

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of January 20, 2009
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Tony James, Secretary, Arthur H. Barber, Ed.D, Richard J. Collins, Dennis Forgue.

Others in Attendance: Dr. Claudia L. Bach, Superintendent, Dr. Susan Nicholson, Assistant Superintendent and David Keniston, Business Manager.

II. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein called the School Committee Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Collins led the meeting in a moment of silence. Mr. Collins introduced Bancroft students, Julianna Kennedy, (Grade 2), Christopher Kennedy (Grade 4), and Allie Kennedy. The students led the meeting in a salute to the flag after which Mr. Collins presented them with Certificates of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Recognition of Achievement

Dr. Bach thanked Theresa McGuinness-Darby for extending an invitation to the School Committee members and herself to view today's inauguration ceremonies at Doherty Middle School. Everyone was very excited and thrilled about the new President and it was exciting to watch the ceremonies with the students. Art Barber also thanked the Doherty Middle School community for hosting this event and said he was very impressed with the students, their questions and responses. Deb Silberstein said there is a letter to President Obama circulating in the audience tonight asking for his support in earmarking revenue from the Economic Recovery Bill to education. Tony James said he heard that a large number of items related to education are contained in the Economic Recovery Bill which could have a huge impact on revenue and help with school budgets. He encourages everyone to take a good look at the letter that is circulating and recognize its importance.

C. Communications

1. Update on IT Review

Deb Silberstein said she spoke with Ray Tode, APS Information Director of Technology & Education, Selectman Alex Vispoli, and Len D'Innocenzo Chair of the Town IT Committee. A presentation of the results of the Town Committee will be given at the February 9, 2009 Board of Selectmen's meeting; after which Ray Tode will work with the Committee on a joint presentation.

Art Barber said the Massachusetts Division I meeting will be held the end of February. Keynote speakers are Dave Keniston, Business Administrator, and Joe Piantedosi, Director of Plant and Facilities will speak about initiatives the Town of Andover has taken to reduce expenses. Exact dates and times will be forthcoming.

D. Consent Agenda

Warrant: Dave Keniston said the Warrants are in order.

Minutes: School Committee Minutes of December 16, 2008 and January 6, 2009 and Planning Session Minutes of January 8, 2009.

Field Trips: Sanborn School Grade 5 Students to Nature's Classroom, Charlton MA -February 24-27, 2009.

Motion: Tony James motioned to approve the consent agenda items, which include the Warrant, the School Committee Minutes of December 16, 2008 and January 6, 2009 as well as the Planning Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2009, and Field Trip to Nature's Classroom in Charlton, Mass. The motion was seconded by Dennis Forgue, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

E. Education:

1. Receive the School Improvement Plans from the Elementary and Middle Schools

The Elementary Principals introduced and recognized the members of their School Improvement Councils. The Elementary School Improvement Plans were presented to the School Committee as a single plan (with individual plans submitted) by Brad Heim, Co-Chair/Parent Representative from High Plain School. Each School has different plans but a common focus; impact of class size, student academic performance, and meeting the diverse learning needs of all students. Class size has consistently been the number one policy, not to exceed the School Committee Guidelines and recognizing that quality education is achieved by maintaining class size. Mr. Heim discussed the importance of providing technical and professional development to teachers to support the acquisition of 21st Century Skills by students. Each school is committed to enhancing the use of Technology through the use of Smartboards, internet based curriculum, etc. The School Councils also recommend the funding of the Education Team Facilitators (ETF) who play an essential role in connecting and coordinating student needs and services.

Deb Silberstein said our Special Education Department received a commendation from the DOE after the Coordination Program Review, for the relationships between school administrators, staff, and parents. It is incredible to have received such recognition from the DOE. Deb thanked the School Principals, members of each School Improvement Council, and Mr. Heim for his presentation this evening.

Middle School Principals, Patrick Bucco, Steve Murray, and Theresa McGuinness-Darby introduced and recognized the members of their School Improvement Councils and introduced Brian Wivell, West Middle School, Devika Ranjun, Wood Hill Middle School, and Colby Gilbert, Doherty Middle School. The three Grade 8 students provided a synopsis of the Middle Schools' School Improvement Plan, explaining how they center on educating the needs of the whole child, culture of learning, importance of technology, and their foundation of belief.

The students talked about the inclusion of Engineering in the Middle School Curriculum and how it has enhanced their interest in Science. This summer, the middle school engineering teachers worked closely with the science teachers to incorporate the benchmarks into the curriculum to ensure the needs of the students were met. The three student representatives said they valued the opportunity to move out of the ordinary everyday classroom programs to participate in offerings such as the program on stocks/investments that enabled them to better understand current economic events and as members of their School Improvement Council, they were provided an opportunity to learn what goes on behind the scenes.

Although we face incredible economic challenges as we go forward, Dr. Bach said no one can disagree with the SIC goals that came forward tonight. A number of meetings have been held with the administrators to discuss primary goals, how to maintain the goals, and how to face the budget crisis. Together they have gone over everything they can do to keep staff. Dr. Bach has reached out to the union leaders, and held an "all" staff meeting to update them on the budget dilemma the school is facing, the deficit amounts for 2009 and FY 2010, the status of state and local revenue funds and the great concern for massive lay-offs. Forums for Parents to participate in the budget discussion will be established with dates and times to be released soon. The budget slide presentation can be found on our website, www.aps1.net.

Tony James attended a second meeting with AHS Liaison, Alex Macheras and several other students to categorize cost savings. The students have come up with approximately one million in savings and will present their findings at the February 3rd School Committee Meeting. Tony stressed how important it is for the Board of Selectmen to reconsider their decision on the dates for Town Meeting.

Deb Silberstein said the work on the School Improvement Councils is very important in good times and in bad and thanked everyone who worked on the plans for their efforts and not to get discouraged.

E. Education:

1. Receive the School Improvement Plans from the Elementary and Middle Schools (Cont'd)

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

F. Policy Consideration

1. To Consider three new policies: FF (Naming School Facilities) FFA(Memorials), and Awarding High School Diplomas

Motion: Art Barber motioned the School Committee accept the new Policies: Policy FF (Naming School Facilities) FFA(Memorials), and (IKFBA) Awarding High School Diplomas with revisions to the Diploma Policy as submitted. The motion was seconded by Tony James, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

G. Finances

1. Recommendation for All Day Kindergarten and Preschool Tuitions

School Committee Member Art Barber left the meeting during the discussion and vote.

Dave Keniston shared the revenue costs of providing the full day kindergarten program and said the program is currently just breaking even. The fees are derived from the actual costs of the program without allocation for space, energy, custodial services, etc. He is recommending the School Committee vote to approve the fee of \$4400.00 with a discount to \$42000.00 if paid in full by the designated July date. Funds received for full day kindergarten can only be used for full day kindergarten.

Deb Silberstein would like to look at all the fees together and the impact it will have on parents. A lengthy discussion on the request to increase the fee for full day kindergarten followed.

Motion: Tony James motioned to approve the increase intuition for All Day Kindergarten as presented by David Keniston with a recommendation to revisit the topic at the end of this fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Dennis Forgue, voted 4-0-0 and approved.

Pre-School Tuition:

Dave Keniston said the two day tuition rate for pre-school will no longer be offered as most children enrolled in the two day children end up moving to the three day program. Mr. Keniston recommends the following tuition amounts for Pre-school: Shawsheen Pre-school will offer a five-day program for \$3622.00; a four-day program for \$2990.00; and a three-day program for \$2622.00.

Motion: Dennis Forgue motioned to approve the tuition recommendation for Pre-school by David Keniston showing a three day rate and elimination of the two day rate as shown on the sheet provided. The motion was seconded by Tony James, voted 4-0-0 and approved.

2. CIP Reductions

Dave Keniston said the Textbooks and Technology amounts in the Capital Improvement Program have been cut, and there are other items identified for possible elimination depending on the 9C cuts from the Governor. Deb Silberstein requested to see the inventory of CIP appropriations not spent from the Town before we eliminate purchasing textbooks. Tony James questioned the proposed elimination in total of the South School Special Education Group space.

G. Finances (Cont'd)

3. Food Service Financial Report

Dave Keniston presented the Financial Report for the Food Service Department and is very pleased with the report. Mr. Keniston recognized Gail Koutroubas, Director of Food Service on her talent for motivating staff. Tony James said it is encouraging to see a steady increase in meals per day.

4. Receive Year to Date Data Financials

Dave Keniston presented the January Financial Report which includes Special Education documents submitted to the Finance Committee. There are no transfers being requested. Tony questioned the amount shown for substitutes this year – seems high. Dave believes it is due to the high number of professional days early in the school year. Dr. Bach will request a report from the Human Resources Department.

5. Discuss FY2010 School Budget

Dr. Bach said it is important to hear the dimensions of the struggle the school principals are deliberating; some are similar to the 2003-2004 budget discussion. Although there aren't a lot of places to look for cost reductions anymore, the principals' hope the cuts can be as proportionately fair at each level as possible. The middle schools are facing a \$400,000 cut overall and are concerned about the effects it will have on the students. The High School is looking at increasing fees and facing the possibility of being in non-compliance with the 9900 hours of instruction saga again if courses are cut. Peter Anderson suggests looking at other models of instruction. Tony James said at the elementary level class size is their core mantra, and the team concept most critical at the middle level.

Dave Keniston provided an analysis of State aid to communities that receive less than 17.5 % in funding for education, Andover received 14.2%. Everyone is encouraged to contact their State legislatures to push for 17.5% funding for all communities. Board of Selectman Chair Ted Teichert will revisit the dates for Town Meeting at the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen and suggests we keep pushing our State Legislatures and check with other communities to see what they are doing. The School Committee members encourages the Board of Selectmen to delay the start of Town Meeting and asks that everyone continue looking for other avenues to assist during these difficult economic times.

Diane Costagliola, Belknap Drive understands and appreciates the spirit of collaboration and hopes there is equity in the pain for both the Town and School. The School Department should not take the brunt of the crisis. Dave McCarron, 1 Napier Road asked what the other six bullet points are that are being recommended, when will there be a public discussion.

Dr. Bach said some of the new initiatives being discussed include closing down the school buildings during the winter months, including the high school, changing the school calendar, and changes in energy. The budget is still in its preliminary stage, but there will be a variety of budget hearings and larger forums for discussion. Deb Silberstein said the budget is due by February 1, 2009 and will be presented at the February 9th Tri-Board Meeting. The School Committee is scheduling breakfast meetings at the schools in February to talk to staff.

H Citizen Input - None

I. Motion to Adjourn

Tony James motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the School Committee. The motion was seconded by Richard Collins, voted 5-0-0 and approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Dec DeLorenzo, Recorder