

Andover School Committee
Regular Meeting of March 24, 2011
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert, Richard J. Collins, David Birnbach, Paula Colby-Clements, and AHS Liaison Jared Rosen

Others in Attendance: Dr. Marinel McGrath, Superintendent, Dr. Susan Nicholson, Assistant Superintendent, Peter DeRoeve-Interim Business Manager

I. Regular Meeting

A. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the School Committee was opened at 7:08 P.M. by Chairman Forgue.

B. Opening Ceremonies

Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Bancroft School Students, Sydney (Grade 1), and Kate (Grade 5) Gregory. Mr. Collins presented Sydney and Kate with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

Annie Gilbert motioned to amend the Agenda to add the Selection of Chairperson and Secretary. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and voted 5-0 to approve.

Annie Gilbert motioned that the School Committee elect from its membership a Chairperson and Secretary at the scheduled April 7th meeting to take office following the April Town Meeting. In accordance with School Committee Policy, the newly-elected Chairperson and Secretary will take office at the School Committee's first regularly scheduled meeting following the Annual Town Meeting. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and voted 5-0 to approve.

The Committee announced that Citizen Input would be heard after the FY-12 Proposed Budget update and presentations.

C. Recognition

Dr. McGrath introduced the new Superintendent-elect of the Waltham Public Schools, Dr. Susan M. Nicholson. Dr. Nicholson was elected by the Waltham School Committee on Monday. Dr. McGrath congratulated Susan and wishes her well in her new endeavor. Susan has made many contributions to the Andover Public Schools, most notably with the Technology Pilot Program and the Strategic Plan.

Dr. McGrath congratulated the AHS Boys' Ski Team and the AHS Girls Basketball Team who both won their respective State Championships. She also recognized the Drama Guild for moving on to the next level of competition. The Winter Sports Team Captains, Co-Captains, and Coaches will be recognized at the April 7th School Committee Meeting.

D. Education

1. Bancroft School Building Project Update

Annie Gilbert reported the architects are working on the exterior aesthetics of the building and have met with members of the Design Review Board developing two options for review. Final interviews for the construction manager position are expected to take place on Monday, March 28th with recommendations coming forward to the full School Building Committee for a decision.

E. New Business

1. ACE Partnership Project: Open Circle & Interactive Whiteboards.

Tina Girdwood of the Andover Coalition for Education (ACE) has been working on partnership projects with the help of service organizations and PTO's to support the needs of the school system. Tonight, Howard Perkins representing the Rotary Club is one of the service organizations supporting the needs of the schools.

Their joint focus is to provide funding for inter-active whiteboards for the middle and high schools and the Open Circle Curriculum for the elementary level, raising \$29,000 for Open Circle training for all elementary schools providing equity across the system. All three middle schools are working on their own fundraising for additional whiteboards, and AHS may be able to help out this year or next. Mr. Perkins announced that the Rotary is donating \$5,000 towards the inter-active whiteboards which ACE has agreed to match. The School Committee and School Administrators thanked the ACE Foundation and the Rotary Club for their generous donation and support.

Annie Gilbert motioned to accept the gift of \$5,000 from the Andover Rotary Clubs and \$5,000 from the Andover Coalition for Education (ACE) for the purchase of two interactive white board systems in accordance with the project plan. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and unanimously voted to approve.

Annie Gilbert motioned to accept the gift of \$29,000 from the Andover Coalition for Education (ACE) for the Staff Development Program for the Elementary Open Circle Curriculum. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and unanimously voted to approve.

F. Old Business

1. FY-12 Proposed Budget Update

Dr. McGrath thanked the many people who have shared their thoughts, concerns, and willingness to help resolve the budget situation. She asked the School Principals to build a level service budget and to bring forward items they would like to see to meet the vision, mission, and goals, which they did. The painful part of the process is making reductions to meet financial constraints. They will continue to work towards a resolution of the budget.

Annie Gilbert reviewed where we are in the budget process, stating last week's budget presentation was a budget hearing mandated by law to allow for public input. The School Committee was there to listen to input, feedback and questions; it was not their plan to take action at that time. Public input helps them to clarify their thinking. In addressing the proposed music reduction at the high school, she explained the .2 reduction is the result of the process that occurs when you reduce course offerings. The proposal is a result of offering classes to meet student needs, not to run classes without full enrollment, and the movement of positions due to the Seniority List. The School Committee has additional information to talk about and digest, and the School Budget Sub-committee will meet at 8:30 A.M. on Monday.

Paula Colby-Clements said there is still a large budget deficit to close. The Triboard Budget Sub-committee met this week to look at revenue, expense assumptions, state aid, circuit breaker reimbursement, meals/hotel tax revenue, all of which impact the budget, and they will meet again at 7:00 A.M. on Monday prior to the School Committee Budget Sub-Committee – all boards are working together.

F. Old Business (Cont'd)

1. FY-12 Proposed Budget Update (Cont'd)

The Middle School Principals, Patrick Bucco, Steve Murray, and Robin Wilson talked about the reduction of the Guidance Counselors at the Middle Schools, and the goal to keep the core of the middle school structure intact. There are no right cuts, each reduction has significant consequences and contract obligations made changes difficult. Keeping the integrity of the Middle School Team concept supports students socially, emotionally, and educationally. Currently, there is one social worker and guidance counselor in each building, and they are going forward with the proposal to remove the guidance counselor and add more social workers. The Middle School Team model provides a safety net for kids; the teachers meet as a team each day and talk about student needs.

Dennis Forgue reported the School Committee is still working with other committees to determine what percentage of circuit breaker reimbursement to assume (40% or 50%) and commented that any decrease in State Aid would further decrease the Town/School budgets. Our State Representatives are coming to a meeting next week to discuss the needs of the community, he encourages residents to call or email our State Senator/State Representatives about budget concerns.

AHS Interim Principal Dr. Sharkey, and Assistant Principals Luz Valverde and Chris Phillips came forward to address the decision to reduce Special Education Teachers at AHS. It was difficult to come up with a proposal to meet the reduction directive. They looked at every position at AHS, considered raising class sizes by 2, or to look at Special Education Staffing to maximize schedules. They looked at Standard Classes with very low class size (3-4) and thought they might be better to deploy their staff with a class of 7-8 (limit by law), they looked at inclusion classes (co-taught) there were 8 teachers co-teaching and 1.4 Instructional Assistants with small class sizes of 4-5. They also looked at assisted and tutorial studies and opportunities for students to get support from Special Education Teachers and noticed inefficiencies in numbers. They also looked at other specialized courses (reading) scheduled at the end of day with a full-time teacher working with 1-2 students. They also found 1.5 teachers acting as ETF's and one person with a teaching license testing. Rather than raise class size, they worked towards more efficient scheduling and better deployment of teachers. They met with families to assure them support will be maintained, not diminished. There are 240 students divided amongst the Special Education Staff, 10.6 students per Special Education Teacher. The reduction raises caseloads to 16 students per teacher. The elementary and middle school caseload is 15-16 students per teacher. The High School Leadership Team also made a decision to schedule special education students first, which will bring better results.

Citizen Input

Questions / Comments from audience:

Concerns about changes at the middle school: Guidance Counselors in middle school are an important connection for students, what do we lose in the process going forward. Changes in the Middle School Foreign Language Program – unclear how that works, choices are taken away; loss of Latin difficult for visual learners-Spanish is more difficult for them. Teacher supported training will be needed. Most of the Engineering students work well with Latin, visual/logical deductive reasoning skills. School system is putting all other languages at a disadvantage if you are aiming for fluency.

Concerns about changes at high school: Standard classes are not inclusion classes; most of the impact of cuts was specific to inclusion classrooms. Efficiencies in scheduling valid; if you are moving away from the co-teaching model what are you moving towards?

The School Committee needs to make a decision; does the budget model reflect complexity of specialists, what is needed to make the school system work today? It does not appear the Town-side is sharing the pain of reductions. The schools have many mandates to adhere to. There does not seem to be any interest on the part of the teachers to help the situation.

Dr. McGrath said their commitment is to prepare the children in the best way possible for the future. They have to work through the scenarios presented, and reductions are painful for everyone. It is important that the community understands why the Leadership Team has put the proposed reductions forward, and that they understand the complexities of the school system. Liaisons from the Finance Committee and Leadership Team should layout information and have faith in the numbers so everyone can understand what it takes to educate children and the levels of complexity involved.

In addition to the budget reductions proposed, items in the CIP budget have been reduced as follows: School Maintenance Items reprioritized to \$250,000; textbooks reduced to \$120,000; and Technology reduced to \$340,000. The School Committee will meet again on Thursday, March 31st. Committee members will submit budget questions to one member of the Budget Sub-committee (Paula or Annie) by Monday morning.

1. 2011-2012 School Calendar – 3rd Reading

Superintendent McGrath reported there have been no comments received regarding the school calendar from the AEA Leadership Team or community; therefore, the School Committee should vote on this tonight. Teacher workshop days will be held on September 1 and 2, with the first day of school for students Tuesday, September 6. The calendar also includes six teacher workshop days for the elementary, middle, and high schools; and the 180th day of school as Monday, June 18th and if five snow days used, the last day of school would be Monday, June 25, 2012.

Annie Gilbert motioned that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the 2011-2012 School Calendar as presented. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements, and unanimously approved.

G. Consent Agenda

1. Minutes: Regular Meetings of March 3 and March 10, 2011 - Hold to next meeting
2. Warrants: None

I. Adjournment

On a motion by Annie Gilbert, with a second by Paula-Colby Clements it was voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recorder

Documents: 2011-2012 School Year Calendar
Minutes of March 3 and March 10, 2011