

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Black Box Theater
Business Meeting Minutes
January 2, 2008
(Approved January 16, 2008)

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Chair
Dr. Forrest Buzan, Vice-Chair
Peter Carson
Ms Berta Erickson
Dr. Paul Funch
Mr. Chuck McKinney
Mr. Frank O'Connell

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark;
B. MacDonald, K. Barrett, R. Barrett, J. Barrett

CALL TO ORDER:

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT

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

Dr. Genovese recognized Dan Twomey for completing the Certified Athletic Administrator program.

Dr. Genovese announced the district published its newsletter and it is going to be available in the local stores, restaurants and real estate offices. It is also on line.

Dr. Genovese recognized Principal Steve Silverman for the various activities he and his staff have been doing to welcome parents and to involve and recognize people in the school.

Dr. Genovese announced he received a retirement letter late today from Florence Roche third grade teacher Joellen Sheehan. She has been with the district for 30+ years and will be retiring on January 20th.

Spotlight - MASS Certificate of Academic Excellence

Each year, superintendent's in the Commonwealth are given the opportunity to recognize a student and present the Superintendent's Award. The award is looking for a student who is in the top of their class, has taken challenging courses and has been involved with extracurricular activities and the community.

Dr. Genovese introduced this year's recipient of the MASS Certificate of Academic Excellence, Ryan Barrett. He highlighted Ryan's many accomplishments, which include ranking in the top three of his class since freshmen year, challenging himself with advanced placement classes and being involved with student council, basketball and soccer. Dr. Genovese presented a certificate to Ryan and a banquet will be held later this month to honor all the recipients.

MINUTES

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2007.

SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2007. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

In Favor: F. O'Connell, F. Buzan, C. Barrett, P. Carson, P. Funch, B. Erickson

Abstention: C. McKinney

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

B. Erickson said she has been approached by community members asking if the district is looking at innovative ideas to help solve the budget problems. She noted the recent newsletter explained initiatives that have been implemented and others that are underway but feels these should be reiterated as often as possible to help sell a potential override. She would like to have a discussion at the next meeting on other ideas people may have and stated they need to educate the public. C. Barrett said one of the Committee's goals is related to the communication of the budget and they will be reviewing the progress they are making on their goals at the next meeting.

Dr. Genovese advised the AC will be having their first real discussion on the budget on Tuesday and members can e-mail any FY09 ideas to him to share at the meeting. He noted they have a clear policy in the manual that says financial limitations should be considered but should not be the end result in the school committee putting together a budget that meets the needs of the students. He noted they lost staff to other districts due to hours being cut or the uncertainty of their positions and said that story is not going to get told. The EQA report will likely talk about concerns they have and accreditation is on the horizon. B. Erickson said they have to get the message out that they are doing the very best they can.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Facilities Task Force III Short-term Recommendations - Bill MacDonald

B. MacDonald reported they have broken down into sub-committees and each will present their findings to the school committee in the near future. The demographic study and enrollment projections are expected to be ready in a month or two. They are reviewing all of the facilities and have two more to go through. There will be a separate report on the Prescott School because of the unique issues. He stated Mr. Byrne has a good short-term plan regarding all the facilities' issues. They hope to present their short-term and long-term recommendations in the spring.

Dr. Genovese asked if there will be a report on each facility like the one on Prescott and B. MacDonald said there will be a report that encompasses the rest of the facilities. Dr. Genovese suggested their final document include Prescott with all the other facilities.

Advertising Policy - Forrest Buzan

F. Buzan said the Policy Sub-committee has been working on a new Advertising Policy for at least two years. The original policy was suspended at that time due to differences between the policy and the district's practices in some areas. Members received a copy of a draft of Advertising Policy Guidelines that represents the consensus of the sub-committee members. He stated they are concerned with many issues related to advertising and how they could affect the district.

C. McKinney asked if the policy would currently approve of everything that is going on in the schools.

B. Erickson said there is no advertising, per se, in the schools although they do have ads in the playbills etc.

C. McKinney asked if there are things they are trying to include and exclude and P. Carson said they are trying to see if they have the right concepts and goals to move forward with a policy. He acknowledged the "devil is in the details" and until they come up with a philosophical basis of what is acceptable, they do not feel they are making progress. If there is that much nuance, C. McKinney feels the people that run the district need to be given direct control over those decisions, with occasional oversight by the committee.

Dr. Funch agrees the draft is very vague and would be hard to implement but feels the sub-committee is going in the right direction. He suggested they make a general policy that they do not want paid advertising that is solely to promote a company name. F. O'Connell agrees there is no need to sell advertising space or air time for products but feels they should aggressively look at any opportunity for a business to become a corporate sponsor of equipment or an event. B. Erickson said advertising is a controversial subject and feels they need to have strong parameters around what should and should not be allowed.

F. Buzan highlighted items the sub-committee discussed that "fell below the line, above the line and on the line" with respect to what they felt would and would not be acceptable advertising. They agreed looser requirements would be okay outside the academic environment (ie: the playing fields). While none of them has an issue with participation in the Labels for Education program, some do have a problem with a giant Campbell's soup can in the lobby advertising the company.

C. Barrett said the original policy was suspended because it says "no advertising of commercial products or services will be permitted in the school building, on assignment books or on school grounds or property". She suggested this be revised and the sub-committee review what was wrong with the original policy. She feels it was a good policy, it just needed to provide some leeway. Members had received copies of other policies that need to correlate with a revised advertising policy.

B. Erickson said a company should advertise the school since it is the school's job to teach, not advertise and she does not feel they should succumb to corporations. C. McKinney feels they should support the local businesses that support the schools. She asked if the school committee would consider categorizing an area of the district (ie: athletics) that could be privatized. C. Barrett pointed out the district would lose control of the program with privatization.

It was the consensus of the committee that the draft is headed in the right direction and it would be a good exhibit to a policy.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - F. Buzan reported they will be meeting next Tuesday to review Section E. They reviewed Section D at last month's meeting and they have referred some questions to Dr. Genovese. Dr. Genovese gave copies of several suggested policies he received at the MASS/MASC conference to the sub-committee members.

Personnel & Negotiations - C. McKinney reported they have not scheduled a meeting.

Budget and Finance - Dr. Funch reviewed the proposed FY09 budget timeline and the Committee will have an initial review at their February 6th meeting. Budget meetings with town officials will begin on February 12th. A budget public hearing will be held on February 26th. Dr. Genovese distributed a copy of a letter that has been sent to the Boards of Selectmen and FinComs.

Report of the Director of Business and Finance - T. Sheehan acknowledged Steve Byrne and his staff for the outstanding job they did with all the snow removal.

T. Sheehan reported they are working very hard to make sure they have actual salary costs as they prepare the FY09 budget. Once completed, they will do the same thing with expenses. They are also working on initiatives such as restructuring photocopier contracts and the renewal of the bus contract to save money for the district.

Work on the Union Building is essentially complete and T. Sheehan reported Mr. Byrne is pleased with the quality of the work. A final report should be available at the next meeting.

T. Sheehan reported they continue to monitor the air quality at Prescott and are concentrating on areas known for high readings. They will also be doing some sampling of air quality in other buildings.

Report of the Chair - C. Barrett reminded members of their Unit A negotiation workshop at Tarbell on January

10th to discuss union negotiation strategies. Members received a copy of the Unit A contract in their packets. Unit A negotiations will adjourn to executive session on January 17th and January 24th at 4:00 p.m. in the high school library.

C. Barrett reported the Communications Research Team will present their results at the next school committee meeting.

Report of the Superintendent - Anonymous Donation - Boutwell Playground - Dr. Genovese asked the committee to accept an anonymous donation in the amount of \$2000 to be used for playground equipment for Boutwell.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

F. Buzan announced that for personal reasons, he will not be seeking re-election. Anyone interested in discussing the position may contact him.

Dr. Genovese stated parents' concerns regarding the snowstorm were heard. The decision was made at 4:45 a.m. and the weather forecast did not predict the storm they received.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: To Accept Anonymous Donation - Boutwell Playground

B. ERICKSON MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE ANONYMOUS DONATION OF \$2000 FOR THE BOUTWELL PLAYGROUND. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

ADJOURNMENT

F. BUZAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:55 P.M. SECONDED BY P. CARSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment