

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
November 2, 2005

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Secretary
Ms Kim Cowie
Mr. Paul Fitzgerald
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Chair
Mr. Frank O'Connell, Vice- Chair
Mr. Alan Vervaeke

ABSENT:

Ms Karen Lofgren

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

STUDENT ADVISOR:

Kara Cover

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: Lowell Sun; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald;
P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; K. Icenog, Dunstable News

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and adjourned to executive session for the purpose of litigation. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:12 p.m. and was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

C. McKinney announced Swallow Union fourth grade teacher Nancy Parker will be retiring on January 17, 2006 after forty-two years of teaching, seventeen of which were spent at Groton Dunstable. Dr. Genovese said he will accept her letter with regret and write a letter on behalf of the Committee. A transition period will be established so the needs of the students are met.

K. Cowie announced the middle school will be holding parent conferences on November 17th and this is a half day. The grade 7 play Annie Jr. will be performed at 7:30 p.m. on November 4th and 5th at the Performing Arts Center. The middle school enjoyed a guest scientist on October 24th who presented a program on space suits and moon walks. The faculty council has planned several Spirit Days to help raise money for Katrina victims and the Paul Solis Elementary School in Louisiana. November 4th will be "loose change day", November 10th is "red, white and blue day" and November 18th is "hat day".

C. Barrett announced Prescott's Veterans Day Ceremony will take place on Thursday, November 10th with a flag raising ceremony and singing of the National Anthem at 9:15 a.m. in front of the school. Brigadier General Bruce Zukauskas will speak in the gym and students are encouraged to invite family, friends and neighbors who have served in the military.

C. Barrett announced the Specialist Open House at Florence Roche will be on November 3rd from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

A. Vervaeke announced Swallow Union held their annual Frightful Feast last Friday night and the three seatings were sold out. They started their Hurricane Katrina fund raiser this week and cash donations will be going to a school in need in the Gulf. Jordons furniture has donated Mardi Gras beads which will be given to those making donations.

Dr. Genovese announced the elementary school parent conferences will be held on November 17th, November 30th and December 1st and these will be half days. High school parent conferences will also be held on November 17th and they will also have a half day.

Dr. Genovese announced GDAY will hold a parent book discussion group on Tuesday, November 18th at the MSN conference room from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The book is Too Much of a Good Thing, Raising Children of Character in an Indulgent Age by Daniel J. Kindlon.

C. McKinney announced the School Committee will hold a workshop at Tarbell on Saturday, November 5th from 8:00 a.m. until noon.

C. McKinney announced Dr. Richard Staub has tendered his letter of resignation as School Physician, effective at midnight on December 31, 2005. He read Dr. Staub's letter. Dr. Genovese accepted his resignation on behalf of the Committee with great regret.

K. Cover announced there is a program for juniors called Student Government Day. It is Massachusetts wide and one junior from each high school goes to the State House and participates in a mock assembly. Hoby is a government leadership program open to sophomores. The third program is Mass Star and focuses less on government issues and more on leadership. It is a three day event held at BU.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget and Finance - F. O'Connell reported they met yesterday and topics included the closeout of the middle school project and a review of town meeting discussion points. He reminded members the joint financial meeting with the Boards of Selectmen and FinComs will be held on November 10th at 7:00 p.m. in the high school library. The auditor's report and quarterly report are posted on the district website.

Dr. Genovese stated they maintained a good bond rating but Moody has expressed a concern because of the judgment as well as the district using what they consider to be a significant amount of E&D money for their budget. C. McKinney noted Moody's also pointed out one reason they maintained their strong rating is because the towns have demonstrated consistent effort to coordinate with the district.

Building Committee - No report

Personnel & Negotiations- C. McKinney reported they will be distributing a draft evaluation instrument for the superintendent at Saturday's workshop. He reported teacher negotiations are ongoing.

Dr. Genovese reported the budget calendar has been established and letters have been sent to town officials inviting at least two members from each town's Finance Committee, as well as at least one member of the Board of Selectmen, to participate in the budget process. Meetings are open to the public and will be held in the high school library.

MINUTES

C. BARRETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 19, 2005. SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE
SO VOTED

In Favor: F. O'Connell, C. Barrett, C. McKinney, A. Vervaeke, P. Fitzgerald

Abstention: K. Cowie

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Dr. Genovese distributed copies of minutes and a time schedule from the Wellness Committee. It is anticipated a policy will come forward soon. The committee will be meeting with the Policy Committee on November 22nd.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Policy - Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI)

A. Vervaeke explained that anyone who works in or around public schools or places where there are school children have to go through a background check to make sure they are not registered sex offenders and do not have outstanding warrants and the like.

The state regulations upon which the CORI Policy was based have expanded dramatically and the district policy went from a single page to two pages. People having background checks are allowed to see the feedback and while they cannot appeal negative feedback to the Committee or superintendent, they can go back to the criminal history systems board.

C. McKinney asked if this is a significant change from their current policy of having a CORI check on anyone involved with the schools that has a reasonable chance of being alone with an individual. A. Vervaeke stated the regulations added sub-contractors and went into detail about questions about the form, questions about the data, how long the data must be kept and that the information is not subject to the public records law.

C. Barrett asked if this is the exact text from the state and A. Vervaeke said slight modifications were made. She asked if they want a request form in both sections R and E-3 and A. Vervaeke said it should have been removed from R.

Dr. Genovese feels the first three pages are what will eventually be brought forward and the rest will be considered regulations for implementation. CORI forms will be done on-line and the results will be sent only to the superintendent. Sometimes results can come back in less than twenty-four hours. With respect to the request form, Dr. Genovese said it will have their heading on top followed by the district's heading so it is very clear where the information was originally generated.

Members will vote on the Food Allergy Policy at the next Committee meeting.

Report on MASC/MASS Conference

Materials collected at the conference were distributed. As the Committee's delegate, A. Vervaeke reported all but one of the twelve resolutions passed. The value added assessment was deferred until next year until there is a clear idea of what the implementation costs will be to districts and that it is fiscally responsible. He stated he represented the district as requested.

A. Vervaeke stated there were many amendments to the resolutions and all were shot down. K. Lofgren attended a discussion on the basics of policy. He attended one where there was a lot of discussion about whether or not policies relate to state law or if they are guidelines or hard governances. It was pretty much agreed that policies are governing words. K. Lofgren gave him information on SPED and noted costs are rising due to earlier medical identification of certain disabilities and a large increase in the diagnosis of autism. Higher costs are not due to parents looking for excessive support for their children nor from districts unable to maintain the costs. Ideas being considered to help decrease costs to districts are to continue lobbying for more funding for the circuit breaker and looking at transportation costs by suggesting collaborative schools become a hub for transporting students. She was reminded over the course of the three day conference that School Committee members are genuine, effective and passionate ambassadors.

A. Vervaeke read P. Fitzgerald's summary of a discussion on Chapter 70 funding. Chapter 70 reform assumptions are a 15% increase in the foundation budget, based on the aggregate wealth of the income and property values in various towns. The minimum state percent will be 10% of the foundation budget regardless of the town's wealth. Dr. Genovese hopes for a foundation formula that captures true costs. Chapter 70 reform could add an additional \$1 billion in the future and with state revenues higher than expected, the question is what they will be spent on.

P. Fitzgerald notes state there was a strong anti-MCAS test sentiment throughout the conference and A. Vervaeke agreed. He said people do not like MCAS being the sole tool for assessment. P. Fitzgerald's comments state there was a strong anti-charter

schools bias throughout the conference. A. Vervaeke believes this has more to do with the funding formula, not charter schools themselves.

A. Vervaeke stated he sat in on policies that are coming up: CORI, harassment, physical restraint of students and school lunch nutrition. He noted these policies are being driven by state and federal regulations. There was an interesting session about the media and Ed Reform and the speaker, Jim Brody, made it clear that conflict sells and newspapers are quick to report the negatives. There was a presentation about lengthening the school day to provide more time for professional development during the school day and half days and whole days taken off for professional development would eventually be eliminated. Those who have lengthened their school days in various states have shown improvement in student scores and in standardized tests.

A. Vervaeke stated the Director of the Boston Museum of Science led a great discussion about technology. Fewer US students major in science and engineering studies than most other Western countries and Japan and this is because teachers are not finding ways of getting kids interested in it. The Director discussed various methods he used at Tufts by taking things that teachers liked to do and making them into curriculum.

C. McKinney stated many resources are available through that foundation and they are on a mission to get schools to adopt more technology in the science curriculum.

With respect to the curriculum, P. Fitzgerald stated they compared the state framework with what is out there and found it was lacking in the engineering area. They developed their own textbook that covers 100% of the state framework for engineering, science and technology and 80% of physics. He encouraged Dr. Rubel to take a look at it.

Dr. Genovese stated there was a lot of recognition of educators and teachers in Massachusetts for the progress they have made with students in meeting benchmarks and improving test scores. He noted the Commissioner of Education pointed out that Mass ranked number one in the four categories recently tested in the fourth grade.

With respect to MCAS testing, he feels fundamentally it is not about accountability but feels the concern is that the testing has a too narrow scope and is one test the best measure? He would argue that it is up to districts to provide the missing assessment in terms of determining the progress of individual students as well as groups of students. He noted Groton Dunstable has rigorous standards that are greater than MCAS. With respect to the funding formula for Chapter 70, he recognized that legislators made a commitment over a seven year time period to fund education. While the economy seems to be getting better, the legislators have the competing interest of balancing the needs of education and providing some relief. He feels there will always be a struggle with competition between school districts and towns that are also dealing with constraints.

Dr. Genovese stated the agenda since 1950 has been about universal access, making sure they were educating all the kids, and that has been met. The agenda now is universal proficiency and this requires a funding commitment.

Dr. Rubel feels early childhood folks would say they do not have equal access in the areas of pre-K and kindergarten and this is why there has been a move afoot since Ed Reform to provide universal all day kindergarten and universal pre-school. She stated they recognize they still need to do some work in the area of technology/engineering and science. They are in the process of developing in-depth units and have identified units of study for each grade level in technology/engineering but they not helped teachers, especially at the elementary level, develop those units. They have identified the learning standards that will be focused on at each grade level. She noted that prior to the high school being built, they spent a lot of time with their science curriculum coordinators and the middle and high school principals around technology/engineering with regards to setting up a "modern shop" that is twenty-first century. She noted last year the middle school science teachers received a GDEF technology/engineering grant to develop a unit.

P. Fitzgerald asked the benefit of paying \$5000 to be a member of MASC.

Dr. Genovese stated they assist in policy development, are there as a resource for different issues districts may be struggling with and there is access to consultants. He looks at this as a professional association. He noted some districts did drop their membership during lean budget times. C. McKinney feels Groton Dunstable has made good use of MASC personnel. A. Vervaeke said it is a large scale advocacy for the state.

Dr. Genovese stated there is some talk about having the conference on Cape Cod next year and this may be too far to commute.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: High School Basketball Trip

C. McKinney stated this trip has been made for the past fifteen years and the Committee formally voted on it for the first time last year after passing the overnight trip policy.

Dr. Genovese stated eighteen students and six adults will be going and there will be three students and one adult in each room. He stated students are well supervised.

F. O'Connell asked who signs the final approval. Dr. Genovese stated once the Committee acts favorably, he would sign.

P. FITZGERALD MOVED THEY APPROVE THE OVERNIGHT BOYS BASKETBALL CAPE TRIP. SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE

K. Cowie asked if they are attending a basketball tournament activity and Dr. Genovese said it is a "Jamboree".

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Bond Anticipation Notes

Dr. Genovese read from Mr. Young's memo dated October 28, 2005 which states the district will receive bids on November 2, 2005 for the sale of \$10,000,000 of Bond Anticipation Notes related to the Middle School North Building Project. The length of the short term borrowing is from November 10, 2005 to April 13, 2006. During this

period, the district should complete the building project and have SBA audit the project. Upon completion of the project and the audit, the district will bond the outstanding debt. Dr. Genovese noted the sale could occur earlier than April 13, 2006.

He distributed a memo from Mr. Young dated November 2, 2005. Eleven bids were received with the low bids provided by Eastern Bank for \$5,000,000 at a net interest cost of 2.967% and Commerce Capital for \$5,000,000 with a net interest cost of 2.9888%. Compiled, the weighted net interest cost is 2.9779%. Dr. Genovese noted this is an incredible interest rate and feels some of the financial things they have in place, such as a strong relationship with the towns, really count. A copy of the motion drafted by Bond Counsel was distributed.

A. VERVAEKE MOVED THAT THE ACTION TAKEN ON BEHALF OF THIS COMMITTEE IN ADVERTISING FOR PUBLIC SALE AND IN DETERMINING THE DETAILS OF THE \$10,000,000 AGGREGATE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES (SCHOOL BONDS) OF THE DISTRICT, ISSUED IN ANTICIPATION OF A PORTION OF THE \$15,900,000 SCHOOL BONDS AUTHORIZED UNDER AND PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 71, SECTION 16 (d), OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS, AS AMENDED AND SUPPLEMENTED, BY VOTES OF THE DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE DULY ADOPTED AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN EXHIBIT A ATTACHED HERETO WHICH BY REFERENCE THERETO IS HEREBY INCORPORATED IN AND MADE A PART OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING AND THIS VOTE, AND IN THAT CONNECTION, ARRANGING FOR SALE OF THE NOTES BY PREPARING AND DISTRIBUTING A PRELIMINARY OFFICIAL STATEMENT AND NOTICE OF SALE, IS IN ALL RESPECTS RATIFIED, ADOPTED, APPROVED AND CONFIRMED;

THAT THE NOTES SHALL BE DATED AS OF NOVEMBER 10, 2005, SHALL MATURE ON APRIL 13, 2006; SHALL BEAR INTEREST PAYABLE AT MATURITY, AND SHALL BE NUMBERED R-1 AND R-2, AND SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS VOTE, THE NOTES SHALL BE IN SUCH FORM AS THE CHAIRMAN AND THE TREASURER SHALL DETERMINE AND APPROVE BY THE EXECUTION OF THE NOTE;

THAT THE NOTES SHALL NOT BE SUBJECT TO REDEMPTION PRIOR TO THEIR STATED MATURITY DATE;

THAT THE NOTES SHALL ORIGINALLY BE ISSUED BY MEANS OF A BOOK-ENTRY SYSTEM EVIDENCING OWNERSHIP AND TRANSFER OF THE NOTES; AND IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE OR TERMINATION OF THE BOOK-ENTRY SYSTEM, U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, OR ITS SUCCESSOR THERETO, SHALL ISSUE REPLACEMENT NOTES IN THE FORM OF FULLY REGISTERED CERTIFICATES AND SHALL ACT AS TRANSFER AGENT AND PAYING AGENT THEREFOR;

THAT THE NOTES SHALL BEAR INTEREST AT MATURITY AND ARE HEREBY SOLD AND AWARDED AS FOLLOWS:

PURCHASER	NOTE NO	AMOUNT	INTEREST RATE	PREMIUM
EASTERN BANK	R-1	\$5,000,000	4.00%	\$21,951.25
COMMERCE CAPITAL MARKETS, INC.	R-2	5,000,000	3.25%	5,550.00

THAT THE TREASURER BE, AND HEREBY IS, AUTHORIZED TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER A MATERIAL EVENTS DISCLOSURE CERTIFICATE GENERALLY AS DESCRIBED IN THE OFFICIAL STATEMENT RELATING TO THE NOTES AND TO INCORPORATE BY REFERENCE THERETO IN THE NOTES SUCH CERTIFICATE BOTH IN SUCH FORM AS THE TREASURER MAY APPROVE BY HIS EXECUTION THEREOF, AND THE OBLIGATION OF THE DISTRICT CONTAINED IN SUCH CERTIFICATE IS HEREBY APPROVED AND CONFIRMED; AND

THAT THE CHAIRMAN, THE TREASURER AND THE SECRETARY BE AND HEREBY ARE, AND EACH OF THEM SEVERALLY IS, AUTHORIZED TO TAKE SUCH ACTION, AND TO 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 VOTE

SECONDED BY K. COWIE

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

With respect to science and technology curriculum, K. Icenogle stated she has had some experience with trying to get Destination Imagination going within the district. While she did not push for teacher and administration involvement, she stated she wondered why the school would not be more involved in a program that offered opportunities for students to "learn by doing". She noted there are areas of Robotics but feels it would be nice to see more extracurricular activities that foster involvement in science and technology.

C. McKinney stated both towns scheduled town meeting votes relative to the debt the Committee voted to incur in anticipation of a settlement and thanked Groton citizens for supporting the article. He thanked F. O'Connell for volunteering to make a presentation at Dunstable's town meeting on Monday and feels the residents will be supportive given the nature of the need for Dunstable to obtain its tax rate.

A. Vervaeke stated they share a football team with Ayer and noted they have done very well this year. He gave the team a " hearty well done" and looks forward to seeing a maroon and white football team on their own field in the next couple of years.

K. Cowie announced she will be resigning from the School Committee as of December 22, 2005 due to her husband taking a new job out of the area. She stated she has enjoyed her short time on the Committee and working with Dr. Genovese. She encouraged community members to come forward and fill her position. Since the Naming Committee is at a critical point, she requested the Chair replace her as quickly as possible as she does not feel she can effectively fill her position as co-chair.

C. McKinney accepted her resignation with regret and will take input from the Committee to fill her position on the Naming Committee. Dr. Genovese thanked Ms Cowie for all her contributions.

ADJOURNMENT:

A. VERVAEKE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:45 P.M.
SECONDED BY K. COWIE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary