

Andover School Committee

Minutes of March 17, 2016

I. Call To Order

Annie Gilbert called the School Committee Meeting to order at 6:15 P.M.

II. Executive Session

On a motion by Joel Blumstein and seconded by Paula Colby-Clements, the School Committee entered in Executive Session for the Purpose to comply with or act under the authority of a general or special law, i.e., G.L., c. 30A, sec. 22(g), consideration of release of executive session minutes from previous minutes and to reconvene in open session for the regular meeting. On a motion duly made and seconded the School Committee adjourned from Executive Session at 6:30 P.M.

III. Regular Meeting

A. Chair, Annie Gilbert reconvened the meeting of March 17, 2016 to order at 7:06 P.M. The meeting began with a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by High Plain Student, Zachary Rabold. A certificate of appreciation was presented to Zachary on behalf of the School Committee.

B.

Recognitions/Communications

1. Senator L'Italien visit with Dr. Berman

Dr. Berman welcomed State Senator L'Italien to tonight's School Committee Meeting. Senator L'Italien presented an official citation from the State Senate to both Paula and Annie in recognition of their years of service to the Andover School Committee.

Senator L'Italien was instrumental in advocating for the additional resources for the Andover Public Schools and through her efforts, Andover received a check for \$200,000 towards the design costs for the AHS Library/Media Center and \$30,000 for improvements to the AHS Peter Aumais Baseball Field. Transforming the AHS Media Center into a 21st Century Learning area is an important step in creating additional space at the high school and will help to begin the transformation of space at AHS. Senator L'Italien will continue to work with her colleagues on Beacon Hill to increase revenue for all communities from the State budget and to increase Circuit Breaker funds. She also encouraged Andover to consider joining the Suburban Coalition.

2. Highlights around the District:

The first cohort of AHS students presented their senior year CAPStone projects thru Conducting Advanced Primary Research Projects to the Committee. Students who presented their projects included Daniel Combs, Emma Plourde, Leigh Burte, Sara Clark, and Henry Gilbert. The students shared what their research project is, and why they chose their subject.

The curriculum of a CAPstone Project is to restore primary resources and dig deeper into a subject the student is passionate about. A formal academic paper, online component and Ted Talks, are more academically rigorous than senior exhibition, and a requirement of the project. This year, Steve Chinosi, Director of Strategy & Innovation and Rebecca D'Alise were the Chairs of the CAPstone Program.

IV. Public Hearing – FY-17 Recommended School Budget

Andover is legally mandated to hold a public hearing to discuss the Proposed School Department Budget. The purpose of this portion of the meeting is to provide the public with the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed budget. The hearing was posted in the newspaper as required.

Currently, the School Department's Budget Recommendation of \$77,299,074 is a 5.46% increase over last year. The Town Manager's recommended budget is \$75,480,829, a 2.89% increase over last year. The School Administration has addressed some Out-of-District (OUD) Special Educational needs, Internal Special Educational needs, all contractual obligations, and elementary needs in terms of growth in enrollment this year by adding five teachers, and implementing the AHS schedule, additional needs for English Language-Learners, and Algebra in the middle schools.

A. Public Input

Kerry Costello, President of the AEA, expressed her appreciation to Annie and Paula for their dedication, commitment, and time given to the Andover Public Schools. The AEA will make a donation in honor of their commitment to the Andover Coalition for Education (ACE).

Kerry asked that the Committee seriously consider their budget decision to delay the implementation of the AHS Schedule. This is the fourth year of working towards the implementation and the high school was to be the priority. The AEA placed an ad in the Andover Townsman and submitted a letter to the Editor with information on what the new AHS Schedule entails, and to point out to the community data supporting yearlong schedules and information on the benefits derived from a yearlong schedule vs. the current semester classes. Staff and administrators at AHS have given thousands of hours the past four years toward the schedule. If we do end up waiting another year to implement the schedule, she hopes the Town and School will make AHS the priority for this Town.

Alana McKee strongly supports keeping the semesterized schedule because, in her opinion, the change to H-Block limits the number of AP courses a student can take.

Laura Gregory, 5 Embassy Lane, and VP of AHS PAC said she supports the new schedule and asks that the School Committee find a way to fund the schedule they voted for. H-Block will allow special projects (like the capstone), allow students to meet with teachers forging a better relationship between students and teachers, which

is important academically and emotionally. We need to put some money, effort and time to advance the high school.

At 8:05 P.M. Chair Annie Gilbert closed the Public Hearing.

B. Response to Public

Input

Response to public input will be provided during the budget deliberation.

V. Return to Regular Meeting

A. Education

1. Neal Grant Survey Student Research

New England Arts for Literacy (NEAL) Project Director, Ruth Tarbox, updated the School Committee on the process to be followed to conduct research in the Andover Public Schools. As part of the NEAL Grant, they are required to access student data, and in order to answer the questions, rely on data from a variety of sources. There will be a post survey and the information will be shared. Dr. Berman said the survey is part of the project and information has been given to the School Committee in their packet.

2. AHS Field Trip to New York (Amnesty International Club) April 8, 2016

Students from the AHS Amnesty Club have been invited to attend the annual Amnesty International Conference in NYC on a day trip. Last year, AHS students also attended the same conference.

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extra-curricular trip for Andover High School students to New York City for a day trip on April 8, 2016 as presented and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Andover School Committee Travel Policy entitled "APS School-sponsored Trip and Student Travel Policy". The motion was seconded by Susan McCready and voted 4-0 to approve.

3. Program of Studies

Each year the School Committee reviews the High School Program of Studies for approval. Two draft versions of the Program of Studies, the current block schedule and the new schedule was prepared and presented by Aixa de Kelley, Guidance Program Advisor. Once approved, the 2016-2017 Program of Studies will be posted so that 8th grade parents can review it prior to the 8th grade orientation meeting. If they retain the current schedule for next year the only change would be in the current AP classes.

Joel Blumstein commented that the total number of credits required for graduation for electives should be examined if the new schedule is implemented. Principal Conrad said they have widened the variety of electives and includes a comprehensive background. Annie Gilbert suggested having a discussion on credits as an agenda

item going forward. Joel also asked if we were to continue with the Block schedule for next year, could they double up in math in the 9th grade. Principal Conrad doesn't see that option available now.

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the 2016-2017 Block Schedule AHS Program of Studies as presented and to delay the implementation of the new high school schedule until 2017. Susan McCready seconded the motion and the School Committee voted 4-0 to approve.

4. Strategic Plan Goal 4: Communications

Goal 4 is a strategic area of focus on communications, planning and partnerships. Three strategies have been organized and vehicles of communication established including enhanced translation services, and updated strategic plan. Andover is working on a collaborative task force with the town to look at two-way communications. They have not yet established the two-way communication system that solicits input on a regular basis, nor do they have the staffing to support an efficient and effective communications program. The District has developed strong collaborations with Merrimack College, The Service Club, Rotary, and Andover Coalition for Education, but have not established formal business and community partnerships; although Steve Chinosi is reaching out to local companies to share initiatives and establish collaborations.

B. New Business

1. Withdrawal of CIP Article – AHS Media Center

The District has received the check for the \$200,000 from the State; therefore, the CIP Warrant Article should be withdrawn at this time.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to withdraw the sum of \$200,000 as a funding request for the AHS Library/Media Center design phase since the State has released FY-16 earmarked funds in the amount of \$200,000. Paula Colby-Clements seconded the motion and the School Committee voted 4-0 to approve.

2. FY-17 Warrant Articles

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote to recommend approval of the following Warrant Articles as printed. Paula Colby-Clements seconded the motion and the School Committee voted 4-0 to recommend approval.

FY-2017 Capital Projects Fund Appropriation – Article P-5

General Housekeeping Articles – Article P-11

A – Grant Program Authorization

E - Contracts in Excess of Three Years

- FY-2017 Revolving Accounts – Article P-16
- FY-2017 Creation of School Dept. Revolving Account-Article Number to be Named
- Public Works Vehicles – Article P-25
- Collins Center Façade Replacement – Article P-28

- Lovely Field Turf Replacement – Article P-29
- School Building Maintenance and Renovation – Article P-30
- 1:1 Student Learning Initiative – Article P-31
- Elementary School Projectors – Article P-32
- Town and School Energy Initiatives – Article P-33
- Andover High School Track Replacement – Article P-35
- Annual Computer Workstation & Laptop Replacement Program Article P-36

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote not to recommend approval of Warrant Article P-50 entitled “general bylaw amendment – contract scoring” (see below). The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and voted 4-0 not to recommend approval.

Private Warrant Articles

General Bylaw Amendment – Contract Scoring Article P-50

To see if the Town will amend Articles III, IV and V of the Town Bylaws as follows to provide for thorough financial and tax-implications analyses ("Contract Scoring"), to be performed by the Town's Finance Committee, of every proposed multi-year contract that Town and School Department officials negotiate with vendors, employees and unions prior to the Town and School Department executing such contracts; and to provide financial and tax implications transparency on each of these contracts to Town residents by including each Contract Scoring report on the Town of Andover website and as a part of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant that gets prepared by the Town Finance Committee. On request of Bob Pokress and others

C. FY 17 Recommended Budget - Potential Final Vote

The \$1.8M budget gap is substantial and Dr. Berman explained how they arrived at the new school budget number of \$76,187,829 for FY-17. Having gone through many accounts to see where reductions can be made and risks taken they developed a list of budget compromises and reductions in line items.

A tentative agreement with the Town Manager has been arrived at that would in essence reduce the school budget by \$551,000 and the Town would increase the recommended budget by \$707,000 and Andover Public Schools would use an additional \$560,000 from the Circuit Breaker reserve.

One potential bright spot is the emergency relief fund appropriated by the legislature that covers emergencies, (i.e. fire, mold, rapid increase of enrollment that the district cannot compensate for and finally, increase in special education expenses). However, we cannot apply for relief until next November, but could have a viable chance of securing an additional \$350K.

Deciding upon whether or not to move forward this year with the AHS schedule or funding additional teachers at the elementary level to address increased enrollment has been a very difficult decision.

Dr. Berman is recommending waiting one additional year before implementing the new AHS Schedule to allow for more continuity; the personalization has a lot to offer supplying support and additional enrichment, and a rotating schedule provides a mix of opportunities and change. Teachers will have collaborative time to look at data, improve their data, and to advance their work together.

The reason why the administrative team is recommending the addition of five elementary teachers is to confront class size due to the reduction in teaching staff last year. The student population in the elementary level has experienced a rapid change in ELL students, our classrooms are more complex, and teachers need smaller class sizes. The foundation for education is laid at the elementary level, and adding five elementary teachers will impact a high number of students across the district.

The high school schedule was also a priority but the schedule will be delayed one year providing additional time to bring the faculty together, work towards common goals, and to work with parents to understand the value of H-Block and how it can serve students. Staying with the current semesterized schedule provides an opportunity to 9th graders to back up Algebra and Geometry if they are interested and for sophomores to take Geometry and Algebra II. Using the \$63,000 to be held out from the new schedule helps us to address the middle school math problem this year.

Tim Chen, AHS Student Government Liaison to the School Committee, said the Student Government Council discussed the schedule choice and were split down the middle on their decision; but the underclassmen were more positive and he felt that was a good sign. His own personal thoughts as a senior now, was originally against it four years ago, but this year he has come to realize that no matter how great AHS is, students feel overlooked with a lost sense of direction; the school is not a community. AHS needs an organizational direction. AHS academically has great opportunities, but as a school he felt it lacked in a lot of things. AHS students are battling serious issues, mental health, drug abuse, etc., and the new schedule offers opportunity to revitalize the school.

Dr. Berman said the sense of community is important in schools, and hopes that over the next year we can bring more people on board and flush out concerns.

Joel Blumstein is supportive of Dr. Berman's recommendation but he is also supportive of the new schedule at AHS. The H-Block has tremendous potential to make a difference and he is committed to making sure the new schedule is implemented the following year. The budget process has been a good collaborative process and he gives our new Town Manager a lot of credit for being very creative on addressing problems.

Paula Colby-Clemens said changing the schedule would reduce a lot of the pressure on students but we have to make choices. She has been enormously disheartened by the negative discourse in the community over the past few weeks, and urges people to hear

what Tim Chen said tonight and to internalize the reasons why we are looking for a new schedule for our kids.

Susan McCready also opposes having to make this decision to put off implementing the AHS schedule for another year and wants to see a demonstrated commitment to AHS by the School Administration by committing to purchasing the online texts.

Annie Gilbert said Tim Chen's statement is what the community should be talking about now, not rankings, not AP Courses, not transcripts, but a sense of community. The choices we tend to have every year are usually about a process, and part of her thinking around her decision comes from the 15 meetings with the Town Manager, Shelley, and three Chairs, which weren't about dollars but the challenges the School Department is experiencing this year. As long as you are sure due diligence has been done and thoughtfulness has been put into the decision, you have to support decisions made by the leadership team. We do need to make the commitment to the AHS Schedule for next year.

Kerry Costello said Dr. Berman asked her opinion about the investment of the AHS staff for next year. She does not share the same optimism of the high school principal. There is a real sense of enervated, the student sense of community and lack of it resonates with all the staff at AHS, it is there and they feel it too. Tim Chen advocates for students, standing up for students' rights and voice. What is the Town of Andover going to do to support us in year 5 to really make our High School matter and make a difference?

The School Committee did not vote on the new budget agreement choosing to wait for more information.

D. Consent Agenda

1. Warrants: Warrants are in order
2. Minutes – Approval of Executive Minutes

Paula Colby-Clements moved to approve the Executive Session Minutes from January 8, 2014 to December 2015 as presented. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready and voted 4-0 to approve.

V. Adjournment

At 10:02 P.M. on a motion by Paula Colby-Clements and seconded by Susan McCready, the Andover School Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting of March 17, 2016.

Respectfully submitted
Dee DeLorenzo
Recorder