

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY
Special Business Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2007
(Approved August 8, 2007)

PRESENT:

Ms. Cindy Barrett
Mr. Forrest Buzan
Mr. Peter Carson
Ms. Berta Erickson
Mr. Paul Funch
Mr. Chuck McKinney
Mr. Frank O'Connell

ABSENT: none

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Joan Endicott, Director Pupil Personnel Services
Mr. Tim Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: Pierre Comtois, Groton Landmark; see attendance sheet

CALL TO ORDER

At approximately 7:04pm Chair C. McKinney called the special business meeting to order noting that there are usually two meetings per month but with the override failing in both Groton and Dunstable we scheduled this special meeting. By policy the school committee reorganizes at the next regular meeting which would be June 6th. It has come to C. McKinney's and A. Genovese's attention that some members of the school committee would not be able to attend the meeting on June 6th and there was some interest in reorganizing at tonight.

MOTION TO SUSPEND POLICY BDA

P.CARSON MOVED THAT WE SUSPEND POLICY BDA
SECONDED BY F.O'CONNELL.

P. Carson said that at the time the policy was implemented he thinks it was written to have reorganization after the election, maybe we need to revisit the policy.

F. Buzan said that he thinks that the policy is clear. What are the requirements to call a special meeting? If the Chair sets it, it could be done to favor a certain outcome. We have been criticized for having votes too late and for having them earlier. F. Buzan thinks that we should just do business tonight and reorganize on June 6th. He thinks that moving the reorganization up could rush people's personal decisions.

C. McKinney agrees that the policy should be upheld and not changed for convenience. He doesn't think it is a really critical issue and thinks it is a calendar anomaly. We have had a chance to post the meeting, let people know about the meeting. It is important that all seven members have an opportunity to vote.

A. Genovese noted that probably a lot of thought went into the policy, the word regular meeting was selected on purpose.

P. Carson said that if all three officers decided not to run it would also be a problem.

C. McKinney asked P. Carson for clarification for his motion. P. Carson said that it is a one time suspension and to revisit the policy. A friendly amendment was agreed to.

C. Barrett said that suspending the policy to accommodate schedules sets a precedent for any time there is an important vote to be taken.

P. CARSON MOVED THAT WE SUSPEND POLICY BDA FOR THIS ONE TIME AND THAT WE REVISIT THE POLICY.

SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL.

In Favor: C. Barrett, P. Carson, B. Erickson, P. Funch, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

Abstention: F. Buzan

6:0:1

MOTION CARRIES.

Superintendent Genovese will preside over the elections.

Chair

A. Genovese said he would entertain a nomination for Chair.

F. O'Connell nominated C. McKinney for Chair.

Seconded by B. Erickson.

A. Genovese asked C. McKinney if he would accept the nomination.

C. McKinney said that he appreciates the nomination but thinks that the committee will be better served with a new Chair.

B. Erickson nominated C. Barrett for Chair.

Seconded by F. O'Connell.

C. Barrett said that she would accept the nomination.

P. Funch asked if additional nominations can be made. A. Genovese replied yes.

P. Funch nominated F. O'Connell for Chair.

Seconded by C. McKinney.

F. O'Connell declined the nomination.

A. Genovese closed nominations and took a vote for C. Barrett for Chair.

In Favor: F. Buzan, P. Carson, B. Erickson, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

Abstention: C. Barrett, P. Funch

Vice Chair

A. Genovese asked for nominations for Vice Chair.

B. Erickson nominated F. Buzan.

Seconded by P. Funch.

F. Buzan accepted the nomination.

A. Genovese closed nominations and took a vote for F. Buzan for Vice Chair.

In Favor: C. Barrett, P. Carson, B. Erickson , P. Funch, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

Abstention: F. Buzan

Secretary

A. Genovese asked for nominations for Secretary.

B. Erickson nominated P. Carson.

Seconded by F. O'Connell.

P. Carson accepted the nomination.

P. Carson nominated P. Funch.

Seconded by F. O'Connell.

P. Funch accepted the nomination.

Nominations were closed and A. Genovese asked each individual to make a comment. P. Carson and P. Funch had no comments.

A. Genovese took a vote for P. Carson for Secretary.

In Favor: C. Barrett, F. Buzan, P. Carson, B. Erickson , P. Funch , C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

Unanimous.

Since the vote for P. Carson was unanimous, a vote was not taken for P. Funch.

Treasurer

A. Genovese introduced the topic of Treasurer.

MOTION TO APPOINT TREASURER

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THAT WE APPOINT FRED APONTE AS TREASURER FROM JULY 1, 2007 TO JUNE 30, 2008.

SECONDED BY F. BUZAN.

In Favor: C. Barrett, F. Buzan, B. Erickson , P. Funch , C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

Abstention: P. Carson

6:0:1 MOTION CARRIES

Assistant Treasurer

A. Genovese introduced the topic of Assistant Treasurer. From time to time the treasurer is not available, examples include when we have needed to cut a manual check, or if we are selling a bond and need a signature. An Assistant Treasure who is not involved with

the Business Department at all would be authorized to sign for the Treasurer. A. Genovese noted that at his previous district he had his administrative assistant be the assistant treasurer. When the Treasurer returns to the office the item is immediately brought to his attention.

P. Funch asked if there was any remuneration? No.

P. Carson said he wanted to understand any negatives, if the person were unscrupulous could they sign a number of checks? A. Genovese replied that they could only sign checks with the authorization of the Superintendent or the Director of Business and Finance.

P. Funch asked who is A. Genovese recommending? A. Genovese replied Joan Campbell. P. Funch asked if J. Campbell needed to be bonded? A. Genovese replied no and that the duty would be very limited, very unusual to need it.

F. Buzan said he did not see this in a policy, is it covered in MGL? A. Genovese said he would get the MGL reference for the school committee.

Authorization to Borrow

C. Barrett read from the May 17, 2006 business meeting minutes when the topic to authorize to borrow from time to time was brought up last year.

A. Genovese said that at the June 6th meeting we will be asking for a vote to authorize to borrow in order to pay the teachers their last check. The Chapter 70 funds from the State do not get here until June 30th and we need to cut the checks just before then. The loan will be about 1.3 million dollars. The timing is quite a nail biter.

Set day, time, and place for regular meetings

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE GENERALLY MEET ON THE FIRST AND THE THIRD WEDNESDAYS OF EVERY MONTH IN THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY.
SECONDED BY P.FUNCH.

A friendly amendment was made to include the time of 7 pm unless there is an executive session.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE GENERALLY MEET ON THE FIRST AND THE THIRD WEDNESDAYS OF EVERY MONTH IN THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY, AT 7PM UNLESS THERE IS AN EXECUTIVE SESSION.
SECONDED BY P.FUNCH.
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY.

Authorize the Chairperson to appoint subcommittees

C. BARRETT READ THE MOTION THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRPERSON TO APPOINT, OR CREATE AS NECESSARY, SUBCOMMITTEES ACCORDING TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY.

P.FUNCH MOVED THE MOTION.

SECONDED BY F. BUZAN.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY.

A. Genovese thanked C. McKinney for his leadership this past year and said that there were a number of issues that needed to be addressed and that he appreciated his willingness to take his calls early in the morning and late at night. A. Genovese noted that C. McKinney has put an incredible amount of effort in as Chair, in the interest of the district, and the kids at the heart of it. B. Erickson said that she also appreciated C. McKinney's leadership.

The school committee then physically reorganized their seats at the table.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Barrett, 2006-2007 School Committee Secretary

FY08 Budget

Both the towns of Dunstable and Groton voted for the base aligned budget. The override failed in both towns leaving the school committee with no budget. The superintendent described three options:

1. Keep the same budget as presented in the override request
2. Reduce the request which would require town meetings
3. Vote budget that aligns with the budgets voted by both towns

The superintendent recommends that we not pursue option 2. If we were to vote on option 2, the towns would have 45 days to hold town meetings and it would be as much as another 35 days following town meeting before the budget were approved. During that time, the district would be required to send out notifications and employees will be receiving unemployment. This would likely result in further loss of staff. While option 3 is painful, it is in the best interest of the district to have a budget.

The meeting is today due to the fact that notices would be required to be sent out by June 1. The superintendent pointed out that Dunstable still has not closed town meeting and that he would like to let Dunstable have the message that the budget is set.

Mr. Sheehan indicated that the Groton selectmen have indicated they would like to keep the resource officer. Currently the district is picking up 75% of the cost (~\$41,000 / year) and the selectmen may be willing to pick up 75% for next year. Mr. Sheehan then reviewed the timeline assuming that the town of Dunstable was to modify their budget during town meeting. The timelines ranged from a best case of a ballot on 7/09 and a worst case of 8/18. Valerie Jenkins indicated the best case may in fact be 7/16.

Dr. Genovese indicated that he felt people want to know what's going on. Employees and the administration want to be able to plan. There was a discussion concerning the liability related to unemployment. Dr. Funch asked what the exact numbers would be for this and the superintendent indicated that they are not available at this time. Employees with seniority would 'bump' other members of the staff. Dr. Buzan asked why we would pay over the summer when teachers are not normally paid at this time; was it by salary or statute. Dr. Genovese indicated by statute.

Mr. Carson asked if there were still time for the principals to reorganize the budget to maintain teachers and class size. The superintendent indicated that the principals do not manage salary, this was the responsibility of business office. Ms. Endicott explained that they had been working the better part of 3 months coming up with scenarios to choose the least intrusive cuts. There were many discussions and the goal was to look at administrative, curriculum and utilities to choose those that impact the students least. Dr. Buzan asked if they had reviewed the suggested cuts. Why not open classrooms in Prescott? Dr. Genovese indicated that there are no open classrooms in Prescott. An effort was made to balance class sizes across the schools. Dr. Buzan followed up with a question about moving class rooms to Florence Roche or Swallow Union. The superintendent was not sure if there were any vacated rooms. They could either be used by a specialist, or closed to save costs.

Dr. Funch commented that the committee was in a difficult position. While he was an advocate for the override budget, and a reduced budget from there was not optimal due to the timeline constraints. Due to the defeat by a large margin of the override request he will support the towns' aligned budget with sadness.

The superintendent outlined some of the financial planning for the district. Timothy Sheehan has done a 5 year projection for the district. There is an upcoming Department of Revenue audit. He pointed out that while a town has an audit every three years, the district has multiple annual audits (a total of 8). An audit is a two way street; it often finds issues that help the district. There have been suggestions that we share costs with the town as non-regional towns do. He explained that regional districts own their own liabilities and this is not possible with a district.

The superintendent indicated that during the following meeting we would be voting on RAN, (Revenue Anticipation Notes) to allow the district to cover costs up to the time when the state revenue is received. Dr. Buzan asked what the interest would be for the 19 day loan and it is somewhere between 4 and 5 thousand dollars.

Questions and Comments

Ms. Erickson indicated that she while she had respect for Paul Funch, she felt the tone of a recently published letter needed to be addressed. She felt it dampens the possibility of success and that kids and community should be priorities 1 and 2. Dr. Funch responded that the email in question was not meant to be public and represented some of the frustrations he and many of his followers were feeling. He hopes the communication will

lead to members of the community having their voices heard. The email indicated his decisions were based on fact. He has learned from this incident and accepts responsibility. He pointed out that not all the facts have been brought forward.

The superintendent reminded everyone that if a public official creates a document, it is a public document. Every thing you write may end up on the front of the paper. There is a court case in which documents were obtained from public officials home personal computers. Dr. Funch added that Peter Carson had no part in the creation of the email in question.

School Choice

The superintendent recommended that we declare 1/1 openings in Kindergarten Full/ Part and 5/5 openings in grades 9 and 10. While it may seem unintuitive given the recent budget cuts, now that the schedule has been decided, it is possible to handle the addition students at those levels. Dr. Funch and Ms. Barrett had questions about how the numbers were obtained and the effect on class size. The superintendent indicated that we are only voting on new openings. It is based on the total number in each grade and who is signed up for what classes.

Dr. Buzan made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. O'Connell.

I move that we create school choice openings. 1 in kindergarten part time, 1 in kindergarten full time, 5 in grade 9 and 5 in grade 10.

The vote was unanimous in support of the motion.

The superintendent announced that Ms. Endicott is a finalist for a position at Manchester by the Sea. She indicated that she lives there but she loves working here. Ms. Erickson indicated that you could bolt her with a feather.

Dr. Buzan made a motion to adjourn and seconded by Mr. McKinney. The vote was unanimous in support of the motion.

Submitted by Peter Carson, 2007-2008 School Committee Secretary