

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2008
(Approved April 2, 2008)

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett, Chair
Dr. Forrest Buzan, Vice-Chair (Arrived at 7:30 p.m.)
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
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Kayleigh O'Brien (Left at 9:15 p.m.)
Rafael Glod (Left at 9:25 p.m.)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; N. Rockwell, Students involved with the Penny Project, D. Twomey, S. Silverman, M. Moisson, J. Moisson, K. Cook, K. McCarthy, G. Babin, L. Lefebvre

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 23B-3. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:03 p.m., with no plans to return to executive session, and was called to order by the chair, C. Barrett.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prepared announcements were read and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Dr. Genovese thanked Principal Silverman for being one of the feature speakers at GDEF's Reach for the Stars event. Dr. Rubel thanked GDEF for a lovely night and stated the stars decorated by the students were beautiful.

MINUTES

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2008 AND MARCH 6, 2008, AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Dr. Funch asked that it be clarified that Ms Lathrop was referring to the EQA report when she made her comment on February 27th regarding not hearing anything about the lack of sports opportunities when they heard about the lack of AP courses.

Approval of the executive session meeting minutes of February 6, 2008, February 27, 2008 and March 5, 2008 was postponed.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Dr. Funch pointed out the article in Sunday's Lowell Sun comparing administrative per pupil costs in various

districts, transposed Greater Lowell Tech's numbers with Groton Dunstable's and this was misleading. He stated Groton Dunstable's administrative per pupil costs are at the state average and not out of line as they appear in the table. A correction was made in Tuesday's paper.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Million Penny Project

Principal Silverman gave kudos to Ms Rockwell, the students and parents who made the Million Penny Project a reality. He has received letters from the Fire Chief and the Police Chief, and is expecting a letter from the Building Inspector, approving the placement of the proposed display container.

Niki Rockwell said the Penny Project has been based in authentic learning and the students have learned necessary skills that will allow them to achieve a goal. In 2005-2006, several 8th grade homerooms began to gather 1,000,000 pennies to commemorate the lives of 1.5 million Jewish children murdered in concentration camps. It was discovered in the fall of 2006 that over half of the counted pennies, as well as several uncounted cans, had been stolen. Because the theft made the newspapers, they were swamped with donations and they have 1,600,000 pennies and a school account with over \$3,000. Some of the surplus will be used to pay for the shipping of the container from Las Vegas.

Several students shared what being involved with the project meant to them. They would like to have a permanent display of the pennies and a banner they designed, and would like hung with the memorial, was displayed.

Cal Carter, from ATM, would like to donate an acrylic container and the project will only need to pay shipping costs. David Glod, of Restoration and Renovation, proposes to bolt the container into the brick wall of the hallway between the front doors of the MSS main entrance and before the doors of the PAC and he will donate his work. A celebration is being planned for March 30th or 31st in the PAC and guest speakers will include those with personal ties to the Holocaust. The pennies are safely burrowed away.

B. Erickson said this is what they work for in education and this project has brought out the best of what Groton Dunstable students have to offer.

P. CARSON MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO VOTE ON ACCEPTING THIS CONTAINER.

SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

P. CARSON MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE DONATION OF A CLEAR LUCITE CASE FROM ATM, ONE MILLION PLUS PENNIES, THE DONATED LABOR TO INSTALL THE CASE AND APPROVE THE LOCATION OF THE CASE. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Shade Umbrella for Florence Roche Elementary Playground

Laura Lefebvre said the PTA was awarded a \$2,500 grant from the Curt and Shonda Shilling Melanoma Foundation which will be used toward umbrella shading. They are recommending a heavy duty Café style umbrella that is weighted by a heavy pedestal that sits on the pavement. It is moveable and can be taken in for the winter and during wind storms.

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION ITEM.

SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE DONATION OF THE CAFÉ STYLE UMBRELLA FOR THE FLORENCE ROCHE PLAYGROUND, DONATED BY THE FLORENCE ROCHE PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

MOU for Football

Dr. Genovese advised the MOU has been reviewed by Attorney Greenspan and it sets clear parameters. Dr. Funch noted there are no provisions for non-cash donations and it was agreed these types of items would come before the committee. If enough money is not raised to start the program, he asked what would happen to any money that is left after incurred expenses. Dr. Genovese said the money would be returned. With respect to the Revolving Fund that would be set up for the program, T. Sheehan advised that by law, it cannot be used for any purpose other than for what it has been set up for and agreed the money would be returned.

P. Carson asked if dues are paid to be in the league and D. Twomey said no. It is more a scheduling system.

The vote on the MOU was postponed in order for Mr. Twomey to discuss tonight's feedback with Principal Cohen and the football group.

Policy - Forest Buzan

F. Buzan stated the subcommittee has gone through sections C, D and E and he distributed a list of those policies with a rating classification. Those with a "1" indicate there were either no changes or there were spelling and grammar corrections and the school committee will vote on these at the April 2nd meeting. Those with a "2" have slightly greater changes and a "3" indicates the review needs more consideration and a possible rewrite. They expect to review sections F and G before his term is over.

C. Barrett advised Leslie Wickfield can update the Table of Contents.

District Technology Update - Gary Babin

G. Babin provided an in-depth presentation designed to highlight some of the changes and improvements that have taken place since 2006 and it will be made available on the district website. On the technical side, a key direction has been to develop and implement network level solutions which they apply to issues of performance and security. These solutions are being realized through gradual reconfiguration of the technology used in the district. An example is the SUS (software update services) server put into service last winter which monitors OS patches needed by workstations and automatically installs them. On the technology integration side, the Technical Coordinator and Integration Specialist developed competency standards for K-12 students and implemented the standards via professional development, coaching, modeling and using technology to facilitate teaching and learning.

Among other items, G. Babin reviewed the changes and improvements with the servers, operating systems, infrastructure, security and data protection and how these help with teaching and learning. G. Babin said a big issue is having an archiving solution for e-mail and IM. This requirement is from a SJC ruling that requires all electronic communication be archived in a searchable form. He will be proposing essentially, a duplication of their e-mail account which has a librarian account that is able to work with specific searches. He noted they have to save all files including homework assignments.

Dr. Funch asked how many computers are currently being replaced each year. If they had a five year replacement cycle, G. Babin said ideally, they would need to bring in over 200 machines every year. The budget allows them to go to a lease program and they will be bringing in 50 to 60 new systems. If it gets appropriated next year, a similar number would be brought in. Dr. Funch noted there are 1100 computers in the district and he does not think this is sustainable. Dr. Genovese said computers that originally had a higher purpose in serving can be reallocated to another use to support teaching and learning and newer computers will replace them. He said they have to match them up with their technology plan they have to file each year. The lease/purchase program is on the books for a three year period. T. Sheehan advised they will be executing the first purchase order for the FY08 lease in a few days and for \$25,000 they will bring in about 59 computers. Another 11 computers will be paid for with a grant from the Groton Trust. There is money in the FY09 budget to pay for the second year of this first lease and for a second two year lease of approximately the same number of computers.

F. Buzan asked what technologies are available that could drastically change instruction in a classroom and if they would have a return on an investment. Dr. Rubel said they have no technology instructional support right now.

K-12 Literacy Update - Sue Rubel, Kathy McCarthy, Kelly Cook

Literacy is the ability to use language to read, write, think and understand. K-8 ELA Coordinator Kathy McCarthy explained the components of a balanced approach to literacy in a PK-8 classroom are decoding skills, word study and the study of literature and writing. Reading is making meaning from text and there is no single method or combination that works for all children. She explained what happens in a reading classroom and reviewed the resources that are needed to teach reading which include having libraries, textbooks, materials and teacher knowledge of the reading process and the learners.

Writing is used to communicate to others, to process ideas and to explore the written language. The characteristics of effective writing include topic development, organization and word choice. Needed resources include highly trained teachers, large blocks of uninterrupted time, books, materials and assessments. K. McCarthy explained word study is the study of spelling, phonics and vocabulary and reviewed how it is taught in the classroom. They teach grammar through oral language and in the context of readers and writers workshop.

Reading recovery, literacy coaches, learning centers and Title 1 support programs are among the resources available for children who lag behind in literacy skills. Teachers learn how to teach a balanced approach to literacy through staff meetings and curriculum days, teacher prep programs, study groups and off-site training.

Kelly Cook, 9-12 ELA Coordinator, explained literacy in grades 9-12 is getting the student to have the ability to demonstrate the habits of mind and ethical behavior of a scholar and a professional. At the scholarly level, they want students to demonstrate higher order thinking in the study of English in the areas of language, reading and literature, composition and media. They want a literate language user to present with confidence and clarity, use vocabulary specific to literary study, writing and communications and to apply conventions of written and spoken English appropriately.

As readers, she explained they want students to, among other things, make sophisticated connections, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and create literature, understand the significances of literary allusions within a work and identify the qualities of an author's style, a culture's literature or a literary movement or period. As writers, students will apply the rules of academic integrity to their research and final product and write well developed literary analyses, each with an arguable thesis and adequate textual support. Students literate in media will understand why one medium may be preferable to another and have a sense of how different media affect cultural development.

Ms Cook reviewed the mandatory English courses that prepare students for graduation and success in college and the elective English courses that prepare students for English-based majors. For students who struggle with English, they have co-taught English classes, learning center support, summer sessions and hands-on language-based electives. The professional development that is done to improve literacy levels was also reviewed.

P. Carson said they can sense Ms Cook's and Ms McCarthy's enthusiasm. Dr. Funch asked if memorization is still part of the curriculum and Ms Cook said yes and it depends on the level of the class. F. Buzan asked when the transition is made from writing using pen and paper to using a computer. Because of issues with the laptops on the carts at the middle school, K. McCarthy said it does not happen as often as they might like and MSS fifth grade does not get to do it at all as the computer lab is not effective. A nine week course is offered in 9th grade. The computer specialists teach Type to Learn in third or fourth grade.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - See earlier report

Personnel and Negotiations - No report

Budget and Finance - Dr. Funch reported they are meeting next Tuesday.

Report of Director of Business and Finance -

Update on FY09 Budget Assessment - T. Sheehan reported a slide shown in the budget presentation that talked about what was necessary to balance the contributions from both towns was incorrect. It said that in order to balance at \$550,000 exactly, Dunstable would have to increase their contribution by \$15,000 while Groton would reduce by the same amount. This was an error and the real number is about \$2,000, in favor of Dunstable. He explained the minimum town assessment for each town is the first part of the assessments and those minimums went up drastically from last year. Dunstable's minimum went up at a higher percentage than Groton's and that accounted for the bulk of the increase in the assessments. He has discussed this with the Dunstable selectmen and FinCom and they are scheduled to meet with the Groton selectmen and FinCom next week. The assessments that went out in the letter were valid. Dunstable's "whisper number" of \$107,000 would be decreased by \$2,000 and Groton's "whisper number" of \$443,000 would be increased by the same amount.

Report of the Chair - C. Barrett reported the school committee workshop has been scheduled for April 9th at 6:30 p.m. at Tarbell to work on their annual goals.

C. Barrett reminded members they will be having an open discussion on discipline at their next meeting and she will e-mail members a list of applicable policies.

Report of the Superintendent - Dr. Genovese reported a meeting was held on March 13th to discuss the shared zone and it has been suggested they have a standing committee that looks at the shared zone on a yearly basis. They will be meeting on March 27th and they plan to present a recommendation to the committee on April 2nd. He is planning a meeting for April 15th to have a committee look at transition. He distributed a copy of an invitation that went to various constituencies, inviting them to attend a meeting on March 26th to share successes and brainstorm FY09 budget strategies.

Facilities Task Force - P. Carson reported they are meeting tomorrow and will give their presentation at the April 2nd school committee meeting.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

F. O'Connell asked how the water is at the high school. T. Sheehan advised it failed the December testing and they are filing a report with the EPA. They have traced the problem to the chemical they were using and are trying to get permission to use a different blend of polyphosphate for coating the pipes. The detailed report from the plant operator will be shared with committee members.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: MOU Football

Postponed to the April 2nd meeting.

VOTE: Shade Umbrella for Florence Roche Elementary

See earlier vote

VOTE: Acceptance of Million Dollar Penny Project Case

See earlier vote

VOTE: Small Refrigerator from Dyan Sierra

F. BUZAN MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCEPT, WITH GRATITUDE, THE DONATION OF A SMALL REFRIGERATOR FROM MRS. SIERRA.

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SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Compaq Computer with 20" monitor from Cathi Webster

P. CARSON MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE DONATION OF A COMPAQ COMPUTER WITH A 20" MONITOR AND A MULTI-FUNCTION PRINTER/SCANNER FROM CATHI WEBSTER. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:37 P.M. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment