

**Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of
March 31, 2016**

Members in Attendance: Joel Blumstein, Chairperson; Susan McCready, Vice Chairperson; Paul Murphy, Shannon Scully and Ted Teichert

Others in Attendance:

Superintendent Sheldon Berman, Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Finance Paul Szymanski, and Dr. Nancy Duclos, Assistant Superintendent Teaching and Learning

I. Budget Meeting

A. Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Salute to the Flag

Joel Blumstein called the Regular Meeting of the Andover School Committee to order at 7:00 P.M. The meeting began with a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Recognitions - Dr. Berman introduced Michelle Costa, new Bancroft Principal, as of July 1, 2016.

Michelle thanked the Committee members for meeting with her in the small SC Reception they had just prior to the meeting. Dr. Berman stated that Michelle had shared with him that she attended all the SC meetings in Topsfield as a requirement of her position. However, he told her that she did not have to do that here but she was always welcomed to the meetings. She came up to the table and gave a little background on herself for the Committee and the parents in the audience.

April is Autism Month – Dr. Berman told the Committee he had received a number of Autism pins with a little document on them from West Elementary. He asked the Committee if they would like to wear the pin during the month of April as it is Autism month nationally.

Dr. Berman reported on the meeting with a representative of the Federation for Children with Special Needs which he attended on the evening of March 30th – a meeting that ran until 9:30pm. He acknowledged all the work of SEPAC and our Student Services department on a number of important issues. Joel also confirmed what Dr. Berman stated and said that there would be a SPED procedures manual rolling out in the coming weeks for all SPED parents developed by a parent representative and the department.

Nancy reported that Beth DelForge and NEAL representatives will be presenting at the DESE conference on April 4 on literacy and the arts. Beth Delforge, Fine Arts Program Coordinator and Art teachers, Ronnie Pennick and Katie Simko presented a workshop attended by 80 participants. Also, Joanne Najarian and Tina Kelley presented information on the next 1:1 initiative last night to the 5th graders and that this was a good start. Many parents came out to the presentation and questions were answered by them.

Susan McCready was at Sanborn on March 30th and happened to be present when the Warrior Way bus pulled up from AHS. These students are led by Carol Martini. These students who are high school athletes interact, teach and play with the elementary students. It is a positive engagement for all and her hopes are that the program continues to be funded for the coming years.

Ted Teichert reported on the Athletic Hall of Fame which is on Friday, April 8th – there are some tickets still left to purchase – it's at the Andover Country Club.

Joel reported on upcoming meetings – the BoS/Fincom meeting on the OPEB report findings tonight at the DMS Auditorium. The Chairs meeting will be held again tomorrow morning (Friday). The BoS

will be meeting on Monday, April, 4th meeting where an expected vote on the school budget is expected to take place. Next week, there will be another SC meeting on Thurs, April 7th.

PUBLIC INPUT

Kerry Costello – President of AEA:

She welcomed the new SC members and congratulated Joel and Susan in their new positions as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Kerry wanted to make a public announcement that the AEA will be providing babysitting services during the first Town Meeting night.

Chuck Fitz, 34 Chandler Road:

He wanted to give some advice on the 4-4 block, they have no study halls at his school (Groton Dunstable teacher) one of the top high schools in the country. He also said that he was a family that had unilaterally placed their child out of district – alluding to a conversation mentioned at a recent FINCOM meeting. He wanted to put a face to that conversation. They placed their son at Landmark School – he said that they did this as a last resort because he felt that his family had made the best decision based on the lack of information they were not getting from the administration. Dr. Berman apologized to Mr. Fitz and said that this was not his intent and that he had not clearly stated the message he wanted to say at the FINCOM meeting.

Jeanne Teichert – 5 Dufton Road:

Ms. Teichert brought up the Special Ed meeting w/the Federation that was held last night. She felt it was a secret meeting that she couldn't get information on from our administration or SEPAC. That to her is indicative of the overall atmosphere she feels is evident here. Ms. Teichert said that it's more important what you do than what you say. Nothing has changed much from the last administration, she's happy to see new faces, but feel there is much more work to be done here. Ms. Teichert was also disturbed by what Dr. Berman said at the FINCOM meeting which was the opposite of what was said in an Administration letter to parents from last fall. She feels that she has worked hard to get along with the administration but feels very dismissed.

Response to Public Input:

Dr. Berman responded that we have had good relationships with parents and understands the frustrations that some families have had in past years which have resulted in decisions of unilateral placements. He apologizes if he misspoke at the FINCOM meeting because it didn't come our right. There are times that children need to be placed in an out of district placement but not always. He feels that parents should work with the administration collaboratively to find the right placement. He wants Andover to be parents' first choice before jumping to the next decision. We want to change the pattern that will keep our legal costs down and we will see that at the end of the year. At times, there are certain things where the district needs to use legal services. The commitment of our Student Services is to listen to parents, but at the same time, we may not always agree with parents.

Joel added that the district is undergoing an assessment of our Language Based programs. The district will be moving ahead to implement those recommendations, so that we can put those suggestions into place and feel more comfortable with these decisions. We're taking steps to take our program in a positive direction.

Susan asked if there are parents involved in the assessment process. Dr. Berman responded that there were 30 parents to give feedback to Eleni. Shelley said that we will post the results of the assessment and know that we will take action.

Ted was also very concerned with what Shelley said at the FINCOM meeting. He's heard stories of parents trying to spend their own money to find solutions for their children. Ted stated his own children are at Landmark. He's not sure if he will agree to the budget numbers presented tonight as he feels more money should be spent on Special Ed services. Ted admits given the choice, he would rather have his children attend the district schools rather than sending them to Landmark. He would like to see the district offer more services in district. Susan asked Ted if he had any suggestions on how to make things better as she felt concrete ideas should be stated publicly if possible. Parent and SEPAC Co-Chair, Teresa Shrimmer, stated that 6 years ago Andover had 13 corrective actions to be dealt with and 6 years later Andover was found to have 46 corrective actions to deal with. She feels the district has more work to do. Susan stressed that all the SC members are here for the students.

C. New Business

1. Chapter 70 Budget Review Commission Recommendations/Resolution: Dr. Berman learned thru Barbara L'Italien about the Chapter 70 Foundation Budget Review Committee. Recently, Superintendent Jon Bernard from North Reading attended a meeting of the Suburban Coalition, and there was a desire expressed to have more communities sign on. Through this resolution, communities would be lending their support to the findings and recommendations of the Commission. Dr. Berman has now been asked to share the letter and resolution with the SC members and forward a similar letter and resolution to the Suburban Coalition (Dorothy Presser), Governor Baker, and Andover's local legislators.

Joel stated that there were some areas where the municipalities are not keeping up. If we vote to approve this, we will send a letter and resolution to the Coalition. Shannon thinks the time has come for a change and that it has been since 1993 since a vote has been taken on this. Susan also concurred that we should encourage the BoS and FINCOM and back this letter and resolution to the Suburban Coalition.

Paul Murphy moved that the Andover School Committee vote to support the recommendations of the Chapter 70 budget review commission so as to motivate those in positions to do so to find the resources needed to operate appropriately all of the public schools systems of the commonwealth to the benefit of all students. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready and voted 5-0 to approve.

2. SC subcommittee and liaison assignments

School Committee 2016-17 Subcommittee Assignments

Facilities - Ted Teichert and Shannon Scully
Negotiations - Joel Blumstein and Paul Murphy
Policy - Joel Blumstein and Susan McCready

School Committee 2016-17 Liaison Assignments

CREST - Joel Blumstein
Audit – Paul Murphy
Town-wide PTO - Susan McCready
Communications – Susan McCready
SEPAC – Ted Teichert

- Liaisons to schools: Shannon Scully-Bancroft & DMS; Susan McCready-Sanborn & WMS; Paul Murphy-AHS and South; Ted Teichert-HPE/WHMS; Joel Blumstein-Shawsheen & West Elementary

Susan requested if the Communications subcommittee could be started sooner than later as there seems to be an urgency on the school side more so than the Town side.

C. **Old Business**

1. FY 17 Recommended Budget - Potential Final Vote As the result of the March 17th School Committee Budget & Public Hearing Meeting, the SC came to a decision on the AHS schedule but did not vote on the FY17 budget. Dr. Berman told the Committee he had listed 4 possible motions for them to consider tonight. Dr. Berman gave the background on the various Chairs' meetings. He explained to the Committee that the Chairs' meetings are where many of the agreements take place. He said that part of an earlier agreement was that \$500,000 of the health insurance savings would be used for the school budget, but the FINCOM now wants to use it for OPEB costs.

A document was passed out on the budget numbers. The compromise was three fold – we would reduce the SC budget by \$551,245, use the CB reserve of \$560,000 and increase the TM recommendation by \$707,000. At this point, given that we don't have a solid agreement, Dr. Berman hopes that the committee approves Budget 3 (\$76,747,829) and also give the Super discretion to adjust the budget to the chairs' compromise budget if approved by the FINCOM and BoS.

Ted wishes there was enough time to have a discussion with the BoS and Fincom so that they could hear directly from the SC about their reservations and concerns. He has some real reservations about voting on a budget tonight.

Shannon appreciates the effort in coming to these budget numbers, but it is disappointing to see the reduction for the AHS at \$300,000. But she feels it is irresponsible to go to Town meeting without a number. She is concerned about the Circuit Breaker and asked if we drain that reserve, will those expenses be handled thru a Town Warrant at Town meeting. Dr. Berman responded that it is a different approach, but there is also an opportunity to recover the money from the "Pothole Fund". As a SC member, Shannon feels it is not up to the SC to micromanage how Andrew will work with the BoS on his end of the budget number and that the SC should vote on the information at hand.

Susan would like to go to Town Meeting with an agreement and feels that the SC should decide on a budget number before Town Meeting. Paul said that we should continue to advocate for the schools. We should do the best we can with the funds that are here now. He applauds the work that has been done thus far. He also supports the budget number recommended by the Superintendent and hopes that they work out a deal before TM so that number isn't as big (4.71%) at town meeting.

Joel also feels there is a risk with spending Circuit Breaker money. He continues to hope that there will be a compromise before Town Meeting. He also supports Dr. Berman's original recommended budget but he understands that if a compromise can be reached, it should be done.

Parent: Colleen Goddard asked an explanation on the Circuit Breaker. Joel said that its reimbursement from the state for sped expenses 72% above a certain dollar mark. Ms. Goddard also asked about the Language Based Program and when it will come out. Dr. Berman said it is conducted by an independent reviewer. The reviewer has observed general and special ed classes, and will write her findings in this report.

Parent: Erica Nichols asked about when the report comes out if there will be an opportunity for parents to have a forum on that. Dr. Berman stated there weren't any definitive plans on that yet but he will post it on the website. She also asked what the Circuit Breaker money could be used for and the response was that money could only be applied to OOD costs.

Parent: Jeanne Teichert spoke about her October public records requests. She asked about information on the district's legal costs. Dr. Berman stated that at this time a final decision had not been made on those requests by the Secretary of State. Dr. Berman also explained that this district includes legal settlements in the budget such as reimbursement for tuition. Dr. Berman believes we are on track, not trying to fight parents, and we have reduced our attorney fees. We have negotiations next year (level funded on all other issues) so we have increased our budget for those anticipated fees. All of our legal costs are not just special education.

Joel said it is a risk worth taking reducing the CB if we can come up with a compromise.

Ted Teichert moved that the Andover School Committee vote to adopt the FY2017 operating budget at \$76,747,829 (4.71%). The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy and voted to 5-0 to approve.

Vice Chair, Susan McCready, moved that the Superintendent have discretion to adjust the budget to the chairs' compromise budget of \$76,187,829 if approved by the BOS & FINCOM. The motion was seconded by Shannon Scully and voted to 5-0 to approve.

Joel Blumstein told the Committee that he would send a draft copy of the letter for the Finance Committee book to all members over the weekend for their feedback and edits. He needs to finalize the letter by Tuesday, April 5th.

G. Consent Agenda

1. Minutes: The Chair asked the Committee not to vote on the March 9th meeting minutes. The committee then decided to defer voting on all the minutes until the next SC meeting.
2. Warrants: Expense SW1620, Payroll 16S040.

Vice Chair, Susan McCready, moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Warrants as presented. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy and voted 5-0 to approve.

III. Adjournment

At 9:00 P.M. on a motion by Susan McCready and seconded by Shannon Scully, the Andover School Committee voted to adjourn. Roll call: J. Blumstein-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y, P. Murphy-Y, and T. Teichert-Y.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alison Phelan, Recording Secretary