

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2007
(Approved 11/7/2007)

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
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Brianna Riposa
Rafael Glod

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark;
S. Abrahamsen

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 7:15 p.m. and was called to order by the chair, C. Barrett.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Genovese introduced the student representatives to the School Committee. Brianna Riposa is a sophomore and plays soccer, basketball and softball. Rafael Glod, also a sophomore, enjoys skiing and soccer. Leo Biocchi and Kayleigh O'Brien will also be student representatives and the students will attend alternate meetings in groups of two.

S. Abrahamsen announced the next fundraiser for the Florence Roche playground will be the Blacktop Blues Program which will be held on October 27th from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Alpine Grove in Hollis, NH. This is a blues concert and swing dance event. Tickets are \$35 and are available at the school and on the website.

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

B. Erickson announced crossing-guard Bill Shute will be honored by the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce at Devens on November 7th.

Dr. Rubel announced they had a successful workshop with Karen Postal on October 11th.

MINUTES

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 5, 2007
SECONDED BY P. CARSON

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

Abstention: P. Funch

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2007 AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY F. BUZAN

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

Abstention: B. Erickson

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3, 2007 AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

None

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

EQA: Strategic Plan, District Vision/Mission, Superintendent's Goals

Dr. Genovese provided an overview of an Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) audit. It was created by the legislature in 2000, is overseen by a five person council and is independent of, and separate from, the DOE. The review includes six standards with 67 indicators and is a one to four year review. The process looks for data driven systems with high "Fidelity of Implementation". The district was selected to have the audit through a local request.

Fourteen different sets of documents are collected however, the backup documents supporting the claims and programs of what the district is doing are far more than fourteen. The Administrative Council will receive a Tier 1 report based on data analysis prior to the visit and various steps will take place before they come and after they leave. The performance rating system was reviewed and it was noted the rating of "excellence" is very rare.

Dr. Genovese explained the comparative review analysis that was done state-wide. It will be used in the district and compares every student with his/her demographic peer. The interview process takes four days and the EQA members will interview the School Committee on December 4th from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Tarbell. More time will be given if needed. This is not a public meeting and it will not be posted as a school committee meeting. The interview notes are not released but they will see the technical report and the summary report and have the opportunity to respond. They should receive the report about a month after the visit. The EQA process has an ability to be insightful and helpful to district administrators.

F. O'Connell asked if there will be any conflicts with their recommendations versus what the DOE requires them to do and Dr. Genovese said nothing would be in conflict with a regulation or interpretation set forth by the DOE but there would be redundancy such as financial audits. The standards were developed by the EQA and they had them approved by the EMAC. The report is presented to EMAC and they vote to accept it and vote on any action they feel is necessary.

Dr. Funch asked if the team will look at assessments other than MCAS. The administrative team will steer them in the direction of other measures of assessment the district feels are important but the audit is really driven by MCAS data and how student achievement is being impacted. They want to see that policies, protocols, curriculum alignment and dollars put in the budget will support the implementation of a particular program to meet a need identified through an MCAS score. Dr. Genovese feels the EQA may look at the teacher evaluation cycle the district has in place and may say it does not comply with the law of having a review every two years. They will also look at whether a teacher's professional development plan is linked to the district's goals and school's goals and if the principal, in writing the evaluation, is talking about the

improvement of achievement and MCAS scores. The EQA may recommend they have a better financial software package that integrates professional development.

Dr. Genovese highlighted his goals for 2007 - 2008 and noted each of them will contribute to improving student achievement:

- Raise the level of achievement for all students
- Prepare for EQA and prioritize recommendations
- Revisit and revise Strategic Plan
- Integrate the new Administrative Council members into a successful high performing team

As they look at MCAS, Dr. Genovese would like to see all sub-groups make AYP and would like to see at least a 3% increase in the number of students who are in the proficient and advanced categories next year.

Given the district's vision, mission and goals, Dr. Genovese reviewed what they are trying to accomplish in moving from a good district to a great district. A focus is on students as leaders and giving them the tools to be in charge of their own learning. They would create professional learning communities at building and district wide levels and create a culture of data analysis and responses at all levels. The ten characteristics of successful districts were reviewed and Dr. Genovese noted they could be connected to the development of a strategic plan. There will be a lot of data to share when it is time to develop a strategic plan and this will likely start in January.

MASC Resolution Discussion

Dr. Funch will be the Committee's delegate to the MASC Conference. The report of the Resolutions Committee was reviewed and comments were noted by Dr. Funch so his votes will be informed by their opinions.

Resolution 1 - Sharing of information on students attending Charter Schools with the sending school districts Members support this resolution

Resolution 2 - Resolution regarding the inclusion of special education transportation costs in the circuit breaker Members support this resolution

Resolution 3 - Public Policy Agenda This resolution has seven positions:

- #1** reaffirms the need for fair funding. F. Buzan is opposed to an increase in the state tax rate.
- #2** eliminates restrictions for membership on the State Board of Education. Dr. Genovese feels members should be elected and not appointed. F. Buzan abstained and the others support this position.
- #3** would allow municipal school districts to retain Medicaid reimbursements. Members support this position.
- #4** calls for a moratorium on new charter school approvals until higher levels of accountability are imposed. C. Barrett and B. Erickson abstained and the other members are opposed to this position. Dr. Funch will listen to input on the floor and decide appropriately.
- #5** restores the authority to School Committees to approve school improvement plans. B. Erickson is opposed, Dr. Funch abstained and the other members are in favor of this position.
- #6** calls for using more than MCAS to determine the criteria for high school graduation and would encourage more research for appropriate assessments. Dr. Genovese feels this position is problematic as it is a hodgepodge of controversial issues. F. O'Connell is in favor, P. Carson abstained and the other members are opposed to this position.
- #7** would allow districts to develop more flexible academic programming for English Language Learners. Dr. Genovese and Dr. Rubel support this position. F. Buzan, F. O'Connell, C. McKinney and B. Erickson oppose the position and the other members are in favor of it.

Resolution 4 - Foundation Budget Members support this resolution

Request - Liaison to Town Boards

In the spirit of their communication goal for the coming year, B. Erickson requested liaisons be appointed to the

towns' planning and finance committees and any other pertinent boards. She suggested the Policy subcommittee consider making this a policy. While a liaison to the Boards of Selectmen does not need to be included, she suggested they keep abreast of their happenings via television broadcasts, minutes and/or attendance at meetings pertinent to the School Committee. The various board meeting schedules were reviewed. The liaison would report back to the School Committee but would not speak on behalf of the Committee unless directed to do so.

It was agreed the chair will send letters, similar to the ones sent to the Boards of Selectmen, to the chairs of the planning boards and FinComs, inviting them to come to any of their meetings and asking them to notify the chair if they have a meeting they would like a School Committee representative to attend.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - Update and Policy Review Plan - F. Buzan reported they will be meeting next week. He reviewed the agenda from their October 9th meeting. They discussed the schedule for reviewing the policy book, the meeting format, policy revision format and new and existing policies currently under discussion. The form developed last year for feedback from School Committee members will still be used.

Personnel & Negotiations - C. McKinney reported they will be bringing forward an action item to have the Committee approve Addendum A (evaluation instrument) of the superintendent's contract. Modifications include having members put together individual evaluations and sending them to the chair for a consensus and there will be a numerical scale for members to provide additional feedback to the superintendent on how well he is achieving each goal. The feedback the superintendent gets from the Administrative Council will be moved into professional development within the confines of the AC and will not directly link to the evaluation process. The professional development will become part of the superintendent's self-evaluation report to the Committee. Their next meeting is October 25th.

Budget & Finance - Dr. Funch reported they will be meeting next Tuesday.

Report of Director of Business & Finance - T. Sheehan reported the Committee will be asked to award a contract to Pinnacle Roofing Inc. for the repairs and improvements to the roof and supporting structures of the Union Building. The architect will supervise the construction. The bat guano in the attic was removed by a wildlife management firm over the weekend and one way doors were installed so the bats can get out but not back in.

It is expected the end of year report will be ready for the chair's signature on Friday. The KVS accounting system now more accurately translates their charter of accounts to the DOE's function codes on which the end of year report is based.

The E&D certification needs to be submitted to the Department of Revenue by October 31st. They need to present a FY07 4th quarter report to Budget and Finance next week as well as a FY08 financial report that will focus on changes in revenue since the budget was produced.

Report of the Chair

A copy of the Committee's revised goals, in outline form, was distributed. Additional documents will be created as members think about the ways they will accomplish their goals.

C. Barrett reported emails were sent to the Boards of Selectmen inviting them to attend any of their School Committee meetings and asking that they contact her if they would like a representative at one of their meetings. She will send similar emails to the chairs of both planning boards and FinComs

C. Barrett reported she will be asking Budget and Finance to work as the Committee's "building committee" for the Union roof project. T. Sheehan will report how the project is progressing to the subcommittee and any significant change would need to come to the School Committee

The Committee has had an ongoing appeal regarding the Casella eminent domain case and based on the superintendent's recommendation, C. Barrett reported a vote was taken in executive session, with six members in favor and C. McKinney abstaining, to withdraw their appeal and settle with the Casella's. The motion was read. A press release will be available tomorrow morning. Their first appeal seemed promising but it was rejected and the second appeal process allowed them to revisit the details of the case. The only reason to continue the appeal would be to clarify the court's rules regarding expert testimony. Although she still believes inappropriate and unjustifiable testimony relating to the land value was allowed, C. Barrett said she no longer believes it is in the taxpayer's best interest to resolve this question by continuing their appeal.

Although it was difficult, Dr. Genovese said members made a prudent decision to drop the appeal.

Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Genovese referred to Representative Hargraves' press release regarding the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The MSBA awarded the middle school project \$466,835 for FY08 and the project will receive a final payment of \$466,839 in FY09. The district did an excellent job of justifying almost all of the expenses for the high school project and reimbursement has been adjusted upward to \$1,700,759 for FY08. The district will continue to receive the adjusted grants through retirement of the bonds in 2022 and this will help reduce the debt assessments.

Members had received copies of correspondence from the MSBA. The district had put in letters of intent for the elementary schools and the MSBA said they had to pick one. Dr. Genovese asked them to look at Prescott and he used the same documentation presented in a previous application. This tells the state there is a project here and puts them in the "hopper" of MSBA's potential projects. Depending on the recommendation of the Facilities Task Force, the recommendation may be something different and Dr. Genovese sees this as a "place holder".

Computer Donations

Dr. Genovese will be asking for a motion to accept three computer monitors as well as an I-MAC desktop.

Other

Dr. Genovese reported he sent correspondence to the Dunstable Board of Selectmen, Historical Society and Board of Health to let them know the School Committee appropriated, at that point \$85,000, to do the Union Building project.

Dr. Genovese distributed information on the Performing Arts Center Advisory Council. He will ask the chair to appoint a School Committee member to serve on the Council at their next meeting. C. Barrett clarified the Council would review and approve fundraising efforts and they would not be doing the fundraising. She requested members receive a copy of the press release. There will also be oversight of the Black Box Theater.

Dr. Genovese distributed a letter from the Squannacook River Runners and members will be asked to accept a \$250 donation for the PTYC Youth Fund.

Members had received information regarding the Massachusetts Municipal Association's Statewide 6th Grade Essay Contest.

Facilities Task Force - P. Carson reported tomorrow's meeting has been cancelled.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

C. McKinney stated B. Erickson is a liaison to Groton's Blue Ribbon Governance Committee and they are bringing forward a warrant article at Monday's town meeting. B. Erickson said the charter proposes a change in town governance and advocates for a Town Manager position. The last public hearing will be held tomorrow night.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: To Accept Computer Donations

F. BUZAN MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE DONATION FROM KIT KILROY OF AN I-MAC COMPUTER AND ALSO ACCEPT A DONATION FROM KARL GRINDLEY OF THREE COMPUTER MONITORS. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Union Building Roof Project

F. O'CONNELL MOVED THAT THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE AWARD A CONTRACT TO PINNACLE ROOFING, INC., OF SHREWSBURY, MA. IN THE AMOUNT OF \$68,750 FOR REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ROOF AND SUPPORTING STRUCTURES OF THE UNION BUILDING IN THE TOWN OF DUNSTABLE. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

(The Committee voted on June 20th to use E&D for this project)

VOTE: Superintendent's Evaluation Addendum A

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADOPT ADDENDUM A FOR THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 2007 - 2008 AS ARTICULATED IN OUR PACKET. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: To Accept Donation from Squannacook River Runners

F. BUZAN MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCEPT THE DONATION FROM KERRI STRAUSS, REPRESENTING THE SQUANNACOOK RIVER RUNNERS, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$250, TO BE PRESENTED TO THE PTYC YOUTH FUND. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

ADJOURNMENT

F. BUZAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:20 P.M. SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachment