

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2008
(Approved February 6, 2008)

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Chair
Dr. Forrest Buzan, Vice-Chair (Arrived 7:18 p.m.)
Peter Carson
Ms Berta Erickson (Arrived 7:33 p.m.)
Dr. Paul Funch
Mr. Chuck McKinney (Arrived 7:07 p.m.)
Mr. Frank O'Connell

ADMINISTRATION:

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

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; J. Boroshok, M. Sparks

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the chair, C. Barrett.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

C. Barrett read a thank you note from Joan Campbell.

Dr. Rubel announced Kathy McCarthy has been invited to participate in the state's performance standards project and part of the writing that will be assessed will be from Groton Dunstable students.

MINUTES

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 2, 2008.
SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Ski Team Field Trip - Melissa Sparks

Coach Sparks reviewed the information on the ski team field trip to Sugarbush and stated this trip will give the JV boys and girls team the opportunity to ski a larger course than Nashoba. They would leave around 2:30 p.m. on January 25th and leave Sugarbush around 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. They will stay at an inn with two students per room and the girls will be on one floor, the boys on another and the chaperones will be interspersed. The field trip is covered by the district's insurance policy and Policy IJOA applies.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO MOVE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE APPROVAL OF THE SKI TEAM FIELD TRIP. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE SKI TEAM TRIP AS OUTLINED IN

THEIR PACKET. SECONDED BY P. CARSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Communications Research Team Survey - C. Barrett, B. Erickson, J. Boroshok

C. Barrett distributed the results of the communications survey. J. Boroshok stated the school committee and the district strive to communicate in a clear and effective manner as possible. Since March of 2007, the Communications Committee has been given the mission of evaluating and improving the tools and methods currently used by the school committee and the district. He presented the results of the October survey and stated 410 were returned. He noted people prefer to receive information from the website, newspapers and school newsletters and although not options, ConnectEd and emails were often mentioned. Now that they know what the community wants to see and hear, J. Boroshok said they have more work to do to see what they can do to meet those needs.

In terms of the website, Dr. Genovese said the EQA officials were impressed with the accessibility of the many documents. C. Beckett-Long asked for an explanation of ConnectEd and was advised this is a system that has phone numbers programmed into it and is used to send a recorded message such as school being cancelled due to snow. It is also used to inform staff. About 2000 calls go out within seven minutes.

F. O'Connell clarified that Dunstable residents can see the televised school committee meetings if they have Charter.

J. Boroshok said the team will digest the data, ask some more questions amongst themselves and come up with some recommendations.

Mid-year Superintendent Self-Assessment

Dr. Genovese presented his goals on October 17th and his annual evaluation will be in May.

Goal 1: Raise the level of achievement for all students - Dr. Genovese provided a written compilation of things happening at various levels to improve student achievement and stated the classroom teachers are driving this goal by implementing the curriculum and doing assessment. This goal is in progress, on target and will require unified continued effort.

P. Carson asked Dr. Genovese what he is doing to support the effort to improve over last year. Dr. Genovese said his role is working with Ms Huston and Dr. Rubel and to lead discussions at AC meetings. They are the support system for the principals. P. Carson asked what parts of the budget supports this goal and if it is adequate. Dr. Genovese said he would like to see more resources to improve this effort but they are working with what they have.

Dr. Funch asked if this goal was adjusted due to inadequate resources. Dr. Genovese said the goal was not lowered and people are putting their efforts into achieving the target. Dr. Rubel said they focused on ELA and math and did not necessarily consider the sciences and social studies where they have less capacity. Dr. Funch asked Dr. Genovese how he sees himself improving in this process. Dr. Genovese said he provides the same leadership in the same role as he has in the last 13 years as a superintendent. He provides leadership, the vision and the direction and stated he has a strong administrative team that is committed to excellence.

F. O'Connell said he would like to see other benchmarks that indicate achievement and other things that need to get done. Dr. Rubel said she can share SAT data, graduation rates and local assessments.

Goal 2: Prepare for EQA and prioritize findings - The team was successful in completing the preparation and the review phase. They will receive the technical report at the end of February and this will underpin the strategic plan. This process was used to tie together Goal 4. The findings will be presented to the school committee on February 6th. This goal is in progress and on target.

Goal 3: Revisit and revise Strategic Plan - Because competing demands on time have prevented

Dr. Genovese from formally beginning this process with the Administrative Council, this goal is in progress and behind target.

Goal 4: Integrate the new Administrative Council members into a successful high performing team

The EQA was an excellent example of the team uniting their skills and talents to accomplish a goal and get results and developing a strategic plan will be another unifying experience. This goal is on target, in progress and ongoing.

Dr. Genovese noted there are lots of other things happening in the district and their efforts are not limited to these four goals.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - F. Buzan reported they met last week and he distributed the minutes from their December 18th meeting. P. Carson is doing another draft of the advertising policy, incorporating comments received from committee members. The policy sub-committee would like to present the policies on the website in a user-friendly way. They will be reviewing sections E & F at their February 12th meeting which will be at 6:30 p.m. in room 219.

C. Barrett said the review of Section D in the minutes lets them know what policies will and will not require change and asked if they have the same detail from the other reviewed sections. F. Buzan said he has a table that needs to be filled out but they did not have this method in place for Section A.

Personnel & Negotiations - C. McKinney reported no meeting has been scheduled. Unit A negotiations begin tomorrow.

Budget & Finance - Dr. Funch reported their regular meeting is at 6:30 p.m. on January 22nd at Tarbell. February 12th will be the first joint meeting with the towns. (It was noted this is the same night as the Policy sub-committee meeting).

Report of Director of Business & Finance - Union Building Update

T. Sheehan reported the contractor has completed 99% of the work and some small details on the roof have been deferred until the weather improves. They are very pleased with the work that was done and they met the objective of getting the work completed prior to the onset of winter.

PTYC - They have closed out the renovation project for the new roof at the PTYC. The final step was to fill out an evaluation of the contractor's performance to send into the Division of Capital Asset Management. They gave Rockwell Roofing of Fitchburg a stellar rating.

Other: They are working on the second quarter financial report for FY08. There are a number of initiatives underway they hope will result in savings for FY08 and will carry forward into FY09. Energy conservation is one of them and it appears they saved \$20,000 to \$25,000 in electricity costs with the decision to close the buildings on Fridays for eight weeks during the summer and by closing the buildings, with the exception of the high school, by 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. They are trying to realign their photocopier leases for a significant cost savings, only a couple of freezers were used during the summer, and they are trying to do the same work more efficiently such as using QuickBooks at the high school for the athletic program and student activity account. They will continue to look at efficient ways to provide services to the students.

Report of the Chair - MASC Speaker "Communications & Public Relations" -

Members can register on line to attend this free seminar on January 31st in Haverhill. C. Barrett reported "The GIC - Is It Right For Your District ?" will be held on February 9th as well as MASC's standard Charting the Course training for school committee members.

C. Barrett distributed copies of the committee's annual goals and members reviewed how they are doing.

Goal 1: Create and implement a policy that includes a) review of policy and b) implementation of policy priorities - Members agreed the policy sub-committee is doing a wonderful job and making progress.

Goal 2: Develop a communication plan that includes definition of roles and expectations of all constituencies - The communications research survey results will tie in to help develop a communication plan that will work.

Goal 3: To effectively communicate to all constituencies a) what is the value/cost of a public education in our district and what does it include b) comparative analyses to other similar districts c) GDRSD FY09 budget - As this is their Budget and Finance sub-committee goal, members can speak with Dr. Funch to volunteer their services to help gather information. Members agreed this goal is in progress.

Report of the Superintendent -

Donation of fixtures and materials for PTYC

Dr. Genovese reported Mitchell Electric, Inc., a local contractor, was the low bid at \$12,400 for the installation of lighting fixtures and electrical wiring of the new middle school room at the PTYC and Mr. Mitchell would like to donate \$8000 of this amount in lighting fixtures and materials for the project. The \$4,400 balance will be paid out of the PTYC Revolving Fund. Dr. Genovese noted this is a very generous and welcomed gift and highly recommends the committee accept the donation.

Donation from Squannacock River Runners

The Squannacock River Runners would like to donate \$1000 to the Groton Dunstable Regional High School athletic program to be used for field and track equipment. He recommends acceptance of this donation and stated people are supporting the district in a number of ways.

Dr. Genovese distributed a draft of the 2008-2009 school year calendar. The teachers will vote by February 15th.

Dr. Genovese distributed an article on Governor Patrick's plan to create a Secretary of Education.

Facilities Task Force - P. Carson reported they will meet tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. to walk through the middle school.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

P. Carson said a lot of volunteers have worked very hard to come up with funding to try to bring a football program to Groton but he is concerned with the way they are going about it. He had requested a public forum be held to review the long-term costs to the district. He is disappointed that decisions have all ready been made when they are looking at inadequate class sizes and inadequate levels of guidance counselors. He said he would not be worried about this if they had a forum and all agreed there would be no long-term impact but the public is worried. He wishes they had been more open before binding decisions were made and is upset about this. He would love to be behind the program but said he does not know the long-term plan and how it may affect the budget. B. Erickson said she shared his concerns but is more at ease with the direction it is going. Dr. Funch thought he had been clear about wanting discussion of the whole plan and stated the process was not as public as it needs to be and objects to the way it has been brought forward.

With respect to Dr. Funch and P. Carson, C. McKinney feels the public has spoken on the issue by saying they will pay for football if the kids can play. He said the committee created uncertainty about where they were going to put this and the community went forward and put together a program and the athletic director stepped up so the kids will be playing football without impacting the budget. He said the suggestion that this was "buried" is inaccurate; this was forced upon them due to the circumstances of the Ayer football program and

they responded appropriately.

Dr. Genovese said the high school principal, the Ayer high school principal and the athletic directors had a conversation and this has been on a burner of some kind for many years. A group is making a three year commitment to provide an opportunity for the students to have this program in the district and he has confidence the athletic director will make sure the fundraising is there and things come together properly. Mr. Twomey has assured Dr. Genovese that this will be funded outside of the budget. After three years, they would have the data to see what the program costs.

If there is a major change in the curriculum, F. Buzan said the school committee is suppose to vote on it and while this may not apply to extracurricular activities, he feels this is major enough that they should expect a full review and be able to weigh in on the decision process. He said football shaded last year's budget discussion and he hopes they will take this head on instead of doing it by a back door method.

C. Barrett pointed out that Dr. Genovese's cover letter is to provide members with information and stated they do not have all the information about the program to make decisions.

It was agreed the athletic director is responsible for running the athletic program and providing opportunities for the students but some members feel there are future budget implications and the facts need to be presented.

F. O'Connell feels it is wonderful to have a group willing to provide this program at no cost to the district and wants to hear more about it and not have a cloud hanging over it.

It was agreed Mr. Twomey will be asked to provide a review of the plan at the February 6th meeting. F. Buzan understands all donations must be accepted by the committee. Dr. Genovese agrees the committee would vote to accept it and if they are leaning toward not supporting this, he wants to know pretty quickly.

Dr. Funch said several people have expressed concern about bathrooms being locked down at the high school and students losing various privileges due to the actions of a few and parents are confused about what is going on. Dr. Genovese said the principal, staff and students have concerns with violations of the student handbook that are occurring in the cafeteria and restrooms (graffiti, smoking and disrespect for the building).

The principal has met with all the students and is asking for their assistance and support in helping to reverse that behavior. The decision was made to close off a number of restrooms, keeping those that could be readily monitored available, and while an inconvenience, it is not a punishment. A letter asking for parents' support is going out and she is trying to gather information in a methodical way to put together a plan to resolve this.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: Accept Donation of Fixtures and Materials for PTYC

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE DONATION OF \$8000 IN LIGHTING FIXTURES AND MATERIALS FROM MITCHELL ELECTRIC FOR THE PTYC.

SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Accept Donation Squannacook River Runners

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE \$1000 DONATION FROM THE SQUANNACOOK RIVER RUNNERS. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

VOTE: Ski Team Field Trip

See earlier vote

ADJOURNMENT

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F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:50 P.M. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment