

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2007
(approved 4/25/2007)

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

Ms Berta Erickson

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development
Ms Joan Endicott, Director of Pupil Services

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

K. O'Brien

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: P. Comtois, **Groton Landmark**; K. Icenogle, **Dunstable News**; K. Riggert, C. Larsen, D. Twomey, J. Sheffield, J. Mitchell, M. Gilbert-Hall, L. Lathrop, P. Hartvigsen, C. Entwistle and four of her seventh grade students, E. Barkhuff, D. Dwyer

CALL TO ORDER:

C. McKinney announced the GDRSC Meeting opened at 6:00 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session under M.G.L. Ch. 39, Section 23B-3. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:35 p.m. , with no plans to return to executive session following the business meeting. The meeting was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

J. Endicott announced the Sped PAC is hosting Maria Trozzi on April 10th from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. She will be addressing disabilities and helping families cope. She has worked with district staff in the past.

Dr. Genovese announced two finalists (Shelley Marcus-Cohen and Tom Murray) for the high school principal position went through the on-site visit yesterday and today and the site visits are scheduled for next week.

Dr. Genovese announced he received a copy of a letter from Groton Police Chief Mulhern, sent to the high school principal, which expresses how impressed he was by the behavior of the students and how well they represented the communities during presentations by the North Andover Police Department on the use of dogs in policing.

Dr. Genovese announced he received a letter of resignation from middle school principal Beth Raucci. She will be assuming a middle school principal position in Manchester-Essex next year. He noted Ms Raucci has been a principal in the district for five years, was a member of the building design team and was very involved in the construction project and transition team. She is most proud of the community efforts that are part of the middle school culture. She and her staff have been involved in the Loaves and Fishes food drive, Thanksgiving projects that have fed elderly citizens for ten years and Project Mitten. Dr. Genovese stated she has made many more contributions. They have begun putting together the search process.

F. O'Connell announced he will be attending a meeting next Monday night at the middle school in Tewksbury at 7:00 p.m. to begin brainstorming sessions around what one third of the cities and towns in Massachusetts are going to do about the lack of funding from the state.

Dr. Genovese announced Representative Hargraves informed him the approved \$220M means an additional \$23,000 for Groton Dunstable. He said it is discouraging to see communities that are considered wealthy in the position of needing overrides because they bumped up against that ceiling. He noted it does not make sense to have "wealthy communities" dismantling school systems.

GDEF Director of Communications Janet Sheffield thanked their premier business donor Jean D'Arc Credit Union and their annual giving donors. She announced they are in their eighth grant cycle and are awarding eleven grants, totaling \$34,375. They cover many disciplines across all the schools and include an advanced placement summer institute training for the development of studio art portfolios for high school art teachers, graphing opportunities for students K-3, the National Science Teachers' Conference in Boston for high school science teachers, the Weather Bug Achieve Program and the Gizmo Guys. A full listing of the grants is available on their website - www.gdefinc.org.

J. Sheffield thanked Dr. Rubel, and the community members and educators, either retired or who work outside of the district, who are responsible for the evaluation of the grants and giving recommendations to the Board of Directors. There will be a grant celebration at the high school on May 3rd from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for the community, administration, staff, parents and Committee members to hear more about the grants and there will be a more formal awards presentation.

K. LOFGREN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO MOVE TO IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE GRANTS. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN.

C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE GRANTS FROM GDEF IN THE AMOUNT OF \$34,375 FOR THE GRANTS AS OUTLINED IN THEIR MEMO. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

Members thanked the GDEF and their supporters.

MINUTES

(The Budget Public Hearing minutes of February 28, 2007 were not in members' packets and copies were distributed. The Committee does not vote on subcommittee minutes)

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 7, 2007 AND MARCH 21, 2007. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

K. Lofgren acknowledged everyone at Florence Roche who participated in *Jack in the Beanstalk* and noted choreographer Mary Kaye Miln incorporates the "Hand Jive" in every play she puts on and it is a lot of fun.

C. McKinney stated the high school principal search process is a lot about timing. He stated one of the finalist's visits to the district was scheduled during Passover and this probably prevented some people from participating in that visit. He apologized for the oversight and stated they did not mean to offend anyone.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Teaching & Learning Using Technology

Instructional Technology Specialist Cynthia Larsen showed a slide created by a first grader using a program called Kidpicks. It enables students to practice all the technology competencies in the lower grades. It allows them to paint, do voice narration, draw, bring in graphics and do text.

C. Larsen said children today are exposed to multiple types of visual images, texts, sounds and the ability to manipulate all of them. They are accustomed to, and comfortable with, a digital world and people in her profession call them Digital Natives. She noted adults are referred to as Digital Immigrants. Students are using technology to make sense of their world by communicating and sharing knowledge using web cameras, text messaging, instant messaging and on-line forums. They are also locating information and accessing huge libraries of data bases at their fingertips. They are taking virtual tours of museums in Boston and on the other side of the world and interacting with the world. What they do is not passive and it makes the students active learners.

C. Larsen said they want to use technology to extend learning, deepen the meaning and tap the interest of all learners. She showed examples of how some teachers are using technology in their classrooms to do these three things. Mr. Rider has a multi-age classroom at Florence Roche and uses a program that enables him to create simple webpages where he can post homework and resources that support his curriculum and bring learning into the home. One of the links he uses is the Weather Maker and C. Larsen demonstrated how it worked.

C. Larsen said MassONE is the Massachusetts Online Network for Educators. Massachusetts recognizes the enormity of integrating technology into the curriculum and they have built a virtual resource for teachers. High school English Curriculum Coordinator Ms Cook teaches film studies and because they always run out of discussion time, she uses an online forum, and her students have accounts, to discuss the films. Students are required to participate and the discussion happens outside the classroom. C. Larsen stated this is a great model of appropriate use.

The district, and Massachusetts, recognizes the need to have an assessment tool so they have a link to the TSAT (technology self-assessment tool for teachers). There is a list of competencies they check if they know them and there are four different levels. When she came to the district in 2004, C. Larsen said she had the high school teachers take the TSAT and 89% were at early and 11% were at developing. They took it again in the spring of 2005 and 71% were at early and 29% were at developing. By the winter of 2007, they have 49% at early, 25% at developing and now they have added 15% at proficient and 11% at advanced. The teachers at proficient and advanced are teacher models and can begin to do things she does and show other teachers how to use technology.

C. Larsen stated seventh grade science teacher Caitlyn Entwistle used software called Vernier to do a bridge project. The software has sensors and probes that takes data in real time, allows them to videotape the experiment and sync it with a graph and is incredibly accurate and very engaging. Dr. Rubel stated the Vernier equipment was subsidized by the GDEF.

C. Entwistle stated teaching the engineering design process, different bridge designs and what happens to bridge structures when force is applied in real life situations are part of the Frameworks. Students take the real life and build their own bridge. After researching various structures and doing some labs, students are asked to design their own bridge and get it approved. She noted they are all assigned a certain role - purchasing agent, project manager and the chief architect. The point of the project is to use the designs they researched, make a bridge that can hold the most force and is also the most cost efficient. Students were graded on cost

per pound for their bridge. Joey showed one of the bridges as well as a force plate that measures in newtons. He showed a video of students pouring pennies, the force for the project, and the equipment measuring the force on a graph.

Sara said she thought the examine tool was helpful as they could look at the small pieces of data and determine the exact amount of force on a particular point on the graph. C. Entwistle said the technology showed the exact newtons.

Kristen liked how they used the video camera so they could re-watch the experiment. Everyone in the class could see what was going on and they could replay the video so the graph would go up as the bridge on the video went down.

Angela said she liked that they were able to add to their bridge and retest it. This showed them what they could have changed and done better. They found out that by adding a few more straws, they were able to hold 17 more newtons than before and their bridge was still the most cost efficient in the class.

C. Entwistle said the students liked the hands-on and to be able to see the numbers and visualize it. They were able to try and test some other designs and they would not have been able to do that without this technology.

High school science curriculum leader Ellen Barkhuff said they use Vernier technology at the high school and she thanked GDEF for outfitting a science classroom with this technology. She said it produces information in tenths of a second and if students were taking data on their own, they would miss a lot of information. She also thanked the technology people in the district that allow people like herself to be able to use the technology. She showed an experiment on freezing and melting water done by all ninth graders in integrated science where students are investigating phase change. A graph showing a phenomenon called super cooling was shown and she said this is not even presented in a high school text but it is in an advanced placement college text. Data was collected every two tenths of a second and this enabled students to see the super cooling happen at 1.2 seconds where they would not have seen it taking a reading every thirty seconds as the lab directions said. She said they now have the lab so everyone obtains these results.

K. O'Brien said she used the Vernier equipment in AP Bio and it was great. She said it is one thing to learn about something and memorize it for a test but it is another to understand why the changes are happening.

F. Buzan said this is a great example of how they use technology in a classroom to help kids get a deeper understanding and when you see this kind of thing, it is well worth the money they paid for it. He asked if they tie in math with the bridge project and show students how they can use math to try to approximate the strength.

C. Larsen said there is a prediction tool. Students in Ms Entwistle's wanted to know how much the platform would hold without supports and they used the tool to predict how many newtons they thought it could hold. F. Buzan said there are a lot of engineering math models that show strength of just a bare element and tying those equations into what they are looking at here would let kids see how formulas help engineers model actual physical systems. He said they need to make sure the students understand the metric system and they need to know what the units mean.

C. Barrett thanked the teachers and students for their presentation and said it showed the Committee so much more how technology is being used. As a scientist, she said she loved it and really appreciated it

C. McKinney thanked Ms. Larsen for her support in helping the Committee get information on the website.

District Athletic Program - Philosophy

Athletic Director Dan Twomey explained the athletic program's philosophy, stating in general, they are trying to offer a positive learning experience as an extension of the classroom. They hope their athletes will learn the values associated with striving for excellence, discipline, teamwork, commitment, confidence, sacrifice and

leadership. The goals for 2006-2007 are:

1. To offer a positive co-curricular experience to GDRSD student athletes
D. Twomey stated this is an everyday event and continues to move forward.
2. Expand the athletic programs to meet the needs of our growing enrollment
They have brought on the boys and girls Lacrosse teams and last fall, started a JV volleyball program. They hope to have indoor track and football in the future.
3. Increase communication to students, parents, school district and community
This is an effort to make it more of "real time" with changes, cancellations, etc. with the use of an email system and Connect ED messages. There is also a comprehensive student athlete guide coming on-line for next year.

D. Twomey stated the overall mission and philosophy of the program stems from the district's mission which is committed to providing the best education to the students. He said the second piece is to look at the schools and offer a positive learning experience. At the middle school, it is more about developing the students and to an extent, these are participation programs although not everyone plays and has equal time. He noted the middle school programs have the most participants and they want to encourage them to be part of the programs. The varsity teams are trying to be competitive and while winning is a piece of it, it is not all of it.

Dr. Funch asked Mr. Twomey for the philosophy on cut/no cut sports. D. Twomey said several factors go into making it a cut/no cut sport. They cannot keep twenty-seven players on a basketball team and expect to get everyone in there and have a valuable experience. He stated they look at the experience they are getting, safety and if it is possible to manage that many kids in the particular program. He said the cut/no cut policies are left to the individual programs and coaches. He does not mandate that a program keeps "x" number of kids because every program is different and he stated if there are 15 opportunities and 17 kids try out, you do not cut the two kids.

F. O'Connell has heard it can be difficult to transition from the middle school to the high school and asked if it is the same with sports. D. Twomey said they are going from the participation based model and some freshmen have certain skills and will be placed at levels different from their peer group and this can be difficult. He said the teams are still representing Groton Dunstable but change goes with it.

C. Barrett said it is good to put this out and educate everyone and noted the website is also very good.

F. Buzan asked if there is district-wide philosophy for try-outs or if it is done by the individual coach.

D. Twomey said they look at the programs and the try-out processes are over a period of time until the coaching staff feels they have sufficient input and evaluation time to give every student a fair chance.

F. Buzan asked if try-outs are done every year and D. Twomey said yes, they have to prove they can participate at that level. F. Buzan asked how the value of competition at the high school level works.

D. Twomey said hard work will earn a spot and opportunity and every year, it is a new slate for everyone. He said every coach will say cutting people is the hardest part of their job.

With respect to expansion of programs and the fields, F. Buzan asked where Mr. Twomey wants to go with that. D. Twomey said it will be a combination of fund raising and school facilities. He said there are many groups that look to use their facilities. As they grow, they will need additional field space at the high school and he stated for safety reasons, it is best not to have satellite locations. F. Buzan asked if they have room for expansion at the high school and Dr. Genovese said that is being researched.

C. McKinney stated at the end of last year, the youth football organization provided the manpower to hydro-seed the stadium field as a means of providing maintenance. D. Twomey noted the town's youth softball are always working on the softball fields as part of their stewardship.

Dr. Genovese asked Mr. Twomey how he keeps the philosophy alive with new coaches. D. Twomey said it is an ongoing conversation and learning continues on a daily basis. There is a lot of collaboration among the coaches and a new coach is teamed with an experienced coach.

C. McKinney thanked Mr. Twomey for the hard work he put into his budget spreadsheets.

FY08 Budget

At their last meeting, Dr. Genovese shared a conversation the Administrative Council had about what kinds of things they would look at if they reduced the budget by \$500,000. He said it is important to continue to make a good faith effort and to reduce the budget as much as possible to put it in reach of the community. They reviewed it again and looked at areas for another reduction.

Dr. Genovese stated he will be making a recommendation to reduce the budget by \$350,608. He reviewed the recommended reductions, which include, among others, level funding deferred maintenance, technology and after school activities at the middle school, reducing the computer leasing program, reducing the proposed increase in the athletics budget by 50% and reducing the hours of the technology coordinator.

With this reduction, Dr. Genovese said the required override amount is \$1,216,547. Dunstable had an override workshop on Monday and he stated they are a classic example of how one third of the communities are being affected by the new formula. He stated Dunstable's override amount and the district's request are close to the same number. The impact on a \$400,000 house in Dunstable would be about \$306. Dunstable will be making some adjustments to move to the no override increase of \$194,937. If the override does not pass, it would result in a \$1.6M reduction to the budget.

F. Buzan asked if mailing needs for the newsletter are accounted for and Dr. Genovese said he does not plan to go with that. He said households that do not have email access would be minimal. He would like the newsletter to automatically be sent to those who register for it and it would be available to those who are not able to do that. He stated mailing would be an expensive proposition with the cost of postage and materials.

C. Barrett asked if this list of reductions is firm and Dr. Genovese said he would ask for a little flexibility but the Council recognized they needed to make another attempt to scrub this the best they can and noted they are losing the value added the reductions would have contributed to the district. He said it brings it under \$1M for Groton but it is still a stretch for Dunstable.

F. O'Connell said they heard the other night that two overrides would add about \$700 to an average Dunstable tax bill. He stated they are facing multi-year problems and the future does not look too bright. He said it is necessary for them to have forecasts in place as they begin to assess this versus the bigger picture - what is the plan, how does this impact it and what do the following years look like?

Dr. Genovese said he would call this a structural deficit in supporting the budget because if they do not have the revenue to support it, that is the gap you have. They have to look at, and talk about, things such as the savings and benefits of taking Prescott off-line earlier than anticipated and having Tarbell annexed at one of the schools. He feels they owe it to the taxpayers to look at what they can do that would least impact teaching and learning and maintain the things they are trying to do. He said there are unintended consequences with the shift moving from the state to the towns. He will be very active in promoting this override in both towns. The Administrative Council will be looking at what a \$1.6M reduction would mean and they will be having presentations in all the schools.

Dr. Funch said he is concerned with how they will continue to utilize the technology they have if they cut the staff. Dr. Genovese said they will be reducing the hours of the technology coordinator. They will reallocate computers they have, they will begin the process of getting new equipment and they will limp along without a network assistant. He stated they want to be careful they do not put so many things on the teachers that they have them get burnt out. Dr. Funch understands the pressure both towns are under with the override and appreciates the effort to see what can be cut. He said it is really a false savings if they cannot use the

investment they are making. He is also concerned with cutting the deferred maintenance. T. Sheehan advised there is \$62,500 in this line item for next year and he was trying to raise it to \$80,000 to take care of more of the projects. Dr. Genovese said they will need to prioritize the projects that get done. Dr. Funch noted the needs do not go away just because the budget is reduced. He asked if the additional revenue they might get from the state could be applied to these things. C. Barrett stated they all ready have undefined revenue in the budget of \$101,000.

F. Buzan asked how this budget compares to the idea of one that is level funding of services provided. If they reduced the budget by \$350,608, T. Sheehan said it would represent an increase of just over 9% from last year's budget. The level services budget they would need to "stand fast" would be between 7.5% to 8%. C. McKinney stated the term "level services" is really misunderstood because in a dynamic environment like a school system where you have what looks like a flat population of students but 40 are moving from the middle school to the high school, this creates a resource requirement to do the same thing for the same number of students and it is still a higher expense. He thinks some people think level services means level funding and it does not work that way in a school system. F. Buzan said he understands and is not saying that is the whole number you look at but it gives a benchmark to look at and gives people a reference point. That fact they need 7.5% to 8% just to provide the same services is a selling point for the fact they need the override and without it, they will be down 8%. He said he has held four jobs in the five years he has been here and has been laid off on election day so he understands many people find this difficult and in many cases, it may also be the same people that struggle when having to buy school supplies. When doing budget presentations, he suggested they meet with the senior citizens and explain to them what they are trying to do and why. He said they want to build a consensus of thought.

F. Buzan asked what the sports cut means. Dr. Genovese said he would leave that up to the Athletic Director. He talked about reducing the number of events for a particular sport. T. Sheehan said Mr. Twomey was very specific about how he would adjust to a 50% reduction in the increase and T. Sheehan said he will provide that information. F. Buzan asked if he would still plan to expand the offerings to hold JV football and indoor track and T. Sheehan said Mr. Twomey had several options. Mr. Sheehan said he does not know which options would be chosen. F. Buzan said for some, this might be their motivation to support, or not support, the budget. He asked if they know what the average tax impact would be on a \$400,000 home. C. McKinney said this comes from town officials. Dunstable's \$396,000 override would add \$306 and the school override of \$359,000 would add around \$150.

With respect to F. O'Connell's request for a forecast, T. Sheehan said this new formula specifically applies to the calculation of the minimum contribution of each town as determined by the DOE. Groton's minimum contribution went up \$484,000 and Dunstable's went up \$114,000 and as the minimum contribution for each town goes up, they can expect to see a reduction in Chapter 70 funding that may not be dollar for dollar, but pretty close to that. Last fall, he created a five year spreadsheet that predicted what that minimum contribution would be and the number for this year was within a few percent of what he had predicted for FY08. The actual contribution will change each year based on property values and the municipal growth factor. It is possible to lay this out to get the magnitude of what this will mean over time and he will provide the information to the Committee.

Dr. Genovese reviewed a "soft" list of reductions, totaling about \$1.6M, that are under discussion if the override fails and they will have an affect across the district. They will be meeting Tuesday to finalize what this reduction would mean specifically and have the opportunity to talk to some of the people it would affect. They would then put together a brochure that shows what they can provide if the override passes and what happens if the override does not pass.

If there was a no override budget (\$29,186,769), T. Sheehan said Groton would have an assessment increase of \$850,000 and Dunstable's increase, based on the regional agreement, would be \$194,937. He said the

total amount of the reduction from the original assessment is the amount of the proposed override. He stated the budget number of \$29,186,769 would represent an increase of 4.65% over the FY07 operating budget. Dr. Genovese noted the health insurance went up 15% and with some of their other obligations, they are going backwards.

F. Buzan asked what happens if the override passes in one town and fails in the other. Dr. Genovese said they would not have a budget and a number of factors come into play. They could have a joint town meeting and he will present scenarios at their next meeting. He thinks Groton has published their warrant and if so, there is a number that reflects the Committee's March 7th vote. They will be publishing their ballot question on April 17th. If the Committee votes to reduce the budget, that number can be amended on town meeting floor. C. McKinney said if the Committee takes no action tonight and the printing of the ballot is done, that cements the request for the override.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - K. Lofgren reported they will be meeting at the high school on April 24th at 6:30 p.m.

Report of Director of Business & Finance - T. Sheehan reported he will be presenting a preliminary third quarter FY07 budget report to Budget and Finance next Tuesday and to the Committee at their April 25th meeting.

Report of the Chair - C. McKinney reminded members the superintendent's evaluation workshop is April 28th.

C. McKinney commended Joan Campbell for her work posting some of the "hot topics" on the website. Some links are there and they are in the process of pulling past presentations, forums, statements and spreadsheets to be posted as well. He noted some specific topics will need to come back to the School Committee for a statement.

C. McKinney reported members have not been appointed to the Communications Committee and he will be asking members to do so tonight. Two Committee members are interested in serving and community member Jon Boroshok is all ready capturing ideas.

With respect to prior discussion regarding budget communications, C. McKinney said he is looking for immediate feedback from members on whether they should form a School Committee organization or whether they should allow the superintendent to form an Ad Hoc budget communications organization. That committee would work directly through the superintendent and he could direct them to the Director of Business and Finance or it could be managed through the Budget and Finance subcommittee. F. O'Connell said he has no preference and would like to see it get going. He asked what the committee would look like and C. McKinney said there would be a number of individuals working with Dr. Genovese and Mr. Sheehan. They may need to interface with the Administrative Council and Budget and Finance at any given time. He said presentations need to be given to the senior centers and the PTA's and cable presentations have been given in the past. F. O'Connell said they need to find the shortest path to get budget communications going. Dr. Genovese asked how people would volunteer for this in a short period of time and said they need a consistent presentation for both towns. He asked if Mr. McKinney sees the principals being very involved as active members. C. McKinney said absolutely and while this extra resource will be a tremendous benefit, he noted the School Committee members still own the responsibility for advocating for the budget and should participate as much as they can in the development and getting the messages out. F. O'Connell said it is an excellent opportunity to involve parents and taxpayers interested in participating and asked that they reach out as far as they can and move forward. Dr. Genovese suggested this be a major topic at Tuesday's Budget and Finance Committee Meeting.

Report of the Superintendent -

MEC Articles of Agreement - Dr. Genovese asked members to become familiar with the MEC agreements

and reported a representative will be at their May 2nd meeting to explain the services provided to the district.

J. Endicott reported MEC (Merrimack Education Collaborative) is a group of public schools that joined together as an organization to provide SPED services in conjunction with other towns. This enables each district to address some educational needs of a child that cannot be met in their own district in a more high quality and cost effective setting. They offer a wide range of services and programs for children pre-school through the age of 22 in a variety of settings. She noted there are several collaboratives across the state. Some of the agreements need to be changed as they are no longer applicable.

Director of Business & Finance - Dr. Genovese reported Mr. Sheehan has made many contributions this year and as they went through a very extensive search for a Director of Business & Finance, they described it as looking for a "diamond in the rough" and he believes they found the "diamond in the rough". He asked if the Committee wants to post the position in house and take a look at who applies or if they want to spend the money for repeating a lengthy process and perhaps not finding someone of Mr. Sheehan's caliber. He recently evaluated Mr. Sheehan and stated it was a very positive review. Mr. Sheehan has achieved his goals, and then some, and feedback from the Committee has been positive.

F. O'Connell said Budget and Finance has not discussed this but he sat in on the interview and is thrilled they moved forward with Mr. Sheehan and feels it would be in the best interest of the district and the towns to make sure he sticks around. Dr. Funch said he has no reservations whatsoever and C. Barrett agreed.

F. Buzan asked for an explanation of an "in-house posting". Dr. Genovese said the position is posted in all the buildings and people are made aware the position is to be filled with a permanent person. He stated they do not know who else may be certified and interested in the position. F. Buzan asked if only people currently involved with the district can apply and Dr. Genovese said no. There is an obligation to post the position internally. Often times, someone will tell someone else about a job opening. F. Buzan said Mr. Sheehan's answers are better than the questions he can ask and he was impressed with Mr. Sheehan during his interview.

K. Lofgren concurred and said she was impressed with Mr. Sheehan's enthusiasm and noted he made the budget understandable and his turnaround with spreadsheets is impressive. C. McKinney said he also supports Mr. Sheehan's work.

Dr. Genovese said he will post the position and provide members with an update at their next meeting.

Junior Operators' License Law - Members had received a copy of the new law in their packets and Dr. Genovese said a link will be put on the website as this is information people need to know about. He noted the penalties and fines that went into effect March 3^{1st} are significant. K. O'Brien stated the students are very aware of the new law.

Elementary Principal Search Process Timeline - Dr. Genovese distributed the Elementary Principal Search Process timeline. K. Lofgren will serve as the School Committee member Ex-officio. He thanked F. O'Connell for participating in the high school search process and recognized Jeanne Mitchell for her efforts.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

F. Buzan asked if they might be having public forums and C. McKinney stated Dr. Funch will be making a motion about a public forum later this evening.

F. O'Connell asked about the PTYC being closed in July for roof repairs and asked if they had reached a conclusion on that. T. Sheehan said they will be going out for quotations the last week in April or the first week in May. F. O'Connell said they have not figured out how they are paying for the repairs. While they did tell Mr. Sheehan to move forward with it, he said they want to be careful how they proceed.

M. Gilbert-Hall stated C. Barrett gave a communication slide show at the last meeting on how to get a problem

solved. She asked if reverse protocol is also followed and if a teacher goes straight to the superintendent, if the superintendent then goes to the principal. Dr. Genovese said he always listens and depending on the nature of the problem, decides what the best approach would be. He stated this almost always involves conversation with the principal and himself or with the teacher, the principal and himself. After attending the March 15th Florence Roche PTA meeting, she understands the Administrative Council did not get their input into the final evaluation of the superintendent and asked if they will be involved this year. C. McKinney said he read a lengthy statement about the evaluation process on February 7th. Their input was used to develop the evaluation last year and some of their comments were utilized in the evaluation and most of their comments were utilized in more of a development forum. He stated the process of how they collect information has changed slightly this year and people can watch the Committee write the evaluation at their workshop on April 28th. The Administrative Council is invited to participate in the process.

L. Lathrop stated she is very pro-education and feels the override budget is still a very sparse one. She said it would be helpful if both towns voted on the ballot question the same day and asked if the towns could be approached. Dr. Genovese believes these things are governed by the town's bylaws but he will look into it. With respect to the "laundry list" of reductions if an override does not pass, she said to put education first on the list, rather than administration and athletics.

K. Icenogle asked if she missed where members were appointed to the Communications Team and C. McKinney said they will be appointing three members tonight and they still need a couple of more people.

P. Hartvigsen said they need to ensure the override passes and encouraged reconsideration of the newsletter. She said this is really an important opportunity to reach all households and they should not assume, because people have computers, they will look at a spreadsheet and be convinced. While she applauds the Communications Committee, she said they need to do whatever they can to get the information out. She stated they need to speak about education at town meeting, not only when they are going for an override.

K. Riggert said if the towns are convinced the district built a budget they believe in and are prepared to support an override, she does not believe there is any reason to reduce it by \$350,000. She stated the ultimate impact on the towns, the dollar value per house, is not going to be that big. While she will not say the \$350,000 is an arbitrary number, she asked if the perception is to get the override figure below \$1M and if it is worth doing that. She does not believe Dunstable has passed any overrides for the schools. She knows the budget is not built on fluff and stated GDEF has supplied thousands of dollars for enrichments and enhancements to the district. She said they need to tell the communities what they are doing and noted enrollment has increased every year. She asked members to support their budget and advocate for what they believe in.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: To accept GDEF Grants

See earlier vote

VOTE: To accept donation of photography equipment for the high school and **VOTE:** To accept donation of t.v. and air hockey table to PTYC

F. Buzan said one of the donor's was surprised that the Committee had to vote to accept his donation. Dr. Genovese said his practice is to do this at a School Committee meeting to make sure the person making the donation is recognized and said a letter is sent to the donor. If the item has value, it is added to the school's inventory.

**C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS: A 60" MITSUBISHI T.V. TO BE DONATED TO THE PTYC FROM LISA BINDER AND ED CARR, AN AIR HOCKEY TABLE TO BE DONATED TO THE PTYC FROM KAREN AND DAVE MARTIN AND PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT TO BE DONATED TO THE HIGH SCHOOL FROM PETE JABLONSKI IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LETTER FROM SUSAN DAUGHERTY. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

VOTE: Motions from Dr. Funch

P. FUNCH MOVED TO PROHIBIT THE CHAIR FROM REPRESENTING THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE TO THE PUBLIC IN ANY WRITTEN OR VERBAL COMMUNICATION (E.G., IN A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR IN PUBLIC COMMENTS TO THE MEDIA OR A PUBLIC GATHERING) WHEN NO VOTE HAS BEEN TAKEN BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE TO INDICATE WHAT THEIR POSITION IS ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE AND NO PRIOR APPROVAL BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE HAS BEEN OBTAINED FOR MAKING SUCH A REPRESENTATION. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

Dr. Funch distributed copies of letters C. McKinney has written to a newspaper editor. Dr. Funch feels this is the second time the chair has misused his spokesman responsibility. The first occurred in the Groton Herald on February 19th in response to an anonymous letter that was critical of Dr. Genovese. When he saw it in the paper, Dr. Funch said he sent an email to the chair, copied to the members, protesting the content of the letter and saying it was not based on any discussion amongst the members and it did not represent him. He said the chair chose to send another letter to the editor of the Groton Herald and the Groton Landmark last week and again, it was not based on any discussion or decision by the Committee.

Dr. Funch feels it is apparent the chair does not feel he has any obligation to represent the entire School Committee in his communications with the public. While he acknowledged the other members may not disagree with what Mr. McKinney has written to the newspapers, Dr. Funch asked them to think about the issue of whether the spokesman for the Committee is representing the School Committee in these letters. He believes the spokesman should represent votes or decisions of the Committee and not his personal opinions.

Dr. Funch said they cannot debate the chair's public opinions outside of their meetings and his opinions cannot be challenged. He feels it is important to deliberate as a Committee and not let the chair speak for them.

Dr. Funch stated he appreciates the efforts of the chair to provide information to the public and knows he is trying to help them by doing so but Dr. Funch said he is finding it harder to do his job by having to explain his position and it may not be the same as the one publicly expressed by the chair. Dr. Funch said he would like the public to know what the School Committee is doing but not what the chair thinks the School Committee is doing. He feels what they deliberate as a Committee should go out publicly but in his mind, what they do not deliberate is not public information.

C. McKinney said Dr. Funch has done a good job communicating with the chair. He acknowledged Dr. Funch's frustrations over some of these communications, having experienced the same with previous chairs. He feels the motion is problematic as the necessity of providing communications happens more frequently than their two week meeting schedule and the range of topics they may be required to discuss go beyond any particular discussion or debate. He asked how they can be open and communicate with the public without calling emergency School Committee meetings to approve a public statement. He feels a more appropriate motion, if the chair found himself out of bounds more often than not, would be to request a reorganization of the Committee and remove any sitting chair that is not operating within the bounds voted on, or agreed upon, by a majority of the members.

From a policy perspective, K. Lofgren said the motion is problematic because if it were to pass, it would directly violate a number of their policies which clearly give the chairman the authority to be the spokesperson for the Committee. She said it is difficult to look at each of their individual voices as they function within a group but she has not had an issue with either of the letters to the editor because she believes they represent pretty clearly the overall consensus of the Committee as a group. She stated she will not support the motion.

C. Barrett agreed with Ms Lofgren and referred to Policy BDB, School Committee Officers, adopted on December 11, 1996 and Policy KDD, News Media Relations/News Releases, adopted on May 26, 1999. In order for the Committee to work efficiently, she feels they need to have the chairperson be the spokesperson for the Committee.

F. Buzan feels personally, the chair has represented his point of view but respects the fact that someone who

might not hold that view might feel unrepresented. He does not believe the chair's communications contain that much speculation and in many cases, he was attempting to provide facts and general responses. He said it could be stated that they do not need to respond to the public between meetings and they could provide time at their meetings for general correspondence. He feels the chair has attempted to be very responsive to people sending in questions. He noted they could lengthen their meetings, which is in conflict with some of the requests, but topics would be discussed more quickly. He is not sure how the chair finds the time to do this job and while he respects Dr. Funch's comments, he stated he does not feel the chair is acting outside of policies.

Dr. Funch read from Policy BBAA, School Committee Member Authority, and he feels there is a conflict in policies and if the motion conflicts with some of the policies, it could be used to modify those policies. With respect to public comments, he said they have received a deluge of comments and while the chair has done a good job of keeping up with them, he said the chair's responses are not always what he feels are full disclosure. Dr. Funch said there is no discussion around emails and suggested they open a place in their meetings for comments on comments that have been received. Dr. Funch feels the chair answering the comments disrupts the real communication that needs to occur among the Committee.

K. Lofgren noted that people who make public comments at their meetings go through the chair and it is at the chair's discretion to open the floor up for discussion. She does not believe this is a policy issue and noted when the Committee chooses its chair, it is in effect choosing the voice of the Committee and should choose wisely.

F. O'Connell said if they feel Mr. McKinney is not representing them in the appropriate light, their option is to reorganize and select a different chair or remove the spokesperson authority from the chair's position. He stated he would not advocate for that and stated Mr. McKinney is the hardest working person here and while he does not always agree with everything he says and does, they will discuss it. He stated he appreciates the time, energy and commitment Mr. McKinney puts into this.

SO VOTED:

In Favor: P. Funch

Opposed: F. Buzan, K. Lofgren, C. Barrett, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

P. FUNCH MOVED TO HOLD A PUBLIC FORUM FOR THE PURPOSE OF HEARING ISSUES OF GENERAL CONCERNS BY THE PUBLIC AND DISCUSSING THOSE ISSUES TO THE EXTENT PROVIDED FOR BY THE FORMAT OF THE FORUM. THE TIME AND PLACE WILL BE AGREED UPON BY BOTH THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND THE CIC COORDINATING GROUP, BUT SHALL BE WITHIN THREE WEEKS. THE FORMAT WILL BE AT THE DISCRETION OF AN AGREED UPON SKILLED MODERATOR.
SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

Dr. Funch stated the Crisis in Confidence started when about thirty teachers came to their November 29th meeting to speak in support of Joe Dillon and continued when Student Leadership Committee spokesman Molly Kalter came to speak to the Committee in support of Mr. Dillon on February 7th. The desire for a public forum was first expressed by the Crisis in Confidence group when they came to the February 28th meeting. He stated the need for a public forum was discussed at the two Committee meetings in March and they did not discuss the list of concerns at the March 21st meeting as requested by Ms Barrett. He stated it has been many months that the Crisis in Confidence issue has been hanging over the Committee and Dr. Genovese and they have yet to meet with anyone who has repeatedly come to the Committee to express their concerns. He feels a public forum will save them a lot of time and noted it is taking a lot of Committee time not doing anything about it. He also feels there is a perception that Dr. Genovese and Mr. McKinney are afraid to meet with the group of concerned citizens and Dr. Funch said he finds this to be unacceptable behavior from the leader of the district. He stated they need to decide whether to hold a forum for general discussion, when to hold it (he recommends within three weeks), what the format will be and who the moderator will be (the group has recommended Bonnie Biocchi or Bob Gosselin).

F. O'Connell asked if he heard Dr. Funch say Dr. Genovese and Mr. McKinney are afraid to face the public. Dr. Funch said there is a perception that they are not willing to do it for various reasons and that they feel under attack by the various groups and are not willing to meet them face on.

C. Barrett reviewed policies she feels are pertinent to the matter of having a public forum for the purpose of hearing issues of general concern to the public - KE- Public Complaints, KEB - Public Complaints about school personnel, KEC - Public Complaints about curriculum or instructional material and KCB - Community involvement in decision making. These policies were adopted on May 22, 1999. She feels they need to look back at their policy book and use the system that is established. She feels part of their problem is that they are not using the system but are trying to go around it and that is why people are feeling frustrated. She stated things will get taken care of by going through proper administrative channels.

C. Barrett stated they received a list of twenty-six items from the concerned citizens and at their last meeting, two Committee members wanted to know the progress on the list. If two members think they are not making fast enough progress on a list of twenty-six items, she sees this as being a log jam. She would like them to work through the system and not around it.

Dr. Funch does not believe the policies Ms Barrett listed address complaints and concerns about the School Committee. C. Barrett said his motions says "issues of general concerns" and she is saying they have great policies that define those issues, break them into subgroups and let them handle them. If the motion read "issues concerning function of the School Committee", she said she would need some time to read the policy book. Dr. Funch said he would amend his motion if that is the intent and he agrees the things she presented have resolution paths in policy and said that is fine but it is the ones that do not have those such as ones involving the School Committee. She said she will read the policy book to see if she can find something that is useful for that. C. McKinney asked Ms Barrett if there is a wording change to the motion that would solve the problem and C. Barrett said no.

K. Lofgren stated Sped PAC was previously very concerned with the School Committee and the administration and this has changed. She feels sometimes the most appropriate way to address something is to go straight to the source and have a conversation and they put their issues and concerns on the table one by one and this area of the district has seen significant growth in the last year and a half. She thinks a lot of the issues have been resolved and stated Sped PAC used the process in place. She stated they did not need a public forum to bring their concerns. She stated she does not support the motion.

F. Buzan said he has also been disappointed that they did not have more of a general discussion about the list of concerns but agrees certain items were discussed and two members gave presentations, although not as a result of an action by the Committee. He felt it would be fair to address the issues more specifically. He said many of the items have been directed to the superintendent and administration and many should be handled at the building level. He feels there are questions that are appropriate for a public forum format. He noted the superintendent recently attended a forum with the Florence Roche PTA and handled all kinds of questions very well. Questions related to personnel came up repeatedly and public comments have been made that they were not answered. F. Buzan believes this is not possible for Dr. Genovese to do and stated the School Committee cannot take action on personnel issues.

F. Buzan said they have policies governing forums. The concept that they should have an independent moderator implies they need someone independent of those elected to run the district and he finds this problematic. If the chair were to decide they need an professional moderator, F. Buzan said the chair can do so. He said he finds it interesting that Dr. Funch is suggesting they bestow a special place to a specific special interest group to work with the Committee to select the moderator. He said this group is broad-based and they do not necessarily represent the town. To give them a special place to hold a forum leaves out all sorts of other groups such as the senior citizens, the PTA's and the School Councils. He feels it is clear that they need to hold some public forums in a timely manner and they are currently planning one about the budget. If it is

going to be a School Committee event, he thinks they need to follow their policies and let the chair do his part and come up with guidelines fair to the public. F. Buzan said if they do not provide the public with a clear picture of where they are going and what they want to do, they will have failed.

If he were to help craft a motion along these lines, C. McKinney said he would first make it topic specific. He believes one of the biggest catch points for the concerns has been on communication and thanked members for supporting the formation of the Communications Research Team. He said he will not support a motion that talks about general concerns. He would want the motion to recognize the priorities of the Committee and not schedule the forum until after the ballot votes for the override have past and that would take them to the first week of June.

C. McKinney said he would have a better ability to support a motion that was amended that maintained responsibility for the forum within the School Committee as he does not believe the Committee should abdicate its responsibility to any volunteer organization.

Dr. Funch stated he would have no problem splitting his motion into three but he would not want to change the first as the point is to have a forum of general concerns for the public to discuss. He feels the group deserves to be heard. He read some of the issues that he said do not fall into a neat category addressed by policies. Dr. Funch withdrew his original motion.

P. FUNCH MOVED TO HOLD A PUBLIC FORUM FOR THE PURPOSE OF HEARING ISSUES OF GENERAL CONCERNS BY THE PUBLIC AND DISCUSSING THOSE ISSUES TO THE EXTENT PROVIDED FOR BY THE FORMAT OF THE FORUM. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

F. Buzan asked for Dr. Genovese's comments. Dr. Genovese said when the students and staff expressed concerns, he followed up and met with them and he tries to be responsive. He stated the Committee has mechanisms in place and it is important to prioritize what is important as they conduct business. He said they might use the Communications Committee to identify what is important and then have specific forums on particular topics. He stated the Committee is very responsive, they hold their meetings in public, everyone can see what is going on and an opportunity is provided for comments that can be taken under advisement. He feels it is important to have a particular focus or it would not be productive.

F. O'Connell said he is not against public forums and has some ideas of things they should be talking about but he will not support an open, general forum. He said there are things on the list that are just his responsibility as a Committee member and they have to trust he will do the right thing and if he does not, they can elect someone else. He stated a round table to discuss their vision should be the first one they hold.

SO VOTED:

In Favor: P. Funch

Opposed: F. Buzan, K. Lofgren, C. Barrett, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell

F. BUZAN MOVED TO HOLD ONE OR MORE FORUMS FOR THE PURPOSE OF HEARING BUDGET ISSUES AND DISCUSSING THOSE ISSUES TO THE EXTENT PROVIDED FOR BY THE FORMAT OF THE FORUM. THE TIME AND PLACE WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR. THE FORMAT WILL BE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR, THOUGH SUGGESTIONS ARE INVITED. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

F. Buzan feels it is important they go on the record as responding with a public forum and they need one to get their budget proposal in front of the voters and they need to do it within the bounds of their policies. People may be disappointed they are not addressing this "wide open" but reminded everyone their superintendent evaluation workshop is coming up on April 28th and this is a public event. He feels with this forum, the evaluation workshop and items taken care of in other ways, they can address the majority of the issues.

K. Lofgren said they agreed earlier to form a budget communications team to specifically do this and asked

how he sees the two. F. Buzan said they are the same and feels the public needs to see a deliberate action. Dr. Genovese sees them as blending together. Dr. Funch said he supports the motion.

C. McKinney is concerned that it is budget specific and he does not want the motion to unduly restrict the Committee. When they talked about the budget communications team, he envisioned a lot of meetings with the PTO's, at the senior centers etc. He stated the motion gives the superintendent and the chair a lot of discretion for scheduling all those meetings.

C. McKinney noted they delegated the authority for those budget communications to Dr. Genovese but the motion says the forums are the responsibility of the Committee via the superintendent and the chair. F. Buzan said the chair can delegate the superintendent. Dr. Genovese hears this as being in the spirit of cooperation and is a beginning to open a door around a specific topic. Other forums that would follow would be identified by the Committee. F. Buzan said this is his intent.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: FY08 Budget Action

Dr. Genovese stated he is making a recommendation about a reduction to the budget and Ms Riggert made a valid point regarding the budget. They know what their needs are and he has no reservation in supporting the full amount. He is looking at it from the point of view that he hears the perception from the community is whether they have made a good faith effort. He believes they have but, on the other hand, they can look at prioritizing and what adjustments can be made doing things incrementally. He sees this as a good faith effort to tell the communities they have looked at the budget over and over again. He said they will absolutely need these positions in the near future and looking at the structure of the district and how it can be reorganized so other savings can occur, will be done. He is confident the budget presented to the Committee had an educational base and was not just numbers. He stated he is recommending the budget be reduced but is doing so with reservation.

Dr. Funch said the full reduction amount does not seem wise and in particular, the reductions to the computer leasing program, the technology infrastructure improvements and deferred maintenance. He would hate to not have these in the budget and suggested reducing the budget by \$305,000. Dr. Genovese said he would prefer they focus on a different money amount, if that is what they want, and allow the Administrative Council and himself to prioritize and make those decisions.

C. Barrett agrees with Ms Riggert's comment about sticking with the original budget and showing support for it but said she knows the towns are concerned with the total amount and would support reducing the budget by this small amount because it has been reviewed by the Administrative Council.

If they reduce the budget and money becomes available, F. Buzan asked if the money would go back to the communities to reduce their assessments. Dr. Genovese said if the towns supported an override and any additional money is received in revenue, he would advocate, as he feels the Committee would, that it go back to the towns to reduce their assessments. He stated he does not anticipate they will be receiving additional funds and feels they will be hard pressed to meet the \$101,000 liability in the budget. They will work very hard to balance the year they are in and hopefully be able to add to E&D, which is getting pretty low. He does not anticipate there will be a lot to add.

C. McKinney asked for a clarification on the conditions under which any additional state aid would be recommended to be returned to the towns versus restoring potential cuts. Dr. Genovese said if any override should pass, the commitment should be that anything beyond the \$101,000 should go back to the towns and not be used to restore the positions. If the override passes, they are able to continue to address specific needs of the district and move forward.

C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE REDUCE THE ASSESSED BUDGET BY \$350,608. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

C. McKinney asked members if they would support the motion as read or if they would like to see a different figure. Since the Administrative Council has looked at the numbers twice, C. Barrett said she is comfortable with the \$350,608. F. Buzan said he wishes to go with the superintendent's recommendation.

The motion was amended:

C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE REDUCE THE FY08 OPERATING BUDGET BY \$350,608. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

Dr. Genovese said the district treasurer will recertify the new operating assessments to the towns.

VOTE: Appointments to Communication Committee

K. LOFGREN MOVED CINDY BARRETT, BERTA ERICKSON AND JON BOROSHOK BE APPOINTED TO THE COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH TEAM. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. Barrett stated they will be having the third quarter financial report, a presentation on Celebrate the Arts, two SIP's and the superintendent's self-assessment portfolio on their April 25th agenda. There will be the MEC presentation, two SIP's, a review of the high school student handbook, a discussion with the high school leadership team and the MASC Resolution at their May 2nd meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

F. BUZAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 11:32 P. M. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment