

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
April 24, 2012

Approved 5.8.12

### **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

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Lindemer, Groton Herald; G. Higley and family, N. Young and family, P. Iannacci

### **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 for the purpose of Custodians contract.

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

The GDRSC Meeting reconvened in open session and was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the chair, J. Frey.

### **II. Pledge of Allegiance (Students from the Middle School Grades 5-6)**

Sixth grader Gabe Higley and fifth grader Naomi Young led the Pledge of Allegiance. Gabe enjoys playing soccer, bike riding and is a Boy Scout with Troop 28 in Dunstable. His favorite subject is ELA. Naomi loves to act, has been in 8 plays and played the lead in many of them. Currently, she is in the musical *Narnia*. Her favorite subject is science.

### **III. Announcements**

B. Erickson announced there will be two assemblies at the middle school on May 22<sup>nd</sup> where students will get their first look at the launch of the Big Book - Pages for Peace and the Chamber Choir will perform. There will be a ceremonial unveiling of the Big Book on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and they plan to have some keynote speakers and the Chamber Choir will also perform that day. She noted the original fifth graders that started the book are now seniors and it is important they enjoy the fruits of their labor. Both events will support the Chamber Choir.

J. Frey announced the spaghetti dinner held at Nashoba Tech to support the Chamber Choir's London trip was very successful. B. Erickson added the food prepared by the students was excellent and they raised \$2000. J. Frey noted they have less than \$20,000 left to raise.

B. Erickson announced Livingston Taylor will be performing at the Devens Common Center on April 26<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. This is another fundraiser for the Chamber Choir.

J. Giger announced an auction fundraiser is scheduled at 134 Main Street on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 10, 2012.

SECONDED BY A. MANUGIAN

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

**Abstention:** B. Erickson, J. Giger

**V. Vote to Accept Warrant Articles**

A. MANUGIAN MOVED THEY ACCEPT ONE PAYROLL WARRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$787,160.92 AND TWO VENDOR WARRANTS TOTALING \$318,630.43. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

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

Paul Iannacci stated his wife Cynthia is a library specialist at Florence Roche. He said standard policy is that teachers and aides stand in the center of the corridor to direct floor traffic each way when students are coming off the bus so they stay to the right and slow down and not run. On December 7, 2011, she was doing this duty when 7 or 8 third graders were running in the hallway and knocked her to the floor. She struck her head and the left side of her body and her head landed eleven feet from where her shoes were knocked off her feet. He said Principal Hoyt is seldom around and he does not know if there is an assistant principal. While Mrs. Iannacci was in the nurses office, Principal Hoyt did not inquire as to what had happened even though he was there. His wife stayed in school all day. He said he received a call from the principal the next afternoon when he called that morning to say his wife would not be in that day but the superintendent never returned his phone call. He said his wife has been in a sling since her operation on March 27th, is on pain medication and cannot make it past 4:00 p.m. without being exhausted.

P. Iannacci said he is not aware of a code of conduct in Florence Roche. He was told the boy who hit her head-on was paying more attention to his handheld gadget than where he was running and while he does not know if this is true, something was going on. An incident like this can happen again and he is asking for some changes to be made so something like this does not happen again. He stated this incident has disrupted their entire family life tremendously.

B. Erickson said it is very unfortunate that this happened and would hope that what Mr. Iannacci has asked for will be looked at and he will notice some difference in the code of behavior when the students are entering the building and classrooms. J. Frey agrees this was unfortunate and the committee wishes his wife the best in her recovery. He said the school committee does not usually get directly involved with site level policy and procedure. They look to the administration and the site manager, in this case Mr. Hoyt, to evaluate the problem and make recommendations on how to change processes to avoid these issues. J. Frey said he expects the superintendent and principal will continue to follow this up. He again wished Mrs. Iannacci a speedy recovery and thanked Mr. Iannacci for bringing this up.

P. Iannacci said the initial tone from the principal was that it was "that time of year" (pre-holidays) and that the boys were "over eager". A woman in the superintendent's office also told him "times have changed" and "things happen". He said safety does not change and people in the hallways are still vulnerable to accidents. He is trying to raise a level of awareness and he did not see an initial reaction of "let's change this".

**VII. Presentation****a. High School Presentation - Gerrit Bolt**

Postponed

**VIII. Reports****A. Subcommittees**

**Policy Subcommittee** - L. Lathrop reported they will probably meet next week.

**Budget & Finance Subcommittee** - A. Manugian reported they are meeting at MSS on Thursday at

8:00 a.m.

**Personnel and Negotiations** - J. Sjoberg reported they are meeting tonight following the school committee meeting.

**Curriculum and Instruction** - A. Manugian reported they will be choosing a date to meet tonight.

## **B. Superintendent**

**1. Superintendent Self Evaluation (From the floor)** - The school committee approved J. Mastrocola's goals in November and Personnel and Negotiations created the benchmarks. He presented an overview of his goals.

**Budget - Goal 1 - Maintain vigilance internally and with town officials towards a balanced Fiscal 13 budget** - A level-balanced budget was created with much input from all stakeholders.

**Budget - Goal 2 - Create a feasibility plan for a tuition free full-day kindergarten** - The plan was delivered ahead of schedule.

**Management - Goal 1 - Create a new performance based evaluation instrument for non-union personnel** - A draft of the document was given to the chair of Personnel and Negotiations and to the school committee chair in January.

**Management - Goal 2 - Expand visibility in schools to support staff and their duties and outside the classroom** - After a first year of restructuring in the district, he assumed a role of visibility throughout the district with all constituents.

**Teaching and Learning Goal 1 - Support the high school administration to implement the NEASC recommendations** - This goal was successfully accomplished by various means including multiple presentations to the school committee and public. He assisted the principal in the creation of a project management approach to NEASC going forward.

**Teaching and Learning Goal 2 - Create a technology plan for the district** - This goal is not fully completed but various actions are in motion. He anticipates having the plan completed by the end of June.

**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** - A rough draft of the plan was given to committee members. J. Mastrocola said this will be a good stepping stone for the district and the new Curriculum Director and he would like to discuss the plan at a future meeting.

He highlighted some accomplishments that support his performance and goals. These include facilitating proper safety procedures during the Halloween ice storm, overseeing the management as a board member of the troubled Merrimack Education Special Education Collaborative, facilitating the implementation of several technology initiatives district-wide and hiring key administrators for the effective management of the district.

He said he had a phenomenal professional year and is fortunate to have good team members around him.

J. Sjoberg said they need to reschedule their May 1<sup>st</sup> meeting to do the superintendent's evaluation since Mr. Giger will not be available. The superintendent's summative evaluation document is scheduled to be reviewed at the May 8<sup>th</sup> school committee meeting.

**2. Update Massachusetts NCLB Waiver Request (Info)** - In the fall, the Department of Education applied for a waiver to the Massachusetts NCLB. Members received a copy of the Waiver Request working draft that

has some of the potential changes that could happen in regards to the waiver. He stated a lot of the data pertains to Level 3 and 4 schools, which Groton-Dunstable is not, but pointed out the potential change with 7.a - 100% proficiency by 2013-2014 - will have an impact. The post NCLB Waiver talks about halving that proficiency gap by 2016-2017 and this is a big change. The benchmark for the level of achievement would come down halfway. He believes some of the changes could be good for teaching and learning and some might be a "watered down of rigor". He expects they will see a final draft sometime between July and September.

**3. Annual Fifth District Day (Info)** - Members received a copy of an invitation from Niki Tsongas to attend the Eighteenth Annual Fifth District Day she is hosting in Washington, DC on Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Members interested in participating were asked to notify him or Aine.

**4. State Budget Update (Info)** - The House Ways and Means Budget proposal for FY2013 increases both local educational and local municipal aid over the Governor's earlier recommendations. Their recommendation increases educational aid from \$3.99 billion to \$4.15 billion. The proposal before the House of Representatives would provide a minimum aid increase of \$40 per student and this would mean Groton-Dunstable would receive approximately \$106,000 in additional Chapter 70 funding. The Special Education circuit breaker would be funded at \$22.6 million, an increase of \$8.4 million over the Governor's level funding. There has been some talk about regional transportation being higher. J. Mastrocola said he believes Financial Literacy, a new program for students, is needed, particularly at the middle school, but is hard to fit into their curriculum. Representative Harrington has done a good job advocating for the district.

With the House coming out with a budget higher than the Governor's budget, J. Frey said the good news is the chance of being surprised with a downside surprise relative to the Governor's budget, is less and less.

**5. Nashoba Valley Technical High School Thank You (Info)**

Members received a copy of the thank you letter sent to Superintendent Klimkiewicz and Groton's representative on Nashoba Tech's school committee Kevin McKenzie. J. Mastrocola said the community spirit was very evident at the spaghetti dinner and noted Mr. McKenzie did a good job of organizing this and putting the kids first.

**6. Merrimack Special Education Collaborative** - Members received a copy of a letter from Executive Director Christine Scott. J. Mastrocola reported he met with her a couple of weeks ago and talked about some of the committee's concerns as well as his own. She was open to hearing the concerns and can come to a school committee meeting in May. J. Giger said the committee should give some thought to their role in the governance of this entity and how it will be determined. J. Mastrocola said they are looking for more representation from other than the superintendent. They will be hearing more about the changes at the collaborative and things will start happening for the better.

**C. Director of Business and Finance -**

**1. Middle School MSBA Project (Info)** - G. Martin reported the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) voted to invite the district into the Accelerated Repair Program to collaborate with them in conducting a feasibility study at the middle school for a potential roof repair/replacement project. Some submittals have to be made by May 11<sup>th</sup>. The invitation is not approval of the project but they should know in June if they are approved. If funding is received, the project would have to be completed within eighteen months of this month and this is feasible.

J. Sjoberg said the roof is leaking and asked about some money left in a middle school renovation account. He was advised it was a small amount of money and some of it was allocated to replace lockers last week in the fifth grade wing in MSS.

**D. Advisory Committees**

**Prescott Advisory Committee** - B. Erickson reported a hearing was held two weeks ago that was pretty well attended and Steve Byrne ushered people through the building. After the architect's presentation, conversation centered on putting the project off but the group decided to go ahead. There will be a

presentation at Monday's town meeting regarding the two options. The Lawrence Homestead has been recommended as the location for the new fire station and Prescott is not being considered at this time. The public will have the summer to think about the options, there will be one or two more public hearings and a vote will happen in the fall if all goes well.

## **E. Chair**

**1. May calendar** - Since the certified results of Groton's election will not be complete in time for the committee's May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, J. Frey suggested they hold a regular meeting that night and schedule their reorganization meeting for May 29<sup>th</sup>. He advised he will be out of town the week of May 21<sup>st</sup>. J. Mastrocola advised the May meetings will predominately be School Improvement Plans along with other presentations. He will be at an out of district meeting on May 29<sup>th</sup> and will not return until about 7:30 p.m. It was agreed a meeting will tentatively be scheduled for May 29<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 p.m.

## **IX. Discussions**

### **A. Old Business**

**1. School Choice Opt Out** - If the committee agrees the district should be in the school choice program, no vote is required. If they decide to opt out, a vote must be taken and the result reported to the DESE by the end of June. Principal Mastrullo is open to continuing school choice at the high school. J. Mastrocola recommends continuing with school choice. No one proposed they opt out.

**2. Stabilization Fund Town Meeting Articles** - Articles for establishing a stabilization fund are on Groton's and Dunstable's town meeting warrants. A. Manugian reported Groton's Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support the article and the majority of the FinCom voted to support it. J. Frey reported Dunstable's Advisory Committee has considered it twice and voted against it twice. Their primary concern is visibility and control over how monies are put in and taken out of the fund. He said they discussed putting an MOA in place that stated the district would put monies into the fund through a separate line item warrant article but there is no regulatory basis for doing that. G. Martin advised Ms Lynch, with the Department of Education, has said she could not find any language that would be against that idea and the law is silent about alternative methods of funding it outside the budget.

B. Erickson said she spoke with a couple of Dunstable's FinCom members last weekend and they told her they are not ready to support the article at this point.

J. SJOBERG MOVED THEY WITHDRAW THEIR REQUEST FOR CREATING A STABILIZATION FUND FROM THE UPCOMING GROTON AND DUNSTABLE SPRING TOWN MEETINGS.  
SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

J. Sjoberg said they can revisit this and re-educate. B. Erickson said this respects Dunstable's decision to look into it further. L. Lathrop said they need to start planning for replacing Central Office and if they received money from MSEC, this would be a good way to deal with it. J. Frey said the Dunstable FinCom has said they would do a debt exclusion. He noted having a stabilization fund puts more sustainability into their financial structure, balances against future risk and improves their bond rating. Dunstable is just not comfortable with it.

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

**3. Memorandum of Agreement with Local 877** - J. Frey stated the custodians union has ratified their contract and the school committee is ready to vote on the MOA. Details will be made public. It covers two contract periods and they will receive a \$ .20 an hour raise, effective June 30, 2011. There will be a split 1%/1% in 2012-2013 year and 2013-2014 year. There is also a minor language change to a set of specific work processes and projects and hours to be attached thereof.

B. ERICKSON MOVED THEY APPROVE THE CONTRACT AGREEMENT WITH THE CUSTODIANS UNION.

It was noted there are two MOA's.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

**4. Public Employee Committee** - J. Frey said an amendment to the agreement in place with the PEC was negotiated and reached in executive session. There will be a change in the contribution rate for healthcare premiums from an 85/15 split to an 80/20 split. A one time mitigation payment is being offered to employees who move from the Preferred Provider Plan to an HMO alternative plan.

J. SJOBERG MOVED THEY APPROVE THE AMENDMENT TO THE AGREEMENT WITH THE PEC.  
SECONDED BY A. MANUGIAN

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

J. Frey said this was previously executed so they could meet the GIC filing deadlines.

**X. New Business**

None

**XI. Adjournment**

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:34 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary