

**Andover School Committee
Workshop
Minutes of November 8, 2013**

School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Dennis Forgue Paula Colby-Clements, Annie Gilbert, David Birnbach, and Barbara L'Italien

Others in Attendance: Dr. Marinel McGrath, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent Paul Szymanski, Assistant Superintendent Nancy Duclos, Director of Student Services, Joyce Laundre'

I. Call to Order

Chairman Forgue called the Workshop Meeting to order at 9:07 A.M.

II. Charter School

A. Position on Charter Chairman Forgue said the readjustment of today's workshop agenda is to allow the School Committee an opportunity to prepare their position for the Public Hearing by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on the proposed Charter School (STEAM) scheduled for November 21, 2013 at the Memorial Hall Library.

Motion: Barbara L'Italien motioned the Andover School Committee take a position on the STEAM Charter School Application. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements.

Discussion:

David Birnbach would like to see the School Committee Workshops used for education needs as scheduled.

Annie Gilbert's major concern is the financial impact the charter school will have on the Andover Public School budget and students. Although not personally opposed to charter schools, she is opposed to how Massachusetts chooses to fund charter schools by taking away Chapter 70 funds from public schools. Contributions to the Gr. Lawrence Vocational School from Andover are vastly different because Andover High is not able to offer the same program. Do we need a third option that could have a bigger impact on APS's funding and is the program vastly different than what is already offered?

Paula Colby-Clement is also concerned about the financial impact on the budget and the potential dollars lost towards the Strategic Plan and a loss to students. The job of the school department is to educate every child. The charter school and our strategic plan are on

similar high-innovation paths; do we divert all these dollars for a few students or put the funds to work to elevate all students.

Barbara L'Italien is in favor of looking objectively at what we offer in technology and innovation and supports keeping funding at Andover High School and within our school budget, and has concerns about how this could affect students with special needs. Low performing school districts need other options, such as a charter school – that is not the case in Andover.

David Birnbach said his position on the charter school proposal is known.

When asked to explain what he sees as flawed in the analysis presented at the Triboard Meeting, David responded that the assumption assumes that 100% of student tuition goes towards hiring teachers and that is not the case; every dollar towards the charter school does not mean a teacher is lost. He is on a team trying to offer an alternative approach addressing a small percentage of students for opportunities not offered at AHS. He has consistently stated the direction he thinks AHS should be going. The charter school is a public alternative, not a private school. The constraints of the teachers unions limits the possibilities of what can be offered in the Andover Public Schools, the charter school will dramatically change the playing field. He believes the charter school will help accelerate innovation, and that investment and impact of the charter school as an alternative will cause rethought of the AEA.

Chairman Forgue asked the members of the School Committee if they were ready to vote on the motion for the STEAM Charter School Application.

Vote: The School Committee voted 4-0-1 to not approve the STEAM Charter School Application. Roll call: A. Gilbert-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, B. L'Italien-Y, and D. Forgue-Y. David Birnbach did not vote.

Chairman Forgue asked the members of the School Committee to vote their position on the STEAM Charter School.

Motion: Barbara L'Italien motioned that given the financial impact on the public school system and vast majority of Andover students that the Andover School Committee votes against the STEAM Charter School. Roll call: A. Gilbert-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, B. L'Italien-Y, and D. Forgue-Y. David Birnbach did not vote.

Vote: On a motion of 4-0-1 the School Committee voted against the STEAM Charter School.

B. Public Hearing Preparation The School Committee discussed the process for the formal public hearing by the DESE on November 21, 2013 at the Memorial Hall Library from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. at which time testimony will be allowed from the audience and limited to three minutes per person. Andover School Committee has until January 3, 2014 to submit written information; DESE will vote on the charter school application February 25th. If approved, the charter school has to provide a list of enrolled students by March 15, inform DESE of their status in April/May, and after which time the decision is made when to open (September 2014 or September 2015).

At the public hearing DESE usually gives preference to the School Committee and School Administration for comments, and the School Committee has to be prepared to provide a statement reflecting their position. Barbara L'Italien suggested they find out if DESE will allow panels of speakers' thus reducing start and stop time, and also check with counsel to see if there are any legal preclusion we should be aware of, and what we can and cannot say.

C. Communications: The School Committee discussed how best to communicate information about the public hearing to the community and how to communicate the impact statement expressing their opinion that will be delivered at the public hearing. Dr. McGrath is working on an analysis and Annie Gilbert shared what she has written thus far reflecting her views which can be used as a starting point for the communication vehicle.

David Birnbach explained the charter school will not offer electives; they are proposing nine to ten courses with a financing computing section. Currently, there are about 200 students in grade 9-12 pursuing an education in private schools and whom they expect to show interest in the charter school. Many students will want to pursue an engineering computing course; although not able to take a deep dive in other areas.

Dr. McGrath said public schools in Massachusetts were developed and designed to meet the needs of every student in the community; it is our responsibility to educate the whole child. The Communication Sub-committee can put together the topics that need to be addressed and communicate the information. The topics include:

- Program impact
- Academic programs at AHS, the status of the strategic plan today and going forward
- Potential of the number of students, who would choose to attend the charter school over private school (raising the number of students educated by Andover tax dollars).
- Number of students educated by the same dollars going up

- Space needs at AHS
- Special needs and impacts

Barbara L'Italien motioned to authorize the Communications Subcommittee to put together communications using bullet points discussed (financial) (impact on facilities), (increase in student costs), (special education impacts), etc. The motion was seconded by Annie Gilbert and voted 4-0-1 to approve. Roll call: A. Gilbert-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, B. L'Italien-Y, and D. Forgue-Y. David Birnbach did not vote.

III. Adjournment:

At 10:45 A.M. on a motion by Annie Gilbert and seconded by Barbara L'Italien, the School Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:45 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

**Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary**