

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2012

APPROVED 3.27.12

PRESENT:

Mr. Erik Dichter, Secretary
Ms Berta Erickson
Mr. Jim Frey, Chair
Mr. John Giger
Ms Leslie Lathrop
Mr. Jon Sjoberg

ABSENT:

Ms Alison Manugian, Vice-chair

ADMINISTRATION:

Mr. Joseph Mastrocola, Superintendent

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Gerrit Bolt

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Lindemer, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; M. Mastrullo, M. Brisson, R. Arena, S. Walsh, C. Willis

I. Call to Order:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by the chair, J. Frey. He announced the executive session scheduled for earlier this evening will be held tomorrow.

II. Pledge of Allegiance - Students from Florence Roche

Sydney Walsh and Charlie Willis led the Pledge of Allegiance. Sydney is an outgoing and caring, thoughtful student, eager to help students and teachers. She seeks challenges and strives to put forth her best effort in all that she does. She loves to dance and performs in musical theater. Charlie is a silent leader, a diligent and motivated learner, quick to lend a hand and loves to be challenged. He plays football, travel basketball and baseball.

III. Announcements

J. Frey announced Nashoba Valley Technical High School is holding a spaghetti dinner fundraiser for the Groton-Dunstable Chamber Chorus on April 12th (date changed from March 22nd) from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Nashoba Tech in Westford.

L. Lathrop announced the Chamber Chorus has raised about \$60,000 to date and \$130,000 is required. In addition to the spaghetti supper fundraiser, there will be a benefit concert on April 26th with Livingston Taylor and the Chamber Chorus. VIP tickets to meet Mr. Taylor will be available and there will be a silent auction. More details are available at www.gdchamber2012.com. They will continue to receive funds and disseminate information at local grocery stores and local events where allowed. Parents of the chamber members appreciate anything anyone can do to further their fundraising efforts.

B. Erickson reported the First Look at the Book (Peace Book) will be May 22nd for middle school students and on June 2nd for the community. The Chamber Chorus will be singing and they will "pass the hat" for donations toward their trip

L. Lathrop announced the new penny tank arrived and the pennies were put back in last Saturday. A

rededication will take place at the middle school in April.

J. Mastrocola congratulated the winter sports teams for outstanding representation of the high school over the past month. The ice hockey team will be playing for the state championship in Springfield on Thursday night.

G. Bolt announced this is Women's History Month at the high school and there will be a movie night on March 15th and a formal tea on March 25th. Destination Imagination teams will be competing in Ayer this weekend. GDR Boosters annual Spring into the Arts event will be held on April 5th.

IV. Approval of Minutes

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 28, 2012.

SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

In Favor: J. Giger, L. Lathrop, E. Dichter, B. Erickson, J. Sjoberg

Abstention: J. Frey

V. Vote to Accept Warrant Articles

J. GIGER MOVED TO APPROVE A PAYROLL WARRANT DATED MARCH 8, 2012 TOTALING \$771,096.93 AND SEVERAL VENDOR WARRANTS TOTALING \$856,078.58. SECONDED BY L. LATHROP

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VI. Questions and Comments from the Public

None

VII. Presentations

A. NEASC - High School Administration - J. Mastrocola said they started this process 2 ½ years ago with a lot of hard work by the high school staff in terms of self reflection, meeting the questions and goals set out by the accreditation team, moving forward with some of the missions and looking at the processes of teaching and learning. The accreditation team did a site visit last March, issued a preliminary report in September and presented a final report in December. As required, the high school administration has responded to the reports.

Principal Mastrullo explained the NEASC process is a ten year continuous process, culminating in a visiting team coming to the high school. The team looks at all aspects of the school as they relate to student learning. An annual information report is due every year that looks at graduation rates, drop-out rates and attendance. A two year progress report is due in 2013 that answers specific recommendations in the NEASC report. In addition, a five year progress report and a substantive change policy are required.

A special progress report is due in December 2012 and will address thirty-eight specific recommendations (1.0 - 2.7). He stated these were categorized to make them more manageable in developing an action plan. The categories are: Leadership and Student Support, Curriculum and instruction, Data and Assessment, Technology and Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations. M. Mastrullo said NEASC thinks everything should work from your core values. He noted they received fifty-eight commendations which include having a focus on teaching and learning, strong core values and a school culture focused on academic achievement. They received many comments about the climate and culture of the school and the way the students and staff interact and staff and staff interact. He stated the mutual respect is quite remarkable. Many of the recommendations were highlighted and M. Mastrullo said many of them are in progress of being addressed. Recommendation 3.4, Increase co-curricular opportunities, has been rejected since there are over 35 clubs in the school, ample opportunities to play athletics and great music programs. Next year the adjustment counselor will go from a .5 to a 1.0 to help provide adequate support for students in social and emotional crisis. Teacher evaluations were a major focal point of the administrative team and they have been consistent with providing feedback to the staff. Leadership at the high school has been stabilized with the interim administrative positions filled with permanent fulltime people. The academic advisor positions are also now fulltime.

With respect to Curriculum and Instruction, he noted collaboration is key. NEASC places a lot of emphasis on core values and the high school Mission Statement is a living document that is referenced often. Learning expectations are part of their core values and are the crux of curriculum development. Thirty five hours are built into the contract for curriculum development and each department has two full-day curriculum days so they can work on NEASC related issues. They have all completed one day. Vertical curriculum alignment is crucial and the academic advisors for grades 6 through 12 meet after school once a month. Next year there will be a curriculum leadership position for grades 8 through 12 but M. Mastrullo said K-12 curriculum leadership is also needed.

With respect to data collection, they took a comprehensive look at the course offerings and while Groton-Dunstable is a high performing district, there is a deficiency in writing and they will be proposing a freshmen writing course. The computer applications class will be revamped to meet the needs of 21st century learners. New class offerings next year could include bio-technology, genealogy and/or exercise physiology. A data team to analyze and share the results of standardized tests and other student indicators has not been created and may require a budget line item.

Technology was a major focal point this year and the FY13 budget includes a technology integration specialist at the high school. Textbook funds were reduced by 33% and will allow a 20% increase in replacing equipment, a 100% increase in software and a 230% increase in instructional equipment. A line item was created for computer replacement. Three additional computer labs were created this year.

This year's budget has allowed the library to remain open until 4:00 p.m. each day, class size has been reduced with the addition of 5 positions over the last two years and it provides funding for, among other things, professional development, curriculum development and instructional materials and supplies.

J. Frey asked what the top three objectives are right now and have the greatest potential payback. M. Mastrullo said investment in technology, continued curriculum development, and earmarking time for that to happen, and maintaining the curriculum positions. B. Erickson said this seems like a daunting task. R. Arena said the process started before they received the report. They evaluate themselves and wrote the recommendations and NEASC makes sure they did it correctly. He said the model was in place several years ago and needed to be reinstated. B. Erickson said she has been told that increasing technology becomes a much more expensive proposition than buying textbooks. She, in collaboration with the superintendent, was hoping to start a campaign to get more textbooks in the district. M. Mastrullo said there is still a significant amount of money being spent on textbooks and they serve a function. There are also many other resources available and he feels it is important to not spend too much time or money on textbooks.

With respect to the technology integration specialist, J. Giger believes this position has been added specifically to leverage, at the instructional level, the sizeable investment that was made this year in technology. He expects the person to spend a great deal of time working with teachers to infuse technology into the classroom. M. Mastrullo said that will be the individual's main function but also having the ability to do a software update will help make things run more smoothly. J. Giger said they may need to look at more resources for the IT side of the organization.

VIII. Reports

A. Subcommittees

Policy Subcommittee - L. Lathrop reported they met and the committee will have a first reading, and possibly a second reading, to finalize the concussion policy. There were no changes to the policy. They had a major discussion, with no agreements reached, on the holiday policy. B. Erickson thought they were going to list the holidays on the calendar for the upcoming year and have Curriculum and Instruction look at the policy. J. Frey said this is a work in progress.

Budget & Finance Subcommittee - J. Giger reported they met at the end of last month and the current FY budget is tracking well and expectations for the FY13 revenue continue to feel relatively strong. They discussed the replacement of the accounting software.

Personnel and Negotiations - J. Sjoberg reported they will meet tomorrow at the MSS library. There will be an executive session at 7:00 p.m. followed by the regular business meeting.

Curriculum and Instruction - They will meet at Prescott on March 19th at 6:00 p.m.

B. Superintendent

1. The Parent Academy - Dr. Abraham (Info) - *What's A Parent To Do? - Straight Talk on Drugs and Alcohol* will be presented by Dr. Abraham on Wednesday, March 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the Black Box Theater. His talk will identify those kids who are most at risk and what parents can actually do to reduce the chance of drug use in their children before it actually starts. Dr. Abraham shared in the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for his work with Physicians for Social Responsibility and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. This event is free to all parents, guardians and community members.

2. Women's History Month (Info) - March is Women's History Month at the high school and members received a brochure of the event schedule. March 15th will feature the 2010 film "Conviction" which is based on the true story of Kenny and Betty Waters of Ayer. Award winning documentary film maker Maryann De Leo will be present on March 22nd for a screening of her Academy Award winning documentary "Chernobyl Heart". A formal tea on March 25th will be the culminating event of the month long celebration.

3. Assessment Letters - The FY13 budget was voted at the February 28th school committee meeting. Members received copies of the assessment letters sent by Mr. Aponte to the Groton and Dunstable Treasurers. The warrants are being prepared for the town meetings.

4. Legislative Budget Breakfast - J. Mastrocola, G. Martin and J. Giger attended the legislative budget breakfast this morning at Nashoba Valley Technical High School. J. Giger reported there were about a dozen representatives and senators there as well as a couple of legislative liaisons. Senator Brewer, chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, talked about the budget and identified state revenues were down for December and January. Some of the FY13 budget items are funded by carryover funds from FY12. J. Giger said to the extent they are missing the forecasted revenue numbers in the remaining months of this year, the less comfortable people might become with next year's forecast. Senator Peterson is a strong advocate for the reimbursement of regional transportation and has submitted a bill to the legislature to reset the target for reimbursement at 80% and move over three years to get the reimbursement to 80%. The focus on 80% is because some people are concerned that districts would not pay attention to the bussing costs if they were reimbursed at 100%.

B. Erickson reported Senator Donoghue and Representative Harrington were at the Board of Selectmen's meeting last night and Representative Harrington addressed the same issue of working up to 80%. Governor Patrick has said this is suppose to happen with no increase in taxes.

C. Director of Business and Finance - G. Martin reported the MSBA came out to look at the Union Building and MSS roof and they will know the results of those projects by June.

They are moving forward with the UniFund software for the accounting. The accounting will be done this summer, followed by human resources, and payroll will be in the new calendar year. He received a call from the UniFund representative advising they are being bought out by Tyler Technologies which is Munis software. J. Frey wants reasonable assurance the product will continue to be supported and maintained moving forward. G. Martin said they will be having a meeting next week to establish dates for training.

D. Advisory Committees

Prescott Advisory Committee - B. Erickson reported there will be a public hearing at Prescott on April 10th at 7:00 p.m. A tour will be offered prior to the meeting and the architect is expected to be there. The advisory committee will be reporting to the Board of Selectmen next Monday. The architect has narrowed it down to a 70% commercial use/30% community use, an Inn or the fire station. A lot of questions will be answered when the location of the fire station is settled. J. Frey noted April 10th is the same night as the school committee

E. Chair - See earlier announcement

IX. Discussions

A. Stabilization Fund

J. Frey stated he and Ms Manugian met with the Dunstable FinCom (known as the Advisory Committee) last night to talk about the article and what they are trying to achieve with it and they are taking it under advisement. Draft language needs to be submitted to the Dunstable selectmen's office by the end of next week to get it on the warrant. It will be on Groton's warrant. The only obstacle L. Lathrop sees is explaining what it is and how it is different from E&D. J. Sjoberg noted Groton previously voted for Nashoba Tech to create a stabilization fund so the groundwork has been done. J. Frey said Nashoba Tech came with a request for initial funding but they are not doing that here.

J. Frey said this was attempted about 9 years ago and was unsuccessful. Dunstable is concerned a fund could be created where money sits unused for an extended period of time and that it could benefit one town and not the other and therefore, be inequitable. The funds would generally be used for capital expenditures associated with facilities and the majority of them are in Groton. Both towns have to agree to establish the fund.

J. Frey said an advisory on stabilization funds published by DESE references funds from a stabilization fund being used for purposes other than a capital cost, such as covering unexpected increases in operating costs, with approval of the Director of Accounts. He and Ms Manugian concluded that would be the Director of Business and Finance or perhaps the Treasurer. J. Giger said the Director of Accounts is someone who sits in the Department of Revenue in Boston and his research shows the circumstances would have to be extraordinary before they would buy into having that occur. Discussion around the warrant article will state the money will be used for capital expenses.

**J. GIGER MOVED THEY PRESENT WARRANT ARTICLES TO THE TOWN MEETING OF GROTON AND THE TOWN MEETING OF DUNSTABLE FOR THEIR AUTHORIZATION FOR US TO ESTABLISH A STABILIZATION FUND AS DEFINED IN MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS.
SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON**

The motion was withdrawn.

**J. GIGER MOVED THEY VOTE TO APPROVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STABILIZATION FUND FOR THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PURSUANT TO MASS GENERAL LAW.
SECONDED BY L. LATHROP
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

**J. GIGER MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE REQUEST THE TOWNS APPROVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR STABILIZATION FUND AT THEIR SPRING TOWN MEETINGS IN CALENDAR YEAR 2012.
SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

A. Manugian is in contact with Groton's Town Manager to get the warrant article in place and J. Frey will proceed with getting the warrant article in place for Dunstable and continue communications with their FinCom.

X. New Business

J. Giger said the bullying and safety in the schools presentation by Elizabeth K. Englander, Ph. D. Professor of Psychology, was held in the Black Box Theater on March 7th and 35 to 40 people were in attendance. He said there was no one outside the door to direct people nor was there a sign-in sheet. The presentation was filmed and he would like copies made available if possible. J. Mastrocola said it will be going on the public access channel and J. Frey said they can see if they can provide a link to access for on-demand replay through the

district website. J. Giger suggested the videography program may be able to help facilitate making this possible.

XI. Adjournment

B. ERICKSON MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:32 P.M. SECONDED BY E. DICHTER

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary