

**Andover School Committee**  
**Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 9, 2009**  
**School Administration Building - School Committee Room**

**Members in Attendance:** Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Richard J. Collins, Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert, David Birnbach, and Charlie Smith, AHS Liaison.

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

**I. Executive Session**

Chair Deb Silberstein called the School Committee Meeting to order at 6:03 P.M. in the School Committee Meeting Room in the School Offices. Present were: Chair Deb Silberstein, and Committee Members Richard Collins, Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert and David Birnbach.

On a motion by Dennis Forgue and a second by Richard Collins it was voted to go into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining strategies and to return to Open Session. Roll Call Vote: Chair Silberstein-Y, Members, D. Forgue-Y, R. Collins-Y, A. Gilbert-Y, and D. Birnbach-Y. At 7:02 P.M. on a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn the Executive Session, return to Open Session. Roll Call Vote: Chair Silberstein-Y, Members, D. Birnbach-Y, R. Collins, D. Forgue-Y, and A.Gilbert-Y.

**II. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room**

**A. Salute to the Flag**

Chair Deb Silberstein reconvened to Open Session at 7:19 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a Moment of followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by students, Alec Pascoe (Grade 3-South) and Amanda Pascoe (Grade 6-WMS). Mr. Collins presented the students with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

**B. Recognition of Achievement**

Dr Bach said she and Dr. Nicholson attended every school faculty meeting on the first two teacher in-service days to personally welcome them. Dr. Bach also recognized all teachers, staff, and students on a successful opening day and remarked on the inspiring AHS Freshman Orientation video promotion produced by Jonathan Harris, AHS Principal and Joe Spanos, TV-Technology at AHS. Annie Gilbert, who attended the Freshman Orientation, said she too was very impressed with the video shown to the incoming ninth grade students and their parents.

In memory of Charlie Wesson and Ed Bennett Mr. Collins recognized their significant contributions to the Town of Andover.

Deb Silberstein said it was an honor to work with Tim Felter, a former member of the Finance Committee and liaison to the School Committee who recently stepped down.

**C. Communications**

**1. President Obama's Address to Students**

Dr. Bach and Dr. Nicholson met with a team of principals to decide the course of action to take about showing President Obama's address to students. The decision was to show the President's address, and allow students to watch it or choose to not watch it.

**2. Scheduling Report**

Dr. Bach reported more than ten teachers offered to teach an additional section of classes to support student requests at AHS. Guidance counselors are diligently working to meet the needs of a handful of students to meet the 7.5 credit requirement and to accommodate requests by other students. There are 730 students in Advanced

### C. Communications (Cont'd)

Placement Courses, which is 150 more than last year and with most class sizes capped at 29 it leaves little mobility for students to change classes or to accommodate all requests for AP classes. The Committee requested AHS Principal, Jonathan Harris present his vision for AHS to the School Committee at a future meeting.

#### 2. School Building Taskforce Update

Dr. Bach said eleven submissions from architectural firms (with sub-contractors identified) were received by MSBA for the design of Bancroft School. The two firms selected by the Designer Selection Panel include Simms, Mannie & Magee, and Design Partners of Cambridge. Before interviewing the two companies, topics for the interview need to be formulated. School Committee members should submit their ideas to Dr. Bach. Currently, MSBA does not have a "model" elementary school and there is interest in Andover becoming that model. Annie Gilbert said incentive points are awarded for being a model school (additional funding). David Birnbach suggests the Committee look at the pre-configured and custom option first, and then dialogue.

Dr. Nicholson announced that she and Steve Cogger, Engineering Teacher at DMS, are working with I-Robot in Bedford on an engineering project for students in grade 8. I-Robot has agreed to fund the parts for now and possibly provide financial backing later. She and Steve plan to bring a group of teachers to the I-Robot facility in Bedford and share with them the work we do in Andover.

David Birnbach said due to the reduction in school music programs information on alternative music programs (i.e. those offered by the Department of Community Services) should be provided to parents and suggested the School Listserve be used to relay this information and enhance collaboration between the Town and Schools. Mr. Birnbach motioned to appoint someone to lead this endeavor to support programs through listservs.

Dr. Bach said school listservs are limited to school communications only. The PTO/PAC Listservs are used for all other communications and the DCS Programs are advertised through that venue. Deb Silberstein suggested it be allowed one time, but deferred the final decision to the Superintendent. It would be a Policy Change requiring a first pass and though not prepared to initiate a new policy tonight, it could be put on the agenda for September 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss with Michael Gilbert. Dr. Nicholson said the Andover After-School Music Program (ASSMP) also provides an opportunity for our students to participate in music programs.

Annie Gilbert said she, Deb Silberstein and Dr. Nicholson met to begin discussing the vision for the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will be a two prong-approach and include a 3-5 year road map as well as establishing the Community's vision for the Andover Public Schools and focusing on the high-priority areas. The Committee agreed to break out into groups for fact-finding. David Birnbach will co-chair the Technology Committee with Ray Tode, School Technology and Information Director; Dennis Fogue and Dr. Bach will co-chair the Revenue Generating area; Dick Collins will work with the Athletic Department; Susan Nicholson and Annie Gilbert will work on the 3-5 year roadmap. Dave Birnbach and Dennis Fogue will report their findings to the School Committee on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. The members will meet next with Dr. Bach to discuss how the overall Steering Committee looks and arrange a meeting with Lyle Kirtman, Future Management Systems.

### D. Education

#### 1. TILE Program Update

Dr. Bach explained how Succession Planning led to Andover's involvement with Salem State and the TILE Program (Teacher Initiative for Leadership in Education) to move teachers into leadership positions. Dr. Bach welcomed the 2<sup>nd</sup> co-hort group of the TILE Program to the School Committee meeting.

Dr. Nicholson said the eleven Andover staff members enrolled in the TILE Program attend classes held after school and on weekends. Their instructors from the TILE Program modeled theories of a Professional Learning

#### **D. Education (Cont'd)**

Communities and, as co-horts the teachers brought best practices back to their schools. Dr. Nicholson introduced Andover teachers from the second co-hort, Colleen McCormick (WMS), Greg Waters (AHS), Andrew Long (WMS) and Linda Breen (HPE), who are here to share their experience with the Tile Program and explain how it has impacted them as a teacher-leader and learner.

The teachers talked about the wonderful opportunity the TILE Program has provided by taking them beyond the classroom to learn about administrative/leadership roles in education. Each participant explained the yearlong action research project they are involved in, how it has affected their role in their schools, with student learning, and the value professional training has on successful implementation of leadership teams.

Dr. Nicholson extended an invitation to all teachers who would like to come to a School Committee meeting to share the work they do.

##### **2. FY2010 AHS Student Handbook**

Dennis Forgue motioned to accept the changes in the AHS Student Handbook as presented. The motion was seconded by Annie Gilbert and voted 5-0-0 to approve.

AHS Liaison to the School Committee, Charlie Smith spoke about the new policy on using electronics in school and asked if iPods can be use in study halls and in the hallways. AHS Principal, Jonathan Harris said he welcomes the opportunity to revisit the policy and make changes if necessary.

##### **3. Enrollment Report**

Dr. Bach said as of today the actual enrollment numbers show class size in grade 3 and grade 5 at West Elementary to be on the high side of School Committee Policy, but overall acceptable compared to previous years. There is a slight decrease of 26 students at the middle schools, and the student population at AHS grew by 97 students from last year with 504 students enrolled in the Freshman Class. The enrollment at AHS sits at 1,818 students and District-wide there are 6,196 students enrolled in the Andover Public Schools. Annie Gilbert commented on the decrease in the ½ day kindergarten numbers and suggested staffing considerations be reviewed in the future. Deb Silberstein stated the majority of students in classes at the elementary schools are below or at mid-level; and overall we are in good shape.

#### **E. Personnel**

##### **1. Report on Part-Time Staff**

Deb Silberstein said a report on part-time employees and related health insurance costs was provided by Candace Hall, Human Resources Director at tonight's Executive Session. The Committee will hold a follow-up session with the Board of Selectmen and with Michael Gilbert from MASS to review the policy.

##### **2. Superintendent's 2010 Professional Goals – hold for next meeting.**

#### **F. Citizen Input**

Former School Superintendent, Dr. Ken Seifert shared his thoughts on specific strategies to consider for the next three to five years. 1. Creating a Parent Center to establish formal relationship. 2. Create a Research, Development and Dissemination Center for the Town. 3. Create a Youth Activity Center in a school. 4. Making every school a specialty school. 5. A format for the Strategic Plan to include ideas and support from residents in the Town. He feels strongly that the Andover Public Schools can be a shining light locally and across the State.

## **G. Consent Agenda**

**Warrant:** Dave Keniston said the Warrants are in order.

**Minutes:** Regular Session Minutes of July 22, 2009, August 4, 2009 and August 17, 2009;  
Work Session Minutes of August 25, 2009 and Tri-board Minutes of August 17, 2009

**Field Trips:** Nature's Classroom – Ivoryton, CT – Grade 5 – October 13-16, 2009 West Elementary School

**Motion:** Annie Gilbert motioned to approve the consent agenda items listed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Collins and unanimously approved.

## **H. Finance**

### **1. Approved FY2010 Budget**

Dr. Bach began by discussing where the school system is currently and the major shift that has taken place in how we provide education to students. She has met with principals to discuss plans to cover areas of reduction and the contract constrictions that make it challenging. Deb Silberstein overviewed the FY-2010 information from the Town Manager's Office which includes anticipated revenue from the Hotel/Motel Local Options Tax and the increase in Property Tax Growth which brings the Town deficit to \$1.4M. Still problematic is the reduction in the Circuit Breaker of \$957,000. Schools have been assigned 65% of the deficit as well as the further reductions from the approved budget at the May Town Meeting. Areas are being identified to contribute towards closing the deficit including reductions in the CIP from Technology and Textbooks. The economic environment is turbulent and schools are still adjusting to the changes. How to stabilize and adjust to these changes while avoiding further reductions that will negatively impact the budget is a goal for the School Committee. Highlights of the meeting with the Board Chair, Town Manager, and the Superintendent with input from Lyle Kirtman of Future Management Systems include: IT Consolidation, moving retired teachers on GIC to the Town's insurance plan, combining school/town nurses, health insurance and part-time employees, outsourcing of payroll, and reductions in wages as well as developing a comprehensive plan for the community. If the AEA would agree to a 1% wage reduction for FY2010 it would close the budget gap. The Chair and Committee members will approach the AEA Leadership once again to ask for this reduction.

Dennis Forge suggested they take another dedicated look at line items in the budget, and then review all possibilities to make decisions to help close the FY-2010 budget gap and to a restoration plan for FY-11. Dr. Bach stated the organization is at risk if additional cuts are taken. Deb Silberstein said the next step would be to look at the core values to stabilize the organization and if they may have to look at increasing class size or closing a school in 2011 to alleviate some of the pressure. Dr. Bach feels there are other ways the Town can step up and challenged their priorities. David Birnbach said the organization structure has to change and restructure the way services are delivered. Direction and strategy from the leadership team is needed. Annie Gilbert is concerned that FY 11 will present a much worse scenario for next year and asked what we can identify right now to get to the target budget.

Dennis Forgue motioned to instruct the Superintendent to work in collaboration with the Town Manager to come back with a plan for the consolidation of the IT functions with an implementation date of January 2010. The motion was seconded by Richard Collins and voted 5-0-0 to approve.

Several residents voiced their concern and urged the School Committee to push back on further school budget reductions. Concerns were also expressed about the loss of the Technology Lab at WHMS and the need for direction to communicate a clear message now for the October Town Meeting. The immediate focus should be on the budget for the October 7<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting.

David Keniston will draft a warrant article for the WHMS laptops as a placeholder for reserving funds. The Committee wants to know what the short-term impact of the FY-10 CIP will be, what the projected out-of-district special education tuition costs are, and what our annual commitments are now. The Committee will meet on Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Warrant Articles and to have a Work Session the following week.

**I. Motion to Adjourn**

Mr. Collins motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the School Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Forgue, and voted 5-0 -0 to approve. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*Dec DeLorenzo, Recorder*