

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2012

Approved 03.13.12

PRESENT:

Mr. Erik Dichter, Secretary (Arrived at 7:13 p.m./Left at 9:00 p.m.)
Ms Berta Erickson
Mr. John Giger
Ms Leslie Lathrop
Ms Alison Manugian, Vice-chair
Mr. Jon Sjoberg (Arrived at 7:06 p.m.)

ABSENT:

Mr. Jim Frey, Chair

ADMINISTRATION:

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

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Lindemer, Groton Herald; D. Melpignano, D. Asadoorian, M. LeBlanc, A. Bettencourt, See attached sign-in sheet

I. Call to Order:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by the vice- chair, A. Manugian. She announced the meeting is being recorded in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

II. Pledge of Allegiance (High School Students)

Walter Campbell and John-Michael Stroffoleno led the Pledge of Allegiance. Walter is a sophomore in the PAVE program, working on academics and vocational skills. He enjoys digital imaging and studio art. John-Michael is a junior and is also in the PAVE classroom where he does PE, chorus and goes out to various work sites. He enjoys the Drama Club and being part of the school plays.

J. Mastrocola said Alex Roberts was not able to be here tonight to lead the pledge and will hopefully be at a future meeting. He attends the PAVE program and likes ceramics, using the weight room and going out to various work sites.

III. Announcements

J. Mastrocola congratulated the winter sports teams as they move on into the tournaments. The girls basketball team is playing here tonight.

J. Mastrocola announced the bullying and safety in the schools presentation by Elizabeth K. Englander, Ph. D. Professor of Psychology, scheduled for tomorrow night, has been postponed to 6:00 p.m. on March 7, 2012 and will be in the Black Box Theater.

J. Mastrocola announced Thursday starts Women's History Month at the high school and there will be a variety of events scheduled for March. The Women in Arts Exhibition is up now and the list of events is available on the high school website. He thanked Tammie Reynolds and her team for their outstanding job organizing this every year.

IV. Approval of Minutes

B. ERICKSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8 , 2012.
SECONDED BY J. GIGER

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

L. LATHROP MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUDGET HEARING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2012. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL BUDGET AND FINANCE MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 12, 2012. SECONDED BY L. LATHROP

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

Abstention: B. Erickson

J. SJOBERG TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL BUDGET AND FINANCE MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 19, 2012. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

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

Abstention: L. Lathrop

V. Vote to Accept Warrant Articles

A. MANUGIAN MOVED TO APPROVE ONE PAYROLL WARRANT DATED FEBRUARY 23, 2012 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$800,708.97 AND THREE VENDOR WARRANTS TOTALING \$185,712.82.

SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VI. Questions and Comments from the Public

In January, Lynn Mueller, Unit D paraprofessional contract manager for the GDEA, gave numbers illustrating how devastating an increase in an employee's contribution towards health insurance would be and she said tonight, she would like to give some different numbers. Approximately 35% percent of the district's employees are residents of Groton or Dunstable and 75% of the paraprofessionals live in Groton or Dunstable. She said they are neighbors, friends, the people they run into at the grocery store and meet at the playing fields. She said mainly, they are the people they entrust their children to for over 6 hours a day and have the faith that they have their children's best interest in mind with respect to their education, safety and peace of mind. She said they care deeply about everyone's child and as another round of contract negotiations begin, she asked people to remember who they are and what they mean to their families.

At a previous school committee meeting, Clare O'Neill said the chair stated dealing with the Public Employee Committee (PEC) was like dealing with a super union. She said her question to the chair would be: Why are we pursuing it in the first place? She stated their collaboration with the district to join the GIC was based on the understanding that the 85%/15% split was fair and equitable and said it saved the towns approximately \$900,000. Six months after joining GIC, sweeping changes were made across the board and wiped out the initial benefits of the employees experience and there were no changes to the district's contribution. She stated the pressure is now on to force PEC members to go to a 75%/25% split with nothing offsetting to the insurance plans that are all ready detrimental to their pocketbooks. She said they wondered why it is necessary at all.

Carolyn Scafidi, president of the Groton-Dunstable Educators Association, said she wants to support a fair contract. She invited the entire Groton-Dunstable community to attend the GDEA Variety Show on March 16th at 7:00 p.m. All proceeds go to the high school scholarships.

Kevin McKenzie, school committee representative for Nashoba Valley Technical High School, said their student representative read about the Groton-Dunstable Chamber Choir needing to raise funds for their trip to the Olympics. She put a motion before the school committee, which was voted unanimously, to support their student council to offer a fundraiser to help the Chamber Chorus. There will be a Spaghetti Supper at Nashoba Tech on March 22nd, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., served by the Culinary Arts students, their student council and members from Groton-Dunstable's student council. K. McKenzie said their theme for the year has been "A Year of Giving" and this is a way to give back to the community and help a good cause.

VII. Presentations

A. Field Trips - Varsity Softball Cape Trip and Baseball Cape Trip (Action)

Coach Derek Asadoorian said the varsity softball team will be traveling to Cape Cod the weekend of March 23rd. The cost of the trip is to be determined. Coach Matt LeBlanc said the baseball team will be having its annual spring training trip to the Cape March 30th through April 1st. The cost is \$150 per student.

L. Lathrop feels D. Asadoorian's statement about the increase in the cost of the trip is a little snippy and asked if it can be removed. He disagreed it was snippy and said he is embarrassed to ask parents for the increase and would welcome a roundtable discussion on how to defray costs. B. Erickson feels the statement is justified and the parents deserve a reason.

J. Giger said he has no problem with the trips or with asking people to do the transportation the right way. Exposing the parents and the district to unreasonable liabilities in the event of an accident would be unreasonable and irresponsible and sometimes they need to change. He is concerned that the trip proposals are not standardized and asked Mr. Mastrocola to create a standardized format. L. Lathrop said it appears there is no standard for the student to chaperone ratio.

J. GIGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE VARSITY SOFTBALL TRIP FROM MARCH 23RD TO MARCH 25TH AND THE BASEBALL TRIP FROM MARCH 30TH TO APRIL 1ST. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

D. Asadoorian asked if the Athletic Director could present the trips to the school committee if there is a standardized form and was told yes.

B. Field Trip - Falmouth Lacrosse Trip (Action)

Coach Arena was not present. The Falmouth Lacrosse Trip to Cape Cod is scheduled for March 30th through April 1st and costs \$150 per student.

J. GIGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FALMOUTH LACROSSE TRIP ON MARCH 30TH THROUGH APRIL 1ST WITH THE CONDITION THE SUPERINTENDENT IS SATISFIED THE NUMBER OF COACHES AND CHAPERONES IS ADEQUATE FOR THE SIZE OF THE GROUP TRAVELING.
SECONDED BY E. DICHTER

J. Mastrocola said he is satisfied with the number of chaperones.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

D. Groton-Dunstable News - David Melpignano (from the floor)

D. Melpignano, representing the English Department, explained the videography program was initiated in the fall of 2004 with the hiring of a Videography/English teacher. Funding for the purchase of equipment was primarily supplied by a grant from the Groton-Dunstable Education Foundation. A partnership was initiated with Groton Cable Access and through them, the videography program has been able to upgrade their production facilities and replace all their equipment.

The curriculum was changed from English based writing and communications to broadcast journalism. Teaching students the broadcast journalism ethics and skills they need will help them get a job and also helps Groton Cable Access. The students will help tape meetings in the community. The program trains students to think creatively and independently and to develop a strong work ethic. Any student can apply for a summer internship with Groton Cable where they can come up with their own project and produce it. He showed clips from the Groton-Dunstable News program that is done once a month and written and produced by the students.

Sixteen students participate and four of them are advanced students and work on the stories for G-D News. Each student makes a commitment to tape two events for Groton Cable.

B. Erickson said the handout is a wonderful presentation. D. Melpignano said an advantage of having it in the

English Department is that it allows students to get the technical and communication skills. He said the writing of the program makes the program.

VIII. Reports

A. Subcommittees

Personnel and Negotiations - See discussion with Mr. Bettencourt - NESDEC

Policy Subcommittee - L. Lathrop reported they will be meeting at MSS next Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

Budget & Finance Subcommittee - A. Manugian reported they met on February 16th. FY12 is on track with spending and it is estimated E&D will be at 4% at the end of the fiscal year. They discussed the ongoing need to secure new software for accounting and HR and they will move forward with UniFund. They are requesting \$30,000 tonight, through transfers, to get started. They also discussed creating a stabilization fund. Their next meeting is on March 29th.

Curriculum and Instruction - A. Manugian reported they will meet at Prescott on March 19th at 6:00 p.m.

B. Superintendent

1. Vote to accept FY13 Budget (Action) - J. Mastrocola thanked the committee, leadership team, community participants, school-based councils and Budget & Finance for their hard work. He stated they have an outstanding budget for the district that is cost effective for the communities and puts forward an education component that continues, especially the low class size.

A. MANUGIAN MOVED THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2013 OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$31,204,083 WITH A DEBT SERVICE BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3,687,823 FOR A TOTAL BUDGET OF \$34,891,906. THE BUDGET TO BE ADOPTED WILL BE BY FUNCTION CODE AS SHOWN BELOW:

FUNCTION CODE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	FY2013 BUDGET REQUEST
1000	District Leadership & Administration	1,163,615
2000	Instructional Services	17,425,271
3000	Other School Services	2,203,010
4000	Operation & Maintenance of Plant	2,514,334
5000	Fixed Charges	6,248,691
6000	Community Services	-
7000	Fixed Asset-Acquisition, Improvement & Replacement	8,600
8000	Debt Retirement & Service	3,687,823
9000	Programs with Other Districts	<u>1,640,562</u>
		34,891,906

SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

2. Day on the Hill (Info) - Members received information about Day on the Hill that will be held at the State House on March 27th. Any member wishing to attend was asked to let Aine know by Friday. L. Lathrop said it is more structured this year.

3. Actions of the Merrimack Special Education Collaborative Interim Management Team (Info)

Members received information on the actions taken by the Merrimack Special Education Collaborative Interim Management Team through February 15, 2012. Dr. Christine Scott has been selected as the Executive Director and will start on March 1st. J. Mastrocola said this is a wonderful leadership move. The district has four students who participate on a daily basis and they are being served very well in a cost efficient way.

B. Erickson asked if a school committee member from each district will be on the board. J. Mastrocola said the governance structure is expected to change. J. Giger hopes Dr. Scott can communicate with them about how the governance model will work and J. Mastrocola said being more visible to the boards is one of her goals. He will ask her to attend a future school committee meeting.

4. **"It Can Wait"**- An assembly for 11th and 12th graders will be held at the high school Black Box Theater tomorrow at 8:45 a.m. Sponsored by AT&T and the District Attorney's Office, speakers will talk about the dangers of texting and driving. Members were invited to attend.

C. Director of Business and Finance

1. **Budget Transfer (Action)** - J. Martin explained they will be going with UniFund LLC for the accounting, human resources and payroll software. The accounting will be done this summer, followed by the human resources and payroll will be in the new calendar year. The software costs \$88,270 and they will do a three year lease and the contract is for five years. The budget transfer request of \$32,500 will cover the first payment. The money is being transferred from snow removal overtime, building heat accounts and the high school water (Poland Springs).

J. Giger said the software will pay dividends in the years to come and automates all sorts of things. Most importantly, it will allow all the pieces to talk to one another when it is time to do the budget. J. Sjoberg said the current system is very difficult and error prone.

J. GIGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET TRANSFERS IDENTIFIED IN THE REQUEST DATED FEBRUARY 28, 2012 TO MOVE BETWEEN ACCOUNTS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$32,500, ENDING UP IN THE COMPUTER SUPPORT ACCOUNT. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

2. **MSBA** - A representative from MSBA will be here on March 6th to look at the middle school roof and the infrastructure at Swallow Union.

D. Advisory Committees

Prescott Advisory Committee - B. Erickson reported there can be no absolutes at this time because everything is in flux. If Prescott is chosen to be a fire station, everything discussed by the re-use committee would come to a halt and the district office would not have to move until the winter of 2012 at the earliest. If the use is something different, they would be looking at the summer of 2013. The town will work with the committee and try to accommodate the situation with respect to when they would have to vacate the building.

E. **Chair** - No report

IX. Discussions

A. **Superintendent Search - Arthur Bettencourt, NESDEC** (Mr. Mastrocola was not present during this discussion)

J. Sjoberg said NESDEC (New England School Development Council) ran the search that found Mr. Mastrocola. 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. The warranty is in effect.

B. Erickson asked if they would be rushing it if they try finding a superintendent at this time or if it would be best to look at an interim. Dr. Bettencourt feels both options would work and shared a draft timeline of the process. This calendar would allow them to be in a position to select a superintendent by mid-June. He noted several searches are happening at this time but about this time is when new talent comes into the applicant pool. Groton-Dunstable is a very attractive district and will draw a good applicant pool.

Dr. Bettencourt said putting an interim in place is a nice way to set the table for a new superintendent and is a nice transitional period. It also gives the committee time to put together a search with the elements they would like to include. He said there may be things they would not need to do again such as the focus groups. He noted an interim superintendent can make up to a certain amount of money in a calendar year. Interims

are very dedicated and he said he could put them in touch with a suitable individual.

Discussion ensued about doing an accelerated search versus looking for an interim. J. Giger said they need to look at other things on their plate such as open contracts and the need to re-design and implement a new evaluation process. He feels they cannot downplay the role of the focus groups and said there may be different thoughts on how things should be. He thinks they should get the principals' thoughts and considerations with respect to transitioning once or twice. B. Erickson agrees their thoughts should be considered. L. Lathrop sees the district having a good forward momentum and does not want hiring an interim to put them on hold for a year.

It was agreed J. Sjoberg will post a Personnel and Negotiations meeting for Monday or Tuesday of next week when all seven committee members can be present.

(Mr. Mastrocola returned to the meeting)

X. New Business

Troubled by the recent school shooting in Ohio, J. Giger said this may be a good time for the committee, cabinet leaders and principals to see how well prepared they are to deal with such a situation. While it is a shame to have to think about it, he said it is a reality of the world today. J. Sjoberg said they do lockdown procedures and students have pass codes. B. Erickson said they need more guidance counselors and social workers in the district that can help the troubled people. J. Mastrocola said they have a crisis team that is more encompassing than it was in the past and has the support of the police chiefs. About ten staff members attended their kick-off about three weeks ago and they meet monthly. He has asked the principals to simulate any notable issue that happens to see what they would do in regard to their crisis plan and what gaps they might have. He said he may ask a principal to come to a meeting to discuss how they do the simulation. The district hosted an extensive training in the summer.

Members received information on a Stabilization Fund. A. Manugian would like the committee to vote on this at their next meeting. They have a place holder on the warrant and they are looking to create the fund and are not asking to contribute any funds. B. Erickson thinks it is a great idea for creating stability and sustainability.

XI. Adjournment

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:20 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment

