

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2007
(Approved March 21, 2007)

PRESENT:

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

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:

Kayleigh O'Brien (left at 11:09 p.m.)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: H. Sato, Lowell Sun; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; C. Scafidi, S. Byrne, L. Zimmaro, G. Babin, Senior class officers, C. Olson, P. Cunningham, D. Nicholson, J. O'Hara, J. Degen, See attached sign-in sheet

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

B. Erickson announced the OT Book Group, a group of six to eight high school students, is reading The Things They Carry by Tim O'Brien. They will be meeting with Gaye Culvette and Onorina Maloney on Tuesday, March 20th at 7:00 p.m. at the high school and administrators and Committee members are invited to attend.

With respect to the Prescott school announcement about the TIMSS (Trends in International Math and Science Studies), Dr. Rubel stated this is an international longitudinal study and it is quite fascinating that they have some students participating in the data for that study.

Dr. Genovese announced he would like to recognize Dr. Robinson and the panel who addressed concerns and answered questions regarding the results of the Youth survey. He stated he applauds the work they do.

K. O'Brien announced the Alpine Ski Team finished 13th overall.

MINUTES

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 17, 2007, JANUARY 31, 2007 AND FEBRUARY 7, 2007. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY WITH AN AMENDMENT TO THE JANUARY 17TH AND FEBRUARY 7TH MINUTES.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Senior Class Trip to Six Flags, New Jersey

Christine Olsen, Co-advisor to the Class of 2007, stated it is a tradition for the seniors to go on a trip before graduation. The group is looking to leave on Wednesday, May 23rd to attend a Red Sox game at Yankee Stadium and after the game, they will depart for their hotel in New Jersey. They will spend a few hours at the beach on Thursday and the rest of the day at Six Flags. A movie will be shown that evening in a room at the hotel and all students will be required to be there. She stated their expectations of the students are high and she has no doubt they will meet them. Because it is the start of a holiday weekend, they plan to be back at the school by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 25th.

Class President Bobby Fredrickson stated he has spoken with many members of the Class of 2007 and they think very highly of this trip. He stated they are an incredible group and will represent the school.

F. O'Connell stated the form is different from the normal trip approval form and C. Barrett said the baseball form is the normal one. She asked if they will fill out the Trip Approval Forms which have the CORI checks and such. She was advised they will and the bus drivers from Buckingham will also have a CORI check.

F. Buzan asked if this is coming to them with the superintendent's recommendation and Dr. Genovese said yes.

C. Barrett believes the Consent Agreement should say School District rather than High School. With respect to the question asking about carrying OTC or prescription medicines, she stated this is against the high school student handbook and requested that it be removed. She noted one of Buckingham's insurance policies expires April 1st and they will need to send an updated policy for the packet to be approved. C. McKinney noted protocol is for Principal Dillon to approve the final checklist.

F. Buzan said there is some question as to whether this fits in with all the constraints of their policy on overnight trips and the various requirements. While there is a tradition of this trip taking place and he would not want to interrupt it at this late date, he feels this is something that should be looked into in the future.

K. LOFGREN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE APPROVAL OF SAID TRIP. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. BARRETT MOVED THEY APPROVE THE SENIOR CLASS TRIP FROM MAY 23, 2007 THROUGH MAY 25, 2007 AS DETAILED IN THEIR PACKETS. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. McKinney noted the first deposit is due tomorrow.

Baseball Team Field Trip/Softball Team Field Trip

C. McKinney stated Mr. Twomey and the coaches are unable to be here tonight. Principal Dillon will answer any questions.

F. Buzan asked if the head coach or athletic director is the leader of the trip and C. McKinney said it is the head coach. C. Barrett suggested they have a generic permission slip that would cover all the details.

Dr. Funch asked if anyone has ever looked into having small buses instead of vans since buses are generally safer. T. Sheehan said he would look into this. C. Barrett believes the coaches drive the vans and they may need a bus license to drive a bus. F. Buzan asked if buses are considered safer since no one is strapped in. Dr. Genovese said that is an ongoing debate.

K. LOFGREN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE APPROVAL OF THE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL TRIPS. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. BARRETT MOVED THEY APPROVE THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TRIP FROM MARCH 30TH THROUGH APRIL 1ST AS DETAILED IN THEIR PACKETS AND THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOFTBALL TRIP FROM MARCH 23RD THROUGH MARCH 25TH AS DETAILED IN THEIR PACKETS. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

F. Buzan asked if these trips come with the recommendation of the superintendent and Dr. Genovese said they do.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

K. Lofgren said GDAY's March on Madness calendar came home in backpacks. She stated her children have chosen their favorite activities and it is a lot of fun. She encouraged everyone to look at it.

C. Scafidi, President of the Groton Dunstable Educators Association, invited everyone to attend their faculty and staff variety show to be held in the Performing Arts Center on March 9th at 7:00 p.m. Proceeds will be used for the high school student scholarship, supporting the yearbook, the Peter Twomey Golf Tournament and other events. Tickets are \$5.00 and are available at the door and at the schools.

Florence Roche parent and PTA member Meghan Volpe thanked Dr. Genovese for attending their special PTA meeting last night. Having stated at that meeting that he regretted not taking the opportunity to publicly thank Principal Zimmaro after announcing her intention to retire or resign at the last School Committee meeting, she asked that he take the opportunity this evening to recognize her 12 years of outstanding service and commitment to countless students, families and staff in the district.

Dr. Genovese said he spoke with a group of parents last evening and they shared many of the leadership initiatives Principal Zimmaro participated in. He has asked them if they would put together a comprehensive document so he can include many of the contributions she has made over the last twelve years. The letter he sent to the press indicated a number of the accomplishments she has made to the curriculum, professional development within the school, the Open Circle initiative and many other things. He would like to defer recognition to an upcoming School Committee meeting as the information was not available for tonight. He said he is not sure that the district has recognized those who have retired at a School Committee meeting and he would like to do that at the end of the school year.

R. Hallock read a letter presented to committee members this evening. A group of citizens, concerned over recent events in the district, combined with the unclear direction of the district, came together to share their views and concerns. The unexpected departure of two highly regarded principals, each citing differences with the superintendent, led the group to voice a crisis of confidence in the leadership of the district.

R. Hallock said they will be organizing a public forum, to be scheduled and posted for a Saturday morning as soon as possible, to address some of the issues and they hope all seven Committee members will attend. They plan to have a neutral, objective moderator run the forum. The list of signatures was read and a copy of the letter is attached to these minutes.

When Principal Dillon announced he would be resigning, C. McKinney said a number of teachers came to a School Committee meeting a few weeks later to read a statement of support for Mr. Dillon. Neither he, nor Dr. Genovese, were made aware that they were coming and some people who watched, felt he was a bit abrupt, and perhaps even dismissive, of the teachers and their concerns. C. McKinney stated even though the Question/Comment period is normally meant not to encourage dialogue, it was his intent to enforce the rules the Committee placed on itself and not engage in a dialogue. The group here tonight has shared some of their

ideas early on and they did let them know they would be here to make a statement. He stated he has prepared a few comments of response and can allow members time to respond as well.

C. McKinney read his comments and stated the School Committee is regulated and guided by law, by policy and sometimes, by past practice. The Committee cannot "take on an issue" and dictate solutions to individual schools and administrators. Policy BBAA also requires them to "refer complaints to the proper school authorities and abstain from individual counsel and action." He stated communication is a topic the Committee will always struggle with, and probably never perfect, and noted they would love to hear specific suggestions to help them improve in this area.

C. McKinney said he does not feel a generic public forum would help address issues that may not have been brought to their attention. He has asked Dr. Genovese to contact the working group in order to identify a suitable time to meet with anyone with a specific issue or concern and noted his door has been open since the day he arrived.. He has also asked the group for a specific list of issues. If a majority of members disagree with his position that a public forum would not serve the stated purpose of these individuals, C. McKinney said he will call a special meeting of the School Committee. He thanked the group for their efforts to improve the district.

A copy of his response is attached to these minutes.

Dr. Funch thanked Mr. McKinney for his thoughts and feels they will help people understand the processes they need to follow as a committee. He stated it is an education for everyone to understand what their powers are and what authority they have and noted they act as a committee, not as individual members, and there is a strong control on their behavior as individuals. He agrees a forum is not an effective way to get issues before the School Committee. He feels the issue is a lack of communication and confidence in the superintendent and believes a conversation needs to take place between Dr. Genovese and the public as to what kind of forum would be the best way to understand what is going on. He personally feels a group discussion would be a good thing. If a public forum is agreed to, he would like the Committee members to be there more as observers rather than participants. Dr. Funch feels they need to find out as much as they can in an orderly and calm way.

Dr. Genovese stated he will reach out to parents and arrange a meeting. It has been suggested that he publish a newsletter, like the Connections done in the past, to communicate what is going on in the district and he said he will try to pick up that ball.

Public Hearing - Proposed FY08 Budget

The regular Business Meeting was suspended at 8:07 p.m. for the purpose of holding the FY08 Budget Hearing. At the conclusion of the hearing at 10:10 p.m., the Committee resumed its regular business.

(See Minutes of Public Hearing - Proposed FY08 Budget)

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget and Finance - F. O'Connell reported they will be meeting at Tarbell on Tuesday, March 6th at 6:30 p.m. It was asked that the date be posted on the website.

Report of the Chair - C. McKinney reported the representative to the Nashoba Valley Technical High School school committee is up for reappointment at the end of March. The current representative, Kevin McKenzie, is willing to be reappointed. The Groton Board of Selectmen, Groton Moderator and Groton School Committee members make that appointment. The appointment will take place at a Monday Selectmen's meeting or at a Wednesday School Committee meeting in March.

Report of the Director of Business and Finance Quarterly Report

Members had received a copy of the FY2007 Second Quarter Financial Report as well as a copy of a comparison of the FY07 to the FY08 budget using the DOE Chart of Accounts.

T. Sheehan reported they compared spending by category and by site for the first six months of FY07 to the same period for FY06. Spending is approximately the same percentage of the budget. It is up slightly in dollars and percent but is reassurance that spending is appropriate for where they are in the budget cycle. He stated they are looking at a potential increase of approximately \$40,000 on the revenue side over the figures presented on June 30, 2006. This is coming from increased interest revenue from the proceeds of the middle school bonds and increases in local reimbursements.

At this point of the school year, they have expended \$12,013,520 as compared to \$10,986,517 in FY06. With respect to utilities, they have spent \$64,397 less than in the comparable period for FY06, a decrease of 15.5%. Given the considerable increases in the FY07 budget for utilities, T. Sheehan stated there is a potential to save \$75,000 to \$80,000 this year. Circuit breaker reimbursement is still on track and is expected to cover the cost of the collaborative and out of district placements. He noted they might have a slight cushion but it could disappear with one unanticipated placement.

The E&D balance has been certified at \$1,254,594. The School Committee has previously voted to authorize \$104,500 to be spent on specified projects and \$371,882 will be set aside for debt reduction in the FY08 budget, leaving a balance of \$745,691.

With respect to the air quality at Prescott, T. Sheehan stated they have implemented just about all of the recommendations that can be financed from either the operating budget or the FY07 E&D account. There are several suggestions to install an exhaust fan in the kitchen and to modify bathroom exhaust fans that vent to the hallway or to the ceiling crawl space. A recommendation will soon be made to the School Committee. They continue to sample the air quality 2 to 3 days a week and will continue to do so until they have ten to fifteen days of data and will analyze it to see if they need to continue testing every room and can test less frequently. The replacement windows are on order and they are waiting for a proposal to alter the windows in the back of the building that go to ground level to see if ventilation can go there as well. Other suggestions involve major structural alterations of the building, significant expense for architects and contractors and possible disruption or relocation of classes. It is strongly recommended that this matter be referred to the Facilities Task Force III in order to develop a long-term strategy for the continued use of Prescott by district elementary students.

T. Sheehan reviewed the DOE Chart of Accounts and stated he will be bringing recommendations to the superintendent later this year that they adopt this format for the budget going forward. He noted this format allows you to see more clearly what percentage of the budget is going to direct services for students.

With respect to the grants, C. Barrett stated there are many lines where they have spent more than what was in that grant line item. She knows a certain percent of a line item can be transferred within the grant and asked if everything will come out okay within that parameter. She noticed they also overspent a small grant from day one. T. Sheehan said when he sees that funds are over expended, he goes to the administrator managing it. There are certain categories that can be overspent and there are times when the grant managers go back and re-appropriate the money but this is not necessarily done when the overage first occurs. He stated he is confident the grants are in good shape. Dr. Genovese stated there is a reallocation process and you have to spend the money to get the money.

While pie charts have always been a favorite of his, C. McKinney agrees the new Chart of Accounts will be a good way of seeing where the money is applied. If they adopt this format, T. Sheehan said they will still be able to see expenditures by school.

Policy - K. Lofgren reported they met last night. F. Buzan is working on Policy IJOA, Late Night Travel/Overnight Field Trips and creating some clarity on fundraising issues. B. Erickson is working on putting together common ground language for the Advertising Policy. They looked at Policy KEC per the request of public complaints about curriculum and instructional materials and the sub-committee felt it is not the

appropriate place for concerns about the math program. Dr. Rubel, in cooperation with the superintendent and Policy, will work to create a draft policy on how to outline the more specific policy and process to handle a broad concern from the public. Their next meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on March 20th at the high school.

Dr. Funch stated Budget and Finance identified that international trips are not, and have never been, covered under the district's liability insurance policy and they would like to make sure those trips are covered. Their suggestion is to have an additional fee for those trips and this would need to be a policy of those trips.

T. Sheehan said their policy covers students traveling in the US and Canada. Overseas trips need a separate waiver or policy and he stated they have that policy in place for the two trips taking place this spring.

Report of the Superintendent

Review Scholarship Guidelines - Dr. Genovese reported the auditors suggest the School Committee votes to accept grants and gifts and to approve establishment of a scholarship for purposes given. He stated this is a little bit in conflict with research Dr. Rubel did with the DOE and he will do further research. He feels they will not have to vote to accept a scholarship but it would be good practice to vote to establish a revolving fund when it occurs.

Mass Public Schools Survey on User Fees - Dr. Genovese reported this was in their packets for informational purposes. C. Barrett stated the district's information is outdated.

Review of Goals - School and District - Dr. Genovese distributed a packet that includes the goals for review. He likes the idea of creatively displaying them in the schools. With respect to the budget, Dr. Genovese said there was a strong link and a lot of conversation that the money being asked for be connected to the programs and services and how it impacts teaching and learning. If they are fortunate to have the support of the communities, the next level would be to look at what systems will be put in place to evaluate the effectiveness and if it got the intended results and if not, what adjustments need to be made. He stated this needs to be part of the accountability as they move forward.

High School Search/Job Fair - Dr. Genovese reported Jeanne Mitchell is facilitating the high school search and has developed a brochure that captures the district. He distributed a copy of the brochure that will be used at tomorrow's Job Fair. J. Mitchell said they will be at the Merrimac Valley Recruitment Fair tomorrow and 28 districts will be there. Last year they hired nine teachers from the fair and she said it saves them a lot of money on advertising as each district pays \$600, a portion of what it costs for an ad in the Boston Globe.

Preliminary Elementary Principal Search Process Timeline - Dr. Genovese distributed a copy of the Preliminary Elementary Principal Search Process Timeline that was shared with the Florence Roche PTA last evening and noted a couple of items have been added since then. There will be a parent forum and a staff forum to identify the attributes and skill sets they would like to see. C. McKinney noted the PTA needs at least a week to get information to parents about the forum and asked Dr. Genovese to keep this in mind when setting the date. Dr. Genovese said he has spoken with someone who will be coordinating this and giving him the date.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

J. Mitchell reported the girls basketball team won tonight, 42-38, and move on to play Uxbridge on Monday night at WPI.

B. Erickson said communication is the basis of all successful relationships and is extremely difficult to achieve because emotions get in the way. They have different ways of looking at the world and different techniques of problem solving and these are often deterrents for successful communication. She believes the "crisis" has been brought on by miscommunication. Rumor and innuendo have been growing in the communities and they

need to communicate in more positive ways. She stated she is happy this group has been formed to help get on the communication journey. She also strongly believes they need to follow a process to try and work out their differences and this begins with the expression of concerns to the person who has the most influence and solution to the problem, Dr. Genovese. She hopes the Committee will be able to help with the process. When questions and concerns are brought to the Committee, she suggested they come back with the answers a meeting or two later. She stated she is looking forward to working together and feels tonight is a good start. She feels gratified by the comments, the approach, consideration and the dignity.

C. McKinney agrees with her suggestion about feedback. He stated Dr. Genovese held a forum with the teachers and answered a lot of their questions but as chair, he neglected to make that announcement at a School Committee meeting.

F. Buzan thanked those who waited so late to continue this discussion. He stated it is important to the functioning of the district that they do get feedback. The superintendent and administrators have the charge of executing the plan of the district and making sure things work. The School Committee serves as an overseeing body but they are not here every day so they do need feedback. He said often, barriers have been put up for various reasons and Ed Reform has put limitations on what Committee's can do with respect to the workings of a school district. He stated parents and citizens should feel free to contact Committee members. He stated they need to make more use of their website as a source of information and make sure the "button click" works to send comments and that they get to them. He stated there are three mechanisms for getting questions and complaints to them: coming to a School Committee meeting, going directly to the superintendent and letting him know their concerns and contacting Committee members via phone or email.

F. Buzan said the various protections are built into a system for peoples' benefit and sometimes they prevent discussion such as when it comes to personnel. He stated everyone involved in this process is very committed to trying to get the best education they can to their kids and to do that, they have to be a good employer and a good neighbor.

C. Barrett agreed communication is key. She is glad the group of citizens came forward tonight and wishes they had come earlier as it may have been a less stressful situation if people had communicated as soon as they had an issue rather than let things build up. She echoes Mr. Buzan's suggestions on ways they can be contacted and feels they are all approachable. She stated they want to hear what the community has to say and feels a list of specific, detailed concerns would be good since they can act on specifics but cannot act on vague statements. She said she looks forward to hearing more on the specific concerns.

For a situation they are blaming on a lack of communications, F. O'Connell said there is a lot of communication going on "under the radar". He stated they need to remember that they are all friends and neighbors and the Committee's agenda, and everybody's agenda, is what is in the best interest of the students. He stated this is why he joined the Committee and listening to the budget discussion and administrators tonight reminded him of that. He said tonight's discussion has been very helpful and they need to move forward and make the best of it.

B. Pine said she is a former school committee member and there are eight former members here tonight and seven former members signed the letter. She said she is pleased to hear the members say they are open to communication but is very disappointed that there is not a stronger endorsement of working together to form some kind of a public forum and assumed they would want to do that. The information about the schools comes from the newspapers and the email list serve and it appears there are a number of brewing concerns in the community at large, many from people who do not have children in the schools. She does not see this as the type of situation where they can make a list of their specific concerns or where meeting with the superintendent is going to be particularly valuable. The School Committee represents them and they have tried to present this idea in the spirit of cooperation, hoping to work collaboratively, and making it clear they are willing to set up a format with rules and having it be a productive and respectful dialogue. She stated she is disappointed the Committee has not agreed to work with them on that.

A. Barbo said she sits on the forum planning team and thanked Mr. McKinney for attending the Monday night meeting, noting they shared some good information. She clarified the forum planning team, as a whole or individually, has not agreed to meet with him and the superintendent to specifically address the many issues held by many citizens. She is concerned such an action might be perceived as individuals seeking to become an ad-hoc school committee and that is not their intent. She stated what was agreed to was that they would forward the invitation on behalf of the superintendent to the larger group that met on February 12th, indicating his desire to meet with individuals, or small groups of 8 to 10, to address personal or special interest issues. An email was sent to the group today so they can choose to act. She stated they are not the voice of the community and believe everyone has the right to speak their own heart and mind. Their goal is to promote a respectful, meaningful way to communicate with the district, Committee and concerned parents and citizens.

K. Riggert understands the points about process, protocol and the Open Meeting Law. She stated there are about fifty signatures on the letter and many more people had personal reasons for not signing the letter but want to be included. She stated two or five people meeting with the superintendent means another 45 do not get to hear what he says. A public forum can be held like they did for the Crusader issue and all members can hear the same thing at the same time and the superintendent can, and should, be there. She stated they would like to coordinate this with the Committee and the comments made tonight can be made to all those people and they can pick and choose what they want to do afterwards.

B. Erickson asked if Ms Riggert sees this as a one time thing. Based on what she has observed in the community, K. Riggert said a one time hearing would go a long way to calm people down, quell all the concerns and reduce the anxiety and tension. She said it is much better face to face rather than having emails going around and it would be a good starting point. C. McKinney agreed the Crusader public forum was a good one and it was held within a School Committee meeting.

He said a few citizens went to Dr. Jennings and said they were uncomfortable that the district continued to use the name. She worked with a small group of people, determined it was a larger issue and got community members involved in a study group and concluded a public forum was needed. Following that same line, he is suggesting they start with a small group, inform the Committee and get feedback and let it build to the level needed to generate the interest needed to fix it. He said it usually starts with a seed planted within the administration, led by the superintendent. K. Riggert said there are a variety of issues and the group needs to hear the process at the same time. She supports reinstating the Connections newsletter which goes to every postal patron.

C. Mills does not think this is just an issue of the mechanics of communication. The salient point in the letter read tonight is that the group that authored it have the sense the district is lacking a sense of direction. He stated there is a palpable lack of understanding on the direction of the district. He agrees Connections should be brought back, as well as other forms of communication they have not seen in a long time. He personally has not received a district-wide mailing on anything in two years. He feels people are waiting to see the district's vision and they use to spend a lot of time talking about this. People are losing confidence that this dialogue is ever coming back. He said there is an opportunity here that is not being taken advantage of and he feels people would feel better about things if they see Dr. Genovese take this opportunity and run with it.

J. O'Hara said an open forum would benefit everyone. She said it is not four or five key people but thirty to forty key people that really want to participate.

D. Hewitt said they wanted to be sure members had copies of the minutes from Monday night's planning forum meeting Mr. McKinney was a part of and members said they have them. She said she is also advocating for a public forum where members could be listeners, and as well as participants, and feels it would be wise to do prior to going into the budget.

P. Hartvigsen said Dr. Funch stated he would feel more comfortable being a listener and stated the intent of the forum is to be comfortable and respectful for everyone. She feels it is very different to come into a forum

when the whole agenda is to talk about issues with a neutral moderator and with people choosing to participate in their own way.

Dr. Funch said his interpretation of what the group was saying had to do with concerns about Dr. Genovese and leadership of the district. As discussion continued, he has heard there are other issues. He noted each layer of the enterprise has different responsibilities and the Committee has one layer of responsibilities. He said he saw himself as a passive observer to the issues but he can also play an active role with the layers of communication.

C. McKinney does not believe it should be difficult to get a list and have people come to a meeting and read that list and have people forward emails to Public Comments. He does not believe the data collection should be that difficult and noted they need this information but is illusive. He suggested the emails asking people to come to someone's house invite them to "come to a School Committee meeting." Dr. Funch said he would not have a problem with a forum being part of a school committee meeting and feels they should try something and have a respectful conversation. He said there is a pent up demand to talk and thinks they should respect this.

In an ideal world, B. Erickson said she would like to have a forum every month and if they were allowed to do that, these problems would have gone away a long time ago. She feels airing concerns is a healthy thing.

C. McKinney said this body decides whether or not to have that meeting but they need to respect the policies voted in.

J. Degen said he is not connected with the group but philosophically he agrees with them. He sees the superintendent as the captain of a ship and the perception is the rest of the crew, that being the principals, follow their leader. A couple of the principals have resigned and he stated there is concern among the parents and he is one of them. He stated the superintendent inherited the principals that were on staff and many times, people do not see eye to eye when new management comes into play. It is understood that sometimes people leave because of that and new people will come on board. He feels there needs to be an open dialogue during the entire time so the community feels connected. The idea of having an open forum is important and strongly urged the Committee to move forward with a public forum outside of this room.

D. Nicholson said she had difficulty with a department for a number of years and went through the proper channels to try to get it addressed but it was not addressed. She stated she made a phone call to Dr. Genovese, he set up a meeting and was attentive, made her feel like she had a valid reason and he made sure every point she brought up was addressed. She stated people did come before the former school committee members and they did not listen nor did they answer. She stated it is a fact that Principal Dillon has been trying to move from the district for at least five years and this was not a decision he made overnight. She said if someone has a problem with someone in the district, address it, but feels this is a "group mob mentality". She stated she had been before the former committee members with problems and concerns numerous times and they were pushed aside but now there is a new superintendent and a new school committee and those same people (the former committee members) want to be heard and their issues addressed. She said a public forum should be held to put this stuff to rest. She said a new superintendent means changes and they all know changes needed to be made.

M. Volpe stated that if Ms Nicholson knows what it feels like as a parent not to have her concerns addressed, she should be in support of the public forum. She does not believe anything in the letter says "mob mentality".

F. Buzan said he has been in contact with several of the members of this group, all of whom he respects very much, and appreciates the fact they feel they need to come forward. Many of them have different issues and some may end up being conflicting issues or at least conflicting resolutions. He stated forums may be a good way to do things but they have heard more say "there are problems" but they are not hearing what the actual problems are so it is hard for the Committee to take action. He does not see how it is going to get any better meeting in an open forum if people cannot list their concerns. He stated to many people, it does come across

as though there is a group of people within a group, trying to push some sort of agenda and the Committee does not want that as it does not help anyone. They want to get to the problems so they can be resolved.

F. Buzan does not think people will find resistance from the Committee to have a forum but when people approach them basically saying "they are having a forum, will you participate?" this gets the hair up on the back of his neck. He said the Committee was given the responsibility to do this and if they are given the problems, they will try to resolve them. He stated they will not resolve all the widely different problems in one forum and they need to go through various steps. He said the statement about the group having their own neutral moderator implies an "us" and "them" and noted the members represent them and come here and try to do that. People may not always like the answers but he asked them to share their problems. He stated they always have the polls and can go vote if they do not like the results.

K. Riggert said they have told the chairman through an email that they would pull together a list before the public forum. She stated they might miss someone's point with the list but the person could still make their point at a forum. B. Pine stated they have said over and over again that they would like to work with the Committee to set up a format that will be successful. She said it will send a message that the members are interested in hearing what the problems are.

C. McKinney feels members have said they would be open to having a forum but they would like to understand the issues in order to properly structure a forum. He said they do not need to wait for a forum as they have been here all along and there are several ways to engage them. He noted the group had a meeting to organize issues and it would be nice for the Committee to get some insight into that list. He said they are thinking that there is more than one answer to the overall issue the group has and a forum is not "the" end all, be all. He stated the Committee is proposing multiple ways and a forum is potentially one way.

B. Pine asked if they can come to an agreement tonight that some sort of meeting will be held with a fair amount of time to give an opportunity for a lot of people to speak and they will work with the Committee on setting the rules and alerting the members ahead of time to the things they know might be said. C. McKinney said personally, he does not feel he has enough information to say a forum is the next step.

B. Erickson said, with all due respect, that she has known Mrs. Pine for 35 years but she has never received a phone call about any concern she has had. She said she would have appreciated a call and would hope that she is open enough that Mrs. Pine would have felt comfortable coming to her.

L. Moskow stated the Committee is not hearing that there is a general level of frustration in the community that is just amazing and it is on issues of every level and it is people who normally do not even pay attention. She feels it will benefit the members to hear this from people and asked what they have to lose by coming to such a forum.

J. O'Hara stated she has talked with a number of the members about different things and she does not feel like a lot of her problems have been resolved. She said people do not want to just be listened to, they want to be heard, they want to know that their problems are going to be fixed and that the Committee cares about what they are thinking. She said some people are afraid to speak out and this should not be the case. She noted that some problems may be resolved but the communication does not filter out and people do not know the results.

At their next meeting, C. Barrett said the presentation will be a conversation with the high school council. They will also be adopting the FY08 budget and hearing from Policy. She requested the review of the goals be postponed as she is working on one she would like to present but it will not be ready. Looking ahead to their March 21st meeting, there will be the annual presentation from GDAY and they will look at district-wide assessments and how they are used. Dr. Funch is the liaison and Dr. Rubel said she would like questions as soon as possible.

ACTION ITEMS

See earlier votes on trip approvals

VOTE: Approval of Scholarship Guidelines

Postponed

ADJOURNMENT

K. LOFGREN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 11:30 P.M. SECONDED BY C. BARRETT
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith, Recording Secretary

With attachments