

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
January 24, 2012

Approved 2.14.12

### **PRESENT:**

Mr. Erik Dichter, Secretary (left at 8:40 p.m.)  
Mr. Jim Frey, Chair  
Mr. John Giger  
Ms Leslie Lathrop  
Ms Alison Manugian, Vice-chair  
Mr. Jon Sjoberg

### **ABSENT:**

Ms Berta Erickson

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

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

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Lindemer, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; S. Silverman, P. Myerson, S. Boczenowski, B. Rich, See attached sign-in sheet

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

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by the chair, J. Frey.

### **II. Pledge of Allegiance (Students from Swallow Union)**

Principal Myerson asked fourth graders Joshua Booth and Ciarra Costen to lead the Pledge of Allegiance because they represent many of the fine qualities of all the students at Swallow Union. Joshua is very thoughtful and takes the time to make a positive difference. He has the gift of always seeing the good in any person or situation and his actions, like many of the students at Swallow Union, make the school a better place to be. Ciarra was welcomed at Swallow Union after the start of the school year and brought a work ethic that is second to none. Her energy and desire to do her best had an immediate and positive effect on her classmates.

### **III. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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.

J. Frey announced Groton-Dunstable made the ESPN.com Boston local blog, pointing out the varsity hockey team is doing very well this year and will hold a memorial game in February to raise funds for the Billy Woitowicz Memorial Fund.

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

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 10, 2012 AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY L. LATHROP

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

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

A. MANUGIAN MOVED THEY APPROVE ONE PAYROLL WARRANT DATED JANUARY 12, 2012 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$780,646.67 AND FOUR VENDOR WARRANTS TOTALING \$713,262.16.

SECONDED BY J. GIGER

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

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

None

**VII. Presentations**

**1. Cedar Point, Ohio - Music in the Parks Field Trip** - Tim Savoy distributed an updated itinerary. He explained they have the option of going to Cedar Point in Cleveland, Ohio, leaving on May 10<sup>th</sup> and returning on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Unlike other competitions, this one is only held on two weekends and they will be in a category with only high schools of their division or larger. The itinerary was reviewed and T. Savoy noted this is a night time competition. The cost is \$637 per person and the bus costs are more since they need to have more than one driver for each bus due to the length of the trip. The Music Honor Society does all the fundraising and they will be able to help those needing financial aid as well as help everyone reduce their cost below \$600. They receive one free package for every 15 paid packages and this covers the chaperones. He stated he only uses teacher chaperones so their CORI checks are all ready done and the bus drivers and tour director will provide CORI checks. This is the fourth time he has used Kaleidoscope Adventures.

A. Manugian asked about the "Director's gift" and T. Savoy said this is usually a thermos or other small item.

Stating this trip is further away than previous ones, J. Frey asked Mr. Savoy if in the process of looking for more competition, this is why this one was chosen. T. Savoy said they look at the options of where competitions are being held and this competition is for high schools only. They will be competing in a higher category. L. Lathrop asked if they are just judged on performance. They receive written and recorded scores. She asked if it is time to think about MICCA. MICCA is a day when any school in Massachusetts can sign up to perform. T. Savoy said he does not do MICCA because it is more of an adjudication and their highest category is gold (anything above an 87). His students score much higher than that.

L. LATHROP MOVED TO APPROVE THE MUSIC IN THE PARKS FIELD TRIP.  
SECONDED BY E. DICHTER

Finn Garvey said he is excited to be going and it is an honor to compete against just high schools.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**2. Project Interface - Steve Boczenowski** - Steve Boczenowski explained last year he and his wife started a charitable organization, Teenage Anxiety and Depression Solutions (TADS) because they developed an interest in mental health, especially with young people. The message they bring is about how important it is to get mental health for a loved one when they need it, what to look for in order to know when help is needed and how to get help. Getting help can be a real challenge as people do not tend to share information about a good therapist or psychiatrist. He said Project Interface is a help line that has a database of all the mental health providers in the area and after asking the caller some questions, they will call back with a couple of referrals. They started in Newton five years ago and this month, TADS paid for a two year contract for them to come to Groton and Dunstable. After two weeks here, they have received five calls and the need is out there.

S. Boczenowski has worked with the high school guidance counselors and they are excited about this. Project Interface had an information night in mid-December with the guidance counselors, nurses, EMTs, librarians, police officers, clergy and representatives from other schools that serve Groton Dunstable. It costs \$10,000 a year for their services. TADS paid \$14,000 and a grant from the Department of Public Health paid \$6000 for the two year contract. He hopes the towns will see the value of this service and be able to pick up the service with public funds as the contract winds down.

He said this issue hits school districts in many different ways. Mental health issues can be caused by physical means or external stress. More and more young people are suffering mental health issues and

guidance counselors everywhere say the issue gets worse every year. There is a high rate of suicide among the gay and lesbian population and starting a Gay-Straight Alliance in the district would show the school, and the community, that these students are valued and accepted.

S. Boczenowski said his son abused alcohol and drugs and ultimately, took his own life. Young people with mental health issues self medicate and get themselves into trouble and throwing them out of school may not be the right answer. Sometimes the answer is to talk about, and understand, the problem and be more compassionate. He said TADS is here to serve the community as a resource for all things mental health.

Volunteer facilitator Barbara Rich explained Community Restorative Justice is an alternative to penalizing students when they misbehave. It is free and used in every country. They want it to be used more in Groton. The Groton police have been trained and they have the option of taking someone to court or helping the person make a change. She stated they are not getting any cases from Groton and she does not know where they are going. She would like the school committee, if possible, to encourage the police to have more involvement with Restorative Justice. The coordinator would bring the offender and victim together and see if they will agree to the process and then the volunteer would work with the offender for several months. She noted that many times they will uncover a serious mental health issue that has been under the radar.

J. Frey said the committee will look into how other districts are using this approach and working with their police departments. J. Giger said Ms Erickson was an advocate of Restorative Justice being an option when they were working on the anti-bullying policy. B. Rich said they would like to meet with the guidance counselors and principals when there is time in their schedules.

Project Interface is for the whole community, regardless of age. They can be reached at 888-244-6843 x411.

**3. Middle School Cluster Grouping - Principal Silverman** - Principal Silverman said he has had three parent presentations in the last year and a half. He stated the district needs to address the concerns of high achieving students to better educate them and the middle school will be piloting this program next year. Teachers have had preliminary training over the past two years and the implementation will not cost anything. Research clearly suggests that most classroom teachers make no, or only minor, modifications to meet the unique needs of gifted learners. He noted gifted learners have unique and specific learning needs that require particular provisions and programs resulting in curriculum which is differentiated in terms of content, process, pace and depth. Research has shown that up to 20% of dropouts are gifted students who quit because they feel unchallenged, ignored and frustrated. Unchallenged gifted students often display the same symptoms of those with ADD.

S. Silverman explained cluster grouping is a group of identified gifted students clustered into a mixed ability classroom with a teacher who has experience in differentiating instruction. Students work with like-minds and are not isolated from the rest of the class. They are part of the mainstream and interact with year level peers and this helps avoid stereotyping. All students benefit from differentiation strategies in each class.

Currently, there are five levels in most classrooms - gifted, above average, average, below average and significantly below grade level. With cluster grouping, all identified gifted students are placed into designated gifted-cluster classrooms, with the goal to not have more than 8 gifted students in one classroom. Teachers will be responsible for three types of learners in their class. High achieving students will not be in the same class as the gifted cluster but average, and below average students will be evenly placed in all classrooms. The far below average students would not be placed in a clustered classroom.

S. Silverman explained that in tracking, students are grouped into classrooms with others of comparable ability and remain together throughout the school years. Curriculum is based on the ability of the average students in the class. With cluster grouping, all classes have a range of abilities and teachers modify or extend grade level standards according to the students' needs and abilities. He noted there are many students in special education that are gifted and it is important to get away from the stereotype that gifted kids are an elite group.

They all ready cluster special education and ELL students at the middle school and now they are looking to cluster another level of students.

S. Silverman reviewed some of the differences between gifted and high achieving students. The challenges of clustering include parents wanting their child in the clustered class and placing gifted students with teachers who have no experience working with high end learners. Over the summer, twenty-one of his teachers took an online course on cluster grouping. In order for a child to be in a cluster group, he/she must take the NNAT (Nagieri Nonverbal Ability Test) and score 95% or higher. To be eligible to take the test, the student must score 260 or greater in the most recent MCAS tests in math and ELA, and have a signed consent form, or a student may be nominated to take the test by a teacher or parent. If nominated by a teacher, the parent must sign a consent form. The NNAT is a thirty minute, nonverbal test and can only be taken once. Once a student is identified as gifted, he/she stays in the program until moving to the high school. Two staff members are trained to give the test and administrators will correct the it. The grade level with the most gifted students will be piloting the program.

He reiterated that if a student is in a cluster group, that does not mean that the other students will not have a fulfilling year at school. Cluster grouping is high end differentiation and many teachers all ready differentiate a lot. A student may be gifted in only certain subjects and if he or she is in the cluster and having trouble, the child does not have to be taken out of the class. Rather, the type of work the student receives will be changed to a different level.

S. Silverman said the fourth graders will have the opportunity to take the NNAT in April.

J. Giger asked what happens to the data on the students who score less than 95% on the NNAT and S. Silverman said it does not go into the permanent record. J. Giger asked how the clustered student will be challenged at the high school. S. Silverman said this has no influence on placement in high school but the high school does have accelerated learning programs. J. Giger said Principal Silverman, Principal Mastrullo and Mr. Mastrocola should probably discuss how to keep the gifted learner challenged in high school.

J. Frey said some tracking does go on in the middle school math classes and asked if there will be a conflict. S. Silverman said not really since the other classes are still mixed ability and they do a cross-teach and one particular teacher could be serving kids from two different teams. J. Frey asked where this fits in with the Turning Points approach. S. Silverman said Turning Points is 100% anti-tracking and talks about meeting the developmental needs of students. The cluster grouping emulates the Turning Points model. J. Frey asked what the next step will be after the pilot. S. Silverman said he will be meeting with the elementary principals and if the pilot works, incoming fifth graders would have the opportunity to take the NNAT. J. Frey recommended he consider piloting the program in two grades so there is a bigger data set to draw conclusions on and said it removes the pressure from a small number of teachers that do not take to it very well. S. Silverman said he will discuss this with his committee.

## **VIII. Reports**

### **A. Subcommittees**

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

**Policy Subcommittee** - L. Lathrop reported they are working on their calendar.

**Budget & Finance Subcommittee** - A. Manugian reported they met last week with the cost center managers to discuss the budget and education implications. Budget information will be available prior to the FY13 budget hearing on February 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the high school library and budget discussion will take place at the February 14<sup>th</sup> school committee meeting. The budget needs to be approved by the end of February or early March. They also discussed the creation of a stabilization fund. Their next meeting is at the Middle School this Thursday at 8:00 a.m.

**Personnel and Negotiations** - J. Sjoberg reported they have been going through personnel policies and they will forward some ideas to the Policy Subcommittee. Their next meeting is scheduled for February 21<sup>st</sup> but

since this is February school vacation, it may be rescheduled.

## **B. Superintendent**

**1. 2012-2013 Proposed School Calendar - (Action)** - The committee received some public feedback with regard to the calendar. J. Mastrocola said it was pretty much a synopsis of what the Leadership Team discussed. There was a consensus with the feedback about starting school after Labor Day but he said the weather component comes into play and starting school a few days early, especially with MCAS, makes a big difference. The early release days are always an issue and the staff is in favor of trying to eliminate some days.

L. Lathrop asked that some Jewish holidays be added to the calendar for informational purposes since they matter for homework, tests etc. J. Sjoberg wants to be equitable if they put religious holidays on the calendar. L. Lathrop asked why the half-days are not on Fridays. J. Mastrocola said Wednesdays are traditionally for teacher professional development and the contracts say the teachers leave at the same time on Friday. Student attendance could also possibly become an issue with a Friday half day.

J. Giger said members received a message from a parent expressing concern about safety and suggesting they not have school on November 6<sup>th</sup> (presidential election). J. Mastrocola said he feels strongly they should not have school on November 6<sup>th</sup> and had suggested moving the October full day curriculum day to November 6<sup>th</sup> but instructionally, this did not make sense. He noted they had extra police presence during the local election and the principals at the middle school complex thought the traffic patterns were okay. J. Frey said the committee appreciates the feedback.

J. GIGER MOVED THEY ADOPT THE 2012-2013 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR AS PROPOSED.  
SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

L. Lathrop asked if the informational data she suggested will be added. J. Sjoberg said he is uncomfortable about putting some, but not all, religious holidays on the school calendar. J. Frey said it is a worthy topic and needs more discussion. More information can be added to the calendar at a later date. J. Giger said the information on the Jewish holidays can be distributed to the faculty and administration to increase awareness. J. Frey would like Curriculum and Instruction to look at this and see how many religious days they are talking about.

L. LATHROP MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO READ "THEY ADOPT THE CALENDAR STRUCTURE".  
There was no second and the main motion stands.

**In Favor:** J. Giger, A. Manugian, J. Frey, J. Sjoberg

**Opposed:** L. Lathrop

**2. No Name Calling Day - January 25, 2012 (Info)** - Governor Patrick has designated January 25<sup>th</sup> as "No Name Calling Day" in Massachusetts. This is a provision of the anti-bullying legislation to increase public awareness of the devastating effects of verbal bullying, to encourage students to use positive dialogue and pledge not to use hurtful names on this designated day, to promote tolerance and respect for differences and to reaffirm the commitment of the citizens of the Commonwealth to basic human rights and dignity. Students are encouraged to wear black tomorrow as a sign of their commitment to "Black Out Bullying" and to sign a banner that reads "I pledge to take a stand against bullying and name calling." Each school was encouraged to design its own banner. Each school all ready encourages no name calling every day.

**3. New England Region Anti-Defamation League** - A letter from Derrek Shulman, Regional Director of ADL, was distributed. He thanks the district for moving forward with the "No Name Calling Day" endeavor.

**4. Governor's Budget** - Governor Patrick is releasing the budget tomorrow and J. Mastrocola will include information in his Friday update. It appears districts will receive the same, or higher, Chapter 70 funding than last year. The preliminary circuit breaker funding numbers are the same as last year as are those for regional transportation. J. Sjoberg pointed out the federal jobs bill money is exhausted.

**C. Director of Business and Finance** - G. Martin reported they have received the preliminary draft audit for FY11 from Melanson and Heath and they will respond to the Management Letter. Melanson and Heath is tentatively scheduled to present their audit report to the school committee at the second meeting in March.

**D. Advisory Committees** - No report

**E. Chair** -

**1. Memorial Committee** - With respect to the request the committee received earlier this year for a memorial for Sgt. Billy Woitowicz, J. Frey reported he has kicked off a Memorial Committee to be assembled and Jeanne Niemoller will be the chair.

**2. Executive Session** - Tonight's executive session was cancelled since they did not have any progress with the teachers' negotiations and nothing to bring back to the committee. They are continuing to meet with the teachers to work out some of the healthcare issues that affect all the units and the next meeting with the PEC is scheduled, at their request, on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**X. Discussions**

None

**X. New Business**

J. Sjoberg asked how they can get the policies in place to support adoption of technologies within the schools so students can bring in their own personal technology devices to utilize for educational purposes. He believes the principals would like to have some support and structure. L. Lathrop said policy would lay the framework and the administration puts it into the handbooks. J. Mastrocola said this can be discussed by the Policy Subcommittee but it is also a discussion at the site based level in terms of the difference between a guideline and a policy.

Fran Stanley stated she is concerned about the status of contract negotiations with the teachers. Since their contract has expired and there is a proposal to increase their health insurance premiums, she is concerned with the impact this will have and asked that they be provided with the information they need. She would like the teachers to focus on the students since this is what they want to do.

J. Frey said they cannot comment on any individual element within the topics under discussion because they are in active negotiations but the committee is committed to reaching a fair agreement. He explained that when the employees were moved into the GIC (Government Insurance Commission) for healthcare benefits, a combined representative panel of all the bargaining units was created and they must negotiate with them. They have to come to an agreement with that group before they can finalize negotiations with any other contracts. That team has abundant information and they communicate back to their constituent units and this slows progress.

Representing the recently formed GDEA Health and Safety Committee for MSS, Clare O'Neill thanked members for listening to their concerns about the building issues. They appreciate the efforts that have been made to clean the areas of concern and having Mr. Byrne, Mr. Martin, Principal Silverman and Ms Gallardo meet with them. They are still concerned about the dimpling and blistering of tiles in various places on the ground floor and would like to have the Department of Public Health come in to address these issues.

**XI. Adjournment**

L. LATHROP MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:30 P.M. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

GDRSC 01/24/2012  
Respectfully submitted,

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Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

With attachment