

**Andover School Committee**  
**Regular Meeting of February 9, 2010**  
**School Administration Building - School Committee Room**

**Members in Attendance:** Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Secretary-Dennis Fogue, Richard J. Collins Annie Gilbert, and David Birnbach

**Others in Attendance:** Dr. Claudia L. Bach, Superintendent

**I. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room**

**A. Salute to the Flag**

Chair Deb Silberstein reconvened the meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:09 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**B. Recognition of Achievement**

Dr. Bach welcomed the overwhelming crowd of instructional assistants in the audience tonight and recognized them for the work they do on a daily basis in our classrooms and schools. Last year the hours of instructional assistants were reduced to an equivalent of the elimination of eleven to twelve instructional assistant positions. This was a huge impact upon the schools and the instructional assistants. Many of the instructional assistants attended a coffee held last fall to talk about the impact of the loss of this time on the school day and the services provided to students by the instructional assistants.

Dr. Bach announced that Sanborn School was contacted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to apply to become a blue-ribbon school based on their outstanding performance on a variety of levels. The application is to be submitted by the end of February. Dr. Bach wishes Principal Barrett and the entire Sanborn Community the best in this endeavor.

Annie Gilbert attended the DMS Winter Concert on January 28<sup>th</sup> which was she said was fantastic and congratulated all the students who participated in the concert. She also commented on how nice it was to enter the auditorium by way of the new steps installed this year.

David Birnbach congratulated the students at Sanborn School who participated in the outstanding play performed in front of a full audience which was "off the charts". The play was funded by the PTO and completed in one week from start to performance.

**C. Communications**

**1. Instructional Assistants**

Co-chairs of the Instructional Assistants Organization, Betsy Spiegel and Sue Cullen thanked the School Committee for allowing them this time on the agenda tonight to speak out on behalf of their colleagues. The instructional assistants are 200 strong and have a vested interest in the Andover Public Schools with many living in the Town. The Instructional Assistants are highly-qualified with many holding a teaching degree, a Bachelor's or Associates Degree. Instructional Assistants participate in professional development opportunities to better assist teachers in the classroom and deliver direct services to the children. They are part of classroom management, provide emotional support and custodial care to the children outside of the classroom, and work one on one with students as needed. They develop close relationships with the children and the children benefit through the consistency of these relationships. The Instructional Assistants wear many hats.

They are counting on the School Committee to be their advocate to save their positions which in turn, saves Andover money. The In-house Special Education Programs could not operate without the Instructional Assistants. Unfortunately, the Instructional Assistants are not feeling valued as employees and are

disappointed with the position taken in support of House Bill 3939 to reduce health insurance of part-time employees, many of whom depend upon this benefit. They feel it is discriminatory to reduce their hours to reduce health-care benefits. Instructional Assistants are still the biggest bank for the buck in the Andover Public Schools. They invite members of the School Committee to spend time with them at the schools to better understand the impact they have upon the education and welfare of all students. The School Committee thanked the Instructional Assistants for coming this evening.

2. Strategic Plan, Technology & Revenue Pinpoint Committee Updates

Dr. Bach reported that the members of the Technology Pinpoint Committee have met several times and are moving forward. The Revenue Pinpoint Committee she co-chairs with Dennis Forgue has generated some amazing new ideas that will challenge the status quo that will be presented to the School Committee at a later meeting.

Annie Gilbert reported that the Steering Committee is moving forward with organizing a community focus group. The Focus Group is scheduled for Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. in the cafeteria at Andover High School and coordinated by Dr. Nicholson. The goal is to have a broad cross-section of stakeholders from the community to listen, learn, and participate in mixed groups resulting in a rich dialogue of the direction of the Andover Public Schools over the next 3-5 years. The results of the focus group will be the heart of the Strategic Plan providing a road-map linked to the budget. Two hour training for facilitators will be held on Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. in the School Administration Building. Please contact Dr. Nicholson if you are interested in attending and/or being a facilitator.

3. Bancroft Feasibility Study

Annie Gilbert reported on the status of the Bancroft School Building Project. Their next meeting will be held tomorrow morning at 8:00 A.M. They have arrived at five possible site locations for the school, and are reviewing option. Three options put the footprint in front of the current building, one option behind (phased construction), and one option for replacement of the building on the current school site. The costs for each option will be discussed with the architects. They have received a lot of feedback from residents on traffic concerns, the footprint of the school, access roads, and playing fields. A report on the traffic study will be received on February 24<sup>th</sup> after which the SBA may need to come back to the School Committee to schedule a work session for a formal report and to discuss capacity district-wide.

4. Budget Advisory Committee Update

Annie Gilbert reported on the newly formed Budget Advisory Committee which includes a parent representative from each school and a community representative (Bob Willard). Their second meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 A.M. The focus of the Committee is to act as a two-way conduit to communicate budget information to the community and back to the School Committee in addition to information on contract negotiations, and items misunderstood, etc. The BAC will dialogue on how to better present budget information at Town Meeting. Deb Silberstein asked the School Committee to let Annie or herself know if they have specific areas they feel should be researched.

5. Superintendent Search Update

Deb Silberstein reported on the status of the Superintendent Search stating the twelve member Search Committee presented the names of four finalists for consideration as Superintendent: Dr. Susan Nicholson-Andover, Dr. Marinel McGrath-Hamilton/Wenham, Mr. Kelly Clenchy-Maine, and Mr. Christopher Farmer-Gloucesterc. Deb thanked the members of the Search Committee for their participation in this important process. The next steps in the process will be to schedule site visits and interviews for the four finalists.

### **C. Communications (Cont'd)**

Dr. Bach reported on the request from the League of Women Voters for the School Committee to act on the Warrant Articles and make a determination as soon as possible. Dr. Bach also commented on concerns about the drinking water in the community, stating that Andover has won several awards for the quality of the water.

Dr. Bach stated that she, Dr. Nicholson, and Shawsheen Principal Moira O'Brien met with Dan Butin, Dean of the College of Education at Merrimack College to discuss services Merrimack could provide to the Andover School Department. One such area is supporting the Assistant Principals, and Deb Downes, Assistant Principal of West Middle School will be the co-facilitator in this endeavor. They also discussed the use of space, collaboration of a lab school, and working with Shawsheen School. Andover is also submitting a major grant to the National Science Foundation in collaboration with Merrimack College.

Dr. Bach received a thank you letter from SHED Director Sydney Bialo in recognition of the assistance of the Andover Schools that provided space for their programs while their building was renovated after experiencing major water damage.

Dr. Bach reported that School Administrators are attending a webinar on Technology Ethics on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, and she will bring information on cyber-bullying legislation to the next meeting.

Dr. Bach has the details of the AHS Scuba Diving Club's trip available for the School Committee to review. She also commented on the AHS Electronic Policy provided by Principal Harris which is to become part of the School Handbook. No vote is necessary.

Deb Silberstein reported our Special Education Director, Dr. Kathy Fink signed onto the Special Education Legislation letter that is pending and asked if the School Committee wants to follow up with their own letter. Mike Gilbert of MASS will provide information on how their organization stands on this legislation. Deb also commented on her discussion with the Dept of Revenue personnel and Jay Sullivan of DESE about the study on the functions of the Town/School Business Departments. They expect to have a completed report on the results of the study by May. Dennis Forgue agreed to follow-up with them on the results of the report.

Deb Silberstein reported that State Representative Barbara L'Italian has signed onto legislation to bring the proposals with two signatures for the Race to the Top Grant proposal forward.

Updates to the AHS course catalog have been made with the insertion of a single page insert in the front of the catalog. Deb Silberstein would like to know what the changes/additions are.

### **D. Citizen Input**

Carrie Horan, 4 Iroquois Avenue, spoke passionately on behalf of the Instructional Assistants. She talked about the importance of consistency in staff for special education and regular education students and how the reduction in hours has affected this consistency which is not in the best interests of students. She also talked about the importance of trust and bonding between students and Instructional Assistants, and how much the students rely on them.

David Birnbach would like to have a dialogue to discuss increasing the number of instructional assistants, and decreasing the number of teachers with the idea of having master teachers overseeing the direct learning of students by instructional assistants through team-teaching. Dr. Bach said an idea such as this would have to be negotiated.

Mrs. Horan asked how the budgets for the Town/School are determined. Deb Silberstein explained that typically a mathematical model is used by the Town Manager which is strictly a percentage of the operating budget.

**E. Consent Agenda**

- Warrants: Dr. Bach reported that the warrants are in order.  
On a motion by Mr. Collins with a second by Annie Gilbert it was voted 5-0-0 to approve the warrants as presented.
- Field Trip Requests: On a motion by Dennis Forgue with a second by Annie Gilbert it was voted 5-0-0 to approve the field trip requests for: WMS, Grades 6-8 Pat's Peak Ski Resort in New Hampshire on February 12, 2010.
- Disclosure Form: On a motion by Dennis Forgue with a second by Annie Gilbert, it was voted 5-0-0 to approve the disclosure form for High Plain Elementary Principal Pamela Lathrop and Shawsheen Principal Moira O'Brien to accept a gift of \$650 from Scholastic to attend a literacy workshop.
- Minutes: On a motion by Dennis Forgue with a second by Mr. Collins, it was voted 5-0-0 to approve the Regular Session Minutes of January 26, 2010 and the Work Session Minutes of January 21, 2010 with revisions.

**F. Education**

1. School Calendars

On a motion by Annie Gilbert and a second by David Birnbach, it was voted 4-1 to approve Version A for School Calendar Year 2010-2011 and Version A for School Calendar Year 2011-2012. Richard Collins opposed.

2. Wrestling Club

Re-scheduled to the next meeting.

**G. Finances**

1. FY-2011 Preliminary Budget

Dr. Bach reviewed the Preliminary Budget and her message for FY-2011 stating there are no funds available for wage negotiations, no increase in the supply and maintenance budget, and no new hires except for the new Special Education In-house Program at AHS.

In adopting the new framework to teach 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, the FY-2011 budget is dependent upon the outcome of the Strategic Plan and adjustments may be made based on the results. Dr. Bach distributed a Foundation Document developed in 1997 which includes a guide for goals and objectives still relevant today. The Foundation Document needs to be refreshed to be brought into line with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills; it is a living document that does require the School Department to continually re-invent itself. The framework includes three themes for moving forward: high challenge, active learning, and diversified instruction. The document contains a vision statement, statement of belief, a mission statement, and student learning standards. If the School Committee is committed to not cutting back, it means a 6.7% increase in the School Budget versus the 2.26% increase recommended by the Town Manager.

Dr. Bach reported that the District has done remarkable things even with a declining budget; more than many other districts. The shortfall in the budget is a result of the State not fully funding the Circuit Breaker. The School Department budget situation is much more volatile than the Town's, due to under-funded mandated programs. She is recommending a push to return to the previous budget model. If the Town Manager's School Budget, the School Dept will have to consider raising class size at the elementary level and a reduction of 10-12 teachers; reducing or eliminating a department at the middle schools, and changes made at the high school. She believes it is her responsibility to present the budget data which she sees as a serious situation and a major issue going forward.

Deb Silberstein said the School Committee has to be strategic about what they are doing, have clear goals, and ask questions differently.

David Birnbach applauds the presentation of the Foundation Document and agreed the framework needs to be refreshed to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. He stated the instructional assistants' impact on students is immense and feels we need to reorganize and create new models for teachers with a different ratio and leverage under leadership of teachers to deliver education in a different way.

Dr. Bach said the Strategic Plan will be instrumental in guiding educators and others through the process. Deb Silberstein said the Town Meeting presentation should be linked to the Strategic Plan.

Dennis Forgue attended a meeting of the Budget Sub-committee and stated he will not support a school budget that has to absorb an increase in Circuit Breaker funds. He states this is a town-wide issue not just a school issue.

Deb Silberstein said the value of education is a deeply held core value in Andover but the schools will not be able to absorb another round of reductions like last year; it would change the nature of what our community looks like.

Dr. Bach feels strongly that the budget gap has never been closed because we have been borrowing from contingency money or taking funds from the CIP to cover expenses. We must find another source of revenue to cover the gap and a shift in how we do business.

Deb Silberstein asked the School Committee members to submit their questions to the Superintendent. She stressed the importance of getting the budget out and to be clear on their message.

#### **H. Adjournment**

On a motion to adjourn by Dennis Forgue with a second by Richard Collins, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*Dee DeLorenzo*

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder