

Andover School Committee Minutes of April 7, 2016

Members in Attendance: Chair, Joel Blumstein, Vice-Chair, Susan McCready, Ted Teichert, and Paul Murphy

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Dr. Sheldon Berman, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration, Paul Szymanski, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Nancy Duclos, and Tim Chen AHS Student Government Liaison to the Andover School Committee.

1. **Regular Meeting:**

A. **Call to Order – Opening Ceremonies**

The meeting began with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag.

B. **Recognitions/Communications/Highlights from the District**

Dr. Berman:

~Recognized Bill Pennington on the successful 'Run for the Troops' event organizes annually to raise money to support Veterans.

~Clarified that there was a bus incident on Tuesday in which the bus driver returned the middle and high school students on the bus back to AHS due to disruptive behavior and the incident was handled properly by the school administrators. Administration is exploring implementation of a rapid alert system for secondary school students similar to the Elementary Alert System; a communication was sent out from the AHS Principal.

Dr. Berman attended several school functions including the Bancroft Talent Show, Math Night at Sanborn, and the Literacy/Writing Night at West Elementary, which were all very exciting and well done. Students at Doherty Middle School will be performing in "Footloose" this weekend at the WWI Auditorium.

Dr. Nancy Duclos gave an update on the Math Program for the middle and high school students. Teachers have been working on the criteria process, a Parent Focus Group was held and a second meeting scheduled for after April vacation (after the Grade 6 & 7 IOWA aptitude tests the week of April 11 are scored); makeups will be held after April vacation. The IOWA Aptitude Tests is one of the criteria used to determine a student's algebra aptitude to move into the accelerated program. In order to get enough data other criteria will include grade point average, PARCC scores and numerical scores, and a rubric for students to do a self-evaluation and for teachers to do on perseverance. The criteria setting update meeting was cancelled due to snow on Monday and has been rescheduled to Monday, April 11th. Proficiency dates and information were set and posted on the website and sent to parents along with a topics list. Job postings for summer school instructors and coaches have to be posted on-line.

Paul Szymanski reported on an elevator failure at WMS. An inspection and evaluation showed significant electrical issues due to the age of the elevator which will cost in the vicinity of \$49K to repair. Ed Ataide has been able to successfully in finding supplemental dollars for emergencies to cover the cost.

Susan McCready requested adding communications as a regular item to the School Committee agendas to provide an opportunity for public dialogue. Paul Murphy said there should be a controlled way to communicate with parents of AHS students much more quickly in case of an emergency. Dr. Berman suggested the School Committee schedule a workshop on the guidelines for communications and facilitated by MASC. Joel Blumstein will work with Dr. Berman in establishing a date for that conversation.

Joel Blumstein said School Committee liaison positions for each of the individual schools have been created and Dr. Berman will discuss with the school principals for their input. Joel also reported that the Channel 5 News Program, Chronicle, featured a program on Dyslexia, which included an Andover student, that was very informative and provided an insight into the social and emotional issues that students go through. There are five segments than can be accessed on their website.

SEPAC has sent an invitation to all the School Committee members to meet on Wednesday, April 13th for a dialog on budget related issues on Wednesday, April 13th.

C. Public Input

Bill Pennington and John Zipeto spoke about their successful involvement in supporting school budgets in prior years, which involves communication and dialogue with all parties and offered to help the School Department with this year's budget.

Carolyn Clayman, commented positively on the thoughtful approach of communication being added to the School Committee agendas as recommended by Susan McGready. It would be a very helpful part of an effort being made throughout the community and internally within the APS organization to have a better and clearer understanding of how the School Committee overlaps with the Town; particularly with administrative functions and responsibilities. She would like to see a clear resource for the community to refer to on process. Dr. Berman is very hopeful that we will have a more accessible policy on line through the efforts of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees that will allow quick access, and continued updates. Improvements on the APS website will be helpful with communications as well.

D. Response to Public Input

Susan McGreevy reported that there will be a Joint Commission Task Force on Communication with input from users on the Policy Manual. The Policy Manual will be greatly improved with the assistance of MASC.

E. Education

1. Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)

Massachusetts by Gov. Baker passed the Opioid Bill a few weeks ago which included the provision for SBIRT Screening, to be used as a tool to identify students who may be at risk for opiate abuse. As part of this bill, the district needs to implement SBIRT screening. Rita Casper, Head Nurse for the District explained to the Committee what she has planned for this year.

The grade levels at the high school and middle school who will participate in the screening have not yet been determined but they are considering screening Grade 7 and 9 students);the Youth Risk Behavior Studies (YRBS) are conducted in grades 7, 9, and 11. The screening would be a short one-on-one questionnaire with three simple questions.

Counselors, Social Workers, have all been trained on the new tool, and Andover has obtained a grant to fund the initial expenses for this screening group to continue with additional training and to be engaged in planning meetings. Confidential Screening will be conducted during health classes on May 13th (about 65 students) and data collected will not have any identifying student criteria. A letter will be going home to parents, and a parent forum will be scheduled to ensure accurate information is provided and to also advise them that there is an option to opt out. This is a State mandate and therefore obligated to conduct the screening. A parent forum will be scheduled to ensure accurate information is provided. Tim Chen said that students would have to feel fully assured of the confidentiality factor to participate.

2. School Choice 2016-2017 - Hold

3. PARCC Update

Dr. Nancy Duclos, Asst. Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, provided an update to the Committee on the PARCC and MCAS testing and the letter be provided to parents. The District voted to stay with the PARCC exam using the paper/pencil test this year, not a computer based version. All students in grades 3-8 will take the Math and ELA exam and Grade 5 and 8 students will continue to take the MCAS Science test. AHS students will take the Math, Biology & Physical Science tests, and ELA because it is a graduation requirement. The testing will start the week of April 26 through May 20. The Opt-out letter to parents and testing schedules are posted on the school website.

4. Goal 5-Funding Financial Management and Infrastructure

Paul Szymanski provided an update on Goal 5 for the Committee and the strategies related to the goal; those completed, in progress, and not yet done.

Strategy 1:

The completed items include the annual budgets, and funding needs incorporated into the Town Managers' and Triboard annual budget process with planning documents; user fees are evaluated on an annual basis for the effectiveness, efficiencies and cost effectiveness; Capital Improvement Plans developed with priorities. They collaborated with the Town for development of comprehensive facilities assessment with a review of facilities scheduled for late spring rather than the end of the summer. The strategic plan has been updated yearly and posted on the website. The APS Facilities Use Policy was revised April 1st.

The Superintendent and he participated in 17 meetings of the three Chairs related to the budget with the objective to negotiate unanimous support for presenting a reasonable and fair FY-2017 balanced budget to the Annual Town Meeting.

Strategy 2: Demonstrate responsible and transparency in its use of municipal funds.

Use of an online payment system for athletic fees, bussing, and food services point of sales; communication of annual progress to the School Committee and community via meetings and information posted on the website; district financials posted on the website; using the work order system implemented by Plant and Facilities, and major revisions to content of FY-2017 preliminary budget book.

Strategy 3: Provide facilities and technology necessary to support student-learning expectations and ensure that resources are equitably distributed across all schools and the district. Overall this has been a very successful initiative.

Candace Hall will present the last report on the Goals at the next meeting, after which the documents will be combined into one with an Executive Summary showing highlights and major accomplishments bringing the five-year plan to a close.

5. Amendment of Date on School Improvement Plan Policy

Earlier this year, a School Committee member asked about the status of the Schools' improvement Plans (SIP) being submitted to the School Committee. After some discussion with the Principals, Dr. Berman said the submission date of February 1st was most likely instituted as a date for budgetary purposes. However, in light of all the work that each School's SIP Committee needs to do, the SIP Councils have requested additional time to present their plans. Therefore, we are asking the Committee to change the date from February 1st to June 1st.

Ted Teichert would like to see previous SIP plans before adopting a policy amendment. The School Committee needs further discussion before actual voting to change new or existing policies, more time to

study the changes, and an opportunity for others to react to a change a policy. There are three steps to making a policy change that include a discussion item, information item, and an action item; and a first, second, and third readings. The School Committee will hold on voting to amend the policy at this time, and Dr. Berman will provide the School Improvement Policies to the Committee for their review.

F. Old Business

1. FY-2017 Budget Update

Chair Blumstein gave a recap of where the budget stands today and what has transpired since last Thursday's vote on a budget number of \$76,747,829 by the School Committee. On Monday, April 4th the Board of Selectmen, on a vote of 3-2, recommended a School Budget number of \$75,687,829 leaving a gap of \$1,060,000. Both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee have rejected the compromise presented by the School Committee, Superintendent Berman, and Town Manager Flanagan. The FinCom focused on the \$500,000 in health insurance savings voting for it to be applied towards OPEB; the Board of Selectmen did not make a specific decision on where that money should be used. There was no agreement made at the Three Chairs meeting on Tuesday this week, in fact, the chairs of the other boards were looking for the schools to make an additional \$500,000 reduction. If there is no agreement reached before Town Meeting, the School Committee will have to decide whether to further reduce the Circuit Breaker funds.

Dr. Berman said although the Town is doing a lot to try to address a number of challenging issues. i.e. Town yard initiative, liability for OPEB, and looking to how to manage resources to manage those problems,, there is revenue available. The Board of Selectmen is taxing below capacity, instead of taxing to capacity; and the restructuring of health care plans will result in over \$1.3M in savings. This is operational savings (salaries and benefits) and is a continual change in the base and there is a reserve trust fund to balance out health related costs, and recommended to be retained at a one-month level. Allocating \$500K from that fund alone is a very reasonable judgment and a recommendation of the Town Manager.

A second significant source of funds is the increase from new growth of \$2.2M and projections for next year at \$1.8M. It is reasonable that the Board and Finance Committee come to some compromise with the School Department. The impact to the School Department not getting funding is significant.

The School Committee members discussed their observations and ideas on how to cover the budget gap. For future and sustainability of the Town you have to be supportive of your schools. Members are disappointed in the response from the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to be that close to an agreement knowing that huge problems will be created without that small amount of money. Not to address the elementary enrollment issue is short sighted and will only cost more later on in future years and be a detriment to the children.

Kerry Costello appreciates the efforts of the School Administration to come to a compromise. The schools are an investment for all of us in the Town. She hopes that the Selectman take a long hard look to the decision made on Monday night and rethink where the investment needs to be.

2. FY-2016 Budget: Financials for Period Ending March 2016

Paul Szymanski presented an updated Financial Report for the period ending March 2016. It has been a rollercoaster ride this year, but they expect to stay within the budget guideline. Paul will be putting out notices to all staff to look at open purchase orders and close them in a timely manner to make decisions before the end of the year. Extra funds would be used for equipment replacement or upgrades where needed as well as for school testing materials, etc. Mr. Szymanski reminded the Committee that there are many expenses that don't come due until the end of the year. The budget is still in process and the financials will continue to be tracked monthly.

G. Consent Agenda

1. Warrants: In Order
2. Minutes: March 9 (Triboard), March 14, March 17, and March 24, 2016

On a motion by Susan McCready and seconded by Paul Murphy, the School Committee voted 4-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

H. Adjournment

At 10:05 P.M. on a motion by Susan McCready and seconded by Paul Murphy, the School Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn the Regular Meeting of April 7, 2016. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Teichert-Y, S. McCready-Y, and J. Blumstein-Y.

Respectfully submitted

Dee DeLorenzo
Recorder

Documents: Goal 5-Funding Financial Management and Infrastructure Presentation
Financials as of March 2016
Minutes of March 9, March 14, March 17, and March 24, 2016