

**GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
April 2, 2008  
(Approved April 16, 2008)

**PRESENT:**

Ms Cindy Barrett, Chair  
Dr. Forrest Buzan, Vice-Chair  
Peter Carson  
Dr. Paul Funch  
Mr. Chuck McKinney  
Mr. Frank O'Connell

**ABSENT:**

Ms Berta Erickson

**ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent  
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance  
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:**

Kayleigh O'Brien (left at 9:00 p.m.)

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; D. Twomey, K. Lofgren, P. Myerson, B. Lavin, T. Fitzpatrick, See attached sign-in sheet

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by the chair, C. Barrett.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Prepared announcements were read and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Dr. Genovese read a letter from a student who shadowed a friend at the high school and would like to be considered for the school choice program.

Dr. Genovese read a follow-up letter from Joseph Rappa, Executive Director of the EQA office. The general and technical reports are available for review at [eqa.mass.edu](http://eqa.mass.edu) and are posted on the first page of the district website.

Dr. Genovese announced he has four tickets available for the Merrimack Special Education Collaborative on Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at the Nashua Country Club.

**MINUTES**

P. CARSON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 2008.

SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Approval of the executive session meeting minutes of February 6, 2008, February 27, 2008, March 5, 2008 and March 19, 2008 was postponed to the next meeting.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

None

**PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION****FTF III**

Members of the FTF III were introduced. The FTF III was formed in March of 2007 and their charge was to review and update enrollment projections, evaluate each facility and report to the school committee. A decreasing enrollment is forecasted, with a 13% overall decline in student population in five years due to declining birth rates and a stagnant housing market.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the future renovation projects and special considerations for each facility. The FTF III recommends they plan for a decline in future enrollment, look at consolidation and the benefits of other cost saving opportunities. At some point, growth will return and they recommend there be plans to explore adding capacity when needed through knowing the cost and benefits of bringing Prescott back online, the possibilities of a new school and the possible expansion of Swallow Union. District-wide, it is recommended that the four underground oil tanks, all about 20 years old, be removed and that other fuel options be studied. A buzzer security system should also be installed in all student occupied facilities.

F. Buzan asked what would need to be considered if Prescott was to be used for another purpose such as an administrative building. Mr. Johnson said the underground tank needs to be removed. The electrical system and ventilation in the building would be adequate for office use.

T. Sheehan said they have been looking at the issue of the underground tanks for about a year and the cost to remove all four would be in the \$100,000 to \$300,000 range. Gas is available for Florence Roche and Prescott could be converted if necessary. He advised they do not have insurance if the underground tanks develop a leak. Gary Hognlund agreed to be on a committee to study other fuel sources, available grants and the removal of the existing tanks. Steve Byrne was recognized for his help and expertise and F. Buzan thanked the FTF III committee for their work.

Detailed copies of the report are available at Tarbell and the Groton and Dunstable libraries. The power point presentation will be posted on the district website.

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE VOTE TO ACCEPT THE FTF III REPORT. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE FTF III REPORT AND DISSOLVE THE COMMITTEE.  
SECONDED BY F. BUZAN  
**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**SDZ (Shared Designated Zone)**

Dr. Genovese distributed a copy of questions raised at meetings of the SDZ Committee and it includes answers distributed at a meeting held earlier tonight.

Principal Myerson reviewed the methodology used to redefine the proposed Shared Designated Zone. The objective was to balance grade level enrollment between Swallow Union and Florence Roche within the proposed shared zone by adding one section at each grade level. There are about 250 students in the shared zone and it is expected the plan will work for the next four to six years.

The SDZ Committee reached a consensus on a number of points and these were reviewed by Dr. Genovese. There needs to be a Standing Committee that reviews this area on an annual basis and they need to begin to plan a methodology to balance enrollment for the future. They want the school committee and the administration to make it their highest priority to not move any students that are reassigned to the new schools and Dr. Genovese supports this recommendation. There was consensus that the Standing Committee would review any changes in enrollment that result in an increase in class sizes over the next several years and that

they develop a strategy that provides flexibility in implementing this proposal. The committee reached the consensus to support his recommendation to establish this area as the new proposed zone for the next 4 to 6 years. Dr. Genovese defined consensus as “everyone not being happy with it but everyone can live with it”. Sub-groups of the committee included “not in the area”, “in the area” and people with multi-age and looping.

The transition and orientation committee will consist of about 18 parents and administrators. Prescott will have 6 parent representatives since all of those students are moving.

Dr. Funch asked if the SDZ committee feels their concerns have been sufficiently addressed. Terry Robertson agreed it is accurate to say they felt it could go forward as long as the described conditions were taken into consideration and a commitment made to make it a high priority that anything that happens in the future is less disruptive.

T. Fitzpatrick said looping and multi-age were not addressed as part of the committee and there are curriculum issues that need to be addressed in a separate meeting with the parents. Dr. Rubel agreed and said they would like to meet with the parents.

F. O’Connell sat in on tonight’s meeting and agrees with Dr. Genovese’s summary of what took place. Parents want to know where their children are going to be.

It was agreed the “shared zone” will be known as the “attendance area”. F. Buzan asked how many children will be shifted to a different school and was told about 277. Four of these students will be shifted for the second time, five are in the multi-age program and nine are in the looping program. Linda, from Dee Bus Company, said all bus routes currently run under ½ hour.

#### **Policies C, D, E**

Postponed to April 16<sup>th</sup>

(The order of the agenda items was revised without objection)

#### **MOU Football**

C. Barrett distributed a copy of draft language for the football and STEM MOU’s. She recommended bullet #2, “Acceptance of gifts or funds will be consistent with school committee policy (KCD). Furthermore, the School Committee will vote to accept gifts of cash or equipment” be added to the football MOU. It was agreed this would be added.

#### **MOU STEM**

Members had received a draft of the MOU and a revised document was distributed. C. Barrett has spoken with Attorney Greenspan and he agrees that, because of policy KCD and MGL, STEM should not give cash directly to teachers; it should come into the district account. However, a teacher may be given an item purchased by STEM or a teacher could be reimbursed through a purchase order.

Members agreed C. Barrett’s suggested bullets #2 and # 4 with respect to GDSTEM maintaining its own bank account and the acceptance of gifts or funds should replace the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> bullets in the draft document.

G. Hoglund was in agreement but wants to have the other STEM members review the suggested changes.

**F. BUZAN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE VOTE TO ACCEPT THE MOU FOR THE FOOTBALL PROGRAM. SECONDED BY F. O’CONNELL SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**F. BUZAN MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE MOU FOR THE FOOTBALL PROGRAM. SECONDED BY F. O’CONNELL**

It was clarified the previously referenced bullet #2 will be added to the MOU.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY****Open Discussion: Code of Conduct/Discipline/Behavior**

Members had reviewed the high school and middle school handbooks and C. Barrett had provided them with a list of applicable policies. C. Barrett reminded members it would not be appropriate to discuss any specific individual or specific disciplinary action.

Dr. Funch feels they have many good policies but he does not see anything described for group punishment. He feels they need to distinguish safety from bad behaviors and they need to understand mistakes are made. He does not feel a zero tolerance policy belongs in an educational environment. He feels they need a policy to address a group punishment for an individual's behavior and said actions are done that are not consistent with policies.

If there is a consistent application of the policies in the manual, C. McKinney feels students have something they can count on. C. Barrett feels the policies are accurately reflected in the handbooks and the expectations and consequences are clear. Dr. Funch feels there needs to be flexibility for the administration to determine what needs to be done. He acknowledged there is nothing outlined in the handbooks relative to discipline for a first offense that he would be upset about.

**REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Policy** - F. Buzan reported they will be meeting next Tuesday to review Section F and possibly start Section G.

**Personnel & Negotiations** - C. McKinney reported no meeting is scheduled. There are multiple negotiation sessions currently open.

**Budget & Finance** - Dr. Funch reported they reviewed the second quarterly report for FY08 and there are some unexpected savings going on with electricity, sewer and telephone totaling \$75,000. They discussed policy DBJ (Budget Transfer Authority) and a significant adjustment is needed to this policy. They also discussed ideas for the communication plan for the override but did not come to a consensus.

Dr. Funch reported he attended a joint meeting of the PTA's, school councils, SpedPAC and the teachers' association to discuss ideas for getting support for the \$137,000 override request. They will be meeting again on April 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the high school. It was noted the override would add \$.06 to Groton's tax rate (\$24.00 a year increase on a house valued at \$400,000).

**Report of the Director of Business & Finance** - T. Sheehan reported he, S. Byrne and the engineer have inspected the repair work done at the Union Building and it is essentially 95% complete. Re-pointing the chimney and flashing need to be completed.

T. Sheehan reported he is working on three Invitations for Bid: security systems for all the schools, the replacement of the HVAC system at the PAC and the elevator replacement at Swallow Union. Bid openings will be in mid-May with notice to proceed in mid to late June.

T. Sheehan reported he hopes to have a draft of the third quarter financial report by April 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Report of the Chair** - C. Barrett distributed the agenda for the committee's workshop on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Any ideas for the workshop can be given to her.

C. Barrett reported MASC's annual business meeting is November 19<sup>th</sup> and any resolutions need to be submitted by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

C. Barrett reported she attended Groton's FinCom meeting and they had questions that centered around administration, curriculum coordinators and curriculum developers. She suggested they create a table showing the operating budget and the number of administrators versus the number of years. FinCom members were reminded a three year forecast has been created with the district and the town.

**Report of the Superintendent** - Dr. Genovese distributed a copy of a letter from Mr. Twomey that shows an example of a local business (Middlesex Savings Bank) wanting to partner with the district by donating a multipurpose scoreboard to the high school. A sample picture was included and the scoreboard does have the bank's name on it. He would support this donation and said these are the kinds of issues that need to be resolved quickly so they will know if they can capitalize on these opportunities to benefit the school. He asked the Policy sub-committee to continue their conversation on where this would fit.

**Recommendation SDZ** - (See earlier discussion and recommendation)

**Other** - Dr. Genovese reported he has talked with their attorney regarding impact bargaining and having a retirement incentive and he asked the committee if they would consider Personnel and Negotiations exploring it. A dollar amount would be established and if the person met certain criteria, he/she would receive "x" amount to retire at the end of this year. F. O'Connell feels it is appropriate to explore. F. Buzan said they can have people in the medical retirement program for a long time and while they would get a one year gain hiring a less experienced teacher, that teacher would get a higher percentage increase with step increases. Dr. Genovese said there is not a long term effect because there is a differential between someone at the lower end of the salary schedule than the person going out.

P. Carson is in favor if it for morale and asked if more would be offered if the override fails. Dr. Genovese said if the override passes, they have still made reductions and they have to comply with notification periods, May 1<sup>st</sup> being one of them. If they move forward with this idea, they have time to develop a proposal and explore it with the teachers' association to see if anyone is interested. There could potentially be fewer non-renewal notices.

Dr. Funch asked if the health benefits are more expensive for a retiree and he was advised the retiree's share of the premium is a bit higher. He is not opposed to the idea. T. Sheehan said savings can be up to \$40,000. F. Buzan believes this is moving in the wrong direction and is poor planning.

It was the consensus of the committee to have Personnel and Negotiations explore the proposal.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

P. Carson asked for clarification on how leasing computer equipment will save them money. T. Sheehan said the most cost efficient way is to purchase computer equipment. The advantage to leasing is that it allows them to bring in three times the number of computers they could buy. They will pay this lease for three years and they plan to initiate another three year lease in the second year of the first lease. They have a \$1.00 purchase option at the end of the three year lease. The plan was to have a series of overlapping leases.

B. Breton stated a March 16<sup>th</sup> article in the Lowell Sun showed administrative costs as being top heavy and feels this is a big problem for the casual observer. He feels the district needs to explain these differences in costs. If the article is incorrect, he feels the paper needs to print a retraction and the district needs to print a rebuttal. Dr. Genovese advised the paper transposed Greater Lowell Tech's numbers with Groton Dunstable's and Groton Dunstable's administrative per pupil costs are at the state average and not out of line as they appeared in the table. A correction was made in March 18<sup>th</sup>'s paper. Since not everyone receives the paper everyday, Dr. Genovese will write a correction for the district newsletter.

M. Mulligan read a prepared statement regarding the proposed redistricting of the attendance area. His family has just been placed into the gray zone. Members were given a copy of his statement.

As a member of the SDZ committee, C. Valente said there are no clear winners but a lot of people put in a lot

of time and they decided this is the best of a bad decision closing a school. She said they do not want class sizes to go up and they do not want children moved again.

J. Sjoberg asked for clarification on the policy referred to by Mr. Mulligan and he was advised it is policy JC - Attendance Area.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **MOU FOOTBALL**

See earlier vote

#### **MOU STEM**

Postponed to April 16, 2008

#### **Accept FTF III/Dissolve Committee**

See earlier vote

#### **Attendance Area (Previously referred to as the SDZ)**

F. BUZAN MOVED THE COMMITTEE VOTE TO SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING FOUR POINTS:

- 1) The School Committee support the creation of a Standing Committee that reviews the attendance area on an annual basis and begin to plan over time, a method to balance enrollment in the future.
- 2) That the School Committee make, as the highest priority, not moving any students that are reassigned to their new school or any existing student.
- 3) That the annual attendance area committee review any changes in enrollment and if these changes result in unbalanced grades, they develop a strategy that provides flexibility in implementing changes.
- 4) That the School Committee support the recommendation of the superintendent to establish this area, defined by the map, as the new attendance area for the next 4 to 6 years. **SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY**

It was clarified any changes in the attendance area in the future would come back to the school committee based on recommendations of the standing committee. While he will support it, Dr. Funch said he does not like being rushed into this decision and objects to the whole process.

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

#### **Policy C/D/E**

Postponed to April 16, 2008

#### **Computer Equipment Donations (3)**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE DONATION OF A HEWLETT PACKARD COMPUTER SYSTEM WITH A VIEWSONIC MONITOR FROM BARBARA WATERS.

SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

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

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE DONATION OF AN NEC MULTI-SYNC DISPLAY MONITOR FROM JAMES MCELHERNEY. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

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

F. BUZAN MOVED THE COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE DONATION OF A SCEPTRE MONITOR, A HEWLETT PACKARD TOWER COMPUTER AND MISCELLANEOUS SOFTWARE FROM AGNES MCKINNEY.

SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

**In Favor:** F. O'Connell, F. Buzan, C. Barrett, P. Carson, P. Funch

**Abstention:** C. McKinney

### **ADJOURNMENT**

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:55 P.M. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

GDRSC 04/02/2008

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

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Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

With attachment