

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2008
(Approved 11/05/08)

PRESENT:

Mr. Peter Carson
Ms Berta Erickson
Mr. Jim Frey
Dr. Paul Funch, Chair
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair
Mr. Jon Sjoberg, Secretary

ABSENT: Mr. Frank O'Connell

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Erin Christman and Molly Nicol (Left at 8:30 p.m.)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; A. Eliot, P. Kelly

CALL TO ORDER:

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Funch stated they have a busy agenda tonight and asked members to stick with the guidelines he provides.

Erin Christman and Molly Nicol read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Dr. Genovese announced condolences have been sent on the committee's behalf to the Headmaster at Lawrence Academy on the untimely death of one of their students.

Dr. Genovese thanked the voters for supporting the debt exclusion.

Dr. Genovese announced members received a copy of the request from the Groton Cable Advisory Committee to put in a walkway that would lead directly to their exterior door in the lower level of the high school. P. Kelly explained this will provide easier and safer access, particularly during the hours the school is not open. Construction costs will be paid from the Cable TV Gift Fund. The sidewalk will not interfere with Mr. Garvey's Eagle Scout project and Mr. Sheehan will make sure there is adequate insurance coverage for the construction.

C. McKinney announced Homecoming Week at the high school begins October 20th and he highlighted the festivities scheduled to take place. It was noted the bonfire is permitted by the fire department.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

MCAS Presentation - Dr. Rubel

Dr. Rubel stated she will not be giving an analysis of any of the data tonight as the principals, teachers and curriculum leaders are in the process of doing an in-depth analysis of the spring 2008 MCAS results. The results of that analysis, and what their next steps will be, will be presented at another meeting. She will present an overview of the district's performance on MCAS and their standing with regard to Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP) as reported by the DOE based on MCAS and their attainment towards the goal of 100% proficiency in ELA and math by the year 2014.

What was tested in 2008 was reviewed and it was noted the class of 2010 must pass one of the STE tests (Biology, Chemistry, Intro to Physics or Technology/Engineering) in grade 9 or 10. This year's freshmen will be taking the US History test in 2011.

Slides representing the percentage of students in each of the categories (Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement and Warning) were reviewed. C. McKinney noted the results seem to reflect they are teaching to the standards and Dr. Rubel agreed. Now that they are testing every year in the middle grades, they are beginning to be able to chart a class. She noted the eighth grade's math score helped them make AYP. The high school has met AYP to the point where all of the students have met the competency determination and this is something to celebrate.

J. Sjoberg wanted to know what explains the large variations from year to year in a single grade. Dr. Rubel stated the test changes every year and the state is not measuring every aspect of every framework. They also have a change in the actual groups and the smaller the group size, the more volatile the data can be.

With respect to AYP, Dr. Rubel said they are aiming to have 100% of students advanced or proficient, state-wide, by 2014 and a graph showing where they should be along that path was shown. In 2008, they should have a CPI (Composite Performance Index) of 85.4 in ELA and 76.5 in math. Dr. Rubel explained how AYP is calculated (participation, performance, improvement and attendance) and reviewed a chart showing the district's 2008 AYP data for all grades and stated, in the aggregate, all their students met AYP in ELA and math. They had not made AYP for 4 years running at the middle school until last year.

Since there is a wide range of different levels of need, J. Frey asked if MCAS creates a special test for the special education group. Dr. Rubel said there is an alternative assessment which is a portfolio. The special education team for that student makes the determination around whether the student takes MCAS or the alternate assessment. The alternate assessment is cumbersome and time consuming and sometimes parents want their child to take MCAS, even against the educators' recommendation, because they want to see how they do in relation to the rest of the population. She noted they caution teachers and principals that just because they have students with special needs, it does not mean they cannot attain to the same high levels and standards. It may mean they need to change the way they provide them with support and change the strategies that are used.

Vision Statement - Dr. Genovese

Members received a draft of the vision statement with some very minor changes that were made after being reviewed with the Administrative Team. He explained it is meant to be a broad picture and it needs to be a shared vision. He stated it is not about how the specifics would be put in play to reach the vision. Members were asked to comment on the content and restructuring ideas can be emailed to him.

J. Frey feels mentioning the intent to achieve state standards is missing and Dr. Genovese said it is embedded in several places. J. Frey said they have to make sure part of their vision is to meet the required achievements in order for them to continue to be adequately funded by the public institutions they depend on and this should be more explicit in the vision statement.

P. Carson did not see discussion on the education of the whole child and Dr. Genovese pointed out where that is captured. P. Carson does not believe "gifted and talented students" should be singled out as they want to challenge all students. Dr. Genovese said each student's need is covered and it is also saying there needs to be multiple pathways to challenge students. Dr. Funch feels the sentence could be more equally balanced.

Dr. Funch said he did not see enough "Groton-Dunstable" in the statement and feels it would fit any school. He noted they should expand upon their uniqueness and while these are laudable goals, he thought it should be more focused to capture people's imagination. He recommended it be shortened and prioritized on the few things they want to focus on in the next few years. Dr. Genovese said the purpose of a vision is to set the

course and a goal oriented action plan flows from the vision statement. He said you do not want to have a narrow focus when you are looking for the best you can be.

J. Frey said an important element for Dr. Genovese to put in the vision plan is what it is he wants to be for the communities he serves. He feels this is important since most of their funding comes from the towns. Dr. Genovese said it has to be a shared vision and suggested members email sentences or phrases they feel would capture what they are thinking. Dr. Funch asked that the vision statement be put on the website.

C. McKinney said you cannot put the incredible imagination the district already has into a vision statement (the \$1M penny project, students at the UN making a presentation on peace) and limiting the document limits what has already been done. Dr. Genovese said a comprehensive strategic plan starts with a vision, which is a broad statement, and begins to get refined into priorities and action steps. The specifics come out of the strategic plan which will be 25 to 30 pages long. He will clarify what the document is suppose to be doing and what the next document would do. Dr. Rubel feels the fourth paragraph on page 1 clearly states Dr. Genovese's vision in terms of strong instruction.

BAN Presentation - C. McKinney

C. McKinney explained the district borrowed \$2.5M last year, with the towns' authorization, using a BAN (Bond Anticipation Note) for the settlement of the land acquisition for the high school. The original plan was to issue a long-term bond this fall but the tight credit market has dictated a change in direction. Budget and Finance had an emergency meeting on October 8th and representatives from both towns, as well as both treasurers, were able to attend and a conference call was placed to the district's financial advisor. There was a unanimous consensus of those present at that meeting that a one year rollover of the debt into another one year BAN was the best alternative. The BAN carries a slightly lower interest rate than the BAN that is expiring. Because there is no principal payment during the year, the debt assessments to the towns should be lowered. When the long-term bond is issued next year, it will be for 18 years and they will work with their financial advisor to determine the bond structure that will work the best for both towns.

The school committee needs to vote to award the \$2.5M BAN to TD Bank, N.A. and vote to reduce the FY09 budget by the amount of the reduced debt payments in time for the towns to incorporate their new assessment into their recapitulation (RECAP) sheets that need to be approved by the DOR in order to set their tax rate.

J. Frey asked Mr. McKinney to review the 4 scenarios included in the materials and which one is being recommended. C. McKinney said the budget was built on scenario 1, they were going with scenario 2 (issue a bond with a long first coupon) and now they are executing one half of either scenario 3 or 4 - issuing a BAN. They will discuss whether the bond will have a long first coupon or have accelerated payments. T. Sheehan said the interest (\$87,211.11) on the BAN taken out a year ago needs to be paid on October 24, 2008. Members received a copy of the press release prepared by Budget and Finance.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

A. Eliot announced the Groton Board of Selectmen unanimously elected Mark Haddad as their new Town Manager and he will be presented at Monday's town meeting.

Dr. Funch asked Ms Eliot if the selectmen have an appointee for the RFP subcommittee. Ms Eliot said at this point, she and Mr. Degen will be working with the school committee but no meeting has been scheduled.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - P. Carson reported they reviewed the advertising policy and came up with some examples to review at their next meeting.

Budget & Finance - C. McKinney deferred to the BAN presentation.

Communications - J. Frey reported he, B. Erickson, J. Sjoberg and J. Boroshok are on the committee and a draft charge was distributed. They are meeting at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow at Tarbell to review the charge and build their goals and objectives and a timeline. One of his goals is to review their communications approaches,

practices and techniques and improve them in anyway they can accomplish in time for the upcoming budget cycle process.

Personnel & Negotiations - Superintendent's Evaluation - P. Carson reported they have been meeting and one of their charges is to negotiate with the superintendent to develop a set of goals and an evaluation instrument. Discussion ensued as to whether last year's goal of raising the level of achievement for all students be included as a goal since they do not have the MCAS results in May. Dr. Genovese pointed out this is the major focus of the district. It was agreed a goal will be added with the MCAS data being used to measure that improvements were made in all areas. The school committee will vote on the document at their next meeting.

Think Tank - B. Erickson reported they met on October 9th and Dr. Genovese provided a lot of information on the revenue budget. Their focus has changed a little and rather than having two groups, they will work as one group, listing all the ideas and then focus on the good ones. Community members can send their suggestions to any Think Tank committee member. Their next meeting is at 7:00 p.m. tomorrow night in the MSN library.

Report of Director of Business & Finance - T. Sheehan reported there is an action item not listed on the agenda. Because of the change in plans for the funding of the bonds, they recommend the committee vote to reduce the FY09 debt capital budget by the amount of money that was included in the budget (\$62,500) to cover the first year's cost of issuing the bonds. This will result in lower assessment to the towns.

The elevator for Swallow Union has been fabricated and is on the way and should be installed by the end of October or early November. A comprehensive safety plan will be put in place during the installation.

The installation of the video cameras and buzzers for all the school buildings is 95% to 98% complete. Mr. Byrne will be giving a presentation to the fire and police chiefs in both towns to demonstrate the systems and make sure they are comfortable with what they have done and intend to do. The Dunstable police chief has recommended a card swipe system be installed in the buildings to allow for emergency access when the doors are locked. Due to their late installation dates, the vendor did install them at the middle school at no cost.

Report of the Chair - Dr. Funch reported there will be a Division 1 meeting in Lynnfield at the middle school on October 29th from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and this is the chance to meet the educational commissioner, Mr. Chester.

He has offered to be the liaison to the Transportation sub-committee.

He and J. Sjoberg would like to be representatives on the Groton selectmen's RFP development committee when it is established.

It was agreed the committee will meet on November 12th if the MCAS analysis information is available.

Report of the Superintendent - Dr. Genovese noted there is an action item to accept the donation of a Canon ZR-900 camcorder with tripod and case from the Groton-Dunstable Athletic Booster Club as well as an anonymous donation of \$1000 for Boutwell School. Members will also be asked to approve the installation of the walkway to the Cable entrance.

Cost Saving Initiative - He is making it a personal focus to involve the students, staff and the community in garnering ideas to initiate cost saving initiatives. Staff members have already made suggestions and he will be putting together a contest for the students.

ACTION ITEMS

Non Consent Action Items

None

VOTE: Consent Action Items

J. FREY MOVED TO ACCEPT CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS #1 - BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES: OCTOBER 1, 2008, #2 - ACCEPT A NEW VIDEO CAMERA AND EQUIPMENT DONATED BY THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE ATHLETIC BOOSTER CLUB, #3 - ACCEPT THE ANONYMOUS DONATION OF \$1000 FOR BOUTWELL SCHOOL AND #4 - ACCEPT LEVEL 2 CHANGES FOR THE FOLLOWING POLICIES: EB, EBCF (ALSO ADD), EC, ECA, ECAC, ECAF, EDAA, EDC, EDD, EEA, EEAAA, EEAC, EEAEAC (ALSO JICC), EF, EFC, EI. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

In Favor: J. Frey, P. Funch, J. Sjoberg, P. Carson, B. Erickson

Abstention: C. McKinney

VOTE: To Award Sale of BAN to TD Bank, N.A. at 3.25%

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE AWARD THE SALE OF A \$2,500,000 3.25 PERCENT GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND ANTICIPATION NOTE OF THE DISTRICT DATED OCTOBER 24, 2008, AND PAYABLE OCTOBER 23, 2009, TO TD BANK, N.A. AT PAR.

FURTHER, C. MCKINNEY MOVED THAT IN CONNECTION WITH THE MARKETING AND SALE OF THE NOTE, THE PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF A PRELIMINARY OFFICIAL STATEMENT DATED OCTOBER 7, 2008, AND A FINAL OFFICIAL STATEMENT DATED OCTOBER 7, 2008, EACH IN SUCH FORM AS MAY BE APPROVED BY THE DISTRICT TREASURER, BE AND HEREBY ARE RATIFIED, CONFIRMED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED.

FURTHER, C. MCKINNEY MOVED THAT THE DISTRICT TREASURER AND THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE, HEREBY ARE AUTHORIZED TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER A MATERIAL EVENTS DISCLOSURE UNDERTAKING IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE SEC RULE 15C2-12 IN SUCH FORM AS MAY BE APPROVED BY BOND COUNSEL TO THE DISTRICT, WHICH UNDERTAKING SHALL BE INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE IN THE NOTE FOR BENEFIT OF THE HOLDERS OF THE NOTE FROM TIME TO TIME.

FURTHER, C. MCKINNEY MOVED THAT THE DISTRICT SECRETARY AND THE DISTRICT TREASURER BE AND HEREBY ARE, AUTHORIZED TO TAKE ANY AND ALL SUCH ACTIONS, AND EXECUTE AND DELIVER SUCH CERTIFICATES, RECEIPTS OR OTHER DOCUMENTS AS MAY BE DETERMINED BY THEM, OR ANY OF THEM, TO BE NECESSARY OR CONVENIENT TO CARRY INTO EFFECT THE PROVISIONS OF THE FOREGOING VOTES. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

VOTE: Approve Revised FY2009 Total Budget of \$35,830,774

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE A REVISED FISCAL YEAR 2009 TOTAL BUDGET OF \$35,830,774 CONSISTING OF AN UNCHANGED OPERATING BUDGET OF \$31,267,561 AND A REDUCED DEBT SERVICE AND INTEREST BUDGET OF \$4,563,213. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

The district treasurer will reduce Groton's debt assessment by \$47,944 and Dunstable's by \$14,556. Groton's new debt assessment is \$1,621,480 and Dunstable's is \$524,973.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

VOTE: To Approve Installation of Walkway to Cable Entrance

P. CARSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE INSTALLATION OF A WALKWAY TO THE CABLE ENTRANCE AT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

ADJOURNMENT

J. FREY MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:43 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment