

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2007
(Approved 2/28/07)

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:

Lauren Palmacci

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: J. Kulesz, **Groton Herald**; P. Comtois, **Groton Landmark**;

J. Robinson, B. Raucci, D. Twomey, D. Black, members of the Robotics Team, see attached sign-in sheet

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 7:04 p.m. , with no plans to return to executive session, and was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

T. Sheehan announced he would like to personally thank Polly McGrath, Deb Durno, Karen Roensch, Marilyn Gallardo, Betty Rourke and Steve Byrne for their work in putting together the budget presented on January 31st. He said he is blessed to have inherited such a staff.

J. Endicott thanked the high school SPED and regular education staff for their presentation for eighth grade special needs parents and students on what life is like at the high school. Many high school students shared their experiences in special ed, SPED teachers talked about how they work with their students and parents shared their experiences of transitioning to the high school and it was a very positive evening. The PAC presented a Basic Rights workshop last night and a lawyer talked about parents' rights. The basics of writing IEP's will be presented on March 13th. She announced the PAC is almost done presenting the books to the schools.

Dr. Genovese announced Prescott was not part of the announcements as Principal Lavin has been under the weather.

Dr. Genovese announced Florence Roche Principal Launa Zimmaro will be retiring at the end of the school year.

C. McKinney announced Groton is convening a Groton Community Center Committee to determine the

feasibility of the Groton Country Club as one potential location for an intergenerational community center and to survey the town relative to its interest in supporting the construction of a new community center to be managed by the town of Groton. At the request of the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee is to designate a high school student to represent the district. Junior Michelle Bradley has agreed to serve on the committee and the School Committee will be asked to vote to designate her as their representative. The Board of Selectmen will also appoint her to the committee. Their first meeting will be February 13th.

Dr. Genovese announced the State Department of Public Health visited Prescott today at his request and did a number of tests throughout the school and they will be issuing a report. Later this evening he will be presenting the analysis of the percent of attendance throughout the district for November through January and Prescott is in the same 95-96 percentile.

MINUTES

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 3, 2007 AND THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 3, 2007. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

In Favor: F. Buzan, K. Lofgren, C. Barrett, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, B. Erickson

Abstention: P. Funch

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 17, 2007 AND THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 20, 2006. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

Dr. Funch stated he did not receive a complete copy of the January 17th minutes. The motion was withdrawn.

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 20, 2006. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Molly Kalter, Class of 2009, read a prepared statement on behalf of the student body relative to Principal Dillon's resignation. The Leadership Team has developed a list of concerns and has some ideas on how they can be addressed so the staff, students and administration can move forward together. She stated communication has broken down and the Leadership Team is recommending the School Committee's goals be posted in the high school so they will have a clear picture of the direction the high school is moving. She stated it is imperative the voices of the student body continue to be heard. She stated Mr. Dillon's sudden resignation shocked everyone at the high school and left most feeling disappointed but his decision must be respected. She stated the Leadership Team created a list of traits the new principal should possess.

Dr. Genovese stated he will share their comments with the Search Committee tomorrow. C. McKinney said he will see that the School Council has a copy of the School Committee's goals and requested an invitation to their next Student Council Meeting. B. Erickson feels the new banner exemplifies the Committee's goal and is part of the reason she is here. F. Buzan said the goals stated by Ms Kalter are the goals the Committee is trying to do at every meeting and they are trying to make sure the district is one of the top district's in the state. He noted they do have a voice on the Committee with Ms Palmacci representing the students. He said the Committee needs to know what questions people have.

C. Barrett suggested capturing the annual goals for all the schools, the School Committee, the district and the superintendent in a single document and posting it in all the buildings.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

YBRS Results - Dr. Judy Robinson

Dr. Robinson stated the district began participating in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in 2000 and the survey is administered every other year in collaboration with Emerson Hospital. The participating districts (Westford, Acton Boxboro, Littleton, Concord-Carlisle and Maynard) are demographically similar. The survey

was developed by the Centers for Disease Control about fifteen years ago and is given on the same day in March in each participating school. Some questions have been added but the questions are not changed so they can compare data. She stated a number of practices are in place to minimize any variation of the responses. She stated they know the survey is a reliable instrument and it is used nationally. Sixth and eighth graders as well as the high school students participate and the survey provides an opportunity to get a great profile on the health and well being of their students. They use the data to infuse their health curriculum and inform the community. The number of student participants from 2002, 2004 and 2006 were reviewed.

Dr. Robinson reviewed the behaviors they have been tracking since 2000 which include alcohol use, marijuana use, bullying and harassment and emotional health. She noted these areas stood out in the other communities as well. Additional behaviors incorporated into the results include internet safety, sexual activity, perceptions and misconceptions of behaviors, teen alcohol use in private homes and gambling.

The sixth grade survey has about 50 to 60 questions, the eighth grade survey has about 80 and the high school has over 100. Dr. Robinson stated the report will be posted on the district website tomorrow and a community forum will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theater on February 27th.

Dr. Robinson provided a snapshot of some of the results and stated for most of the behaviors they are looking at, they are starting to see a steady downward trend over time which is encouraging. With respect to bullying in the middle school, F. Buzan asked if this is more a function of the age and if they should be concerned. She feels it is part of the developmental experience of middle school aged children and changes as they grow older but they want to be concerned if students perceive themselves as being a victim of bullying. She said it also speaks to school climate.

With respect to sexual harassment, K. Lofgren asked if students are given a definition and Dr. Robinson said no. L. Palmacci said she remembers being taught a lot in high school about what sexual harassment is and as a senior, was very clear of the definition.

With respect to the question about alcohol usage within the past month, Dr. Robinson said this still needs to be addressed as a high school and a community but noted the trend is going down. Dr. Funch asked if the trend is seen in each of the high school grades and Dr. Robinson said she will have to check. B. Erickson asked if there could be some untruthfulness when they are taking the test that might cause the trends to go down. Dr. Robinson said anonymous self-report data usually gives some good information. F. Buzan said this means almost half the students are drinking at least once every month and there seems to be no resistance in the community to alcohol use at the high school level and he finds this very disturbing. Dr. Robinson said alcohol is by far the number one drug of choice and is the one that causes the most problems. F. Buzan feels it reflects a permissiveness of society in general that parents are allowing this to happen and feels there cannot be that much drinking going on without parents knowing it. He finds it troubling and Dr. Robinson agrees. She stated they need to look at the influences on teen alcohol use.

Dr. Funch said permissiveness is one description but there is also a sense of protectiveness on the part of many parents where they allow kids to drink in their house and they know where the kids are. They are trading off the risks they perceive of pushing them out of the house to drink somewhere else and then drive. F. Buzan stated the question about riding with someone who is impaired implies they are not "staying put" anyway. Dr. Robinson stated a survey question asks if students have been to a party in homes in their district where students were allowed to use alcohol. While adults may be well intended, Dr. Robinson stated driving is not the only risk and parents are making a decision for someone else's child that is not their decision to make and crosses the line. GDAY has done some work around social host liability. Dr. Funch noted the alcohol-free venue for post prom activities is a nice venue to have. C. Barrett requested the data for the aggregate for this question.

Dr. Robinson said the perceptions of use is a key area and research shows the perceptions around drug, alcohol and sexual behavior are much higher than the reported norm and this is because people take their behavioral cues from what they perceive to be the norm of their peers. She noted 27% of the high school

students perceive that over ¾ of their peers use alcohol (norm is 43%) and over half use marijuana (norm is 23%). What drives the perception is people tend to drink and use drugs with people who use them in similar ways and the talk on Mondays is about the big party and what happened there. The high school peer leaders would like to do a campaign targeting the eighth grade students on these misconceptions. The previous theme was "Join The Crowd" because the crowd did not drink or use drugs.

Following the results on sexual behavior, F. Buzan said in most of the age levels, Groton Dunstable is above their peer groups and feels it reflects on the values they are being given. Dr. Robinson said they do not know if it is a reflection of values or if they are more rural and it would be an interesting follow up study. She hopes parents are paying attention to this.

With respect to playing on a team sport and using alcohol and/or marijuana, Dr. Robinson noted student athletes are not at less of a risk for alcohol use although they are slightly less likely to use marijuana and said this is great information for intervention work. Dr. Funch asked about the national data and different sports. Dr. Robinson said some work was done at the college level and college athletes tend to use less in season.

Intervention and prevention strategies currently being done in the district were reviewed and include physical and behavioral health curriculum, policy review and enforcement, collaboration with the police and community building and an advisor/advisee program. Dr. Robinson stated GDAY was founded after the 2000 survey and works closely with the district, tries to move the issues into the community and encourage community leaders and parents to "step up". The community intervention and prevention strategies were reviewed and include a parent to parent network, a half day network and Community Circle programs.

C. Barrett asked if a special curriculum piece is created when they see a spike in data and Dr. Robinson said they look at gaps in the curriculum. Drugs are addressed and information is shared with the school nurses and guidance counselors.

Dr. Funch saw the 2000 presentation and said this shows behavior can change for the better and sensitizing the community to these behaviors is important. He said it is a community effort that needs to take these things seriously, particularly the drinking and driving. He stated GDAY is a great organization.

Youth Football

D. Howes stated the success of last year would not have happened without everyone's support and they exceeded their goals with the number of kids that played youth football and cheered. They had five cheerleading teams and six football teams. He said the visiting teams were amazed at the facility when they showed up for games. The 2007 schedule was reviewed and practices will remain as they did last year. The last regular season practice is scheduled for October 18th with the last regular season game on October 21st.

The estimated total for the 2007 season is 200 kids, a 10% increase from 2006. The middle school practice field is large enough to handle 6 football teams and 4 cheerleading teams and there is also a storage area for equipment, uniforms and other items. The parking area is large and a safe area and the field location is conveniently located. D. Howes stated the Athletic Director has approved the use of the field and the proper field use form has been submitted. The high school field was used for games last year and the youth football league re-seeded it after Thanksgiving and they would like to pursue using that field again for a special event.

With respect to the schedule, Dr. Funch feels an assumption is being made about having lights again and wonders if they have an alternative plan if lights are not available. D. Howes said this will come up again as a need but noted daylight savings is moving so it will be lighter longer. C. McKinney said the use of lights on that field would need further authorization and exactly how that would work has yet to be determined.

As they move forward, and knowing what Mr. Twomey is bringing on for his athletic teams, there is a need for another football game field and they are hoping to build out the Florence Riche track field. It is estimated it

would be used for four to six games on Sundays, starting at 9:00 a.m. and the last game would start at 3:30 p.m. The field has enough parking, a concession stand, a storage facility and is a safe environment. The field is not being used on Sundays and Mr. Twomey has approved its use.

F. Buzan asked if use of this field is in addition to the high school field. D. Howes said the games and practices would be at the middle school field with possible use of the high school field for a night game. F. Buzan asked if this field is closest to the abutters and was told yes. He predicts there will be an issue with using it all day on Sunday and Mr. Howes said he understood.

D. Howes said they would improve and maintain the appearance of the field, improve the storage facility as needed and add goal posts and soccer netting. They will also improve and enhance the concession stand. By doing these things, the school gets an additional game field and improvements at no cost to the district or taxpayers. C. McKinney asked how the youth group raises money and D. Howes said with registration fees, they do fundraising and receive donations. He noted they broke even with the concession stand. Home games are expensive with referee and janitor costs.

F. Buzan asked if the district typically charges a fee for the use of the fields. C. McKinney said it varies by for profits and not for profits and varies based on the actual expenditure of the district to support those operations (ie: custodians). There is a significant expense difference between using the field and an indoor facility.

D. Howes said there is a problem with the lack of fields at the school as well as in the town. There are no available fields at the high school and the town field does not have enough parking, there is no storage area and it is used for soccer. All the soccer fields at Cow Pond are used until dark, football would damage the baseball fields and there is no storage area. D. Howes stated most towns share their fields the best they can.

F. O'Connell asked if the field at Florence Roche is a dust bowl in August. D. Twomey said it is in good shape. F. Buzan asked if there are sprinklers there and D. Twomey believes there is irrigation on the upper track field and the middle school fields have sprinklers.

D. Howes said they are looking forward to working with Mr. Byrne and improving the Florence Roche track field, concession stand, if needed, and the storage facility as well as working with the appropriate boards on the permitting and installation of permanent lighting at the middle school practice field.

K. Lofgren asked if there are any fields in Dunstable and D. Howes said they have the same problem. Although an inconvenience, if push came to shove, B. Erickson said there are some idle fields at Fort Devens.

C. Barrett thought this was a great overview and gave good information. She asked how they move forward with the lighting issues. C. McKinney said the district/school committee needs to articulate the decision process and identify who the authoritative bodies are and make sure people are involved in the process.

Three Year Athletic Budget Estimate

D. Twomey stated much of the revenue is generated from user fees and the fee is \$225 this year. The FY08 budget is \$567,862 with a school operating budget contribution of \$281,069. User fees, gate receipts and Booster Club/fundraising contributions would account for the remaining 50% of the budget. The stipends, athletic trainer and secretarial support will be paid through the operating budget where before they were paid out of the user fees. Expenses for the high school and middle school programs would be paid for through the user fees. These expenses include official fees, game management, equipment, transportation, awards and other supplies. D. Twomey said stipends, salaries and expenses would increase 2.5% on a yearly basis. He stated a plan should be put in place to reduce the user fee over time.

New programs for FY08 include JV football (\$13,258.67), boys indoor track and girls indoor track (\$8,314.86 for each). D. Twomey acknowledged there will be start up costs that will have to come from the Booster Club and fundraising contributions. They plan to bring on a varsity volleyball team in FY09 (\$7,450) and

transportation is all ready paid for with the JV team as they will go to the same site on the same bus. The FY09 budget would also have some subtractions that include the new program start-up costs (\$15,000) and they would potentially be in the last year of the Co-Op agreement (\$5,000). Facility planning to add an additional field at the high school by reconfiguring a baseball field is a one time cost in the FY08 budget (\$7,500). This will give them a field they really need in the fall and spring. Looking at the total costs of the programs from FY 08 to FY09, he stated they are running a more efficient program at less cost.

With bringing on varsity football (\$21,597) in FY10, D. Twomey stated the coaching staff cost is an estimate and he noted the season is much longer than any other they have. A cheerleading program would also be added (\$7,950).

If they try to reduce user fees by \$50.00 a year, D. Twomey said by the third year they could expect a significant accumulation of gate receipts by hosting varsity football games. On average they have 5.5 home games and hosting a Thanksgiving game is a major revenue. He noted in FY10, they would subtract the cost of the Co-Op agreement and there would be increased gate revenue for the varsity football.

C. Barrett said Budget and Finance would need to figure the total that will come from the operating budget for the three years. D. Twomey said it is dependent on the user fees and C. McKinney said it is more dependent on user fees than football. He said there is a perception that football adds a huge cost that comes into the operating budget and it is not there. If there is an increase, it would be based on the Committee's willingness to decrease the user fees and absorb that money into the operating budget.

B. Erickson asked the reason behind wanting to reduce the user fees. D. Twomey said it comes down to a cost per sport basis and it does not cost \$225 to participate in some sports. User fees also create a barrier for participation and they are a public institution and whatever comes out of that institution, philosophically should be free. He acknowledged they can make exceptions and wave the fee but noted many students do not want to pay to "sit on a bench". He stated if you are guaranteeing playing time by paying a fee, they are getting away from the things they are trying to emphasize with any free program - if you work hard, you will have the opportunity to participate. He stated there is additional pressure on coaches to play students because they are paying a fee. It is also difficult to accurately predict the number of participants with a \$225 fee.

C. McKinney said the matter deserves Committee discussion.

F. Buzan asked if the fee is per sport and D. Twomey said it is per season. It was \$150 last year. F. Buzan said when he sees the number of kids playing sports, he does not see a lot of financial resistance to them going out on the field. He asked if participants in the music programs have user fees and C. McKinney said if the program takes place during the school day, there cannot be user fees. F. Buzan asked if they pay for their own instruments and concert uniforms. They do pay for their instruments and a variety of uniforms are available. F. Buzan would hope all the kids are created equal and deserve equal playing time in a competitive program. C. Barrett said in the past, the decision was they can either keep user fees low and cut programs or raise the fees and keep the programs and that was the decision that was made.

Dr. Funch asked where the uniforms and equipment for the football programs are funded. D. Twomey said it would be part of the equipment budget. There is \$10,000 in the budget to replace uniforms on a yearly basis. He stated the Booster Club gives a significant contribution for equipment. Fundraising will need to take place for the sleds and additional equipment.

F. Buzan asked the current revenues from basketball and how these would compare to football. D. Twomey said football would be a lot more. He stated up until the past couple of years, there were very successful girls and boys basketball programs, as well as hockey, and traditionally they expected about \$20,000 in revenues. This has been adjusted to \$15,000 for FY08. F. Buzan asked if this could be adjusted by decreasing the price and having a threshold for families and fill up the stands. He is hoping this can be done for football and thinks they can do it for basketball. He noted the youth football said they hope to break even with the concessions

yet Mr. Twomey expects to make money. It was stated the youth football is trying to fund the day.

F. Buzan asked where they would play football and D. Twomey said on the high school field. F. Buzan asked if the field would have to be modified and was advised they currently play games there with Ayer. He asked how many kids they estimate will be in this program and if they are kids that would not otherwise be participating in fall sports such as soccer. D. Twomey said it is hard to say but at the JV level, he is anticipating about 35 to 40 student athletes and with the JV and varsity program, about 60 to 70 student athletes. He noted soccer and football players are two distinctly different athletes and typically, you do not start playing soccer in high school but you would start playing football. F. Buzan asked if there will be additional kids for the indoor track program and D. Twomey said these will be entirely new students and if you are a runner, you are a runner period. He stated there is no sport offered in the winter that can be tried and started for the first time. F. Buzan asked where they will hold indoor track and D. Twomey said they do not host indoor track; they would go to Shrewsbury, Fitchburg High School, Mt Wachusett and the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston. Most of the schools in the league do not have an indoor track facility. C. McKinney said they do not have a winter track program now but they do have track athletes working out at the high school and they run all year.

With respect to field maintenance, F. Buzan asked if they will be able to stand up to the addition of this football program and the youth football program. He asked when will they be seeing a town meeting question, he knows they are going to get, for artificial turf. People are saying the high school fields are in terrible shape and he asked if this will mean a large increase in the budgets they have not anticipated for the sake of taking care of facilities. D. Twomey said it would certainly help to have a multi-use surface for all sports programs. He stated with the amount of use and capacity they have at the high school now, the fields do not have a chance to rest and it is a real crunch in the spring with all the field sports. With the addition of football and the relocation of the youth football to another field, he said they could host a maximum of six JV games on the main field. He plans to reconfigure the second baseball field and add that as a practice field for spring and fall sports teams. F. Buzan said practice sleds would have an impact on the turf and the more damage that gets done in the fall cannot get repaired because it is cold and needs to repair itself in the spring. In order to sell this to people, he said they need to be sure they have budgeted correctly and people will not get "blasted later".

D. Twomey said there is a need for fields in the long term. When they arrived at the high school site, it was all ready tight with the amount of use and capacity with the sports programs they all ready had. He noted the youth football is playing and practicing at the school because there are no locations in Groton or Dunstable that work for that program. There is a need for more athletic fields in both towns.

Dr. Funch asked what will happen when they have JV and varsity and D. Twomey said there will be more of a crunch on the facility. Dr. Funch wonders where they will be when the fields are not adequate. He is concerned they will not be able to sustain this thing they have started. D. Twomey stated additional field space will be needed in the long term and he loses sleep about fields, especially in the spring. They try to disperse the use among all the fields, including those at the middle school.

Should this come to fruition, Dr. Genovese asked how it will play into meeting the requirement of Title 9 so they are in compliance with equal opportunities for male and female athletes to participate in sports.

D. Twomey said they would continue to be in compliance with the addition of these teams.

C. Barrett feels Mr. Twomey and Mr. Sheehan captured all the costs in the FY08 budget. She asked what happens if they fall short in the amount of estimated user fees. D. Twomey said they would have to make an adjustment to programs such as limiting the number of games.

Dr. Funch asked if there is an additional insurance cost and T. Sheehan said the insurance broker has advised the JV and varsity football would be covered under their existing general liability program at no additional charge.

F. O'Connell said they do not want to overlook the point about the fields as they do not want to be in the

position to have to cut something because they do not have the field capacity. Without adding to the burden of the Facilities Task Force III, he feels it is something they could consider.

FY08 Budget Review

T. Sheehan distributed a FY2008 budget update. The operating budget being proposed, less debt, is \$30,666,653, a \$2,777,130 increase (9.96%) over the FY2007 budget. The budget increases by major categories were reviewed. T. Sheehan stated the athletics budget shows an increase of \$119,317 (73.8%) and reflects Mr. Twomey's salary being transferred from the high school salary budget to the athletics budget so the actual increase is \$52,817. He noted the utilities increase is significantly smaller than previously presented as Groton Electric's rate is lower than expected.

The \$1.7M in salary increases is a combination of factors that includes teacher raises (3.25%), step increases, other payrolls, new positions (7.9), salary reserve and the FY07 deficit (combination of many factors including not accurately capturing all the stipends being paid). C. McKinney asked if the \$160,470 has been a rolling deficit. T. Sheehan said they ran a surplus in the salary account in FY06 and the amount of the raise from FY06 to FY07 was about 3% when it should have actually been more. They did not need to put as much money into FY07 as they would have if the account had been even. The technology director was not budgeted in FY07 and some SPED aides were added. There was also an overlap of administrative assistants in the superintendent's office at the time Barbara was retiring and an overlap of his salary and Mr. Young's. Approximately \$115,000 in longevity and technology stipends were not captured in the prior budget process.

Since these were paid, F. Buzan said the overall affect on the budget should negate itself and T. Sheehan hopes all the accounts will come out closer to the budgeted amounts than they have in the past. F. Buzan said he understands the raises are the contractual increase and the step increases are due to a higher level designation. He asked what causes a step change and T. Sheehan said simply one more year of experience.

F. Buzan said virtually every teacher will get the 3.25% raise plus a step increase and T. Sheehan said yes if they are not at their maximum step. F. Buzan asked how many years they have before they max out and was told there are a maximum of nine steps for a bachelor's degree and thirteen for a master's degree and beyond. At least 2/3rds of the teachers will be receiving step increases.

With respect to the FY07 deficit, F. O'Connell asked if there is a line item in the budget showing this deficit or if they know there are \$160,000 in salaries they are paying for from other accounts. T. Sheehan said there are many salary accounts in the budget and the sum total of the deficit in all of those is \$160,470.

Dr. Funch asked if they budget for any overlapping positions or just for the things they know will be there plus an average amount of change that may occur. T. Sheehan said they are trying to capture the accurate costs in the FY08 budget so as they go forward, they will not see this variation in the salary and utility budgets. C. Barrett said Mr. Sheehan is not using a line item and adding money to it. He has added the raise each individual is getting so it is a person by person total accounting of real dollars. He will provide a spreadsheet showing where the \$160,470 deficit comes from.

F. Buzan asked if a salary category includes the retirement and health insurance for an employee. T. Sheehan said no, the expense for health insurance is under the System-wide budget. F. Buzan asked if they make a contribution for retirement and T. Sheehan said they only contribute to Middlesex County Retirement for those not covered by the Massachusetts teacher retirement system. T. Sheehan said the \$512,000 for new positions includes the cost of insurance benefits. He is including the full time equivalent positions line item by line item in the salary budget so it will be easier to identify the reasons for a change next year.

T. Sheehan reviewed the major drivers of expense increases which include health insurance, retirement, transportation and the school resource officer among other items. He noted few of the items are discretionary expenses. C. McKinney asked when they will receive the response on the health insurance proposal and

T. Sheehan feels it will be March or early April. F. Buzan asked about the employee retirement cost and Dr. Genovese said this is for employees, outside of teachers and administrators, who are in the Middlesex County Retirement. F. O'Connell asked if the school resource officer is part of the deficit and T. Sheehan said no. This has been treated as an expense item because the officer is not paid directly as they get billed by the town. It was omitted in the FY07 budget.

T. Sheehan said the new spending in the FY08 budget includes \$512,000 for the 7.9 new positions recommended by the superintendent, \$60,000 for the first year of a multi-year program to replace computers and a \$20,000 increase in the deferred maintenance account. These account for 2.12% of the proposed budget. C. McKinney asked if there is any correlation between the computer category going up by \$64,327 and computer leases for \$60,000. T. Sheehan said part of the \$64,327 increase is for general infrastructure and part is in the library for maintaining and improving the system.

T. Sheehan presented a pie chart that shows 57% of the budget is going toward instructional purposes. In the future, they will present the budget using the Department of Education chart of accounts. C. McKinney noted transportation accounts for almost 10% of their budget and asked what category this falls under. T. Sheehan said this is under Other School Services. C. McKinney noted there are many large expenses that fall under other categories that are critical components though not directly part of the instructional services. Dr. Genovese stated transportation is not built into the foundation formula to support education but is added on top of the minimum contribution. F. Buzan asked about athletics and T. Sheehan believes it is under instructional services.

C. Barrett asked the factors behind the large salary surplus and T. Sheehan said he will give this spreadsheet to Budget and Finance at their next meeting as he does not have it with him tonight. Since they are asking for a significant budget increase, F. Buzan believes they will need to answer the question of what is in this budget that will resolve some of the issues they have. He is not sure people will understand what they mean by "they have to reset the bar" so they need to give people a vision of where they are trying to go and how this helps them get there. Dr. Genovese referred to the Guiding Principles in terms of what they hope to accomplish with the new positions and he will review the backup data behind the request for these positions at the public hearing on February 28th. The positions are listed on page 4 of the budget. At the high school, the goal is to address the increase in student population. Two additional teachers will basically maintain present class sizes and maintains the offerings they have. At the middle school, the teacher would be at the fifth grade level and is a possible dual position, with someone certified in math and special education.

F. Buzan asked if the math specialist will be in the classroom and Dr. Genovese envisions this person working in the classroom as well as doing workshops with teachers. F. Buzan asked if a Math Coordinator is also a teacher. Dr. Rubel said at the elementary level, she is only half time and does not teach. The Math Specialist is an additional position and the person will be coaching teachers and providing direct services to the students.

F. Buzan asked if the teachers coming out of college are being taught the kind of math instruction the district is using. Dr. Rubel said new teachers coming out of college have never been taught specific programs, they are taught the fundamentals of math and math pedagogy. Dr. Genovese said mentors are assigned to new teachers.

F. O'Connell said this question came up at Budget and Finance as well as at the joint meetings and the need for the Math Specialist position came through loud and clear from the elementary principals. He noted they cannot fix everything they think needs improvement overnight but they need to start somewhere.

Dr. Funch said there has been controversy on the curriculum and the best way to teach a subject but said they need to support the people that make these decisions. He stated you try to do the best you can, hope it succeeds and adjust if it does not. He feels this is a well thought out approach to an obvious problem they are having in the district. Dr. Genovese said it provides in-house professional development and is one of the most powerful ways to change and improve instructional practices.

C. McKinney stated they are a very young school committee in terms of its overall experience. He said they are still trying to understand their role and how to equip themselves to be advocates for the school. He noted everyone's approach will be slightly different and everyone needs patience.

K. Lofgren asked if the need for extra support, extra teachers and mentoring with math is unique to Groton Dunstable and Dr. Rubel said it is not specific to the district if you look at the MCAS scores.

C. Barrett stated library support services will be eliminated in June 2007 and they have to buy a new system in order for the libraries to continue functioning. She thought in past years they have been buying equipment that allows them to barcode the books. She asked if this is the TLC program they are getting rid of.

Dr. Genovese does not know which software they hope to purchase. C. Barrett asked how much of their existing equipment is defunct. Dr. Genovese said the plan would be to reallocate existing equipment across the district. He said there is a document in progress that will look at the needs and how existing computers and new equipment will move around so everyone has what they need to improve teaching and learning.

F. O'Connell said Budget and Finance talked about the vision at their last meeting and what the vision is for with this year's budget as well as in following years. He said it is important that the Committee formulate a distinct message on what the vision is. He noted this is Mr. Sheehan's first budget as Director of Business and Finance and these tough questions are extremely important and an education for him as well.

T. Sheehan said a meeting with Budget and Finance and town officials is scheduled for February 15th and the budget public hearing is scheduled for February 28th. C. McKinney said he will be talking about the budget with the Groton Board of Selectmen and FinCom on Saturday between 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. While both Mr. Sheehan and Dr. Genovese are unavailable on Saturday, they stated they are willing to meet with any town official at the pleasure of the boards.

Dr. Funch asked Mr. McKinney where he will get the information from on the debt and debt assessment and when the Committee might have the time to talk about it. C. McKinney said there has been one internal meeting to help Groton officials understand debt/debt assessment and he does not expect this to be a large part of Saturday's discussion. He said he will be meeting with Mr. Sheehan prior to Saturday.

School Committee Goals

Postponed to March 7th meeting

Visit from Robotics Team

Arlo Towle, Devin Beaulieu and Eric Deyoteo, members of the Robotics Team, presented their invention to Committee members. This year's project was to design a robot that could pick up a large tube and place it at various heights on a goal. Arlo said they are on schedule as of today and they need to ship their robot on February 21st. The competition will be held on March 1st and is held for three days. There is a fifteen second optional autonomous mode and the rest of the match is remote. They will be testing their robot at Bishop Guertin on Saturday and will be doing a pre-competition the following Saturday with several other teams at a real arena.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget & Finance - F. O'Connell reported they had a joint budget meeting on January 25th and Budget and Finance met on the 26th. Their next meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on February 13th at Tarbell.

Policy - K. Lofgren reported their next meeting is scheduled for February 27th but stated this conflicts with the community forum for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the policy meeting may be rescheduled.

Report of Director of Business and Finance - T. Sheehan reported two architects visited Prescott on Monday to assess the recommendations of the mechanical systems survey from Johnson and Seaman Engineering and he will have a report for the Budget and Finance Committee. He stated they have received

a number of specific recommendations on what to do next regarding the ventilation system.

F. Buzan asked if they have been in contact with their own Boards of Health to get their input on this situation. Dr. Genovese said he has sent a report to them as well as documents on the middle school flooding. F. Buzan asked if someone with that kind of expertise has been put on the Facilities Task Force and Dr. Genovese said they have not been able to coordinate a meeting with the FTF and they do not have a community-at-large member and there are other areas they are looking to fill.

Dr. Genovese distributed data showing the percentage of cumulative attendance for all the schools for November, December and January and noted the overall percentage is excellent. Prescott's percent of attendance is equal to, and in some areas better, than the other schools. He said he would not draw any major inferences from this and stated they will be doing testing in the other schools as well in order to develop a baseline.

Report of the Chair - C. McKinney read a copy of his statement clarifying the superintendent's evaluation process and a copy is attached to these minutes. His statement provides historical context, an explanation of the public records law and an explanation of the School Committee's role in the process.

Dr. Funch said he did not find the requirement to vote on the process in the policy book and asked if this was a formal requirement of policy, done as a courtesy or as a tradition. C. McKinney said they could not find any formal policy or consistent practice. Dr. Funch feels they should think about doing this. C. McKinney said he is more interested in formally accepting the superintendent's goals in the updated timeline because the label of that document is Addendum A to the superintendent's contract. Since the Committee votes on his contract, he feels it makes sense to vote to add to the contract even though it would be updated in minor ways.

Dr. Funch said he likes the idea of having people who wish to provide input be at their workshop. He asked when the School Committee deliberates and comes up with the evaluation. He said he talked with MASC about the evaluation process and was surprised they said the 360° input is very uncommon. He feels there has been a misunderstanding by people who were solicited for input and feeling their input "must show up" in the evaluation. He stated MASC said the Committee's job is to do an objective evaluation based on as much input as they can get but it is not to go to others to collect that information.

As they step up to Dr. Genovese's year end evaluation, C. McKinney said they will need to be sure they make a re-statement on how this works. Although not on tonight's agenda, Dr. Genovese feels it makes sense for the Committee to vote to accept his goals so they are part of the document.

Report of the Superintendent - Dr. Genovese distributed a list of participants on the High School Principal Search Committee and their first meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on February 8th in Room 219 at the high school. He stated Bill McDonald is Dunstable's community member.

With respect to his self-evaluation presented at their January 17th meeting, Dr. Genovese asked if time could be spent with members providing feedback. C. Barrett thought they were suppose to put their comments in writing and Dr. Genovese said he has not received any and wanted to be sure they had the opportunity.

Dr. Funch felt there should be some public dialogue. He agrees being superintendent is a tough and demanding job and there are many aspects Dr. Genovese is evaluated on. He stated he is confident Dr. Genovese knows how to run the district but would like to see more leadership from the top and have him say this is why these things are done, this is what we stand for and participate in the discussions. He stated he is sensitive to Dr. Genovese wanting his staff to be the spokesperson as well. Dr. Funch said he senses some uncertainty in the community about a lack of direction for the district. He stated he admires the job Dr. Genovese does. Dr. Genovese said he finds his job very rewarding.

B. Erickson agrees with the good things said about Dr. Genovese and feels his actions have made the statement Dr. Funch is looking for.

F. Buzan feels the community needs a strong educational vision - where are we going, what are we going to change, how are we going to get there? He knows Dr. Genovese does not want to make it sound like it is "me, me, me" but as a leader, it is something that needs to be done. He said when things come to the Committee they would like it to be obvious that he supports it and if it is part of his vision. He stated Dr. Genovese needs to advocate the district to the Committee and sell them so they can go advocate to others. In some cases, he feels they need to have a quicker public response to issues so they do not take on a life of their own. He stated the community needs to understand his vision.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None

ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Genovese stated two Apple computers damaged in the middle school flooding need to be declared surplus so they will be part of the list for their insurance carrier.

VOTE: Declare Surplus - Damaged Middle School Computers

F. BUZAN MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE DECLARE SURPLUS THE TWO COMPUTERS THAT WERE WATER DAMAGED IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL FLOOD - APPLE EMAC MODELS WITH OSX OPERATING SYSTEMS AND MICROSOFT OFFICE.
SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

C. Barrett asked if new computers will be purchased if they receive any insurance money for these and Dr. Genovese said yes. F. Buzan asked what they will do with the computers and was advised very little can be salvaged and they will be disposed of.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: School Calendar

Dr. Genovese stated half days and curriculum days still need to be added to the calendar. He stated 115 teachers voted to start on Tuesday, September 4th with students returning on Thursday, September 6th. The last day of school will be June 18th without snow days.

B. Erickson asked if the vote indicates the teachers' disapproval of starting before Labor Day and Dr. Genovese said it has to do with when Labor Day falls.

K. LOFGREN MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR 2007 - 2008 STARTING AFTER LABOR DAY AS OUTLINED IN THEIR PACKETS. SECONDED BY C. BARRETT

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Designation of Student Representative to Groton Community Center Committee

K. LOFGREN MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE DESIGNATE MICHELLE BRADLEY TO THE GROTON COMMUNITY CENTER COMMITTEE.
SECONDED BY C. BARRETT

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Scholarship Account

Dr. Genovese said they have been collecting money that has been sent to the district for a memorial scholarship under the name of Norman R. Carkin, Sr. Since this is under the district's tax identification number and because they are the guardians of the funds, Dr. Genovese feels the Committee should vote whenever a scholarship fund is opened. He will then authorize the opening of a savings account in the name of Norman R. Carkin, Sr. Memorial Scholarship fund under the district's tax ID number and designate the treasurer and the accountant as authorized signers on the account.

Dr. Genovese distributed a list of the scholarships they have to date and asked the Committee to vote to

authorize the scholarships that presently exist and include the opening of this new scholarship account.

C. Barrett asked if there is a policy that determines how the funds are used and distributed to the students. Dr. Genovese said there are scholarship committees and there are two pages of guidelines on how scholarships are handled. Dr. Rubel stated they were cited on a discriminatory practice, which has been corrected, on one of their scholarships and wants to be sure the bylaws follow the civil rights guidelines.

Dr. Funch asked who the administrator of the scholarship fund is and was advised the district deposits the funds and there are generic guidelines on how they are dispersed. Generally there is a board that oversees each individual scholarship. Dr. Rubel stated they do not know what the disbursement procedures are for the new scholarship.

Dr. Funch believes they should not accept the scholarship until they confirm it is compliant with the nondiscrimination regulations. Dr. Genovese sees it as a two part process and stated they have a lot of checks that need to be deposited. Dr. Funch asked if they can approve the opening of an account.

C. McKinney said no money can be dispersed from the account until the policy is in place. Dr. Genovese said the guidance office sends paperwork that outlines the parameters to the family and they work with the high school guidance office to go over how it works.

**C. BARRETT MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE OPENING OF A SAVINGS ACCOUNT UNDER THE DISTRICT'S TAX ID NUMBER UNDER THE NAME OF NORMAN R. CARKIN, SR. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

ADJOURNMENT

**F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 11:51 P. M. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachments