

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of August 4, 2009
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Richard J. Collins, and Dennis Forgue. Members David Birnbach and Annie Gilbert were skyped into the meeting.

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

II. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein called the meeting to order at 7:07 P.M. in the School Committee Meeting Room. Mr. Collins asked for a Moment of Silence in memory of former Andover School Teachers Alan Minkinnen and Michael Pearl, as well as Jerry Silverman, former Selectman and long-time community volunteer and friend. The Moment of Silence was followed by a salute to the flag.

B. Recognition of Achievement

Dr. Bach introduced the new administrators present at tonight's meeting: Jonathan Harris, Principal, and Christopher Phillips, Assistant Principal of AHS, and Pamela Lathrop, Principal of High Plain Elementary School. She also welcomed other school principals in attendance this evening, Liz Roos, West Elementary School, Francine Goldstein, Bancroft Elementary, and Patricia Barrett, Sanborn Elementary School.

Dr. Bach recognized Gail Koutroubas, Food Service Director who has been appointed Vice President of the National Association of School Nutrition. She also recognized Candace Hall, Director of Human Resources and her staff who were part of the license renewal team instrumental in coordinating and submitting a report on highly-qualified teachers and which was acknowledged by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Mr. Collins recognized the AHS student who is participating in his summer course at Phillips Academy.

D. Communications

A draft of the School Committee Calendar for the 2009-2010 school year was provided to the members and Dr. Bach requested the members to report any discrepancies in the calendar to her Assistant, Alison Phelan.

Dr. Bach thanked the School Principals who were instrumental in monitoring energy use at their schools over the past year. The FY2009 Energy Report received from Mr. Piantedosi, Director of Plant and Facilities showed a town-wide savings of \$481,000, with \$200,000 of the total related to school energy savings.

Deb Silberstein received a communication from the Town Manager explaining the Board of Selectmen and School Committee's responsibility to appoint a member to the Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational School Committee to complete the term left vacant by the passing of Jerry Silverman. Interested parties should submit their names to Town Clerk Randy Hanson. The two Boards will vote to choose a member for the beginning of the new school year.

D. Education

1. 2010 Projected Enrollment

Dr. Bach reported that the projected enrollment for the upcoming school year shows the elementary schools have eleven more students than last reported. Class size is of concern at Bancroft School in Grade 3, with half-day kindergarten enrollment increasing at South, High Plain and Shawsheen. Sanborn School has seen an increase in ELL students and the ABA class at West Elementary has eight students enrolled. The current total elementary school enrollment is 2,876 students. The Middle School enrollment shows 1,485 students with the High School at 1,799 students with an incoming 9th Grade class of 496 students. District wide the total enrollment is 6,160 students. Administrators are looking at the each individual schedule for students at AHS to ensure student needs are being met and to decrease study halls. Stipends have been offered to teachers to teach additional sections to relieve scheduling problems. AHS Principal Jonathan Harris will provide an update on the enrollment and schedules at AHS at the August 25th School Committee meeting.

Dennis Forgue said the elementary school numbers show significant changes from the last report and the Enrollment Report submitted to the State for October 1st is most important. Deb Silberstein asked how increases in class size would be calculated if future reductions are required.

E. Citizen Input - None

F. Finance

1. Financial Update

Business Administrator David Keniston reported on the status of the FY2010 Budget showing a deficit of \$253,798. He said the total amount of the available stimulus money is \$944,000 and explained there is still confusion as to how much can be spent on recovery and how much on investment. There are significant needs in Special Education that qualify for investment revenue with recovery funds to be used to cover expenses already committed to. Mr. Keniston talked about the communication received from the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager detailing the total deficit the Town is faced with and discussed the School Department's portion of the deficit. Mr. Keniston will report back to the Committee with a plan to meet the School Budget. Deb Silberstein is having a follow up discussion regarding stimulus funds with Congresswoman Tsongas via email later this week.

2. Staffing Update

Dr. Bach reported that the FY10 Budget includes the reduction of \$3.2M in salary and services to students and increased fees. There have been 47.58 positions eliminated with the addition of 4.9 positions for the Wellness Program for a total loss of 42.68 positions. Dr. Bach explained the changes created through the lay-offs with 24 staff members bumping other positions, 6 teachers not renewed, 5 positions taken through retirement and 4 positions filled by staff that resigned.

Deb Silberstein provided an update on the Town Budget and talked about the communication received from the Town Manager explaining the deficit encountered from the drop in local revenue, new growth, interest and revenue from the State. The Selectmen voted to have a Special Town Meeting on August 31, 2009 for a vote on local option taxes to increase the meals tax and the hotel/motel tax. The Town is expecting the School Department to be responsible for 65% of the deficit. She would like to see equitable cuts across the Town and invited the Finance Committee Liaison, Jon Stumpf to visit the classrooms. Deb also asked the School Committee and Administrators to look at other areas that could be cut in place of class size.

The Elementary Principals talked about the need to send home letters to students/parents on class assignments for the upcoming school year.

2. Staffing Update (Cont'd)

Dennis Forgue motioned to recommend the Elementary Principals move forward with their plan to mail letters to parents/students for class assignments on August 14th with current staffing expectations knowing there could be future changes. The motion was seconded by Richard Collins and voted 3-0 to approve. Deb Silberstein supported the motion but is concerned there could be further reductions in staff. The Committee agreed to compose a letter to be sent to all parents via Listserv with regard to the budget deficit and to state that decisions made are subject to change depending upon the economic climate. Dr. Bach prevailed upon the Town to be more creative in looking for additional funding.

Finance Committee liaison Jon Stumpf said what the School Committee actions tonight are admirable and agrees that it is important children not be impacted by further reductions. He hopes the AEA will be open to making changes to work to rule conditions to save money.

I. Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Forgue motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the School Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Collins, and voted 3-0 to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:22 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder