

Andover School Committee
Regular Meeting of February 2, 2010
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Secretary-Dennis Forgue, Richard J. Collins, Annie Gilbert, and David Birnbach

Others in Attendance: Dr. Claudia L. Bach, Superintendent, Dr. Susan M. Nicholson, Assistant Superintendent, and Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle, Charlie Smith, AHS Liaison

I. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein reconvened the meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:08 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge to Allegiance led by Wood Hill Middle School students Alex Brickman (Grade 7) and Juan Quelis (Grade 7). Mr. Collins presented the students with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Consent Agenda

Mr. Tuttle said the Warrants are in order.

Warrants: On a motion by Dennis Forgue with a second by Richard Collins, it was unanimously voted to approve the Warrants as presented.

Field Trip Disclosures: On a motion by Dennis Forgue with a second by Annie Gilbert it was voted 5-0-0 to accept the field trip disclosure forms as presented.

C. Education

1. School Improvement Plans

Deb Silberstein welcomed the members of the School Improvement Councils in attendance tonight and recognized the efforts of parents, principals, Dr. Bach and Dr. Nicholson who are instrumental in bringing forth well thought out plans. The six elementary schools will present one combined presentation, the middle schools one combined presentation, and then Andover High School.

Elementary Schools

The Elementary School Improvement Plans were presented as one unified plan describing the four overarching priority goals the six elementary schools value most. The first goal is class size which they request to not exceed the current School Committee mid-size policy. The second goal is to provide technology and professional development to support the acquisition of 21st Century skills. The third goal is to restore the hours of instructional assistants that were reduced last year. The Instructional Assistants are an integral part of the classroom supporting the need to meet diverse learning for all students. The fourth goal is to restore custodial positions previously cut to ensure a safe, secure, and clean environment for student learning.

Comments: Shawsheen Principal Moira O'Brien said Shawsheen has the highest special education population in the district without a full-time Learning Specialist or a 12-month Administrative Assistant. Dr. Colleen McBride, Principal of South School said if they lose anymore resources they will be compromising the safety and instructional hours of students. Consistency in personnel is extremely important to children.

School Committee member Annie Gilbert noted that the pressing needs of each elementary school since the reduction in force and revenues over the past several years is highlighted in each of their individual school improvement plans. In summary their statements indicate that the quality of education being compromised, and stressed the need for human resources to deliver instruction, as well as professional development for teachers.

D. Education

School Improvement Plans

Deb Silberstein noted that school principals have worked hard to do things differently in response to the reductions in revenue for their schools. David Birnbach asked if they have considered programs that would generate funds, i.e. charging for after school enrichment programs with services generated by the staff; expanding the notion of what school is through highly-motivated programs (remedial, enrichment programs for art, music, and sports) that could also be offered to sister communities for a fee. Dennis Forgue noted that the Revenue Generating Pinpoint Committee will be presenting proposals for revenue generating ideas to the School Committee in the near future. Annie Gilbert encouraged everyone to go online and read each individual School Improvement Plan.

Middle Schools

The Middle School Principals, Theresa McGuinness-Darby (DMS), Patrick Bucco (WHMS), and Steve Murray (WMS) presented the unified Middle School Improvement Plan. The Principals introduced the members of their School Councils and recognized them for their assistance in creating their plans. The Middle School SIP goals include: 1) Restoring positions lost last year especially the school librarians. 2) Supporting the middle school model of educating the whole child and stated it is important to keep the middle school course offerings they have and not reducing programs. 3) Building robust professional development opportunities for staff, expanding assessment tools, and increasing partnerships with organizations within the community. They request the School Committee defend and protect their schools.

WHMS Principal Patrick Bucco talked about Technology and the School Climate. They need to take advantage of student interests in technology. School Climate is a key factor in educating middle school students and Mr. Bucco spoke of the need to ensure each student has at least one adult they trust and can connect with socially and emotionally in their schools; students in middle school need to feel accepted and connected.

Andover High School

AHS Principal Jonathan Harris recognized all the members of the AHS School Improvement Council and introduced members Diane Costagliola, Andrea Zaines, Kerry Costello, and David Whitney.

The AHS School Improvement Plan includes four threads of need; the first being the increased access to and the use of technology. David Whitney spoke in detail on supporting 21st Century Skills through more access to technology and the need to develop a technology plan for AHS as they move forward. In addition to the new Foreign Language Lab, increased technology would include exploring the implementation of a wireless network infrastructure, classroom white boards, student response systems in classrooms (clickers), studying the availability of on-line courses, creating study groups to examine E-books, purchasing laptops (180) for faculty, and expanding professional development for teachers.

The second thread as explained by Diane Costagliola is increased student and community participation in activities outside of the school day. AHS has approximately 1800 students and increasing collaboration between AHS and the Andover Youth Services would be instrumental in students feeling connected. Their goal is to facilitate an opportunity to have an AYS facilitator on board during the day at Andover High School. They also request that the late bus be restored to provide transportation home for students that want to participate in after school activities. Andrea Zaines said a proposal to request that the Wrestling Club become part of the Athletic Program/budget will be presented to the School Committee at an upcoming meeting.

The third thread is to diversify instruction to reach all learning styles. Kerry Costello spoke to the diversity of the student body, faculty, courses offered and the need to diversify instruction to better educate all learners. Currently, the faculty is focusing on sharing a best practice as part of their department meetings.

She stressed the need to build on the team teaching model, honor teacher-directed workshops, providing opportunities for teacher proposed topics on workshop days, and exploring traditional and non-traditional course offerings even beyond the school day. AHS Principal Jonathan Harris spoke about the fourth thread which is to begin planning for the 2012 NEASC accreditation process. School Committee Liaison Charlie Smith stated that nurturing the high school is a good investment for the district.

Motion: Mr. Forgue thanked all of the School Improvement Council members for their work and excellent presentations. He motioned for the School Committee to accept the School Improvement Plans for K-12 as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Collins, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

Workshop

Deb Silberstein opened the meeting to a discussion on the impact of reductions at the different levels.

Sanborn School Principal Patricia Barrett stated although parents have not felt the cutbacks, her staff is. Covering the loss of instructional assistant time has been challenging. Learning and Reading Specialists positions have been expanded to fill-in for the loss of instructional assistant time. DMS Principal Theresa McGuinness-Darby reports that as time goes by test scores will slowly degrade with the loss of time that staff can spend assisting students. West Elementary School teacher Ethel Coltin said social and emotional needs of children have increased and the reductions have an impact on small group learning opportunities. Diane Costagliola said parents at AHS have felt the impact of increased fees and have had to make hard choices. Lisa Glickstein stated that changing the block schedule at AHS would be a disadvantage to advanced students. Health teacher Cheryl Todisco talked about the loss of the Elementary Health Program, and asked if the School Dept has researched budgets of other districts that do well on the MCAS testing. Laura Gregory a parent at Bancroft and Shawsheen, said PTO's are covering much of the extra requirements at schools (i.e. whiteboards) and talked about the opportunities being lost for students due to reductions in programs and personnel and the need to communicate this information to the community.

Dr. Nicholson announced that as part of the Strategic Plan, the School Department is inviting the community to participate in a focus group on Thursday, March 11th from 7:00 PM to 9:30 PM at Andover High School to discuss the future of education in Andover for the next 3-5 years. Trained facilitators will be leading the focus groups. All stakeholders in the Andover Community are invited to attend.

E. Finances

1. FY11 Preliminary Budget Overview

Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle presented the Superintendent's FY-2011 Preliminary Budget. He stated that in FY-2010 Salaries were \$47,601,540 compared to \$49,448,068 for FY-2011 a 3.9% increase that does not include wage settlements. Expenses for FY-2010 were \$12,126,618 compared to \$14,27,383 for FY-2011 an increase of 17.7% and stated that Special Education expenses were the driving force behind the increase. Special Education increases are almost 30% more than Regular Education. The Town Manager has recommended a School Budget of \$61,078,014 a shortfall of \$2,647,437 recommended by the Superintendent. The shortfall of 2.6% is a result of the reduction in circuit breaker reimbursement from the State for Special Education. Dennis Forgue requested an analysis of the IDEA money showing where the funds were spent last year. Mr. Tuttle said 72% of the funds went to recovery for Special Education expenses with the remaining funds going to the new Special Education In-house Programs. Mr. Tuttle said what is not included in the FY-2011 budget is the cost of step advancements, coverage for wage splits from collective bargaining, two FTE teachers and consulting services for the new Special Education Program at AHS, and instructional supplies. The budget presented is a level service budget.

F. **Finances (Cont'd)**

1. **FY11 Preliminary Budget Overview (Cont'd)**

Dr. Bach said the school budget was reduced by \$705,000 at the special town meeting in the fall to close the budget gap. Major changes would be necessary to close the \$2.6 million shortfall for this year. Some of these changes which include bringing class sizes up at the elementary schools to the maximum of School Committee policy, eliminating one or two departments at the middle schools, and reverting to a 5 x 7 class schedule instead of the current block schedule at AHS.

The School Committee had an intense discussion on ideas and solutions for improving, maintaining and recovering the direction of the Andover Schools going forward.

E. **Adjournment**

At 10:45 P.M. on a motion by Dennis Forgue and a second by Annie Gilbert, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo

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Recording Secretary