stay in the program. A student visited in January but since they can only stay for one year, that student intends to come in the fall. Students come from all over but the majority are from Europe.

The company finds the host family within the community and the family is paid about \$7000. The district would recommend the host family have a school age child in the home to make the transition easier. The company receives a fee from the student and does all the paperwork. M. Mastrullo noted the district currently has two foreign exchange students and B. Erickson asked if they pay tuition. M. Mastrullo said yes but it is a smaller tuition.

A. Manugian asked what the process would be if a student became ill, was struggling academically or had behavioral issues. M. Mastrullo said there is a liaison and a strict code of conduct. The student is seeking an opportunity, paying a high tuition and is looking to succeed. He said they would like to start in September.

J. Mastrocola said this is a very competitive project in Massachusetts and students will be doing a lot of research. Arlington High School has 20 students and would take 50 if they could. Their tuition is \$12,000. The district will need to do some promotions as many of the students want to be close to Boston. He anticipates seeing other districts becoming involved with this within the next 18 months.

While they will not see their first student until September, J. Giger said they need to be committed to move forward now and would like people to get their concerns on the table. J. Mastrocola said the fee structure among high schools will be a factor. J. Sjoberg would like to make sure there is diversity in the countries represented in the district. B. Erickson asked if this will impact school choice and J. Mastrocola said no. E. Dichter thought it would since these students would be taking some of the available spaces but J. Mastrocola said the revenue source could be used to add teachers and maybe bring in more school choice students.

J. GIGER MOVED THEY DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH EDUCATIUS INTERNATIONAL WITH A ONE YEAR COMMITMENT WITH THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT AND HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL COME BACK TO THE COMMITTEE AT THE FIRST MEETING IN JANUARY 2013 WITH A PROGRESS REPORT TO DECIDE IF THE DISTRICT WANTS TO PURSUE THIS INTO FURTHER YEARS. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

L. Lathrop asked why they chose this company and J. Mastrocola said because of their success in other districts. M. Mastrullo said he is comfortable with the research that has been done on the company.

J. Mastrocola respectfully stated they do not really need the committee to take a vote and suggested he work with Mr. Mastrullo and get more information for committee members and perhaps do it with the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee. He said he could ask a company representative to come to a meeting but he does not feel they should delay this project.

**In Favor:** E. Dichter, J. Frey, J. Giger

**Abstention:** B. Erickson, J. Sjoberg, L. Lathrop

**Opposed:** A. Manugian

J. Frey recommended the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee do some additional study around this and report back to the school committee.

**3. Appointment of Attendance Officer** - Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Section 19 requires school committees to appoint a Supervisor of Attendance and this role is lacking in the district. J. Mastrocola recommends Dina Mancini be named district wide supervisor with a yearly stipend of \$3000, pro-rated for this year. She has acquired her state license. The job responsibilities were reviewed and he noted that investigating student residency/guardianship issues is missing in the district. The district has relied on the police department in the past for some of these issues but there are legal components the police cannot do. He stated 90% to 95% of her duties will be after the work day unless she had a court date and this would be rare.

Referring to the last sentence in Section 20 of Chapter 76 which says "they may apprehend and take to school without a warrant any truant or absentee found wandering in the streets or public places", J. Giger said they should ask for police involvement and feels there should be written guidance for the supervisor.

J. SJOBERG MOVED THEY APPROVE DINA MANCINI AS ATTENDANCE SUPERVISOR FOR A COMPENSATION OF \$3000 ANNUALLY, TO BE PRO-RATED FOR THIS YEAR.  
SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

B. Erickson asked if they will vote on this every year and was advised the school committee will appoint the person every year.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**4. 2012-2013 Proposed School Calendar** - The proposed 2012-2013 school calendar was developed with input from the principals, teacher union leadership, school committee subcommittees and others and pretty much mirrors this year. Early release days are contractual and will continue to be on Thursdays. The curriculum full day was changed from Friday to Tuesday during the Columbus weekend. With respect to parent/teacher conferences, B. Erickson asked if a half day for conferences is contractual and J. Mastrocola said he does not recall the language. The conferences are held in the afternoons and at night. J. Sjoberg and A. Manugian have heard from parents that having conferences on different days can be a problem when they have children in different schools.

L. Lathrop said the Policy Subcommittee is discussing whether or not they should examine religious holidays such as the Jewish high holidays, Good Friday and possibly others. There is no formal policy.

J. Sjoberg said having consistent half days has been a fantastic change and very helpful. Gerrit asked why Thursday was chosen since the students like a half day on a Friday. J. Mastrocola said Wednesday is generally the meeting day for teachers and it was just the day that was selected. E. Dichter asked if the curriculum half days extend the teachers' work day and was told yes.

The proposed calendar will be posted on the website with a link for comments and the committee will vote on it at their next meeting.

**5. Donation** - IBM has donated \$1000 to Florence Roche for technology. An Elmo P10 document camera, or comparable equipment, will be purchased.

A. MANUGIAN MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE GENEROUS DONATION FROM IBM.

SECONDED BY L. LATHROP

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**6. Evaluation Guidelines** - Today the state released the guidelines and model for the teacher evaluation tool, the superintendent evaluation tool and the principal evaluation tool. J. Mastrocola said he and the principals did a webinar conducted by the DESC and a team will be attending an intensive workshop in Fitchburg on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Another team will attend a workshop to learn how to develop Smart Goals. He will give the superintendent guidelines to the chair of Personnel and Negotiations.

**7. Mold** - Some middle school teachers were concerned about air quality and potential mold in the sixth grade wing. Testing reports from Covino Environmental Associates, Inc. were distributed and their observations and analytical laboratory results did not identify any mold contamination. Steve Byrne distributed a memorandum dated January 5, 2012 with pictures of the unit ventilators, and explained the proactive mitigation that was done and the ongoing efforts taking place to ensure indoor air quality is not impaired. More air samplings will be done tomorrow. J. Mastrocola stated he can unequivocally say there are no air quality issues. The teachers have received a copy of the report but Mr. Byrne has not yet met with them. B. Erickson asked how much the testing cost and was told \$1000. No overtime was involved.

**C. Director of Business and Finance** - G. Martin reported they have made an offer to Liz Baker and she should be on board the week of January 30<sup>th</sup>. The position opened up with the retirement of Karen Roensch.

#### **D. Advisory Committees**

**Prescott Advisory Committee** - No report

**Tarbell Advisory Committee** - B. Erickson reported the septic system is in and Mr. Haddad will be signing the contract with the new owners very soon.

**E. Chair** - J. Frey reminded members to let him know if they are interested in attending the National School Boards Association Conference in April.

#### **X. Discussions**

None

#### **X. New Business**

None

#### **XI. Adjournment**

B. ERICKSON MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:27 P.M. SECONDED BY A. MANUGIAN

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

With attachment