

**Andover School Committee**  
**Minutes of Regular Meeting of January 6, 2009**  
**School Administration Building - School Committee Room**

**Members in Attendance:** Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Tony James, Secretary, Arthur H. Barber, Ed.D, Richard J. Collins, Dennis Forgue, and AHS Liaison, Alex Macheras.

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

**I. Executive Session**

Chair Deb Silberstein called the School Committee Meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. in the School Committee Meeting Room in the School Offices. Present were: Chair Deb Silberstein, and Committee Members Tony James, Arthur Barber, Richard Collins, and Dennis Forgue.

On a motion by Dennis Forgue and a second by Richard Collins it was voted to go into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining strategy and non-union contract matters, and to return to Open Session. Roll Call Vote: Chair Silberstein-Y, Members, A. Barber-Y, D. Forgue-Y, T. James-Y, and R. Collins-Y. On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn the Executive Session and to return to Open Session at 7:03 P.M. Roll Call Vote: Chair Silberstein-Y, Members, A. Barber-Y, D. Forgue-Y, T. James-Y, R. Collins-Y.

Also present in Executive Session: Dr. Claudia Bach, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Susan Nicholson, Candace Hall, Director of Human Resources, and Business Administrator David Keniston.

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

**A. Salute to the Flag**

Chair Deb Silberstein reconvened to Open Session at 7:11 P.M. Mr. Collins led the meeting in a moment of silence after which he introduced Christine (Christy) Morin, a Grade 4 student from Bancroft School who led the meeting in a salute to the flag. Mr. Collins presented Christy with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

**B. Recognition of Achievement**

Dr. Bach recognized AHS Senior, Nicholas Rowe who has been awarded the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship offering free admission to any of the public Massachusetts Higher Education Schools. Nicholas earned very high achievement scores on the MCAS test making him eligible for this prestigious award. Congratulations!

Three Andover teachers will be participating in forming questions for the 2009 MCAS tests. Steve Cogger, DMS Engineering Teacher will assist with the development/assessment for the Grade 8 Science Test.; Darlene Doucet, AHS Science teacher will assist with the High School Chemistry, and Dr. Mary Jo Carabatsos, AHS Science Program Advisor will assist with the High School Physics exam.

Dr. Nicholson recognized AHS Freshmen students, Ally Fazio and Nicole Boudreau, both girls are outstanding members of the AHS Girls' Varsity Basketball Team. Nicole shot five 3 pointers in her first game! Dr. Bach commented on the recent newspaper article about the Girls' Basketball team which talked about the spirit of the team and what a close group of teammates they are.

Mr. Collins commended Police Chief Brian Patullo for being such a courteous, helpful individual and a great Chief of Police.

## C. Communications

### 1. Report from Former School Committee Members

Deb Silberstein introduced three former members of the School Committee; Tina Girdwood, Don Robb, and David Birnbach who are here this evening to give their input, advice and reflections on how they worked through some difficult budget times. David Birnbach served on the School Committee from 1985-1989 and again from 1995-1998; Tina Girdwood served three consecutive terms from 1995-2004; and Don Robb served on the School Committee for ten years from 1979-1989.

Mr. Birnbach said we are facing unprecedented financial challenges and the schools will have to fundamentally re-think how to deliver education to students. We are also given the opportunity to reposition the schools in a unique way. It is important the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen keep the Superintendent and Town Manager in their positions for the next few years because challenges and decisions to be made need continued leadership. Mr. Robb said the first financial crisis he experienced came to passage because of Proposition 2 ½. The financial model established then has fallen apart due to responsibilities and mandates put on school districts from the State and Federal level without funding. This time the financial crisis is not just State and Federal wide but a world-wide crisis. We cannot do everything we are doing now, we can't even afford a level services budget. Tina Gridwood said when her children were in school and they went through a budget crisis and cuts to course offerings included Home Economics, Auto Mechanics, and Woodworking. They were painful times but in retrospect, financial pressures forced changes which turned out to be educationally sound changes and established priorities for the future. You can't make decisions that will make all 6,000+ students happy, and if there are interests that are cut from the school day students can pursue these interests on their own. The Gifted & Talented Program was cut years ago, but teaching has evolved through Differentiated Instruction to adapt teaching to all levels of students. The decisions were painful but they were the right decisions. Andover is fortunate to have a tremendous team of Administrators in the School Department.

David Birnbach also said this is an opportunity for distant learning of high quality content which can be used as the backbone of future teaching methods and the opportunity to combine distant learning with technology. Mr. Robb said the need is to focus on teaching skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He enlightened the Committee on the three P's: Priorities-what are they in revamping the school system. Process – how to determine and implement priorities and finally; Perception – on the part of the community that the School Committee is working for the town. As the school system is reorganized, it is important the community understand what the changes are and statements such as "We have always" and "We never have" should be rejected. There is an opportunity to find new opportunities out of chaos as we look at downsizing the operation. Tina Girdwood said the educational leaders are responsible for determining the next steps, but should be open to ideas from students and the community and accept knowledge from outside sources.

Deb Silberstein asked how the School Committee can enhance collaboration with the Town. Tina Girdwood said to work together as a committee and on sub-committees and a one-on-one basis so people can get to know other members and develop a sense of trust, relationships and shared concerns. Mr. Birnbach suggested administrative teams on both sides look at what can be done in the area of delivering services to the town and outsource services to communities in the area for a fee. Mr. Robb said the School Committee has more outside pressures than the town and communicating these types of pressures and sharing them with the Town is important.

## C. Communications (Cont'd)

### 2. Strategic Plan Update

Deb Silberstein has discussed the timeline for the Strategic Plan with Susan Nicholson and it is apparent that all hands are needed to focus on the budget crisis and therefore she suggests the Strategic Plan be suspended for the time being. However, she does suggest we continue to hold focus groups to gather input from the community as we move forward.

Dennis Forgue motioned to suspend the Strategic Plan process with the intent to revisit it later in the fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Tony James, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

### 3. Administrative Search Update

Dr. Bach announced that Peter Anderson, AHS Principal, intends to retire at the end of this school year. Students, staff and administrators are all saddened by his decision. Extensive advertising will begin this week for both a high school principal and the elementary principal position at Bancroft. The established timeline is aggressive with the intent to appoint two new administrators to these positions by the end of February. Deadline for applications is February 2<sup>nd</sup> with parent group meetings at Bancroft on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and at Andover High on January 13<sup>th</sup> with Faculty sessions scheduled for February 12<sup>th</sup> at Andover High School and February 14<sup>th</sup> at Bancroft School. Shawsheen School Principal Moira O'Brien will lead the Bancroft search team and Dr. Susan Nicholson will lead the Andover High School search team.

Deb Silberstein said Peter Anderson has brought stability and navigated the school through some difficult challenges and has done a remarkable job. AHS Liaison, Alex Macheras asked if the students at Andover High School would be involved in the search. Dr. Nicholson said the student perspective and voice are very important to hiring a new principal and she has several ideas to bring forward.

Dr. Bach communicated the following:

The new laws for possession of marijuana will not change the school policy. It is still inappropriate behavior to be in possession of marijuana during school hours.

Heather McNeil, a North Andover parent, would like to start a local chapter for Stand for Children

The Five District Coalition will meet with the Assistant Superintendents, Human Resources, and Business Departments to continue discussions on sharing resources and ideas.

Dr. Bach has been asked to be a part of the Mass Association of School Superintendents' Legislative Committee. Deb Silberstein congratulated Dr. Bach for taking on this important position.

Snow Days are decided on after reviewing detailed reports on the weather and information received by the Department of Public Works and the Police Chief. The Department of Public Works plows the sidewalks on a priority basis and only after the roads are cleared. Bancroft School would have been closed regardless of the decision due to the heavy snow load on the roof. The roof situation is under constant monitoring by an engineering company. There may be times in the future that Bancroft will be the only school closed due to snow.

Dr. Nicholson said she continues to meet monthly with the people involved in the program review of Balanced Literacy (K-2), Middle School Math, and Expeditionary Learning at Wood Hill Middle School. She reports that all three Program Reviews are moving forward and will continue to update the committee on their progress.

### C. Communications (Cont'd)

Art Barber said he attended the Board of Selectmen meeting on Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup> and the Selectmen voted to not change the date of Town Meeting and to open up a Special Town Meeting if needed. Mr. Barber is concerned about the effect this will have on the timeline to advise employees of layoffs. Tony James is astonished and appalled that the Board of Selectmen would take a vote to set Town Meeting dates with the fiscal uncertainty that faces us. Every single day and hour is valuable. We would be planning with unreliable data and adverse decisions could be made at Town Meeting somewhere down the road. He strongly urges the Board of Selectmen to reconsider their decision. Denise Forgue feels we need to buy time to make decisions with the most accurate data possible. Deb Silberstein said she spoke with the Finance Chair Joanne Marden and Board of Selectmen Chair Ted Teichert and they could change the meeting dates at any time and start the meeting as scheduled and postpone it to a future date if necessary. She suggested sending the Board a letter stating why we request they reconsider.

**Motion:** Arthur Barber motioned to recommend the Board of Selectmen reconsider their vote of 4-1 to adjust the dates of the Town Meeting. The motion was seconded by Richard Collins, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

Tony James announced he would not be running for re-election to the School Committee at the end of his term in March. He hopes to be a full-time retiree and travel. He also feels very comfortable knowing that Annie Gilbert is running for School Committee and feels she is an extremely strong candidate to fill his seat. All members of the School Committee recognized Tony for his commitment and dedication to the Andover Public Schools. Tony will be greatly missed.

### D. Consent Agenda

**Warrant:** Dave Keniston said the Warrants are in order.

**Field Trips:** AHS Grades 9-12: Lonesome Lake AMC Hut, NH (Peakbaggers Hiking Club) Jan18-19,2009.

**Motion:** Tony James motioned to approve the consent agenda items, which include the Warrant and Field Trip to Lonesome Lake AMC Hut in New Hampshire. The motion was seconded by Dennis Forgue, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

### E. Policy Consideration

#### 1. Revisions to JLC and JLCD

Art Barber asked that the vote be tabled because the revised policies that were emailed did not include suggested changes. Deb Silberstein said the changes to the language could be part of the procedural piece.

**Motion:** Art Barber motioned the School Committee accept the revisions to Policy JLC and Policy JLCD as stated with the addition of procedures as discussed. The motion was seconded by Tony James, voted 5-0-0 and approved.

#### 2. Addition of Three New Policies:

As this is the first pass for the addition of the three new policies Naming School Facilities (FF), Memorials (FFA), and Awarding High School Diplomas, they will be voted on at the next meeting.

## F. Personnel

### 1. Update on Superintendent's Performance Goals

The members discussed the Superintendent's Performance Goals with Tony James stating it is an impressive list. Art Barber asked about the mentoring contract in the budget. Dr. Bach said Eileen Woods provides her a monthly log of the time she spends meeting with the new administrators and has been an enormous help troubleshooting areas and giving sound advice. With all the new administrators in the system, it was necessary to establish a mentor they could reach out to. Dr. Bach also said the website overhaul has been slow in coming but we are almost there.

## G. Finances

### 1. Budget Transfers on the Year-to-date Financials

Tony James motioned to approve the recommended general fund transfers contained in the School Committee Packet on page three. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion was voted 5-0-0 and approved.

### 2. FY2010 APS Budget

Dave Keniston said he met with Tony Torrisi, Finance Director for the Town to discuss the Capital Improvement Plan and the Governor's 9C cuts. He also met with Plant and Facilities Director Joe Piantedosi to review items listed on the CIP that will be cut and recommends a freeze on the CIP budget until we know more. Mr. Keniston will provide the list of items under consideration to be cut back to the School Committee.

## H Citizen Input

Paula Karl, Cheever Circle and Karen Kim, Burnham Road asked the Committee if they would still be committed to maintaining small class size as they review budget issues and priorities. They are especially concerned about Grade 5 at West Elementary School. Deb Silberstein asked the School Committee members to state what their priorities are and asked Dr. Bach to explain the process to develop the budget. Dr. Bach said she will be holding meetings with the heads of the unions and all principals this week and everyone will be given the opportunity to talk about options for the budget for this year and next. The principals are charged with representing student, parent and staff values. However, reductions may be unavoidable.

Marj Andreson, Argilla Road said the priorities are different at the three school levels.

Dennis Fogue would like to keep the reductions out of the classroom especially at the elementary level. Art Barber said class size at all levels is important to him. Mr. Collins said class size is a priority and they have to look for alternatives. Tony James agrees with maintaining smaller class size but feels we will be facing some harsh realities and this will be a very difficult year. Deb Silberstein said class size and the quality of the teachers' matters. All positions add value to the classroom. She also does not want to see wholesale elimination of programs such as athletics, band, etc.

## I. Motion to Adjourn

Dennis Fogue motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the School Committee. The motion was seconded by Tony James, voted 5-0-0 and approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:52 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*Dec DeLorenzo, Recorder*