

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
May 2, 2007
(Approved 5/16/2007)

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Secretary
Dr. Forrest Buzan (Arrived at 8:03 p.m.)
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
Ms Joan Endicott, Director of Pupil Services

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

K. O'Brien (Left at 9:05 p.m.)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; R. Hoyt, R. Calabrese, M. Clisbee

CALL TO ORDER:

C. McKinney announced the GDRSC Meeting opened at 6:03 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session under M.G.L. Ch. 39, Section 23B-3 for the purpose of non-union negotiations, discussing litigation and review of security measures. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:18 p.m. , with no plans to return to executive session following the business meeting, and was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Dr. Genovese announced the high school graduation rain date is June 2nd at 6:00 p.m.

Dr. Genovese announced members should have a copy of the *District News*. He said Cindy Larsen put in a tremendous amount of time formatting it and they had several editors. This is available on the district website at www.gdrsd.org and copies are available at the town halls, libraries, schools and the district office. Anyone wanting additional information can contact Joan Campbell at 978-448-5505, extension 200. The newsletter is available electronically and people can let them know they would like it sent to them. This edition focused on the budget and future editions will represent an overview of things happening in the district.

MINUTES

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE GROTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 2007. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

C. Barrett stated this meeting was held for the Groton School Committee members and the Groton Board of Selectmen to appoint Kevin McKenzie as the Groton representative on the Nashoba Valley Technical High School School Committee.

In Favor: K. Lofgren, C. Barrett, C. McKinney, P. Funch, B. Erickson

Abstention: F. O'Connell

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

C. McKinney said he was late to the meeting due to being held up in the driveway. As a public service announcement, he stated they have to be more diligent and the high school officials have been instructed to ask the police to come out and ticket the vehicles that park in the driveway alongside the fields. There is a serious safety issue relative to getting emergency vehicles in and out if they were needed with cars parked along the driveway from the upper fields to the parking lot. He said it is not about being mean to people who want to park there for convenience, it is about the safety and security of the school. The School Committee, superintendent, principal, athletic director and business manager all want everyone to enjoy the facilities in a safe manner and that means parking in a real parking space.

Dr. Genovese said he will pass the word along to visiting schools to make sure they are clear that is a restricted area.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION**Boutwell School Improvement Plan**

Dr. Genovese stated R. Hoyt has been working with his staff and parents to take a look at having their own School Improvement Council.

Boutwell Principal/Director Russell Hoyt stated they did a search to gain the interest of parents and staff and formed the Boutwell School Council Planning Committee. They met once in March and once in April and looked at the guidelines of what a school council is and while these say they are appropriate for elementary, middle and high schools, with Dr. Genovese's guidance, it made sense to have a SIP for Boutwell. They have an active group of four parents and six staff members. One of their main tasks is to try to increase the number of parents that want to be involved and since most parents are typically with them for only two years, they are trying to get a mix of parents, some who will be with them both years and some for one year. He said they will be meeting once more and a letter will be going out to current and prospective parents this week.

C. McKinney asked what size council he envisions and R. Hoyt said they would like to have 5 to 6 parents, 5 to 6 staff members and 2 community members.

F. O'Connell asked if they will be focusing on something in particular. R. Hoyt said one of the first things they will focus on is what they offer and what the classroom configurations will be. They want to look at the number of days parents can sign their kids up for because, unlike the other schools, Boutwell has half day placements and 3 day placements and they have to balance the number of typically developing students with the number of students on IEP's in order to meet the criteria for inclusive settings. They also want to look at improving the grounds and how the budget ties directly to the curriculum for early childhood. He said continued improvement happens through the budget process.

Dr. Genovese asked if the council would be involved with implementing the national standards for early childhood. R. Hoyt said there is a group called NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young

Children) and this is something public school pre-schools are encouraged to apply to and noted the process involves some expense. While it is not something they have to do, they feel it would be a healthy process to do in terms of continuous improvement.

B. Erickson said this is a great initiative and is another notch in the progress of the school. She said a lot of good things go on there and asked Mr. Hoyt to keep up the good work.

Dr. Funch asked if they have curriculum for Pre-K. R. Hoyt said the DOE has the Early Childhood standards, which are the rules on how you run a classroom, and within the standards, they have to look at the guidelines for pre-school learning experiences which is a particular curriculum. Each teacher has their own Carolina curriculum book and they pull out the specific activities such as early literacy, recognizing letters and number recognition.

K. Lofgren asked how that fits into the Frameworks. R. Hoyt said the Pre-K are aligned with the K - 12; it is a separate document but was written and designed to align directly with those documents. They have been meeting with the pre-school and kindergarten teachers for the past two years to be sure Boutwell is working on the pre-requisite skills they would like to see the kids have coming into kindergarten.

C. Barrett asked Mr. Hoyt to comment on the program for the kids too young for pre-school. R. Hoyt said when the Recreation Department lost their funding for their parent/child program, the district offered them a "house" and the coordinator from the Recreation Department stayed with the program. It has been restructured for children birth up to age 5. Parents and their kids come in for one and a half-hours and work with a facilitator and the kids get use to being able to sit and listen to a song or a story. It is a nice opportunity and gives young families coming into the district an earlier exposure to Boutwell they might not otherwise have had. The cost of the program is slightly more than covered by the cost of the tuition.

Dr. Funch asked if there is competition for the spots or if they can accommodate everyone who applies. R. Hoyt said they are required to have a spot for any child who qualifies through an IEP and they have additional tuition paying slots for typically developing or peer role models. They are projecting they will start with ninety kids next year and would be at full capacity with one hundred and five.

C. McKinney asked the best way for community members to get involved. R. Hoyt said once they find out who the group of parents and staff are, they will do interviews and select who the appropriate members would be. The same would apply to community members and anyone interested can call him at 978-448-2297 or e-mail him at rhoyt@gdrsd.org. Dr. Genovese asked what the time commitment would be and R. Hoyt said there would be one meeting for every month of the school year, except in December. They would likely meet in the evenings and the meetings would last about 1 ½ hours.

Merrimack Education Center (MEC)

Dr. Genovese introduced Executive Director Dr. Mary Clisbee and Dr. Robert Calabrese. He said the district has been a member of Merrimack Special Education Collaborative for at least ten years and they provide professional development, training opportunities, such as restraint training, legal training and licensure programs. They also provide special education programs for at risk and low incident disabilities. It has been a wonderful partnership where they work together to meet the needs of the students.

J. Endicott said she has enjoyed a wonderful relationship working with the MEC staff. They are very responsive to all of the area SPED Directors and when they let MEC know what they need, they listen and come up with programs that meet those needs. She said it is an important and unique opportunity for all school districts to have access to high quality programs that address a wide range of disabilities.

J. Endicott said it would be very costly for the district to run a program for a small number of students but combining with the towns, they have access to a total range of programs that provide a wonderful education for very involved kids. The district has had the opportunity to place students on a forty-five day assessment program because there are some situations where they do not want the students to leave the district but they do not know the best alternatives for them. With the placement, their staff gets to know the students and they

make recommendations independently to help the district make good educational decisions. They have used the service twice this year and they have 5 students who are currently attending the high school programs. They offer a small school setting with a high staff to student ratio, they have a fabulous vocational component for students with a wide range of disabilities and they have a wonderful relationship with community businesses. The district has one student who will be graduating this year after being in the program for three years. Students in the high school program maintain their status as Groton Dunstable high school students and get their diplomas, as well as guidance services, from Groton Dunstable. The high school staff attends team meetings for these students off-campus. Anytime they have any concerns J. Endicott said the MEC staff is right on the phone and they are able to get together and do incredible collaborative problem solving to keep kids in school and successful.

Dr. Calabrese said they do all this in a very cost-effective way. He said it has grown over the years and has been run in a very efficient way, considering special education is very costly. Dr. Clisbee said Groton Dunstable was one of the founding members of the collaborative and has been a member for thirty-five years. She stated SPED collaboratives are allowed to form under Mass General Laws and some of their original Articles of Agreement have never been amended and the laws have changed. They need to rework the articles to bring them into alignment with state law and she noted they had two districts join them along the way and they never went through the formal process of accepting them in. Nashoba Vo-Tech and Whittier Vo-Tech have approached them and Dr. Clisbee said this is a win/win situation because they are the only collaborative in the state that has brought in vocational/alternative schools. Because they have the vocational schools, she said they can do the forty-five day assessments for students from the vocational schools whereas, no one else can because students who are out on forty-five day assessments have to have access to the curriculum they would have had, had they still been in their local public school.

Dr. Clisbee said she appreciates the kind words and stated they work closely with their SPED Directors as an Advisory Committee. All the programs have been designed with their input and any new programs they put in place are because those programs have been requested by the Directors. She said they tell them what they need and they look to see if there are enough students across all the districts to make it cost effective. She said they have grown from \$2.5M ten years ago to about \$15M this year. Dr. Calabrese clarified this is serving more students, not charging more, and said the vocational program has been a big growth area and an area of great demand.

C. McKinney said a lot of the changes are formatting and specific changes based on Chapter 40 Section 4 E statute changes and there are four other specific amendments. Dr. Genovese said there was a concern about attendance in terms of voting. The representative, in many cases the superintendent or he can appoint a designee, needs to attend a certain number of meetings or the ability to vote is forfeited. He said he does not see this as a concern as he feels it benefits all the districts to be active and participate. He said either he, or his designee Ms Endicott, would attend the required number of meetings in order to be part of the discussions and votes.

In terms of the amendment process, Dr. Genovese believes there needs to be some flexibility because it is such an emerging need as they are meeting students' educational plans. He does not see them losing anything by the Board of Directors, who are the collaborative by being members, having the ability to introduce and vote on amendments. He noted any decisions being made would be in the best interest of serving the districts.

With respect to a comment that there appears to be a restriction that if you belong to this collaborative, you cannot belong to others, Dr. Genovese said to belong to a collaborative is to be vested in its needs to the point that if there are additional needs, the district really wants to work within the collaborative to put together programs that will meet the needs cost effectively. He said MEC has a history of doing this. In the event the district felt this was restrictive, the School Committee has a six month period to give notice that they choose not to be a member of the collaborative. He stated the strength of the collaborative is identifying services and programs and working together to develop those and he does not see that as an issue.

Dr. Calabrese said the School Committee can purchase SPED services from another collaborative or a state approved school. The exclusivity is that you do not become part of another collaborative but there is no restriction on placing a student in another collaborative or a 766 school. He said they are trying to keep the synergy they have been developing and keep it close to home because they feel they are doing a good job.

C. McKinney asked the effect of adding additional members into the collaborative and if that dilutes the voice. Dr. Genovese said it would strengthen it. Dr. Clisbee said Nashoba and Whittier all ready purchase services from them and they were affiliated with no collaborative. She does not foresee a great increase in the number of students coming from those communities. She noted Whittier uses their Topsfield facility much more so than their Chelmsford facility. She sees only positive things happening and gaining through their knowledge. Dr. Genovese said they have two rooms dedicated at Groton Dunstable and they have no plans to expand. Dr. Clisbee said their intensive special needs programs are located within public schools and they are at Groton Dunstable, North Middlesex, Tyngsboro, Tewksbury and Billerica.

B. Erickson asked if there are other collaboratives in the area and Dr. Clisbee said in Burlington, Fitchburg, Leominster, Lunenburg, Gardner, Marlboro, Lawrence, Concord and on the Cape. B. Erickson asked what other services are offered by MEC. During a workshop at the convention in Hyannis last year, she said it was emphasized that transportation collaboratives are starting up, especially in the western part of the state, and she thinks it would be great if they had a curriculum development collaborative to become more cost effective. Dr. Calabrese said they have a transportation collaborative that is a part of MEC that was initially started between Tewksbury and Billerica. Dr. Genovese has asked him to gather some information about Groton Dunstable's out of district SPED transportation. He stated they provide a professional development division, licensing programs and technology services (internet services, e-mail archiving, security). He stated they have a curriculum council, comprised of assistant superintendents and curriculum directors who meet monthly, and programs for principals and assistant principals. They also provide specialized legal services. B. Erickson said it is a wonderful solution and Dr. Clisbee said these groups, which are nation-wide, are considered the hidden partner in public education.

Dr. Funch asked the size of MEC. Dr. Clisbee said they have 9 member communities and are looking to go up to 11 with these Articles of Agreement. Fifty-five other communities send students to them and they have about 400 students and a staff of 350. Dr. Calabrese said overall, they have an additional 100 staff members.

C. Barrett clarified the collaborative is only the SPED component and Dr. Calabrese said this is correct. Dr. Clisbee said the special ed collaborative is the only piece that is governed under 44E.

Dr. Genovese asked if this positions districts to be more competitive when looking at grants. Dr. Clisbee said they apply for any grants available to them but they are not able to apply for the same grants that public schools can but the Mass Organization for Education Collaboratives (MOEC) has tried to educate the legislators and the DOE about what collaboratives do and the response they had from the state had to do with the transportation initiative.

B. Erickson asked how they are funded and she was advised it is all fee for service. Dr. Clisbee said they are the only collaborative that does things this way - there are no dues or overhead fees. Dr. Calabrese said non-collaborative members pay a 15% surcharge on their tuition.

Dr. Genovese said he would recommend the Committee vote to approve the agreement as amended and designate the superintendent to be a member of the board and the superintendent would have the flexibility to have a designee.

**K. LOFGREN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADVANCE THE ACTION ITEMS.
SECONDED BY P. FUNCH
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

VOTE: To Accept MSEC Amendments to Articles of Agreement

C. BARRETT MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MERRIMACK SPECIAL EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE AMENDMENTS TO THE ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT AS INDICATED IN THEIR PACKETS.
SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

Dr. Genovese asked if this motion is consistent with the other districts and Dr. Calabrese said yes.

F. Buzan asked if he should abstain since he was not here for the entire presentation. C. McKinney said he is comfortable with Mr. Buzan making his own decision.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**VOTE: To Appoint Designee to Serve on MSEC Board of Directors**

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPOINT DR. GENOVESE TO SERVE ON THE MSEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. McKinney signed the required paperwork and noted the last signature was Beck Pine's in 1988.

MASC Resolution

K. Lofgren distributed copies of the Resolution for Adequate, Equitable and Predictable Pre-K-Grade 12 Public Education Funding. She stated it was tabled at the conference last year and they had to go back to the drawing board. Immediately after the delegate assembly, the Tyngsboro School Committee asked to work with them to begin to craft a resolution that was more palatable. In their attempts to be inclusive and encompass a lot of areas, it made it a bit too complicated. She, Tyngsboro and Chelmsford have been working the past few months, trying to get a resolution on paper but Chelmsford and Tyngsboro have backed out because they have looked at a lot of the other advocacy groups and felt they are working on a lot of the issues and this would be redundant. They specifically pointed to the Suburban Coalition and Groton Dunstable is not a member. K. Lofgren said she did not agree with them as she feels the more voices out there, the better it would be. If anyone is interested in this, she said it needs to get picked up and submitted to MASC by July 1st in order to be considered by the Resolutions Committee. While they got support from five other school committees in three different regions, it did not get the stamp of approval from the Resolutions Committee which it really needs to get in the process. She said she would be happy to work with anyone even after two weeks from now when she will not be an active Committee member.

C. Barrett asked if there are any unique things in the Resolution that are not covered by other groups and if so, could they cut those out and streamline it to be unique. K. Lofgren said she does not think there is anything that is absolutely unique. She said it has to be done at the legislative level in order for it to continue year after year and this year is a good example of the numbers coming out of the State House not changing a lot. While her answer would be no, she does not think it makes it redundant, it just makes it another voice.

If their motion was tabled because they felt it was overlapping with other motions, F. Buzan asked if those motions moved forward. K. Lofgren said it was not because they felt it was overlapping. It was a lengthy resolution and they had difficulty encompassing all the pieces. They tried to be inclusive and include a lot of the changes at the legislative level that would benefit a lot of different kinds of districts, and by trying to be inclusive, they did not please anybody by trying to please everybody. He said perhaps they should try to narrow the scope and focus on issues within resolutions. K. Lofgren said they broke it down into three resolutions - one for the foundation formula, one for SPED and she could not remember the third. She said this was just for the funding piece. A resolution supporting regional transportation was passed.

If they look at the process, F. Buzan asked if they can learn what they need to do to get it all the way through and how they can be the most effective at the State House. He asked if they need another resolution of their own, if they try to team up with another coalition or if they go straight to the legislators and K. Lofgren said "all of the above".

B. Erickson said she would be interested if she could share it with other members and C. Barrett said she would work with her. K. Lofgren said it is a time sensitive issue.

Dr. Funch said what Ms Lofgren did was a great effort and applauds her efforts to get it to this point. He said perhaps they should see if there is a specific resolution they should pursue or spend time helping with other efforts. C. McKinney is comfortable with Ms Erickson and Ms Barrett looking at it and said the Committee would have to vote on the resolution. K. Lofgren said the resolution must be sent to MASC and they are at the mercy of the Resolutions Committee as to whether it goes forward. If it receives the support of four or five other school committees that encompass two different regions, it automatically goes as written and bypasses the Resolutions Committee. She would not recommend doing it this way. She agreed to work with Ms Erickson and Ms Barrett and thanked Ms Erickson for sitting with her at the Delegate Assembly.

If the Resolution does not go forward, K. Lofgren said it is not a lost cause. She distributed copies of the MASC Legislation filed for the 2007-2008 Legislative Session and read the titles of the Acts.

K. Lofgren said she has been serving on The Massachusetts Association of School Committees Regional School Committees sub-committee and they put together something for a Day on the Hill to try to highlight what the legislative priorities were for regional schools and she distributed a "School Bus" flyer put together by Assabet Valley Vocational School. She read the regional school priorities. She said the quote of yesterday from Senator Antonioni was "No matter how equitable we make the funding formula, if it is not adequate, it is not enough." While she liked what she heard, she said she did not hear how they would do that and noted their Resolution gave good suggestions on how to address some of the concerns and problems.

Dr. Genovese said the late Senator Paul Tsongas said "everyone is looking for more" and there is only so much of the pie to go around. Dr. Genovese said they "need to make more pies" and look at other alternatives to generate revenues to fund public education. He is not necessarily saying they need to raise taxes. C. McKinney said they appreciate all of Ms Lofgren's work. K. Lofgren said she will not stop being a voice.

Superintendent's Evaluation

C. McKinney said everyone worked very hard at Saturday's five hour workshop and they agreed they wanted Ms Barrett to write up the notes she had discussed as they were reaching a consensus on each individual item.

C. Barrett distributed copies of Draft #1 and Draft #2 of the superintendent's evaluation. Draft #1 is exactly the wording they agreed to on Saturday with the addition of one statement on page 2 under Goal 4, point #1. She added the words "and by proposing a technology finance plan starting in FY08" and said this was not included in the document they wrote on Saturday but it is a factual matter. Draft #2 includes items she feels are obvious things that should be added and under Goal II, she listed the three things members recognized they could do.

Dr. Funch said he passed out a modified version with administrative type changes to make it clearer and make it a better document. C. Barrett asked if he had a hard copy as they would need to discuss any changes as a group. Although he did not have a major problem with the draft documents, F. Buzan said he would be open to discussing any substantive changes. C. McKinney said Dr. Funch has five specific points while Ms Barrett's draft has only four. She said they were calling them "coaching moments" and she did not include the coaching moment on her document. F. Buzan asked Dr. Funch if he drafted his from Ms Barrett's handwritten copy and he said yes. Dr. Funch said he made a lot of changes but tried not to make any substantive or tone changes.

He apologized for the complication and C. McKinney said he knows the intent was right.

With all due respect, C. McKinney said Ms Barrett is their secretary and should maintain ownership of the document. Dr. Funch suggested they give her editorial control from this point on and have her come back with a finished document at their next meeting and C. McKinney said as long as Dr. Funch is willing to characterize his comments as editorial of the formatting as opposed to editorial in terms of the content. A copy of Dr. Funch's red-lined changes was distributed. Dr. Funch said he had no intention of making any content changes and asked members if they felt his changes helped enough that they could support them. If not, he said they can go with Draft #2.

With all due respect, B. Erickson said she got a change in meaning sometimes and referred to Goal 5. She thinks it is a great idea if Ms Barrett would like to edit it. When Ms Barrett returned to the table after making copies, C. McKinney explained Dr. Funch would like her to take his document and see which changes she wished to adopt into her document since hers represents the official document. Given all the discussion about evaluations for the past two years, he will be asking the Committee to vote to accept the evaluation on May 16th. F. Buzan feels they are asking her to do more work and come up with something different for them to accept and he would like to narrow the focus of that before they ask her to do more work. He said they did the evaluation and he is not sure they need to beat this thing to death from a college-prep English standpoint. Dr. Funch said people are going to be interested in the document and it is a reflection of all the members and he urged them to be grammatically correct and have it be a quality product. He said he means no disrespect to Ms Barrett and she said none is taken.

C. Barrett asked if members agree points a, b, and c are accurate details to add to the document and members agreed to go with Draft #2. She said under Goal III, point #1, she added additional detail and added once sentence to point 3 and added point 4. She went through the pages of notes she took at the workshop and tried to pull out additional detail. Under Goal VI, point 1 she modified the sentence because of redundancy and she added a comment from the Administrators' consensus document to point 3. Under Goal VII, point 4 she slightly changed the wording. It was agreed Draft #2 is the better document and C. Barrett said she would take Dr. Funch's draft and rework the grammar.

Auditor's Report FY06 - Melanson & Heath

Postponed

High School Leadership Team

Postponed

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - K. Lofgren reported they will be meeting on May 15th .

Budget and Finance - F. O'Connell reported they will be meeting at 6:00 p.m. on May 8th at Tarbell.

Report of Director of Business and Finance

High School Water Update - T. Sheehan reported five water samples were sent out three weeks ago and this time they past the copper test but failed the lead test and this is the reverse of what happened in September. He said they are continuing to work with the engineer and continue to adjust the pH of the water and still believe they are close. They will continue to monitor it and send out a full round of twenty samples within a month or so. He said they are "this close" to being able to pass those tests.

When the engineering firm reviewed all the documentation on the water system, C. Barrett said they had a graph that was pH over time and the engineer indicated they had to have a narrow window of pH in order for the copper and lead to not leach out of the brass. She asked if they are within that narrow window of pH because if they are not, samples should not be sent out. T. Sheehan said they are close to that and the pH is exactly where the engineer recommended it be coming out of the treatment plant and into the holding tank. When they test the water going from the tank into the building, the pH has changed and the engineer has recommended they increase the pH to try to get the pH as the water is going into the building in the same

range. He agreed it is a narrow range they have to achieve.

F. Buzan asked if they are sure there is actually a solution that does fit and if they know what process is going on inside the holding tank that is causing the change. T. Sheehan said there have been several theories, one of them being that the soda ash was settling to the bottom of the tank. F. Buzan asked if there are typical processes used to do something so they are not just turning knobs and praying. T. Sheehan agrees it is a fragile process and they will have to pass the standards every time they submit samples for testing and there is real concern. He will address this with the engineer. F. Buzan wonders if ripping out the walls and floors and changing the valves causing problems might not have been a better way to address this. K. Lofgren said she suggested this at a Building Committee meeting. T. Sheehan said the plumbing was done to specification and it is a combination of the materials used and the acidity of the water causing the problem and there does not seem to be any clear legal blame anywhere.

C. McKinney believes the addition at Swallow Union had the same problem and its solution took 2 to 3 years.

Travel Insurance Policy Update- With respect to insurance liability for overseas trips, T. Sheehan reported following last week's meeting, he sought additional information from their insurance carrier as well as from a potential insurance carrier. The information will be provided in member's packets for their next meeting but in summary, he said he asked their insurance carrier five specific questions. He asked why they need additional coverage if parents sign a waiver agreeing not to sue the district. They said you cannot waive negligence. If something accidental happened, the waiver might protect the district but if what happens beyond the accident is to the point of negligence, the waivers would not protect the district in a court of law. Their general liability and casualty insurance only covers the US, its territories and Canada and a rider is needed for other travel destinations. The insurance company said they would need to look at the policy provided by the travel agency to see if it has dedicated limits that apply directly to the district.

He asked the risks to the district if staff and students go on a foreign trip that is not officially approved, sanctioned or sponsored by the School Committee and was advised if the trip was voted and not approved, it would be perceived by the public that if it was led by district employees, it was officially sanctioned. He asked if there was a less expensive policy or rider for FY08 that would cover two overseas trip for 30 to 45 students. The Ace Travel Program, which provides the coverage, said the \$3000 is the minimum but it does cover trips taken from February 2007, when the policy was purchased, through February 2008. If the China trip takes place in February 2008, there may be no expense as it would be covered by the existing policy.

T. Sheehan said he posed the same questions to a potential broker and they said no separate policy would be required as their general liability/casualty policy is world-wide in nature. Until they go through the formal bid process, they would not know if there would be any cost savings. He recommends the Committee continue to approve overseas trips so there is no question as to whether or not it is approved and that they continue to require this insurance until they have some proof that they do not need it.

Even if the Committee disapproves a trip and they go anyway, Dr. Funch said they are still liable and they may need to make a policy change. C. McKinney asked if their policy clearly articulates what happens and K. Lofgren said it is implied and C. McKinney said the policy needs to be clarified.

T. Sheehan recommended the Committee refer two specific questions to their attorney - what the liability is if the trip is disapproved and proceeds and whether there are legal distinctions between approved, sanctioned and sponsored. The insurance carrier was not able to provide clarification. C. McKinney asked Mr. Sheehan to forward those questions to their attorney.

K. Lofgren read from the policy that states "Teachers and other school staff are prohibited from soliciting for privately run trips through the school system and in the schools. The School Committee will review for approval only school sanctioned trips and the School Committee will not review or approve trips that are

privately organized and run without school sanction.” Dr. Genovese said he does not necessarily agree with the insurance carrier and said they need to have clear parameters. If a staff member wants to hook up with a travel agency and run a trip, the parameters will need to be that those organizational efforts should be through a travel agency, off campus and information given out would have to say it is not a school sanctioned trip. He said they cannot take away an individual’s right to do something just because they are a district employee yet they have to make it clear to parents whether or not it is sanctioned by the School Committee. He agrees the policy needs some attention.

**Report of the Chair -
MS Principal Search Committee - Appoint Ex Officio Member**

C. McKinney said an Ex Officio member should be appointed to the Middle School Principal Search Committee. He reviewed the timeline and noted the parent forum is tomorrow evening. There will be a discussion around the characteristics of the type of leadership qualities they want and people who are there will have an opportunity to serve on the search committee. The candidate will be selected the week of June 11th or June 18th. Dr. Funch said he is willing to serve and B. Erickson will do so if he is unable to.

C. McKinney reported he will be bringing forth some discussion on the superintendent’s contract once the evaluation is complete.

C. McKinney asked members to serve as liaisons at each school, specifically to help understand and motivate residents to participate in the town meetings and spring elections. He is grateful to the Groton residents for overwhelmingly passing both the balanced budget and the override budgets this week. He said they still have a lot of work to do in terms of maintaining community awareness and support for Dunstable’s town meeting and the ballot votes.

Dr. Genovese will be meeting with the School Council and PTA members on Monday, May 7th at 10:00 a.m. at the MSN Conference Room to help them understand what efforts they can undertake to inform their own communities. If more than three members wish to attend the meeting, it will need to be posted and it was agreed he should post it.

Swallow Union - F. Buzan, **Prescott** - B. Erickson, **Florence Roche and Boutwell** - K. Lofgren,
Middle School - C. Barrett, **High School** - P. Funch, **District-wide/Central Office** - C. McKinney

F. O’Connell asked how people will reach out to them and C. McKinney said they will contact the principal at their school and let them know that if parents have budget questions they will be referred to their liaison. The same will be true for representatives of the PTA. T. Sheehan said he will attend any school site meetings that his schedule allows and F. O’Connell said he will be meeting with the Dunstable senior citizens. C. McKinney said former School Committee members are making plans to have a visible show of support for the budget.

Report of the Superintendent

PTYC Roof Replacement - Dr. Genovese reported Budget and Finance recommended they look at the funding source for the PTYC roof through a combination of some short-term borrowing for a year followed by a ten year bond. The payment plan would be to pay the bond off by using a portion of the rent presently used to defray the cost of the budget. The highest point over the ten years would be \$37,500, principal and interest, and it would decrease from there. Dr. Genovese said they currently take in over \$60,000 so it is a doable plan.

Dr. Genovese said town officials would want to know about this and he stated there would be no increase in the FY08 budget for the principal and interest. T. Sheehan has been looking into whether or not town approval is needed. The project is all ready out to bid and they will inform the towns they plan to bond the project and the Boards of Selectmen would have 60 days to have a special town meeting and have an action to approve that or they could have no town meeting, understanding the district is paying for it, and let the time expire and the district would automatically have the authorization. A letter will be sent to the Boards of Selectmen prior to May 16th. Bids are due back May 23rd.

B. Erickson asked where the rent went before and what they are sacrificing to use it for the roof.

Dr. Genovese said it was used as a revenue source. She asked if the Building Inspector is involved with the projects and was told yes.

F. Buzan asked if this was counted as a revenue source in the FY08 budget and T. Sheehan said yes. There would be no impact on the FY08 operating budget. They would do a short-term borrowing of the entire \$250,000. If they take out that loan in July 2007, the interest payment would not be due until July 2008. The interest for the one year loan would be due in July 2008 (FY09) and the first payment would be due on the bond in FY09. Dr. Genovese said you earmark money in the general fund for projects like this so you always have enough for the year ahead.

Dr. Funch asked what this will do for the summer program. T. Sheehan said they were originally asked to have the work begin on July 1st so they will have to work that out with the PTYC. They were planning to be closed for the month of July and they may want to adjust their schedule.

B. Erickson asked why they did not include this at town meeting and avoid having a special town meeting. Dr. Genovese said they do not have to have a special town meeting and they "simply didn't."

In addition to sending a letter to the Boards of Selectmen, C. McKinney asked Dr. Genovese to attend the Selectmen meetings so there is no misunderstanding with the funding.

PTYC HVAC Funding - Dr. Genovese reported this project has not gone out to bid. T. Sheehan is working with Kevin Johnson and the engineering firm will be preparing the documents. The funding source will be through the revenue that is being generated by the people who have a special interest in the PTYC. He stated they need to develop plans for relocating the maintenance shop and the use of that part of the building.

C. Barrett pointed out the PTYC Fund is one of the Revolving Accounts and would be used to pay for the HVAC. Dr. Genovese said he would not want to say that at this time. He wants to be sure he understands where the fundraising efforts are and where that money is and will get clarification. C. Barrett said they need clarification on what money is in the PTYC Fund itself if it is not fundraising monies used by the Advisory Board.

Union Building Roof Repair - Dr. Genovese reported Mr. Sheehan has arranged to have a third party look at what it would be to repair the supporting valley beams. T. Sheehan said he just received the bid documents but has not identified the structural engineer who will come in and do it and is in the process of trying to find someone who will do it on an hourly or fee basis. Dr. Genovese said Budget and Finance will likely recommend using E&D as the funding source. The roof needs to be repaired before next winter.

High School and Middle School User Fee Increase for FY08

Dr. Genovese said he will be bringing forward a recommendation at their May 16th meeting to increase user fees from \$225 to \$250 for FY08, whether the override passes or not. He stated they need to make an adjustment to make sure the program is properly funding itself along with the district contributions. They will be discussing this with the Budget and Finance Committee before bringing a recommendation to the School Committee.

B. Erickson asked if there are any plans to raise the parking fees at the high school and Dr. Genovese said not at the moment. He wants to have a better understanding of how it would be monitored, how they would inform parents and if the right language is in the handbook. He said they need to make sure they have the protocols and the education is there.

With respect to the PTYC roof replacement and HVAC system, C. Barrett understands these have to be timed so they are done together. T. Sheehan said he asked the consulting engineer, who drew up the documents, if these needed to be included in the same bid and he was told they did not have to be bid or performed at the same time. She said she was under the impression they had to be done together or the warranty coverage on

the new roof would be eliminated if they cut into it to put in the HVAC. T. Sheehan said he was assured they could proceed separately with no adverse consequences and said he will get Ms Barrett a specific answer. Dr. Genovese said he may have been the one that said the projects needed to be done together but that may not be the case.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

B. Erickson said she owes Dr. Funch an apology. She said she chastised him earlier about a change he made to the superintendent's draft evaluation and stated he did not make any change in the meaning.

C. Barrett reviewed the items on their May 16th agenda - Review of the high school handbook, the superintendent's evaluation, Prescott's and Swallow Union's SIP's and Dr. Rubel's presentation of the Elementary Professional Learning Community Initiative.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: To accept MEC Amendments to *Articles of Agreement*

VOTE: To Appoint Designee to Serve on MEC Board of Directors

See earlier votes

ADJOURNMENT

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:42 P.M. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment