

GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2005 Approved June 1, 2005

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Secretary
Ms Kim Cowie
Ms Karen Lofgren
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Chair (arrived at 7:08 p.m.)
Ms Patricia Murray
Mr. Frank O'Connell, Vice- Chair
Mr. Alan Vervaeke

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Mary Athey Jennings, Superintendent
Mr. Craig Young, Business Manager
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development
Ms Joan Endicott, Director of Pupil Personnel

Student Advisors:

Erica Schroeder (left at 8:30 p.m.)
Mike Fredrickson (left at 7:40 p.m.)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: J. Kulesz, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark;
J. Mitchell, B. Morgan-White, S. Bodzioch, See attached sign-in sheet

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7: 04 p.m. by Dr. Jennings. She announced this is the first meeting of the new School Committee. After officers are elected, the new chair will run the meeting.

Welcome and Farewell: School Committee Members

Dr. Jennings acknowledged and thanked Judy Converse. Ms Converse came on the Committee as an interim and then ran for a spot on the Committee. She was elected chairman almost immediately and Dr. Jennings stated she came on board when there were three controversies going on in one year. Ms Converse also served on several committees, most recently the Naming Committee, and has done so with style, conviction, calmness and grace. A token of appreciation was presented to Ms Converse.

J. Converse thanked the Committee, the voters who elected her and allowed her to represent them and her husband and three daughters for their support. She also thanked the many people in the district she has had the privilege to work with and stated she has the utmost respect for the people who run the district and work with the students on a daily basis. J. Converse stated the children are the reason they are here and it is their opportunity to grow them into the leaders they want to have in the future. She hopes the Committee will continue to find their way to meet the needs of the students and wished them well.

Dr. Jennings welcomed new Groton Committee member Kim Cowie and presented her with the traditional Peace Lily. She also welcomed back Cindy Barrett, who will be serving a three year term.

Election of Officers

Dr. Jennings opened the floor for nominations for chairman.

P. MURRAY NOMINATED C. MCKINNEY FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE.
SECONDED BY K. COWIE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

The gavel was passed to Mr. McKinney. He thanked the members for their support.

C. McKinney opened the floor for nominations for vice-chairman.

A. VERVAEKE NOMINATED P. MURRAY FOR VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE.

Ms Murray declined the nomination.

C. BARRETT NOMINATED F. O'CONNELL FOR VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE. SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

K. LOFGREN NOMINATED C. BARRETT FOR SECRETARY OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE.
SECONDED BY P. MURRAY
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. McKinney distributed a sheet listing the openings on the sub-committees. He stated the chair serves as exofficio on all the committees and sub-committees showing his name should be considered as openings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Jennings announced the last day of school will be June 22nd. Graduation will be held on Saturday, June 4th.

Dr. Jennings announced May 23rd through May 26th is Arts Festival Week and art work is on display from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center. The high school concert will be held at the PAC tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. and Monday there will be a fifth and sixth grade concert at 6:00 p.m. and the seventh and eighth concert will be at 7:30 p.m. Florence Roche's third graders will hold a concert on Tuesday night, Prescott's concert will be held on Wednesday and Swallow Union's kindergarten and first grade will hold a concert on Thursday.

E. Schroeder announced Friday is the last day of school for seniors. Today was their last day for senior internships.

M. Fredrickson announced about one hundred seniors will depart next Tuesday for their four day class trip to Virginia Beach. He stated it is an unprecedented class trip and everyone is looking forward to it.

M. Fredrickson announced the prom is this Friday at 7:00 p.m. at the Best Western Royal Plaza in Fitchburg. The promenade will be held at 4:00 p.m. at the Dunstable gazebo.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget & Finance - P. Murray reported they met yesterday and got an update on the FY05 budget. They also received updated revenues from the state. Expenditures that may need to be funded through E&D were reviewed with Ms McGrath. She reported they also reviewed the management structure and hope to have a report in the fall. They discussed having a joint meeting with the towns in June, after they get their final numbers.

Personnel & Negotiations - C. McKinney reported they met on May 11th and they have two negotiations ongoing - Unit A and they are working on closing negotiations with the cafeteria and maintenance. They will be meeting at Tarbell on June 8th at 11:00 a.m.

Policy - No report

Communications - C. McKinney reported they are putting together a Connections newsletter that talks about Dr. Jennings and the things she has done in the district the past eleven years. They also put together a letter of thanks to the Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committees and Town Accountants. They will meet again on June 8th.

Since this is a new sub-committee, A. Vervaeke suggested they develop a charter to identify their purpose.

Naming - Dr. Jennings stated Ms Converse was the School Committee liaison and would like to continue to serve as a community member. J. Endicott reported they will meet at Tarbell at 1:00 p.m. on May 31st to review the thirty-nine names that have been submitted.

MINUTES

P. MURRAY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 4, 2005. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

In Favor: C. Barrett , K. Lofgren, , C. McKinney, P. Murray, F. O'Connell, A. Vervaeke
Abstention: K. Cowie

A. VERVAEKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 22, 2005, APRIL 27, 2005 AND MAY 4, 2005 (AS AMENDED). SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

In Favor: C. Barrett , K. Lofgren, , C. McKinney, P. Murray, A. Vervaeke
Abstention: F. O'Connell, K. Cowie

C. BARRETT MOVED TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 16, 2005, APRIL 4, 2005, APRIL 13, 2005 AND APRIL 27, 2005. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

In Favor: C. Barrett , K. Lofgren, , C. McKinney, P. Murray, A. Vervaeke
Abstention: F. O'Connell, K. Cowie

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

A. Vervaeke asked for a Laidlaw update. At the last meeting, Dr. Jennings reported they were going to the state Superior Court for a preliminary injunction. She stated Laidlaw filed a motion and has received approval to take it to Federal District Court because Laidlaw is a corporation beyond the boundaries of Massachusetts. She will keep the Committee updated.

P. Murray thanked Dunstable for their generosity and support. The selectmen met with the FinCom prior to town meeting and agreed to increase their assessment by about \$65,000. This puts Dunstable's budget out of balance and this will be rectified in the fall. She stated it was a pleasure to work with the selectmen and FinCom members and recognizes how difficult it was for them to do this. She noted that by doing so, the district did not lose \$280,000 in funding.

A. VERVAEKE MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADVANCE THE ACTION ITEM ON GDEF. SECONDED BY P. MURRAY
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Acceptance of Grant Funds: Groton Dunstable Education Foundation

K. Riggert announced the fourth cycle of grants approved by the Groton Dunstable Education Foundation. They had over \$75,000 in requests and they were able to fund \$25,901.73. Fourteen grants were fully or partially funded and were dispersed across the district.

C. McKinney asked about the vernal pool poster and K. Riggert said the idea came from a high school science teacher. There used to be one that hung at Tarbell and the work will be done with research on a vernal pool at the high school. Posters will be hung in several places in both towns when the work is completed.

P. MURRAY MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE GENEROUS GRANT FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,901.73.

SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

K. Riggert said they will see a lot of the outcomes from these grants in late spring and early fall. Dr. Jennings said the Committee will see the results of a grant on June 15th when Mr. Arena, who is on sabbatical in Italy and other eastern countries, will be at the Committee meeting through the

telecommunications software funded by GDEF. He has been teaching his European history class all semester using this software.

M. Fredrickson said their AP English class read *Angels and Demons* and Mr. Arena showed them monuments and gave them historical background on places in the book.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Progress Report - Middle School Configuration

Principal Raucci stated a year ago the middle school was under construction. They were preparing to move the eighth grade back to the MSN building from the high school and the fifth grade transition was underway. They were also preparing for a 33% growth increase and moved seventy-five staff members between the end of June and the beginning of school in September.

Ms Raucci stated they built a new integrated arts schedule and common planning time. She stated they had a fun start to the school year and thanked Dr. Jennings for allowing them to have a staggered start since there were so many students and families that had never been in the buildings. She stated they instantly became a community.

Construction was still going on after hours, on weekends and during school vacations. They tried to keep that from teachers so they could focus on education. The administrators kept notebooks in their offices where items that needed to be attended to could be addressed.

Parent Alice Anne Barbo, who serves on the middle school Grade Eight Support Team, stated this volunteer organization arose from an invitation from the administration. Members of the support teams serve as a hub for the various components of middle school life, with attention to specific needs on grade level. Each grade level team has networked with various constituents from students to teachers and the communities. She stated this resource reflects the concerns and observations from last year and that they were heard. She feels incredible energy at the school and sees a connectedness among the students, staff, administration and volunteers. She stated they operate from the philosophy that the middle school is a convergence of ideas, emotions and physical and social changes. She stated the eighth graders are happy to be at the complex and the fifth graders feel welcomed.

Ms Barbo stated the teachers have created unique ways to educate and motivate the students, each other and the communities. She invited others to join the awesome students and caring staff at the middle school community.

David Hill and Roe Vickery discussed the operation of the buildings. Ms Vickery stated it is "all in the details" and the planning takes place in the background. She stated they have a lot of considerations to make with respect to movement and safety is at the forefront of their planning. Relative to the movement between buildings, she stated they purchased umbrellas for rainy days and remind students to wear their coats when it is cold.

Mr. Hill said it took a lot of time to build an evacuation and safety plan. He stated they have a solid plan in place and it has been practiced with students and staff. Ms Vickery said they also did a lot of background planning around the traffic patterns and it should look seamless.

D. Hill said there were concerns about the fifth and eighth graders riding on the same buses and expectations were developed for bus behavior across the board. They also communicate with the bus drivers when things go wrong. They are looking to develop a peer leadership type program with the older students so they can provide leadership to younger students when riding the bus.

Fifth grade teacher Jessica Smock reported on their program of studies. She stated she has witnessed a strong group of fifth grade teachers and they, and the students, have a positive feeling being at the school. She feels they have done a good job of balancing the needs of the fifth graders as well as giving them a bit of independence. All curriculum areas have made enormous progress since they are next to each other in the building. Ms Smock stated the integrated arts program has been a great opportunity for students. She

stated many parents were concerned about fifth graders being with eighth graders but they have served as mentors and role models.

When she volunteered to be on the Fifth Grade Support Team, Margie Ferro stated she wanted to be able to be in the school and keep her finger on the pulse of what was going on. She was extremely concerned about her son entering the middle school less than a week after turning ten. She stated she was afraid of bullying, cliques and intimidation but can thankfully say he has had a great year and has thrived on the added responsibility and independence. She stated he has made a lot of friends and she feels a big part of this is due to the social and after school activities that are offered to the students.

B. Raucci stated support systems within the middle school include the guidance department and the staff has noticed the additional space has decreased conflicts and the need for discipline. They also have parent support groups, the MSPO and GDAY.

Ms Barbo stated there is a need to develop communication and tomorrow they are having an organizational meeting on building a parent to parent network. B. Raucci stated they recognize the need for a social competency program and they hope to adopt a program next year.

D. Hill said effective discipline dovetails nicely with the building operations and the proactive pre-planning on traffic flow and bus safety. Ms Vickery said there is strong staff supervision and support. The discipline of the students is across the staff and everyone takes equal responsibility and the philosophy that guides their practice is to help the kids when they make bad decisions. D. Hill said partnered with this is having a strong partnership between school and home. Having been teachers themselves, D. Hill said he and Ms Vickery miss the connection with the kids and these discipline opportunities provide an opportunity for them to connect with them.

B. Raucci said they realize this year was a learning curve and a work in progress. There are some things they need to reassess and some things they would like to change. They would like to hire a facilitator to create a vision plan they all can buy into. They would like to move the IA portion of the fifth grader's day to the end of the day to eliminate a whole set of movement for them. They kept moving with their SIP and the math teachers are close to adopting a new program. Ms McCarthy is working on literacy libraries in both buildings.

The technology department has worked hard to get the iPASS implemented in each school. They also want to develop a stronger orientation program within the middle school community.

A. Vervaeke stated Carolyn Jakubiak was very passionate about the benefits of this configuration on the behaviors of the students and that there would be reduced risky behaviors, less bullying, less harassment and reduced incidents of cutting and eating disorders. He asked what the effects of this have been upon what she saw as historical data of behavior issues. Ms Raucci stated she spoke with Ms Jakubiak this afternoon. Risky behaviors within the middle school are fairly minimal and they have not had drug and cigarette infractions. They have not seen a spike in the types of behaviors he mentioned.

C. Barrett stated Ms Jakubiak had said there was an increase in eating and cutting disorders when only the sixth and seventh grades were in the building and she was hoping there would be a decrease having three grades in the building. Ms Barrett asked if they are still at the higher level. Ms Raucci feels they have seen a decrease in discipline and since she does not recall Ms Jakubiak specifically saying this, she does not want to answer for her. She said they did see a spike with the sixth and seventh graders in one space and with the eighth graders in one space. Discipline remains level and there have been no infractions between the fifth and eighth graders. She stated the planned activities between them have been very positive.

K. Cowie realizes how busy the administration is but stated as a parent and part of the Sixth Grade Support Team, the communication has been excellent and parents appreciate it.

A. Vervaeke asked if all fifth graders have lunch together. B. Raucci said space does not permit this. They tried having all eighth graders eat together but too many students were standing in line and not eating. They are now staggered every seven minutes.

P. Murray stated her daughter will be in fifth grade next year and she feels better after listening to Ms Ferro. She stated it is very important to her to have the fifth and eighth graders separated and asked when the decision was made to mix them. B. Raucci said they do not mix them but they have had some very organized cross-graded academic projects and these have been very positive. The eighth graders are in a separate building but have been fantastic with the fifth graders. The age difference is great enough to create leadership opportunities.

Student Information Management System implementation

B. Morgan-White stated the iPASS was purchased from IMG Software, Inc. The previous system was a building-based system and any data they needed had to come from that building. The new system can be accessed from anywhere as long as the person has a log-in and the security of the system is huge.

S. Bodzioch stated they had to collect approximately 3000 student records and format the data to a usable file to send to IMG to upload. Once this was done, the data was verified and conversion errors were corrected. The next step was defining where staff worked, the level of user access that was needed and security levels. She stated the attendance piece was huge. They had to create a school calendar and scheduling was a challenge. They created discipline systems that were aligned with the DOE, define bus routes and drivers, course catalogs and grade scales.

S. Bodzioch stated they went with the "train the trainer" method because it was the best fit for the district. Training was tailored to a group's needs. She stated IMG provides wonderful support. She reviewed the work they have done in the schools over the past year and noted there are many similarities between schools. The next project is the iHealth Project. They are doing the data conversion process now and will start training with the district nurses in June and will have additional training in September. They will start entering data on incoming kindergarten students.

S. Bodzioch stated they have a three year plan in place and next year they expect to train the middle and high school teachers to use iTeacher Student Rankbook. Teachers will be able to create classroom assignments and give them a grade that automatically ties into the grading system. They would like the elementary schools to consistently enter student grades and discipline data and they plan to import MCAS and SAT scores.

In 2006-2007, S. Bodzioch said they are looking at iStaff, which is the human resource piece, which would allow the HR personnel to track curriculum development, certification levels and professional development. iParent allows a parent to log-in from home, with a secure user id and password, and look at their student's attendance, discipline, classroom assignments and grades. She feels this is a great communication piece between the parent and the school. Training will be given to HR staff, administration and secretaries.

A. Vervaeke asked them to use this system to eliminate the need to fill out numerous information cards. S. Bodzioch said this will streamline that effort and parents will get one piece of paper. He asked if they have considered implementing the iHealth at Boutwell so health issues are tracked within the system and he was advised this does include pre-K.

Since this is a web-based system, P. Murray asked what the potential is that someone could hack into the system and have access to all this information. B. Morgan-White said the information is encrypted. Connecting to a wireless network that is not password protected is a lot different than being able to log into a system behind a firewall.

K. Cowie asked if there could have been a better way to communicate the issues with the term 3 middle school report cards for those who were not informed until two weeks after they could not find them. B. Morgan-White apologized and stated they wanted to verify all the data. She acknowledged a letter should have been sent out. K. Cowie suggested posting "alerts" on the school website in the future.

With respect to the secretaries entering information about discipline, K. Cowie stated they are in common areas with parent volunteers and this is sensitive information. She stated she is not comfortable with them entering this information in a common area.

B. Morgan-White feels this issue lies more with the building than with them. They help them to know how to enter data and access the system. Dr. Jennings said they have job descriptions for different levels of secretaries and they emphasize confidentiality whether they are using paper or the computer.

C. Barrett asked if the high school schedules will be done with this system for next year and S. Bodzioch said they have been done. C. Barrett asked when they will be coming home. Dr. Jennings said Principal Dillon has said they will not be going home as early as they did last year but they hope to have them done before the end of the school year.

C. Barrett said parents received a memo regarding the time line for course selection and their child should have come home with a list for parents to sign. She feels parents are getting concerned that they have not approved their child's schedule.

A. Vervaeke asked if there are password policies in place and S. Bodzioch said it is an alpha numeric combination and there is an expiration date. After a certain amount of inactivity time, it logs them out. Users are told to log out when they are finished with their task.

C. McKinney asked if the system can expand on assessments and S. Bodzioch said they can add as many fields as they want. He said in theory, they could scan in DRA's and this would help with storage issues.

Due to the time, Dr. Jennings said Ms Morgan-White and Ms Bodzioch are willing to come back another time to do their presentation on the recent library evaluation. This presentation was tabled for the time being.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: Sale of Bond Anticipation Notes

C. BARRETT MOVED THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE SALE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,660,799 FOR OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TREASURER AND THE DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS & FINANCE, AND THAT THE SALE BE AWARDED TO FLEET NATIONAL BANK AT 2.64% NET INTEREST COST. THE INTEREST COST AT MATURITY ON DECEMBER 16, 2005 IS \$39,415.30.

FURTHER, THAT APPROVAL IS BASED ON THE VOTE PROVIDED BY BOND COUNSEL, ROPES & GRAY AND WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES. SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE

C. Young stated they were able to keep their bond rating at A3. He advised Moody's that they have been working in cooperation with the FinComs and Boards of Selectmen. He stated Moody's is impressed with the district's financial stability and if their finances stay strong, there is a possibility of an upgrade in the near future for their rating. As they prepare to refinance the BAN's, C. Young stated SBA has given them another \$3M reimbursement so they can buy-down the amount they turned over.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

VOTE: English Learner Education Policy

A. VERVAEKE MOVED THEY ADOPT ENGLISH LEARNER EDUCATION POLICY IHBEA AS SHOWN IN THE HANDOUT. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

K. Cowie asked if this policy is required by Mass General Law and Dr. Rubel said yes. She asked if there is any funding from the state to help offset the cost of the program and Dr. Rubel said no.

SO VOTED

In Favor: C. Barrett, K. Lofgren, C. McKinney, P. Murray, F. O'Connell, A. Vervaeke

Opposed: K. Cowie

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT:

P. MURRAY MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING TO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 9:20 P.M., NOT TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PERSONNEL AND NEGOTIATIONS.

SECONDED BY C. BARRETT

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith

Recording Secretary