

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY
Business Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2005 Approved September 21, 2005

PRESENT:

Ms. Cindy Barrett, Secretary
Ms. Kim Cowie
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. Sue Rubel, Dir of Curriculum

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: Jack Minch, Lowell Sun; Pierre Comtois, Groton Landmark, Jayme Kulesz, Groton Herald, Berta Erickson, Jesse Leib and Peter McManus from CONECT-ED. See attached sign in sheet.

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Meeting was called to back to order at 7:11pm by the chair C. McKinney. He stated that they met in executive session at 6:00pm for the purposes of litigation.

C. McKinney said one week ago the lives of the people on the Gulf Coast, Louisiana, Mississippi, and the Gulf States changed and there is no way for us to imagine what has happened. C. McKinney asked the committee to observe a moment of silence in recognition of the tragedy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

K. Lofgren said that since this is the first school committee meeting of the school year, we are presenting this plant to Dr. Genovese. K. Lofgren said she chose an ivy plant because as educators we are always learning and growing.

A. Genovese said that school has started. It is incredible how the administration team is organized. He is delighted to have the kids back in school, without them the buildings are not the same. He has talked to kids and parents. Kids will come home with stories about school and the kids and the parents can learn together.

A. Genovese recognized the bus drivers and Dee Transportation. They have stepped up to the plate without a lot of time to get ready.

A. Genovese announced that on Sept 19 at 7:45pm [in the first floor meeting room of the Groton Town Hall] the BOS and Groton members of the School Committee will interview candidates for the school committee seat left vacant by Patti Murray.

A. Genovese announced that \$3500 was spent versus the estimated \$12000 to modify the high school water system. We need time to test, don't want to rush, then will phase out bottled water.

A. Genovese announced the Massachusetts School Building Authority contacted C. Young and told him that the district was on the fast track to have MSN and MSS audited as bans come through in November. So the state can give 67% cash for that and we will borrow 33%.

A. Genovese announced that he visited Prescott School on opening day and spent more time there due to the major renovations. Parents and students were there, having a ceremony right in front of the school. He hopes to make that circuit quicker so he can see other ceremonies at the other schools. The contractors will finish caulking the windows after the paving on Main St is done. They will come back in October to do the back.

A. Genovese announced the Town of Groton has given \$30,805 to fund activities to support teachers and students. After we approve it, he would be happy to send a letter of thanks.

A. Genovese announced that he had included the bus contract fuel cost escalation clause in the school committee member packets. The finance subcommittee needs to discuss this; it is something that we need to monitor.

A. Genovese announced that he had a clarification regarding a local newspaper story that said there were 31 new jobs in the district. There were not 31 new jobs; these were vacancies that were filled. There were a total of 41 vacancies. He followed up why there were vacancies and there were a variety of reasons: retirement, moving, starting families, etc. For the 31 vacancies we had over 2000 applicants.

A. Genovese announced he planned on accepting an appointment that he was nominated for in Dunstable on the Capital Planning Committee for Dunstable. He looks forward to planning for the future, especially as it would impact the school and/or the towns.

A. Genovese announced he had met the staff and restraint training was done-it is a requirement, not a response to his speech! Civil rights training was also conducted.

S. Rubel announced that almost 130 teachers were involved in the summer professional development program, for a total of about 1500 hours. Several workshops were held, 1 course, and all content areas and technology were involved.

S. Rubel announced that we have done the restraint training and civil right training a bit differently based on DOE review. Information related to these training sessions will be put on the website.

S. Rubel announced that on August 29 and 30 new teachers participated in new teacher training, they will be assigned mentors, they will participate in a New Teachers Institute. Teachers with less than 3 years of experience will pursue 2 in-service credits and teachers with prior experience will pursue 1 in-service credit (15hours).

S. Rubel announced that preliminary MCAS data and determination of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) has been released and she wanted to bring to our attention that the MS for two consecutive years did not obtain AYP in Math in the Special Education subgroup. A letter will be sent to the MS staff about what we need to do, we will look at the district and school improvement plans. A. Genovese said some districts are moving along nicely, a goal was set for 2012 or 2014 and then divided by the numbers of years left. It is important that we look at each kid as an individual, we have that data. Sue is looking at the trend. K. Cowie asked is it MS Math Special Ed only? S. Rubel replied yes and then explained that the MS stands out because we have the highest number of students and have the most testing, both in 6th and 8th grade. A subgroup must have at least 40 members to present the data for the subgroup. The district did not have AYP for Math and English for this same subgroup. A. Genovese said this creates a lot of opportunities for us to focus on areas to improve.

A. Genovese announced the school enrollment data and referenced a handout. 73 students at Boutwell, 584 at Florence Roche, 224 at Prescott, 333 at Swallow Union, 988 at the MS, 817 at the HS, for a total of 3019. A. Genovese noted the average class sizes on the back of the sheet and said that he wants to get more information from the MS what are the actual numbers and he will ask B. Raucci. A. Genovese said he thought C. Barrett had asked for the enrollment information. C. Barrett said it wasn't her. K. Cowie said let's blame Patti!

C. Young announced that on August 29 he and Steve Byrne did a walk through. The schools were in excellent shape. C. Young found 8 items and all were addressed. C. Young said our hat goes off to the maintenance and custodial staff. Each year we have had a maintenance project: this year was Prescott, prior to that was MSN, the HS, the portable classrooms for Flo Ro and MS S, in 2001 it was MS S. We have had an unrelenting crush to get the schools ready and these big project demands are abnormal. See the School Walk Through memo dated September 1, 2005.

C. Young announced that there was a bus accident this morning with bus #23 from Florence Roche. No one was injured. L. Zimmaro sent a memo home with the children. C. Young read the memo out loud. C. Young said that all students arrived to school safely and he is very pleased how the bus company responded.

K. Lofgren announced that the SpedPAC will meet Friday September 9 10am-12 to elect PAC officers as they did not have a quorum to elect at the June meeting. On Tuesday

September 13 from 7-9pm at the HS library the first lecture in the lecture series will be held on Executive Functioning, by speech and language specialist Sara Ward. A. Vervaeke asked if they are electing officers that they should have it in the evening as more people could attend.

K. Lofgren announced that the policy subcommittee has changed the date of their next meeting to September 16 at 7pm at Tarbell.

C. McKinney announced that the MASS/MASC joint conference will be October 26, 27, 28. On the afternoon of 10/26 MASC has an official meeting and we must send a delegate. This will be an action item tonight.

REPORTS FROM SUBCOMMITTEES

Budget and Finance-F. O'Connell said that the next meeting will be 09/22 at 6pm at Tarbell.

Policy- K. Lofgren said the next meeting will be 09/16 at 7pm at Tarbell.

Building-C. Young said the next meeting will be Tuesday 09/13 at 6:30pm at MSN. C. Young said that we have received a report from the general contractor for Prescott. C. Young also said that we received the official approval from DEP for the water system modification at the HS. Some equipment has been ordered and received. Within 2 weeks we will have it installed and will start treating the water. We will move forward slowly. A. Vervaeke asked for clarification about the lead. C. Young said there is no lead in the water, there is dissolved carbon dioxide in the water that reacts with the brass fittings, and then lead leeches out of the brass.

Naming-K. Cowie said that the naming committee had met. B. Raucci was going to attend tonight but couldn't at the last minute. The naming committee wants to ask the school committee for their support/comments regarding the naming committee intentions:

1. To insure that all ideas for naming have been considered
2. To increase involvement within the community
3. To increase school involvement, especially at the MS
4. To have two open meetings at the MS in the fall, one in the morning and one in the evening.
5. The MS will offer as an after school activity where students will research for 8 weeks then write articles, appear on Around Town. The after school activity will come out in the fall MS booklet.

The next subcommittee meeting will be held Thursday 09/29 at 9:30am at MSN location TBD.

A. Genovese asked if new nominations are going to be considered? K. Cowie replied that we aren't actively soliciting but we will entertain any ideas. K. Cowie said you don't have to send a letter, just show up at an open meeting. A. Vervaeke asked if the original submissions will be shared? K. Cowie said that she had asked J. Endicott to attach them, we will get them. K. Cowie said she wants the open meetings to be well advertised, help with transportation. C. McKinney suggested having a meeting at the Senior Centers. C.

Barrett asked if the naming committee wanted input tonight? K. Cowie replied no. A. Genovese said that it will be an agenda item on 09/21 and we will share our ideas then. Then on 09/29 you can present the agreed plan to the subcommittee.

C. McKinney noted that there are vacancies on subcommittees with P. Murray's resignation; don't assume all of the positions will go to the new person. The Chair is also considering the communication subcommittee.

MINUTES

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF WORKSHOP AUGUST 17, 2005 AND AUGUST 24, 2005.

SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN.

In favor: C. Barrett, K. Cowie, K. Lofgren, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, A. Vervaeke.

Approved 6:0:0

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 17, 2005 AND AUGUST 24, 2005.

SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN.

In favor: C. Barrett, K. Cowie, K. Lofgren, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, A. Vervaeke.

Approved 6:0:0

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Berta Erickson of Groton said she had done a small poll of friends and community members; the majority are basically against the appeal for the Casella property eminent domain case. To quote an old timer, "The man should get what the land is worth." It is old, it is done. If we have to drag it out for 2yrs or 4yrs, it takes a lot of time and resources. This is the general view of the people in the community. This will loosen up school committee time and energies to put towards education and kids.

Berta Erickson also noted that the educational and historical play Keeping Time will be presented on 09/22 and 09/23 at the MS PAC.

C. McKinney thanked Berta Erickson very much for taking the time out this evening to tell us your opinion.

A. Vervaeke said last year when the tsunami hit, all of our schools got together to help.

A. Vervaeke is hearing the kids talking about trying to help the victims of Katrina and that would be great.

A. Vervaeke said August 31 was the first day for teachers and he attended the first day. There was lots of nervous excitement. He said A. Genovese took the Mike Donahue approach with the microphone in the audience and he shared a very personal story about his father. Thanks for sharing something so personal. A. Vervaeke said he has kids in three schools this year and said this is the start of the Genovese Era.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

A. Genovese said in reference to what C. Young said about the minor bus accident, if we had had CONNECT-ED in place within minutes each parent would have received a message from the principal. We are looking at ways to improve communication. CONNECT-ED will provide lots of opportunities to communicate with lots of subgroups; it is a proactive way to communicate.

Jesse Leib from CONNECT-ED made a presentation. He said this idea started with an accident and a backpack memo that was 5 days late. A focus group of 100 superintendents was asked if money and technology were not an issue, how would you like to communicate. They answered by telephone and it must work with their student information system. But money and technology are an issue. CONNECT-ED is web based. No new computers, no new phones, no software downloads are required.

A. Genovese said there is a correction to make from a local newspaper story-there is a cost per pupil but no new equipment is needed.

J. Leib said there are 3 components: attendance, emergency, community outreach.

Attendance takes so much time, when calls had to be made one at a time, it wasn't getting done fast enough to make an absent a tardy. You can create a generic message once. There is no human intervention, CONNECT-ED gets unexcused absents from the database. It can even do period-by-period attendance at the MS or HS.

For emergencies you cannot control the press or the stories that you hear. Up to 6 telephone numbers per pupil ring simultaneously. Get one clear, consistent message out to parents with your voice, your inflection. For example, in Marshfield there was a bomb threat. 3000 parents were contacted in 3 minutes. Parents tried to call their kids on their cell phones but the kids were in lock down and did not even know. Diane Sawyer did a story on CONNECT-ED.

Community outreach calls are by far the most utilized in the country. For example, the day before MCAS testing you send a message reminding the parents to make sure the kids get a good nights sleep and eat a good breakfast. Another example from the nurse-7th graders need the following immunizations. Another example is Saturday wakeup call for HS detention.

J. Leib said they are seeing a tremendous shift in paradigm, parents want to be involved but they blame the school for not communicating to them. The calls are date and time stamped and whether the call was answered live or by voicemail is recorded, so parents can't claim that they did not know. For example, you could send out a call for MS tutoring for AYP at the end of the call list report would be the numbers answered live, number voicemail, number busy, number disconnected. 4500 schools and districts nationwide use CONNECT-ED. You just need an Internet connection and one phone or cell phone.

A. Vervaeke asked how does our student info get into your web-based program? J. Leib said that they upload directly and it is a secure site. Can set up an agent or a script that runs every night and pulls up any updated information and sends it to CONNECT-ED. Attendance gets sent the same way each day.

A. Vervaeke asked about system security, have you worked with our SIMS package? J. Leib said yes, you use iPASS. Barbara Morgan-White has been making calls and asking other schools if they like CONNECT-ED.

A. Vervaeke said there is no law that says we have to notify parents about absents and we would have to vote to do so. CONNECT-ED is a better way to notify parents.

K. Cowie said this is more effective than fliers. J. Leib said based on his estimate schools spend between \$9-15 per pupil per year on paper for fliers. He does not see districts doing away with fliers; it builds redundancy in communication. K. Cowie said it is greener, less paper to recycle.

K. Cowie asked who has access? Is it decided by the superintendent? We don't want students sending messages. J. Leib said he has best practices and effective use policies that he can give us. Usually the superintendent, assistant superintendent, support staff at central office. At the building level the principal, assistant principal, and secretary. You need a username and password. Suggest you change your password every 3 months. They have never had it happen where an unauthorized person sent a message.

K. Cowie asked about the 6 phone numbers per pupil. J. Leib said that the parents designate what numbers for what type of call. For example, an attendance number for the attendance call, the community outreach goes to the primary number, emergency calls go to all numbers. If there was an emergency, everyone would rather receive it on all lines. J. Leib said it becomes our decision what numbers to send out to. K. Cowie gave an example of a parent phone tree when school needed to be dismissed early because of a snowstorm. J. Leib said if it gets a busy signal or a fax modem line, it will retry 5 times over the next 90 minutes.

A. Vervaeke asked if you could get RSVP or surveys. J. Leib said the system has email and single survey capability. Can only survey to the primary number. A survey can ask one question with up to 5 answers. He gave several examples and said it has unlimited use. He said email holds up to 2 email addresses and options to hear email message or read text of message.

C. McKinney asked for the community outreach calls is it possible to get outside of the school? J. Leib said that they do not market outside of grades K-12; you might get the 6 numbers and get some grandparents in that group, for example. K. Lofgren asked if preK was included. J. Leib said yes.

A. Vervaeke asked do we have an age out when they graduate? J. Leib said you cannot contact alumni due to telemarketing laws. We help you upload new data every year.

F. O'Connell asked if the 350 employees would also be included. J. Leib described the fee of \$3.60 per pupil x the number of students enrolled plus \$1000 for startup, plus \$100 per each school does include all employees, BOS, fire, police. The cost is less subsequent years because you don't pay the start up fee.

A. Genovese said J. Leib made a presentation to the staff. The staff also wants policies in place. We don't want to be like telemarketers. A parent told A. Genovese that CONNECT-ED is really catering to the parents and that is really nice.

A. Vervaeke said if you look at the individual administrators, they all have their own ideas on communication; this gives us a chance to have a district policy on communication.

J. Leib showed examples of the web page on the big screen. There is role based security- for example; the building principal only sees their own staff. It does not translate English to a Foreign Language but you can record a message in a foreign language. You can create messages ahead of time and program when to send. You can record message, select contacts, program time sent, and confirm. You will not get 3 of the same calls if you have 3 children at the different schools, it is unique deliveries, and duplicated numbers are eliminated.

J. Leib explained that the cost of \$3.60/student includes a sponsor only on the community outreach calls. For example "...this message is brought to you by our partner in education xxx." It is J. Leib's job to find a national sponsor for you. He would find a sponsor that is not a conflict for us. He suggests a 3-year term with a sponsor; notify any change 30 days prior to any new term. The cost without a sponsor is \$5 per student. A. Genovese suggested a local sponsor or maybe to give recognition outside of the system, like in a newsletter. C. McKinney pointed out the policy about use of advertisements connected with use of school. We will need to revisit that policy (section K). A. Vervaeke thinks it would be worth not having a sponsor. J. Leib said that they would only use nationally recognized, blue chip companies. For example, Philip Morris and Budweiser would not be used. J. Leib said that he does not have any sponsors right now; he thinks he will have some in one year.

C. McKinney asked about the timeline. A. Genovese said he would like to institute this year. C. McKinney asked the policy subcommittee if they could review the policy mentioned above. K. Lofgren and K. Cowie said that their agenda was already full for the next meeting; it would be put on the agenda for the following meeting. A. Vervaeke suggested that we review all of our policies related to this. A. Genovese said we need training, need to review sample policies, thinks this would be a separate policy, more narrow than our existing policy.

A. Vervaeke said he thinks it would be cost effective, timely, historically we have not communicated in a timely manner. A. Genovese said it is a common theme he hears, if there is a way to improve communication. A. Genovese does not think that we will save

money on paper yet. K. Cowie asked about the numbers for cost estimates. A. Genovese will ask J. Leib to do those numbers.

J. Leib said that the training takes 90 minutes. 75% of their clients pay for CONNECTED from their operational budget. 25% pay for it from other sources. He could share grant info, etc with us. A. Genovese said the hold up would be on our end; we need to be sure our data is entered into iPASS correctly. J. Leib said use the report at the end of a call to identify the bad numbers, and then correct. In general there are 15-20% bad numbers on the first call, on the 2nd call only 5% bad numbers. A. Vervaeke asked for some more technical information, J. Leib will send it to him.

ACTION ITEMS

C. McKinney mentioned that earlier the school committee was in executive session to discuss litigation.

K. LOFGREN SAID I MOVE THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE HIRE AND RETAIN THE SERVICES OF HINCKLEY, ALLEN, SNYDER ATTORNEYS AT LAW, AS AN ADDITIONAL LEGAL RESOURCE FOR THE CASELLA EMIENT DOMAIN APPEAL.

SECONDED BY A. VERVAEKE.

SO VOTED BY ROLLCALL: C. Barrett, yes; K. Cowie, yes; K. Lofgren, yes; C. McKinney, ABSTAIN; F. O'Connell, yes; A. Vervaeke, yes.

MOTION passes 5:0:1.

A memo dated August 13, 2005 from the Karen Tuomi for the Town of Groton Lecture Fund was distributed.

A. VERVAEKE MOVED THAT THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCEPT THE GRANTS FROM THE TOWN OF GROTON IN THE AMOUNT OF \$30,805 FOR FY06.

SECONDED BY K. COWIE.

SO VOTED BY ROLLCALL: C. Barrett, yes; K. Cowie, yes; K. Lofgren, yes; C. McKinney, yes; F. O'Connell, yes; A. Vervaeke, yes.

MOTION passes 6:0:0.

C. McKinney thanked all of the administrators who did the paperwork for these grants.

C. McKinney said the MASS/MASC conference is coming up and C. Barrett, K. Cowie, A. Genovese, K. Lofgren, C. McKinney, and A. Vervaeke will be in attendance. C.

McKinney said there are 10-21 resolutions that are brought forth for policy for this body. We usually spend time reviewing resolutions and instructing our delegate how to vote.

Resolutions sometimes get amended on the floor so we give our delegate leeway. C.

McKinney asked if anyone wanted to be the delegate? A. Vervaeke raised his hand.

C. BARRETT MADE A MOTION TO DESIGNATE ALAN VERVAEKE AS OUR DELEGATE.

SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN.

SO VOTED IN FAVOUR: C. Barrett; K. Cowie; K. Lofgren; C. McKinney; F. O'Connell; A. Vervaeke.

MOTION passes 6:0:0.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A.VERVAEKE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT APPROXIMATELY
9: 30 PM.

SECONDED BY K. COWIE.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Barrett, School Committee Secretary