

Andover School Committee
Regular Meeting of October 9, 2014
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Annie Gilbert, Paula Colby-Clements, Barbara L'Italien, David Birnbach, and Joel Blumstein

Others in Attendance: Dr. Marinel McGrath, Superintendent, Paul Szymanski, Assistant Superintendent Finance and Administration, and Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Nancy A. Duclos, and AHS Liaison Jason Gross.

I. Executive Session

At 6:30 P.M. the School Committee on a motion duly made and seconded voted to meet in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy relative to impact bargaining for the High School Schedule proposal and to return to Open Session. Roll call: A. Gilbert-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, B. L'Italien-Y, D. Birnbach-Y, J. Blumstein-Y. At 6:56 P.M. on a motion by Paula Colby-Clements and seconded by Barbara L'Italien, the School Committee voted to adjourn from Executive Session and return to Open Session, not to return to Executive Session. Roll call: A. Gilbert-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, B. L'Italien-Y, D. Birnbach-Y, and J. Blumstein-Y.

II. Regular Meeting

A. Call to Order and Opening Ceremonies

Annie Gilbert called the meeting to order at 7:14 P.M. followed by a Moment of Silence and a Salute to the Flag led by Cailin Cronin a 6th Grade Student at West Middle School. On behalf of the School Committee, Barbara L'Italien presented Cailin with a certificate of appreciation.

B. Recognition/Communication

Superintendent McGrath reported on the recurring bomb scares that several communities have recently experienced. She and Paul Szymanski met with Police Chief Keefe to review safety features and protocols which have been communicated to school principals. Should Andover receive a threat, parents would be notified by a Connect 5 call from her (not the Code Red Municipal Alert System).

C. Education

1. Presentation of High School Proposal

The previous contract negotiations with the Andover Educators Association was contentious due to the issue of the high school block schedule implemented in 1998 which has been a topic of scrutiny ever since. During the last contract negotiations, the AEA, School Committee and School Administration agreed to form a committee of teachers, administrators, and parents to investigate the implementation of a new schedule. Over the past two years, the High School Scheduling Committee collaboratively worked to find a schedule that would best suit the students in Andover. Tonight the School Committee's task is to deliberate and vote on the proposed new schedule and if they approve the schedule, it will be the first step in the implementation process followed by impact bargaining with the AEA. Once the bargaining sessions are completed, and contingent upon satisfying other facets involved with the schedule, the earliest the new schedule would be implemented would be the fall of 2015. The School Committee is charged with approving Educational Policy.

Email responses received from the public included questions surrounding the framework of the proposal relative to Advanced Placement Courses, reduction of credit opportunities (7 credits vs current 8), and the substance of the H-Block. There were questions about the Implementation Proposal that included passing time, scheduling and logistics of H-Block, transition plans, scheduling for special education students, and parent access to H-Block, flexibility of the advisor/advisee assignment, impacts on homework, new course pacing, and orchestra. A few email responders do not think there are enough opportunities for student input. Positive responses on the new proposed schedule included having year-long courses, pacing, and improved

opportunity for teacher/student relationships, continuity of instruction, and more opportunity for student personalization.

Comment Period: There were a number of public comments some of which included the following:

Mrs. Sousa, 10 High Lane, asked what the alternative would be if the schedule is not approved, what the cost will be to implement the new schedule, and how the high school teachers feel about the proposed schedule.

If the new schedule were not approved, they would continue with the current semester block. The cost of the implementation would be determined through impact bargaining. The schedule would add five FTE's to maintain class size. Teachers are looking forward to the continuity of seeing students in year-long classes and more than once a day, and feel there are a lot of positives associated with the new schedule.

Dennis Fogue, 18 Reservation Road said there is nothing magical about the September 2015 implementation date. The School Committee has the authority to make that decision to begin the schedule at that time or to wait until they feel all implementation pieces are in place. There are a lot of broad issues to work out and it is most important to take the time to have a successful implementation.

Sarah Schmidt, 7 Knollcrest Drive, asked if any thought had been given to phasing the schedule in each year.

The Scheduling Committee did discuss trying to implement the schedule to a small group initially but it didn't make sense, and there aren't enough faculty members to successfully do this.

Lucia Krinsky – a parent representative on the Scheduling Committee said there is a lot discussion going on at the high school, students don't know what the schedule can do for them.

David Birnbach said a similar H-Block model is used by other school systems that Andover compares themselves to and Thomas Jefferson High School in Fairfax County, which is the number one high school in the country, uses a very similar model. This schedule will take the District and students to the next level. They will take the necessary time needed to properly implement the schedule and he feels confident we will be prudent in that process. H-Block will become the highlight of the student's day and morph AHS into the direction of other well regarded school districts.

Jean Teichert, Dufton Road, has concerns with the lack of transparency with the process. There are concerns about credits and there are questions that have not been answered.

Joel Blumstein said before he was elected to the School Committee he was on the Scheduling Committee and a public forum was held before the process started. Annie Gilbert shared her observations from her visit to ConVale High School (who uses the H-Block) and shared responses from the teachers she spoke to: H-Block extends learning; offers opportunities for credits, critiques, internships, task talks, and high-achieving students have the ability to schedule their own H-Block activities. Other teachers said it offers student the opportunity for extra help during the school day.

Assistant Superintendent Nancy Duclos believes the schedule promotes academic growth and provides frameworks for teachers so students can grow. The schedule supports an analysis of data, change, and better meets needs of students as well as the Department of Elementary and Secondary requirements.

Rebecca D'Alise, AHS teacher and member of the Scheduling Committee, said the new schedule offers more continuity, delves deeper into context and plunges deeper into academic and advisor opportunities to meet at varied times throughout the day.

Superintendent McGrath recently attended the EdLeader21 Conference in Atlanta where the highest achieving school systems were represented. The consensus is that high schools want to move towards a more innovative way for education, and provide flexible schedules that offer time to engage in a passion students have. The Scheduling Committee was designed to ensure our interests, high school values, and options for every student to enable them to be ready for the future. She views the schedule as another tool in our tool chest to better meet the needs of our students.

School Committee:

Joe Blumstein: The H-Block Schedule has the potential to transform school for many students and will benefit all students. H-Block provides educational time in a broader manner than a typical classroom setting. The Implementation Plan should be developed first and the schedule begun after that. He is in favor of the H-Block Schedule.

Paula Colby-Clements: Andover Public School's vision is for every student to achieve and the new schedule would fill the need for every student to meet their potential. The schedule offers more collaboration opportunities for both students and teachers and offers a buy-in for both teachers and administrators who feel this schedule best meets the needs of students and is more flexible and adaptable. The size of the high school has been a complaint; the H-Block schedule can create a smaller school size and help teachers to identify more quickly students in need. It would also reduce some daily pressures, and make connections between students and teachers, and will be monitored to capitalize on opportunities for students. The key to its success is management, acquisition of new school software, and the proper timeline for implementation. She is in favor of the new schedule.

Barbara L'Italien: Many students don't feel connected in a larger school environment. This is an opportunity to create a small school initiative which is an important mechanism for all kids to feel connected. Different students need different modes of education and motivation, and the H-Block will help to reduce some student stress and provide an opportunity to educate the whole child. She agrees the implementation needs to be ready before launching the schedule, and is in support of the new schedule.

David Birnbach: He is in full support of the new schedule.

Annie Gilbert: This is a great opportunity in that it is not fully defined and we will be able to leverage opportunities. Thoughtful work has been done by a thoughtful committee. She is willing to take a leap of faith and support the schedule.

Dr. McGrath said the School Committee will be notified if more time is needed to implement the schedule.

Paula Colby-Clements moved that the Andover School Committee vote to accept and implement the schedule recommended by the Joint Scheduling Committee starting no earlier than the 2015-2016 School Year subject to satisfying its bargaining obligations with the Andover Education Association. The motion was seconded by Joel Blumstein and voted 5-0 to approve.

2. Appoint School Committee Members for the Impact Bargaining Team

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote to appoint Annie Gilbert and Paula Colby-Clements as the School Committee's Negotiations Subcommittee charged with Impact Bargaining the Recommended High School Schedule recommendation. The motion was seconded by Barbara L'Italien and voted 5-0 to approve.

D. Consent Agenda

- 1. Warrants:** Expense: SW1507A and SW1507
Payroll: 15S015 and 15S014

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and voted 5-0 to approve.

E. Adjournment

At 9:25 P.M. on a motion by Paula Colby-Clements and seconded by Barbara L'Italien, the Andover School Committee voted to adjourn. Roll call: P. Colby-Clements-Y, J. Blumstein-Y, B. L'Italien-Y. D. Birnbach, A. Gilbert-Y.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary

Documents: AHS Scheduling Committee Report