

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library

Business Meeting Minutes

January 3, 2007 – Approved February 7, 2007

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Secretary

Dr. Forrest Buzan

Ms Berta Erickson

Ms Karen Lofgren

Mr. Chuck McKinney, Chair

Mr. Frank O'Connell, Vice-Chair

ABSENT:

Dr. Paul Funch

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent

Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance

Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

Kayleigh O'Brien

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: P. Comtois, **Groton Landmark**; R. Savard, **Lowell Sun**;
J. Kulesz, **Groton Herald**; T. Mann, W. Mann, C. Mann, J. Dillon

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session under M.G.L. Ch. 39, Sec. 23B-3. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:04 p.m. and was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Dr. Rubel announced Sandra Devlin, a 1985 graduate of Groton Dunstable, started as the new secretary in the curriculum office on December 28th. She thanked Leslie Wickfield for standing in for several months.

Dr. Genovese announced Dr. Rubel will be giving Ms Endicott's presentation tonight since Ms Endicott injured her knee and is unable to be here tonight.

Spotlight - MASS Certificate of Academic Excellence recipient - Thomas Mann

Dr. Genovese stated this is the time of year when superintendents review a number of criteria and make a selection for the recipient of the Superintendent's Award. He recognized Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Mann and Principal Dillon. Dr. Genovese introduced this year's recipient, Thomas Mann. He stated Thomas has an excellent academic record and has made numerous contributions to the district. During the interview process, Dr. Genovese asked him if he had a favorite quote and Thomas has his own: "Life is about passion, passion of one's work, education, cause and the betterment of the world. Passion is life in its most potent form."

Dr. Genovese noted Thomas has a special interest in psychology and brain research and his transcript is peppered with A+'s. He is an active member of the community, is on staff at the Dunstable Library and among other things, is a member of the National Honor Society, tutors students in geometry, is Peer Leader President and Book Club President. Dr. Genovese stated Thomas has a strong sense of values which will serve him well in his adult life and he will be successful in whatever he chooses. Dr. Genovese read the Certificate of

Academic Excellence and noted Thomas will receive the actual award at a formal luncheon later this month.

Thomas stated he is excited and happy to receive the award and said he never did any of these things out of a desire to win anything as he honestly loves what he does and this is the "icing on the cake".

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

CPR (Coordinated Program Review) Update,

Dr. Rubel distributed an executive summary of the CPR. She stated the CPR is an audit of federal grants conducted by the Department of Education. The audit was done in May 2005 and included all the special education services, methods of administration of civil rights, the Title I program, the English Language Learner Education program and the Safe and Drug Free Schools program. A five member team visited the district and interviewed staff and parents, observed classroom facilities and reviewed the programs. The district received the Department's final report in December 2005 and the district submitted a Corrective Action Plan in February 2006. The Department approved the plan in October 2006 and a progress report as to how the Corrective Action Plan is being implemented was submitted in November. She stated this process takes place approximately every five to seven years

Dr. Rubel noted the district was commended for several things including special education students receiving required services and being well supported in their needs, exemplary outreach to parents and the communities and all students having equal access to all programs. They were also recognized for having crisis management plans and teams in all the schools.

As is customary in many districts, there are areas in need of corrective action and specific to special education these included maintaining compliance with timelines, writing measurable goals and progress reports, completing forms correctly and maintaining appropriate ratios of SPED students to peer models, particularly applicable to the Early Childhood program. They also need to provide professional development to regular education and special education staff regarding special education regulations and their implementation and to teachers of LEP students regarding second language acquisition and sheltered English immersion teaching techniques. They were asked to improve their documentation around implementation of certain policies, especially their homeless policy. Translation of materials for LEP (Limited English Proficient) parents is also required.

Budget Implications

Dr. Rubel stated the district is mandated to provide training for staff in these areas and to conduct a program evaluation of special education services. They have applied for a \$12,000 grant through the DOE to fund the SPED training and to do an independent program evaluation. Funding for translation software is also being requested through the grant. Without the DOE funding, the district would have to budget the \$12,000 to implement these DOE mandates. In addition, \$4500 was budgeted for ELE professional development and an additional \$4500 is needed for additional training since they have now been told they must be certified by this year. A similar amount will be needed next year. Dr. Rubel noted those teachers will change every year as the students move up to different grades and this will cost between \$6000 and \$9000 a year. Homeless transportation averaged \$60 a day per student (four students for about 60 days) last year but since a budget number is difficult to predict, money has not been budgeted to date for FY07 or FY08.

C. Barrett asked when they will know about the DOE grant. J. Endicott was told it is in the process of being reviewed and they should know before the end of the year. Dr. Genovese noted they could not apply for the grant until their Corrective Action Plan was approved and Dr. Rubel noted the district has been very timely in their responses but the DOE has not been timely.

F. Buzan asked how many students are in the LEP category and Dr. Rubel said there are six with possibly one more as of today. She stated a test is used to identify students as being Limited English Proficient and there are mandated tests done by the state. LEP is not just for students with English as a second language.

B. Erickson asked if the SPED Department would not automatically take care of students who are not proficient in English. Dr. Rubel said no and this is one of the reasons for the current laws that are protecting LEP students because they do not necessarily have a learning disability, they just have not learned English. She is not saying that all their students who have English as a second language are not proficient but those who do have LEP have English as a second language.

F. O'Connell asked what the penalty is if they cannot comply with some of these things. Dr. Rubel said it would depend but they would continue to get their hand slapped and if they are not in good faith "not complying", the federal grant money could be taken away. She said she is robbing Peter to pay Paul because she knows she has to provide this particular training. When the budget was done in the fall, they had not been told all of the training had to be done in one year.

C. McKinney asked how many languages they are translating and Dr. Rubel said none as they do not have the software. She has sent a letter asking parents if they require translation services and at the moment, they only have Spanish as a need for translation.

F. Buzan stated these are state mandates that threaten their federal money. Dr. Genovese noted a number of the grants the state puts out actually come from federal money.

Homeless Protocol

Dr. Rubel distributed the protocol for homeless students that has been in place since early 2005 and stated it mirrors the School Committee policy. She stated they had one student a few years ago that was briefly homeless and did not have anyone designated as homeless (four students) until last year. They have four students this year. Students are designated as homeless if they lack a fixed, regular and nighttime residence. They may be living with friends due to economic hardships or loss of housing due to fire, are living in motels/hotels or waiting for foster care placement. She stated this law protects the students and their ability to remain in the school they were attending prior to becoming homeless.

Dr. Rubel stated she has had some difficulty identifying homeless students and had to do some outreach to public organizations such as Loaves and Fishes and DSS. She noted the Groton and Dunstable town halls have a copy of this protocol. The district is required to provide transportation for the student and they are required to negotiate that transportation with the district where the student currently resides. F. Buzan does not feel it makes sense to the districts or the student involved to continue to attend school in Groton Dunstable if he/she is living in Lawrence. Dr. Rubel said it makes sense for the student because it provides a little stability. When it has been a Lawrence situation, she stated it has often been an emergency transitional shelter and was short term.

B. Erickson understands the short term situations but feels there is a duplication of effort going on with respect to DSS. Dr. Rubel said they are only required to provide the education for the student and when it is a situation that involves DSS, she needs to be in contact with the shelter or the case manager so she knows where to pick up the student. DSS is supposed to make a placement within a certain period of time. She stated the homeless provision does not apply once a child is in foster care.

F. Buzan asked how much money they are talking about per year and what kind of effort, from an administrative standpoint, they are talking about to track, document and identify. He feels they would want to do these things quietly in the community as they do not want to stigmatize and track students. Dr. Rubel said they are doing it very quietly and it is very confidential; only those who need to know do know. Last year two students needed transportation for three months combined. The cost was \$3650 and was shared with two other communities. Administratively, Dr. Rubel said a significant amount of time is needed for one student.

Having taught in an urban district, T. Sheehan stated allowing a child to stay in the school they have been assigned to is probably the single greatest thing they can do to protect the dignity of the student and to make sure their education is not interrupted. He use to go to shelters in Lowell to tutor some of his own students, and others that were there, and would go at different times and on different days because they were

desperately afraid their friends would find out where they were. Staying in their schools was extraordinarily important.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget and Finance - F. O'Connell reported they will be meeting at Tarbell at 6:00 p.m. on January 9th. The joint budget and finance meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on January 25th in the high school library.

Policy - K. Lofgren reported they met after the last School Committee meeting and debriefed about the comments made at that meeting. They developed "Guiding Principles for Policy Review of Manual" and members had received a copy in their packets. She read the principles for the public. Tonight the Committee has two policies under Action Items.

With respect to #5, providing sufficient time for members to review the policy drafts, C. McKinney stated he would encourage members to divide their feedback into two categories - grammatical/editorial changes and substantive changes. He stated the subcommittee can make grammatical changes as they do not need approval of the school committee to make a word plural or add a comma. Dr. Genovese said this was a focus of discussion during their meeting and the reason for the form. C. McKinney stated he takes #1, reviewing, revising and condensing policies when appropriate over the next three years, seriously and if they are not making sufficient progress, they will need to schedule additional time to be sure they stay on track.

With respect to Mr. McKinney's statement about the subcommittee making revisions to correct typo's, C. Barrett asked if "revised" and the date would be added to the bottom of a policy so it would be clear it was revised for a typo only. She would like to distinguish between "revised and the Committee voted on it" versus "revised for typo's only" and the subcommittee approved it. C. McKinney said correcting a typo is not a revision and they would be making false history if they said the policy was revised. C. Barrett asked if they could say "corrected" with the date and C. McKinney said he would not say anything. He would have the correction in the master but would not issue new paper for the policy books if it is just a comma. B. Erickson said correcting a typo does not substantively change the policy.

Dr. Genovese said they could have policy subcommittee review and the date and a revised policy with the date. F. Buzan asked how often the policy books are updated as a whole and Dr. Genovese advised new members get an updated book. Members update their own books as they receive new documents. F. Buzan said the typo errors would continue to be in the books and he feels they will chase it in circles. Dr. Genovese said there is an expectation that members will read each policy being reviewed and comments can be made for consideration.

C. McKinney said he will leave it to the policy subcommittee and/or the administration to decide when the missing comma needs a new piece of paper. F. Buzan said they will try to get these changes into revised policies when they are making substantive changes. Dr. Genovese asked if the conversation around this issue is significant enough that it needs to be added to the guiding principles to clarify it.

K. Lofgren believes it is captured in #1. They will be meeting on January 16th at 6:30 p.m. in room 219 at the high school.

Report of the Chair

Facilities Task Force III

C. McKinney reported they have a few missing slots and they are not ready to appoint this committee. He stated they intend to have two community members from Groton and two from Dunstable and they will not necessarily be specifically related to parents from a school. They need to get the word out to the communities and anyone interested can make themselves known to the superintendent or a School Committee member.

F. Buzan asked if he can make a public announcement and C. McKinney gave him permission to do so. Dr. Genovese suggested he use the Charge document and stated he will be asking the principals to recommend parents to serve on the committee. K. Lofgren will be representing the School Committee on the Facilities Task Force III committee.

**Report of the Director of Business and Finance
Middle School North Flooding Update**

T. Sheehan reviewed the water damage that was caused by a heating system failure that was discovered on the morning of November 27th. He also reviewed the corrective measures that immediately took place following the discovery. He stated two small conference and/or special education rooms and two classrooms are still out of service but he expects them to be available as early as Thursday, January 4th and no later than Monday, January 8th.

T. Sheehan stated ServiceMaster Disaster Recovery of Stoneham was brought in by the insurance carrier to supervise the cleanup and repair effort. Instar Service Group of Hudson, MA. , did the reconstruction and is working directly for ServiceMaster and the insurance carrier on a turn-key basis so the district is not responsible for directly paying for any of the cleanup costs. On the upper level, conference room 159, the source of the flooding, and the adjacent classroom 158, have been out of service since the incident but it is expected that the reconstruction work will be completed by the weekend, leaving only the final cleanup and air quality testing for the following week. On the lower level, classrooms 57 and 56 were re-occupied several weeks ago following biological cleaning and successful air quality testing. Classroom 58 needs new white boards, some acoustic panels need to be reinstalled and new fabric covered panels have been ordered. Room 59 needs new baseboard moldings and white boards and a bookcase needs to be reinstalled. This room is expected to be ready for air quality testing next Tuesday. The walls and ceiling in the electrical closet (room 51) will be scraped and painted and the hallway floor will be stripped and re-waxed this weekend. He stated they received significant assistance from Turner Construction and Gary Stirgwolt attended several of the meetings where they discussed the disaster plan.

C. Barrett asked if the textbooks in the classrooms were salvaged and T. Sheehan said he is waiting for a report from Principal Raucci listing the district owned educational materials that were damaged or destroyed. The insurance company will cover the replacement of those materials. He has also asked for a list of teacher owned materials that were damaged and will present the list to the superintendent with the hope it will be presented to the School Committee so they can reimburse them for their lost materials. Mr. Babin evaluated all of the computer equipment in the affected rooms and is recommending that two Apple computers be declared non-salvageable.

B. Erickson asked if they had to pay Turner Construction and T. Sheehan said Mr. Stirgwolt did it on his own. He will draft a letter for the superintendent to thank him for his services which he found invaluable.

F. Buzan asked if they assessed the initial problem and established if there is any risk of this happening in any other classrooms. T. Sheehan said a ¾" water pipe connection pulled out and there was not sufficient overlap where the pipes came together. It was a poor solder job. He stated it would be almost impossible to see if the condition exists in other parts of the building. The original HVAC contractor went bankrupt, invoking the performance bond, and the second contractor was brought in. Even with the second contractor, there were known problems with the heating system but when the district occupied the building in September 2004, that started the clock with respect to the one year warranty. It is unlikely they can get any compensation from the general contractor or the second HVAC contractor.

Dr. Genovese feels Mr. Buzan is asking if the insurance carrier would have an interest or recommendation to go through the other heating units to look at the particular joint that has been soldered. F. Buzan agrees this would be difficult to do but noted it could have been catastrophic if this had happened when kids were in the classroom and it immediately filled up with steam. He said they want reassurance that this will not happen to any other pipes and wondered if there is anyway to know. T. Sheehan said he will get back to the Committee.

Dr. Genovese stated Mr. Sheehan did an excellent job meeting with people, going down to the school regularly and making sure secondary problems did not occur by things not being done right the first time. T. Sheehan

said it was clear from the onset that the insurance carrier and the people they brought in were very aware of the risk to the district, and themselves, if they did not deal with this properly and he never got the sense that they were cutting corners or doing anything other than what was required. He stated he was very pleased with their approach.

High School Water System

T. Sheehan reported they are waiting for the results from 20 water samples taken on December 28th. They have been sent to Small Water Systems Service (SWSS) and should be available in one to two weeks. The samples were taken from various locations throughout the building. Prior to taking the samples, the system was being flushed every night for about four hours and then the water must stand in the pipe for four to eight hours. Samples are taken as soon as the spigots are turned on. Several months ago they implemented Tata and Howard's recommendation to install equipment to continuously monitor the acidity of the water. They wanted the pH factor raised to get it more neutral and over time, they have been able to get the pH factor of the water coming out of the treatment plant just where they wanted it. The water goes from the treatment plant directly into a storage tank and the pH readings of the water leaving the tank and going into the building were lower than the pH as it was leaving the plant and going into the storage tank. The most plausible theory is that the soda ash, which is the neutralizing agent, was settling while it was in the tank so the level of the water going into the tank was raised. The pH of the water going into the building is 7 to 7.5 and they would like to see consistent readings in the 7.5 to 8.0 range.

T. Sheehan reported three samples were taken several weeks ago to test for copper and lead. Two of the three passed the lead specification and the third was close. All three did not meet the copper requirement but they were quite close. Once they have the results from the current samples, they will consult with Tata and Howard, as well as SWSS, to determine the next steps.

K. O'Brien asked if there is a timeline for how much longer they will have the water coolers. She stated there have been some incidents of kids tampering with the water and lifting up the bottles. Dr. Genovese said he hopes these were reported. T. Sheehan said he does not have a timeline but they need to make sure the water system will be operating within the standards for a period of time before they remove the water coolers.

Designer Selection Procedure

T. Sheehan reported members have received a copy of the Designer Selection Procedure. The two motions made at the last meeting have been inserted into the final document.

B. Erickson said she has a concern with page 1, part 3 and feels they should add "and/or a Groton or Dunstable resident" rather than just "a Groton or Dunstable resident". Dr. Genovese agrees that gives them a little more flexibility. T. Sheehan said he could envision circumstances where it might be desirable to add even more than two people to the committee and suggested they could entertain language that could allow the Designer Selection Committee, as approved by the procedure, to bring a recommendation to the School Committee that for a particular project, the committee be expanded. Dr. Genovese feels the last sentence gives them that flexibility. C. Barrett feels this does not need to be revised as it is at the discretion of the Designer Selection Committee and feels Mr. Sheehan's and Ms Erickson's comments can be incorporated and the document kept as is.

Budget and Finance Meeting

At the request of the superintendent, T. Sheehan said they have been working on how assessments would change if the operating budget, less debt, was +3%, +6% or +9%. He stated they do not know what the revenue side of the budget will be. He will have these numbers for that meeting and expects to have tentative debt assessment projections as well.

B. Erickson complimented Mr. Sheehan on his detailed and concise reports.

Report of the Superintendent Update on Principal Search Process

Dr. Genovese distributed a timeline for searching for a new high school principal. The position will be posted on January 4th and a Screening/Search Committee will be established by January 18th. He reviewed the meetings that will take place beginning later in January. It is expected a candidate will be selected the week of April 16th and possibly earlier and employment would begin on or about July 1, 2007. He noted there are many functions and activities that occur in terms of appointing people to the committee, selecting questions and so forth. He reviewed the participants (15) that will be part of the committee.

C. Barrett asked how the parents and community members will be selected. Dr. Genovese said he will be sending something out to the communities and have people submit their names and will discuss with the administrative council on how best to get the other participants. There will be a parent from the School Council and he will probably do a Connect-Ed call to high school parents asking anyone interested to submit their name and then do a random drawing.

B. Erickson asked if School Committee members will be involved with the off-site visits and C. McKinney said the Committee does not hire principals. Dr. Genovese said the representation for off-site and on-site visits has not been determined. F. Buzan said he looks forward to any adjustments that might be made in the process of the selection for the Screening Committee as he thinks it needs to have more input from the School Committee, or at least the superintendent, in the selection of people. He said the team is the filter that affects the candidates that go to the superintendent and while they may be giving several candidates, they may be weeding out extremely qualified candidates if this is not the right search committee.

Having gone through a number of administrator searches, C. McKinney said in the beginning of the process, there is concern about whether the process will drive the result and he noted an inclusive search team such as this is the key. The combination of the groups has their own dynamic which is self-balancing. He stated this is a proven process. Dr. Genovese stated you have multiple perspectives that are balancing and competing when going into an interviewing process and this creates the check and balance. Because there are so many stakeholders with different representation, he stated he trusts the process. There is an initial screening when applications come into the Central Office to make sure they have the qualifications and the Screening Committee filters out who they will bring forward. Once they have the semi-finalists, it becomes a public process and there is another dynamic. Other people will be involved in site visits and additional interviews and conversations. Dr. Genovese said he would have the ability to start the search again.

F. Buzan said he does not disapprove of faculty members being part of the process and it is important to fill each slot with a broad spectrum of people.

Graduation Date: June 1, 2007 - 6:00 p.m.

Dr. Genovese reported graduation will be held at 6:00 p.m. on June 1, 2007. The rain date is June 2nd at 6:00 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: Policy JIE - Pregnant Students

C. Barrett asked if Dr. Rubel has reviewed this policy. Dr. Rubel said it is more appropriate that Principal Dillon has and Dr. Genovese said he has spoken with Mr. Dillon. K. Lofgren said Mr. Dillon came to a policy subcommittee meeting and talked with them about his suggestions.

K. LOFGREN MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT REVISED POLICY JIE, PREGNANT STUDENTS. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

K. Lofgren thanked Dr. Rubel for staying after the last meeting. She said they took all the member's comments into consideration and she read the policy for the public. F. O'Connell asked if it is defined somewhere what appropriate support services would be. He stated the Homeless Student policy states what will be provided. F. Buzan said it might be home tutoring and the main purpose is to make sure the student would not be excluded from things and discouraged from continuing her education. Dr. Rubel stated it is also required not to discriminate.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Policy BEE - Special Procedures for Conducting Hearings

A copy of the policy with minor changes (the word File was added before BEE and the word District was added at the bottom) was distributed.

K. LOFGREN MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT REVISED POLICY BEE, SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING HEARINGS, AS PROVIDED THIS EVENING.
SECONDED BY C. BARRETT

K. Lofgren stated the policy was made consistent to refer to "chairman of the committee, or his/her designee".

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

F. O'Connell asked if the policies on the website are updated and was told yes.

C. Barrett said the presentation on Standards Based Math K-8 is scheduled for the next meeting and members should forward any questions to F. Buzan as the liaison. He will forward them to Dr. Rubel by the end of the week. Dr. Genovese's mid-year self assessment is also scheduled along with the second quarterly report from T. Sheehan.

ADJOURNMENT

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:16 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment