

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
February 14, 2012

APPROVED 02.28.12

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:

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Lindemer, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; J. Peterson, L. Joyce, J. Joyce, M. Suchecki

I. Call to Order:

a. Vote to Enter Executive Session

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The committee unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21a-3 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 and in accordance with Section 21a-2 to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel. Topics: Compensation, litigation and Unit A bargaining.

b. Reconvene in Regular Session

The GDRSC Meeting reconvened in open session and was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by the chair, J. Frey.

II. Pledge of Allegiance - Students from Middle School (Grades 5 and 6)

Sixth grader Julia Joyce and fifth grader Matthew Suchecki lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Julia's favorite subjects are art and science and she is a member of the Pages for Peace Club. She loves horseback riding, Irish Step Dance and drawing. Matthew loves drawing, singing and acting. He is a member of the Chess Club, is learning to play the saxophone and has a second degree green belt in karate.

III. Announcements

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

J. Giger announced GDAY is offering an American Red Cross babysitting course in the PIT at MSN on March 15th from 11:30 am to 6:00 pm. The course is open to 24 participants on a first come basis and the cost is \$85. Registration forms will be available in the Friday Folder.

B. Erickson announced she will be running for a three year term on the school committee.

A. Manugian announced she will be running for a three year term on the school committee.

IV. Approval of Minutes

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 24, 2012.
SECONDED BY A. MANUGIAN

In Favor: J. Giger, L. Lathrop, A. Manugian, J. Frey, E. Dichter, J. Sjoberg

Abstention: B. Erickson

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL/BUDGET AND FINANCE MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 17, 2011. SECONDED BY A. MANUGIAN

In Favor: J. Giger, L. Lathrop, A. Manugian, J. Frey, B. Erickson, J. Sjoberg

Abstention: E. Dichter

A. MANUGIAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL/BUDGET AND FINANCE MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2012. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

In Favor: J. Giger, A. Manugian, B. Erickson, J. Sjoberg

Abstention: L. Lathrop, J. Frey, E. Dichter

V. Vote to Accept Warrant Articles

A. MANUGIAN MOVED TO APPROVE TWO PAYROLL WARRANTS TOTALING \$1,602,479.51 AND SEVEN VENDOR WARRANTS TOTALING \$940,181.91. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VI. Questions and Comments from the Public

None

VII. Presentations

None

VIII. Reports

A. Subcommittees

Policy Subcommittee - Members received a copy of the concussion policy JJIF approved on December 11, 2011. It was noted this policy will be revisited in March.

Budget & Finance Subcommittee - A. Manugian reported they will meet in the MSS library at 8:00 a.m. on February 16th.

Personnel and Negotiations - J. Sjoberg reported they met to discuss mitigation strategies should the superintendent be leaving. Their meeting scheduled for February 21st has been cancelled.

Curriculum and Instruction - A. Manugian reported they met on February 2nd. Principal Mastrullo was present to discuss the student foreign exchange program. The kindergarten feasibility plan and the potential of moving to a full day free kindergarten in the future were discussed.

They also discussed the school calendar and what holidays should be on it and how to make people in the district aware of observances that may be going on with their friends and neighbors. L. Lathrop said the decision was that holidays will be added on the calendar and webpage J. Mastrocola said they looked at models from other schools and J. Giger has provided additional information on the subject. He said it was more of a discussion than a decision on what they would do.

J. Mastrocola said one thought from the meeting was to produce a similar workshop around Brain Gym and Four Quadrants of Thinking, similar to a Parent Academy session that was attended by a few school committee members. Brain Gym is a way for kids to use a mental activity to help with emotional intelligence

and is a popular strategy to use.

B. Superintendent

1. Self Assessment (from the floor) - As part of his contract, J. Mastrocola is required to make a self-assessment half-way through the school year and he presented an overview of his goals.

Budget - Goal 1 - Maintain vigilance internally and with town officials towards a balanced Fiscal 13 budget - This process was started last summer and a much better job was done this year due to the way they organized the programmatic discussions with multiple budget and finance meetings, shared decision making and getting the site-based councils involved early. Based on the presented budget and the education components that have been put in, he is confident he will meet this goal.

Budget - Goal 2 - Create a feasibility plan for a tuition free full-day kindergarten - He has shared a draft of the plan with the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee.

Management - Goal 1 - Create a new performance based evaluation instrument for non-union personnel - A rough draft of the document was given to the chair of Personnel and Negotiations about three weeks ago for feedback. There is a little more work to do and he is on target to complete this in April or May.

Management - Goal 2 - Expand visibility in schools to support staff and their duties and outside the classroom - His role has expanded this year in a positive way and he feels he has met this goal very well. The Fireside Chats and Tea with Joe have been well attended. A strategy he used this year is a weekly accountability sheet from the principals. He receives them at 10:00 am on Fridays and they talk about instructional components the principals go through, components about working with teachers and provide feedback on students who are falling below grade level. This provides an opportunity for him to have rich discussions with the principals.

Teaching and Learning Goal 1 - Support the high school administration to implement the NEASC recommendations - Making sure he supports the new high school principal and administration in moving forward with the recommendations has been job one for him. They received continued accreditation and the challenge is to put the blueprint of the NEASC report into action items. He is on task with moving forward with this goal.

Teaching and Learning Goal 2 - Create a technology plan for the district - He said he is a little behind in getting this in place but informally, they have put together a lot of plans for technology since September. He anticipates he will have a full plan put together in the upcoming months.

Overarching Goal - Create an accountability plan by July 1 that synthesizes all budget, management and teaching and learning accomplishments since June with short and long range plans - He needs a lot more time with the principals and the Leadership Teams. He is on task to complete the document by April 1st.

J. Mastrocola highlighted other accomplishments that are not part of his goals. These include creating an exploratory report card committee to look at moving toward a standards based report card, creating an athletic field exploratory committee, that will present their findings to the school committee in March, and getting school open in two days following the devastating October snowstorm. He noted a stabilized administrative team is in place at Florence Roche and the high school and they have a new athletic director. Major teaching positions were also put in place. Curriculum cadres have been established in anticipation of a curriculum coordinator coming on board.

He noted a true leader is putting good people around them and said he is lucky to have Mr. Martin with his good work of restructuring the high school debt that will save the district and communities thousands of dollars over the next ten years. He recognizes having good people around him and having a team approach to getting things done is vital and he anticipates completing the goals.

2. Kindergarten Survey Draft - Members received a copy of a rough draft for a Free Full-day Kindergarten Survey. J. Mastrocola said he has worked closely with Mr. Hoyt and feels strongly that this is the right thing to do in public education. Having this discussion is important for the community and he noted there would be a cost associated with having a free full-day kindergarten. He would like the survey to go out within 3 to 4 weeks and asked members to send him, or Mr. Hoyt, any feedback. J. Giger requested the survey be sent out in Word rather than a PDF. A. Manugian suggested they partner this with another survey that goes out to parents of kindergarteners through first or second graders to see how they feel about partial or full day kindergarten as their child progresses. B. Erickson suggested a spot assessment be done with parents of children who attended full day kindergarten and are now in 8th and 12th grades. L. Lathrop would like to see pre-schools with private kindergarten provide feedback because this might pull some students away from those.

3. Special Parent Academy Session - On Wednesday, February 29th, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center, Elizabeth K. Englander, Ph. D. Professor of Psychology, will be talking about bullying and safety in the schools. She is the Director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) and is an expert on bullying. J. Mastrocola thanked Mr. Hoyt for putting this together.

C. Director of Business and Finance - G. Martin reported the annual audit was completed in August and Melanson and Heath will present their report to the school committee on March 27th. The end of year report submitted to the Department of Education in September needs to be audited and this will be done next Tuesday. The single audit for the 240 federal grant (Sped grant) was completed last week.

J. Frey asked when they will hear about the grants they applied for to use on capital programs and Mr. Martin said it should be in March or April.

D. Advisory Committees

Prescott Advisory Committee - B. Erickson reported architect Joel Bargmann gave a presentation to the Board of Selectmen last night. The options are a 70/30 and/or a 50/50 commercial/community use. The building is still being considered for use as a fire station although the town is simultaneously looking at the Lawrence Trust on Pleasant Street. A fire station would cost up to \$8M to bring the building up to seismic regulations. The use of the building as an Inn is also a consideration and a public hearing will take place. Zoning will have to be changed if the use is changed from a public use.

Members discussed the fact there are contingency plans in place for the Central Office to be moved and it was agreed a notice, with a fixed amount of time, needs to be given to the district if they need to move before the end of their lease. L. Lathrop asked if they need to move over a summer and J. Mastrocola said this would be preferred but it could be done during the school year. If things go as planned, B. Erickson said there will be a vote at the spring town meeting.

E. Chair

1. Naming Memorial Committee - J. Frey reported he has named Jeanne Niemoller chair of the Memorial Committee. She will be putting together a planned structure and some recommendations on who should be added to the committee.

2. National School Board Association 2012 Annual Conference - Because of a scheduling conflict, J. Frey said he cannot attend the April 21st - April 23rd conference in Boston. If another member can attend, he will see if his registration can be transferred. He noted there will be about 130 sessions offered over the three days.

IX. Discussions

A. Proposed FY2013 Budget

J. Frey said he has not received any general feedback other than some general support from community members with respect to the good cost control and sustainability they are showing with the plan.

B. Erickson said Groton FinCom chair Jay Prager is pleased with the work that has been done. J. Frey said

he, Mr. Martin and Mr. Mastrocola gave a presentation to the Dunstable FinCom and answered some questions. They were essentially supportive.

J. Frey said approval of the budget will be on the next agenda. Questions can be sent to the Central Office or to a school committee representative.

X. New Business

Superintendent Search

J. Frey congratulated Mr. Mastrocola for being offered a position in his former home district of Peabody.

The committee needs to start considering their plans for new leadership in the district. Personnel and Negotiations met as a whole on January 31st to discuss options which included retaining the superintendent, looking for an interim superintendent for one year while they did a full year search or starting a search now. J. Frey said he contacted MARS (Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools) and MASS (Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents) around the interim superintendent process to see if there are best practices or lists of interim, other potential interim, candidates. He was advised that to name an interim, they have to demonstrate, and file with the state, that they have done a search and have not been able to find a suitable candidate and therefore, chose to invoke an interim. A criteria could be there is simply insufficient time to do a search in time for the new school year.

With respect to the search, B. Erickson asked if word of mouth is allowed. She has heard the names of retired superintendents that might be interested. J. Frey said there are a number of resources available to identify candidates but there is no process that would prevent them from considering any qualified candidate no matter how the name comes to them.

J. Sjoberg asked if there would be a screening committee for choosing an interim or if the school committee would choose. J. Frey said either process can be used.

L. Lathrop said she has been in contact with MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) and NESDEC (New England School Development Council), the search committee they used the last two times. Both advised you do not have to start a search during a certain month in order to get the right pool of candidates. NESDEC has a "two year warranty" - if you used their services to hire a superintendent and that superintendent leaves the district before the two years are up, they will do the search for just their expenses. NESDEC called to tell her they are ready to begin.

J. Frey advised he has received unsolicited offers from two other search firms. L. Lathrop asked if they will need to go through the focus groups again. A. Manugian said they could put it out on the List Serves to see if community members are interested in doing public forums. B. Erickson thought they were trying to stay away from List Serves. E. Dichter said they had an overall positive experience with NESDEC and if they are willing to help at little to no cost, feels they should sign them up as soon as possible.

Although this is a school committee decision, B. Erickson asked if it would be appropriate for Mr. Mastrocola to give some thoughts about it. J. Mastrocola said it is too early for him to give those thoughts. J. Giger said they may want to do some things in parallel so they are covered for which ever alternative unfolds.

J. Frey said they are having this discussion as a forgone conclusion that Mr. Mastrocola is leaving but he has not signed a contract with his new district.

It was agreed J. Sjoberg will have a NESDEC representative come to a Personnel and Negotiations meeting as soon as possible to talk about the process for doing a search.

Future Discussion Item

A. Manugian would like to have discussion on the use of List Serves and communication tools.

Day on the Hill

J. Giger said there will be a different format at this year's MASC's Day on the Hill on March 29th. By design, the time to spend with the Senators and Representatives will be at lunch. After lunch, MASC and DESE will be doing a two hour tutorial on the new evaluation program.

Washington, D.C. Field Trip

J. Sjoberg said he has been chosen as a chaperone for the Washington, D.C. field trip and wants to be sure this is not a conflict since he voted to approve the trip. He was advised there is no conflict with his disclosure.

XI. Adjournment

L. LATHROP MOVED TO ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION, NOT TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION, AT 8:30 P.M. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary