

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2005

PRESENT:

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

ADMINISTRATION:

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

STUDENT ADVISOR:

Kara Cover

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: K. Boutselis, Lowell Sun; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald;
P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; B. White, J. Dillon, L. Zimmaro, B. Lavin, J. Mitchell,
B. Erickson, N. Roberts, P. Myerson,

CALL TO ORDER

C. McKinney announced the GDRSC Meeting opened at 6:00 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussing litigation and collective bargaining. The GDRSC Meeting reconvened in public session at 7:10 p.m. and was called to order by the chair, C. McKinney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Vervaeke announced Swallow Union currently has an Artist in Residence program going on and artist Carol McGrath is coming during the school day to paint a beautiful seashore painting. Students are allowed to stop and visit with her and ask questions while she is working. This program was made possible by the GDEF and the Swallow Union APT. Art books and supplies have also been purchased for the library.

A. Vervaeke announced Swallow Union's APT is running their holiday raffle through November 29th and businesses and parents have donated exciting prizes.

Swallow Union Principal P. Myerson announced they raised \$550 that will be donated to a school damaged by hurricane Katrina.

F. O'Connell announced Florence Roche hosted their Bus Driver Appreciation Breakfast on October 18th. Food was provided by parent volunteers and entertainment was provided by first grade students and music teacher John Wiesner.

F. O'Connell announced Florence Roche held a successful Specialists' Open House on November 3rd. New handwriting binders were created by parent volunteers and staff in October and each classroom now has a three ring binder of master worksheets of current core handwriting and supplementary materials to support instruction in their D'Nealian handwriting program. Second grade students and parents were treated to the traditional "Two Fiddlers" Artist in Residence program on November 2nd and November 9th.

Principal L. Zimmaro announced their Holiday Fair will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on December 3, 2005.

K. Cowie announced Prescott had a great Veterans Day Ceremony on November 10th. Fourth grade student Milo Brandt served as MC and Brigadier General Bruce Zukauskas was the featured speaker. A new brick walkway has been installed at the school and parents, students and staff approaching from the east side of the parking lot will no longer have to walk through mud.

K. Cowie announced Prescott recently formed a Parent Community Preservation Committee to look into grant funding for the restoration of the interior of the building. The hope is to develop a three year plan that is in concert with Groton's Community Preservation Grant cycle each August.

On behalf of the Committee, K. Cowie welcomed Kimberley McCormack who has been hired to replace 2.5 day kindergarten teacher Kelly Fay while she is on maternity leave for eight weeks. Ms McCormack shadowed MS Fay and began on November 14th.

K. Cowie announced Prescott's third graders attended a "Star Night" where they viewed Mars and other constellations they have studied. Earlier the same day, third and fourth graders climbed into the portable Star Lab from the Museum of Science.

Principal B. Lavin announced Prescott raised approximately \$700 for the Katrina Fund. Ben and Jerry's has matched these funds and will be sending ice cream to the school. She announced they are in the final stage of the window replacement project.

A. Vervaeke would like the Committee to tour Prescott after the windows are complete.

P. Fitzgerald announced Boutwell held their first parent meeting and coffee with Early Childhood Director Russ Hoyt (aka Mr. Russ). He did a presentation on relationships between brothers and sisters titled Siblings - Fair Isn't Always Equal. He will present it next month to the Boutwell Florence Roche PTA and to the SPED PAC in the spring.

P. Fitzgerald announced the Boutwell Early Childhood Assessment Team completed the fall preschool screenings. One of the twelve children brought in was found to be eligible

for SPED. "The Feast", which is a celebration of fall, family and food, will be held on November 22nd and 23rd. K. Lofgren stated "The Feast" is a lot of fun.

K. Lofgren announced the eighth grade trip to Washington, D.C. has been rescheduled to March 20th through March 23rd since the originally scheduled dates fell during Passover week. The first parent meeting to discuss the trip was held on November 10th.

K. Lofgren announced the middle school staff and students celebrated a series of spirit days to raise money for a Louisiana elementary school that was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Final figures will be in after Friday's Hat Day. Under the direction of drama teacher Linda Jones, eighty-six students danced and sang in the production of Annie Jr. It raised \$2,000 for the Paul Solis Elementary School that is recovering from Hurricane Katrina.

K. Lofgren announced middle school teachers continue to participate in professional development workshops that will assist them in implementing their new math program. A new selection of after school activities will begin December 5th and their new activities booklet will be in this week's Friday Folder.

K. Cowie announced the seventh graders will be rolling coins tomorrow during their math time. They have collected many soda bottles filled with coins and are excited to see what the total will be.

C. Barrett announced award winning sportswriter and best selling author Dan Shaughnessy will be at the Black Box Theater on November 29th at 7:00 p.m. Dan is a graduate of Groton High School and will do a Question and Answer about New England sports including What Happened With Theo? This is a fund raiser for the PTYC and donations will be accepted at the door.

C. Barrett announced GDAY has several programs set up for tomorrow's half day. Having friends over is always a great choice and they remind everyone a parent or guardian should be home to supervise. The Llama Lounge at the Groton Library is open to teens in grades six through nine and will be open from noon to 2:30 p.m. Students can also become a member of the Middle School Youth Program at the PTYC. Director Karen Tuomi can be contacted at 448-0398 for more information. The Respect Committee of the GDAY and parent organizations has been working with Catherine Dart to plan the annual Reading Day. A local volunteer reader will visit each elementary classroom on November 30th. The general theme is respect and civility. Funding for book purchases last year was provided by the GDEF.

K. Cover announced Senior Jake Manning is one of eleven semi-finalists across the state in the Wendy's High School Scholar-Athlete Competition. The boys cross country team placed third in the Central MA and will advance to the All-State competition at Franklin Park this Saturday. The girls soccer team advanced to Central MA semi-finals but lost to Marlboro High School in overtime.

K. Cover congratulated the thirty-four juniors and seniors recently inducted into the National Honor Society. Special thanks were given to NHS Advisor Ellen Barkhuff.

K. Cover announced the Sharon Arts Center sponsored a call for artwork to a juried Black & White exhibition. Art teacher Maureen Green-Stevens still life was juried in with a group of thirty-six out of one hundred fifty applicants in this prestigious competition. Kimberly Magid (Most Creative) and Dan Ludlow (Best of Show) were the student award winners from the Dunstable Artisans/GDRSD joint show.

K. Cover announced the drama club will perform the Crucible in the Black Box Theater at 7:00 p.m. on November 18th and 19th and at 4:00 p.m. on November 20th. Next week is Spirit Week, with a different activity planned for each day such as "crazy hair day". They will have a penny drive and will be collecting food and canned goods for Loaves and Fishes.

Principal Dillon announced GD News, taped and edited by the videography class, is on the cable channel at 7:15 p.m.

A. Vervaeke stated school announcements/recognitions are put in the Groton Herald and the Groton Landmark but unlike other schools, they are not in the education page of the Lowell Sun. He asked that a concerted effort be made to have announcements included in that paper. P. Myerson said he does email the Lowell Sun about events taking place at Swallow Union but they still get limited exposure.

K. Cowie announced she attended a training last week on childhood obesity given by the Massachusetts Public Health Association. They are endorsing Massachusetts Bill 4452 that promotes healthier choices in school. It is basically doing everything their own food services are doing. Committee members interested in supporting it can let them know. She stated she supports the Bill.

Dr. Genovese announced there was a representative in Groton inquiring about the School Committee vacancy that will be coming up and wondered whether they could be a joint meeting on December 19th to begin the process. Ms Cowie's resignation is effective December 22nd and the vacancy does not occur until the effective date. He said they will be looking at January and he will put the ad out in a week or so.

On behalf of the Committee, F. O'Connell thanked the Dunstable taxpayers for supporting the \$2.5M debt authorization Town Meeting article two weeks ago.

C. McKinney thanked Mr. O'Connell for representing the Committee.

C. McKinney announced they received an email resignation from the secretary of the Building Committee, effective at the end of the calendar year. Linda McCulley's resignation was accepted.

C. McKinney announced Craig Young, Director of Business and Finance, has submitted his letter of resignation, effective June 30, 2006. He read Mr. Young's letter and

Mr. Young received a standing ovation. C. McKinney noted Mr. Young graciously delayed his retirement to assist with the transition of the new superintendent and appreciates everything he has done.

C. Young said he has had a wonderful experience in the district. He stated one of his proudest moments is being cited in Moody's rating for having a collaborative effort toward town finances. He noted this year has been the most challenging with the Laidlaw lawsuit, the eminent domain lawsuit, wrapping up the building projects and dealing with a new budget process. He stated he appreciates all the support he has received and the great friends he has made. While he will enjoy having some time to himself, he stated he will miss having contact with the many people that bring meaning and value to his life.

A. Vervaeke stated Mr. Young makes casual look dapper, makes the mundane seem exciting and the esoteric as being obvious. He stated Mr. Young has made things easier for the Committee and has always been patient and understanding. Dr. Genovese said he is disappointed not to have the opportunity to work longer with Mr. Young.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Budget & Finance - F. O'Connell reported they met with the Joint Budget and Finance Committee and it was facilitated by Dana from the Dunstable FinCom. They reviewed the tax rate updates, the budget timeline, announced the town representatives who will be participating in that and reviewed how budgets will be presented. The next meeting is December 1st and will be facilitated by Groton town officials. C. Barrett noted this date will need to be changed since Budget and Finance has a presentation that night.

The FinCom met last night and this was the first of the budget review meetings.

C. Young reviewed the School Committee, System-Wide and Central Office budgets. The next meetings will be held on November 28th, November 29th, November 30th and December 1st at 6:30 p.m. in the high school library and department heads and principals will present their budgets.

Building Committee - C. Young reported all the modifications have been made to the high school water and they have been accepted by DEP. They expect to do testing the first part of December and hope they will show very low lead levels. They will submit the results to DEP.

Policy - K. Lofgren reported they will meet at 6:00 p.m. on November 22nd in the high school library. They will discuss the Food Allergy Policy, the Wellness Policy and there will be some discussion about a protocol for replacing the school physician.

Personnel and Negotiations - C. McKinney reported they have completed, and have an agreement on, the superintendent's evaluation instrument.

MINUTES

The approval of the November 2, 2005 business meeting minutes was postponed.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Superintendent Entry Plan

Dr. Genovese stated the purpose of an Entry Plan is to take a look at the activities he will be involved in so he will have a better understanding of the district. He noted this is a data collection mission and from that, he will make some specific observations, findings and recommendations. He will make a report to the Committee in April.

Copies of his 2005-2006 Entry Plan were distributed and Dr. Genovese provided an overview of the Plan. He stated he has all ready been involved with a number of the items listed under Other Entry Activities. He stated many people have been willing to discuss things they would like to see some attention focused on and appreciates the input. P. Fitzgerald said the activity of working with the Boards of Selectmen and FinComs is not shown on the list and he feels Dr. Genovese has been building bridges with the towns. Dr. Genovese said this is embedded in several places, such as improving communications with town officials.

C. McKinney asked that the Entry Plan be put on their website. Any questions members may have can be emailed to Dr. Genovese and C. McKinney asked that they be copied to him.

High School Graduation Date

Dr. Genovese stated this topic came about because last year five students qualified for the state finals and four of the students chose to attend graduation and one chose to attend the finals. He stated this was a tough situation for the students and parents to be in. Principal Dillon has put in a lot of effort to see if the MIAA date can be changed but they do not seem agreeable to changing it. Three options are: Friday, June 2nd at 6:00 p.m.; Saturday, June 3rd at 1:00 p.m. and Saturday, June 3rd at 6:00 p.m.

J. Dillon stated graduation has been held at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday for the twelve years he has been here and for several years prior. Many years ago it was held on Friday night but that changed fifteen to twenty years ago because there were two to three consecutive years of thunderstorms which interrupted the ceremony. A survey given to the seniors indicates Friday night is the date of choice. The survey will be in the December newsletter asking for parent input. He stated they would like a decision by the first of the year.

J. Dillon noted they cannot use the Performing Arts Center when it rains as they have in the past as they will have over two hundred graduating students for the next two years and they cannot fit on the stage. That many students also cannot fit in the gym. With respect to bugs being an issue at night, he stated graduation takes a little over an hour and they should not be a problem.

A. Vervaeke stated the names of the students not present at graduation were not mentioned and asked that in the future, the student's name be mentioned if he/she is not present.

Dr. Genovese feels the date should be the principal's decision although he would like input from students and parents. He asked if members had suggestions for Mr. Dillon on how to get additional information. He stated CONNECT-ED could be used.

K. Lofgren asked if the junior class should be polled as well and J. Dillon said they could survey any number of groups. He noted that changing the date does not have to be etched in stone although it would be nice to begin a tradition so people can make plans. Dr. Genovese said it can be fluid and feels the students and parents should have influence since it is their once in a lifetime event. He noted the goal is to try to avoid having graduation happen when students are put in the situation of having to choose between graduation and a sports final.

C. McKinney asked Mr. Dillon to inform the Committee of the date in January.

N. Roberts thanked the Committee, Dr. Genovese and J. Dillon for taking this topic into consideration. She stated they have tried to get this in the forefront for some time and noted it took an unfortunate event last year to bring it forward.

C. Young suggested the Committee go on record with a formal communication to MIAA and say there is a conflict with the date and ask them to consider an alternative.

A. Vervaeke will see if other districts are experiencing the same problem and would be agreeable to "sign on".

Business Administrator Search

The proposed Business Administrator Selection Process Timeline was reviewed by Dr. Genovese. A Search Committee would be formed in late December/early January, requirement criteria would be established, feedback on expectations would be gathered and interview questions and scoring rubrics would be developed. He stated having good representation from the towns and trying to involve all the constituencies is critical. He feels the new person needs to be certified and has to be able to communicate with the towns. The position would be advertised in February and interviewees would be selected in March. Final interviews would be conducted in April and finalists would visit the district and meet and greet the communities to provide feedback.

Site visits would take place in April and/or May and Dr. Genovese said he would like to go on these and feels Mr. Young should go as well. An appointment could happen in May and there would be a transition period in June/July. He has asked C. Young to put some money in the budget so he can collaborate on the end of year report as well as other special projects such as the audit of the high school project.

Dr. Genovese said only a third of the Business Administrators in the state are certified and will be difficult to find. He feels the district needs someone with experience and suggested they have a sub-committee discuss what the process would look like.

P. Fitzgerald asked if the process could be shortened if, through his networking, Dr. Genovese had a candidate (or a few candidates) that was outstanding and available. Dr. Genovese said they could do this but feels the importance of this position requires community participation. C. Young said he will talk with his professional organization and people he knows about the position. He said the Committee does not want the search to look as though it is "in the bag" with the Business Administrator picking someone. Involvement by other groups is essential. Dr. Genovese stated they can do a candidate an injustice if they get in too quickly and do not go through a process. Finding the best candidate is paramount and the process can be open to flexibility.

P. Fitzgerald asked if it is possible to add a career page for this position to the website since this is currently done. C. McKinney would like a definitive date for the Committee's selection that is prior to the spring elections that occur around May 20th.

While putting the vacancy on the webpage is informational, A. Vervaeke does not feel it will attract a lot of interest and suggested they consider Monster and places where people look for jobs. C. McKinney delegated the Personnel and Negotiations subcommittee, with Dr. Genovese's participation, to propose the makeup of a Search Committee, as well as some requirement criteria, and present it at the December 1st School Committee meeting.

Dr. Rubel asked if there will be a clear job description and Dr. Genovese said yes.

ACTION ITEMS

Possible Vote on Middle School Security System

Dr. Genovese noted Budget and Finance did not have time to discuss this and make a recommendation as a group. C. Young distributed a memo dated November 16, 2005. He stated Budget and Finance has discussed when the building projects might be closed out so they can sell the bonds. The middle school is wrapping up but the security system is still "out there" and discussion was held on whether the value of the project would be appropriate for the gain that they get. The funding comes from the middle school building project (\$75,000) and the annual general budget fund (\$40,000).

Middle School Principal Beth Raucci believes there may be merit in creating a record of events through a camera system to enhance student safety but does not believe vandalism poses a great risk. The buildings have intrusion alarm systems if an after hour break-in should occur. The Budget and Finance Committee is concerned that the expenditure of funds may not be justified considering the location of the school and members of the Building Committee would not be opposed if the Committee chose not to install a system.

C. Young said he believes minimal security benefits will be derived from the system and feels it provides little value in deterrence. He noted the timing of this purchase is at odds with the closing out of the middle school project and the selling of their bonds.

Dr. Genovese stated they had a lot of discussion about it being the right thing to do for the high school and why isn't it the right thing to do at the middle school. He noted the campus location is a key factor and stated they have specific response plans in place for the schools. He is not sure this is a good use of the funds.

A. VERVAEKE MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE DIRECT THE ADMINISTRATION TO PUT THE KIBOSH ON THE SECURITY SYSTEM FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPLEX. SECONDED BY K. COWIE

F. O'Connell said he has not heard a compelling reason to move forward with this at this time but he does not want to send a message that they are not interested in security. He noted the Committee has a future agenda item to discuss school security plans.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLLCALL

Vote on School Committee Goals

C. Barrett stated Mike Gilbert facilitated the Committee's workshop on November 5th. The Committee discussed last year's goals and kept two of them, adding more detail to them, and added two more:

1. Build improved relationships with constituencies and effectiveness as a School Committee: A. Community, B. Municipal Officials, C. Staff, D. School Councils and E. Each Other
2. Create and implement a policy plan that supports district goals
 - A. Review of Policy
 - B. Implement policy priorities
3. To support the goal of improved student achievement and promote integration of technology into the curriculum. (New)
4. To support the new superintendent's transition. (New)

P. FITZGERALD MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S GOALS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 2005-2006. SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Speaking as a community member and as someone who indirectly sometimes gave him a hard time, B. Erickson stated Mr. Young has survived several ups and downs with the financial situations with the schools but is going out on top and with the respect of the communities.

ADJOURNMENT:

A. VERVAEKE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:02 P.M.
SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith, Recording Secretary