

Andover School Committee
Regular Meeting of June 1, 2010
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

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

Others in Attendance: Dr. Susan M. Nicholson, Interim Superintendent, Bernie Tuttle, Interim Business Manager

I. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Dennis Forgue reconvened the meeting from Executive Session to Open Session at 7:08 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sanborn School Students, Julia Keenan Grade 5, and Jessica Keenan, Grade 2. Mr. Collins presented the students with Certificates of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Business Manager Position

Chairman Forgue framed the issues and recommendation to invite the Department of Revenue and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to participate in the review of the Town and School finance and accounting functions. The Business Manager position was posted this spring in order to initiate the process of obtaining a new hire by July, but we were unable to move forward without the recommendation from the report. A verbal report has since been received with the final report expected soon. One of the recommendations is to go forward with hiring a Business Manager for the School Department.

The Town Manager, Buzz Stapczynski, and Selectmen Lyman, Vispoli, and Teichert shared their thoughts on reviewing other areas within finance and accounting that could be consolidated. Selectman Vispoli said they will continue to investigate possible consolidations on both sides (Town & School) as opportunities become available through attritions. Selectman Teichert asked if the Business Manager's job description/responsibilities would change to realize a reduced salary. Chairman Forgue stated that the position is critical to the School Department and does not see a consolidation in this area. The Town Manager recommended the Town Finance Director, Tony Torrisi and Town Accountant, Rod Smith sit on the Selection Committee. Selectman Lyman suggested establishing a time frame to jointly review the report from the DOR and DESE, and to determine what measures can be mapped out for future joint goals in consolidation. The School Committee and Board of Selectmen agreed to schedule a workshop to discuss the report findings.

C. Strategic Plan Update **Tabled**

D. Recognition of Achievement

Dr. Nicholson made the following recognitions:

- ~ AHS Seniors Karen Abou Hamad and Matthew Liffman who were honored as outstanding citizens and scholars at the Merrimack Valley Superintendent's Association luncheon.
- ~ Town and School employees who were recognized for their years of service at the Founder's Day Reception.
- ~ The outstanding presentation by AHS students at Senior Exhibition Night at AHS.

Dr. Nicholson introduced AHS English Language Arts Program Advisor, Patricia Whalen who congratulated and recognized Andover High School seniors Katie Knowles and Molly Van Doren who have been named winners of the Dickens Project High School Essay Contest. They and Stacy Giggie (their AP English teacher and faculty sponsor) will be attending the annual Dickens Universe week-long conference at the University of California Santa Cruz, August 1st- 7th. This is the first time that the two top winners have been from the same high school.

The students will have their papers presented at the conference and published on the DU website, and they and their teacher will attend lectures and discussions with Dickens scholars from across the country, graduate and undergraduate students, and community members at UC Santa Cruz. Ms. Giggie's class read Dickens' Hard Times for their AP class and one of their assessment choices was to write a 3-5 page essay analyzing a theme of a Dickens novel that was the contest assignment. Ms. Giggie entered the two best essays from her class in the contest, and they turned out to be the best in the country in a year when the number of entries was so large that the announcement of winners was delayed by one month.

Mr. Collins recognized AHS Track Coach Peter Comeau on the fantastic job he has done coaching the AHS Track team. The combined Boys' and Girls' teams won the State relays, Andover Booster Championship, League Meet and the State Championship.

E. Communications

1. Annual District-wide Gr 4 & 5 Track Meet

The annual Grade 4 & 5 District-wide Track meet will be held on June 9th at AHS from 9:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. The final event will be a relay with principals and teachers participating.

2. DMS Principal Search Update

Dr. Nicholson reported that site visits for the two DMS Principal Search Candidates were held last week and they anticipate a decision on the selection of the new Principal for DMS by the end of this week.

3. Bancroft School Update

Annie Gilbert reported that MSBA voted to approve the Feasibility Study for the Bancroft School and the School Building Committee (SBC) will now move forward to the Schematic Design Phase which consists of more detailed plans of the project for classrooms, media center, art rooms, etc. MSBA will periodically check-in on the progress being made, and on June 23rd meet to examine more specifically at how the building will be sited. The SBC will convene on June 2nd at 8:00 A.M. to vote on a secondary vehicle access road to the site, and to determine if one or more access points other than Bancroft Road is needed. The SBC will hold a public meeting on June 9th at 6:00 P.M. at West Middle School to discuss lessons learned from the High Plain/Wood Hill Building Project, and to gauge what the community's interest is in incorporating sustainable designs into the project

4. AHS Course Offerings

AHS Principal, Jonathan Harris and Science Program Advisor Dr. Mary Jo Carabatsos presented new expanded course offerings for a half-credit (.5) to students. The course offerings will be inter-disciplinary units combining art studies with physics and allow students to develop knowledge of their inter-relationships.

Annie Gilbert motioned for approval of the new Physics with Art and Music Inter-disciplinary Units as presented. The motion was seconded by Richard Collins and unanimously approved.

Chairman Forgue reported that he has reached out to the AEA President, Tom Meyers to consider signing onto the second round of the Race to the Top Memorandum. Mr. Meyers responded the Association would consider the request during contract negotiations.

F. Citizen Input

Bob Willard, 76 Tewksbury Street said the history of contract negotiations with the teachers union has been behind closed doors with misinformation reported. He suggests the upcoming negotiations be held in open meetings or joint public reports of progress/disagreements frequently provided. He asked the School Committee to present this request to the AEA.

G. Budget Update

Dr. Nicholson and Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle provided a report on where the \$700,000 in reductions will be made to align expenses with the budget approved by the School Committee for FY-2011. Many difficult and challenging meetings were held with the Administrative Team resulting in decisions that are best for the children in the Andover Public Schools.

Five positions slated to be reduced at the elementary level were minimized to two positions due to six unexpected leave of absences by teachers. No cuts will be made at the Middle Schools. AHS will see a reduction of 6.2 positions and any State Stabilization funds received will be used at AHS to restore reductions. The Administration regrets making these cuts but has fulfilled their obligation.

The High School reduction of 6.2 teaching positions (which includes a guidance counselor) will save \$470,000. The High School Guidance Counselor open position will not be filled. Dr. Nicholson reported on the list of reductions by department at the High School, the impact it will have on student learning, and the challenges that will result. The reduction in courses is based on student's course requests, and the Language Lab will be capped at 29 students. David Birnbach is concerned with the loss of classes at AHS and suggested preserving reductions in Science by increasing elementary class size instead.

There was a lengthy discussion on the loss of a Guidance Counselor and the additional student load it will place on the other Guidance Counselors, the impact it will have on students especially seniors, and the School Committee's request the Guidance Counselor position not be cut.

Dr. Nicholson reported that the AHS Guidance Counselors have started to build a preliminary schedule with 884 students still under the required 7.5 credits for next year but they are confident this number will be reduced. Chairman Forgue then discussed reviewing class size policy. AHS Math Program Advisor Donna Pappalardo stated there could be many situations with over thirty students in a class.

Annie Gilbert is uncomfortable with the impact the reductions will have at the High School but the School Committee charged the Administrative Team with finding a better way to realize the \$700,000 necessary budget reduction. Although it is a terrible impact, the School Committee has to support what the Administrative Team has brought forward. She talked about the status of potential ARRA Stimulus money; IDEA Funds for Special Education, and State Fiscal Stabilization Fund revenue that will come from the State; she supports any revenue received be earmarked for the High School.

Nancy Bergeron, Stinston Road talked about the implications of the decisions being made especially the increase caseload for the Guidance Counselors, the impact it will have on students, and she would like to know how these decisions were made. Dr. Nicholson said she would like to meet with the team to vet out how the decisions were arrived at and appreciates Mrs. Bergeron's concerns.

Mr. Tuttle explained that the Guidance Counselor on leave submitted their resignation and has been filled this year by a permanent substitute. If this position is not filled, no current Guidance Counselor would lose their position and the current permanent sub filling this position is included in the reductions.

Cyndi Weber, 9 Gavin Circle talked about equity in reductions across the three levels and clarity of reductions made. Diane Costagliola, Belknap Drive understands the cuts made but it does not help students. Issues will arise with a reduction in Guidance Counselors. The \$150,000 should have been used proportionately as cuts have hit the High School for the past two years. Peggy Kruse questioned the perception of equity across the three levels. She too commented on the loss of a Guidance Counselor at the High School noting how difficult scheduling classes and meeting graduation requirements can be for students and the importance of a student's junior and senior years. With class sizes at the high school going well above the mid-point, but not so at the elementary level, there is cause for concern.

Dr. Nicholson is hopeful that State Fiscal Stabilization Funds will be made available to decrease the reductions at the High School. The decisions made were a result of thoughtful discussions by the Team based on building cuts for one year. The priority will be given to seniors with more information forthcoming over the next few weeks on the number of study halls for students. The situation is fluid and will continually be reviewed.

Consent Agenda Annie Gilbert motioned to accept the consent agenda items, except the Minutes of the March 19th Work Session, as presented. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and unanimously approved.

Warrants: Mr. Tuttle reported that the warrants are in order.

Field Trips: West Elem School, Grade 5, Canobie Lake Park, Salem, NH, June 17, 2010.
DMS Grade 7, Canobie Lake Park, Salem, NH, June 21, 2010.

Minutes: SC Work Session of March 19, 2010, and School Committee Regular Meeting of May 11, 2010.

Financials: to accept as presented.

On a motion by Annie Gilbert with a second by Richard Collins it was unanimously voted to approve the appointment of Dr. Susan Nicholson, as Interim Superintendent retroactive to April 29, 2010.

H. Adjournment

On a motion by Annie Gilbert and a second by Richard Collins, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder