

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of May 5, 2009
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Richard J. Collins, Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert, and AHS Liaisons, Alex Macheras and Charlie Smith. School Committee member David Birnbach was skyped into the meeting and therefore unable to vote.

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

I. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein called the Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order at 6:08 P.M. Mr. Collins led the meeting in a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Communications

Dr. Bach announced that the School Department has won a Website Make-over. Karla Kohl in Human Resources applied to E-Power School's Web Make-over last year but Andover was not chosen. Karla applied again this year and Andover was chosen to receive the Website Make-over worth over \$22,000. The make-over includes setup, design, training, and two years of support plus many additional add-ons. Congratulations and thanks to Karla!

Updates on the H1N1 / Swine Flu can be found on the APS website. A video conference was held today with Commissioner Auerbach of the Department of Health who feels the virus is a secondary transmission and is contagious but not "easily" contagious. Personal surveillance is encouraged.

Mr. Collins recognized the AHS Track Team member Chris McConnell for his performance at the track meet held in Weston. Mr. Collins reminded everyone that the Boosters Track Meet is scheduled for Saturday, May 9th at 10:00 a.m.

Annie Gilbert said the Representatives at the State House passed its version of the FY2010 Budget on May 1st. State revenues have fallen \$600M short of expectations and further budget cuts may be necessary. The State Senate is scheduled to release their budget on May 12th.

On behalf of the School Committee Deb Silberstein thanked the Central Office Administrators and Principals who have agreed to a full freeze of their 2010 pay increase and the Independents' unit who have agreed to a 1.5% reduction in their 2010 pay increase.

Workshop Session
FY2010 Preliminary School Department Budget

Dr. Bach began the workshop session with a powerpoint presentation of the new budget plan for 2010. The School Administrators met and contributed to the plan being presented to the School Committee. An explanation of the task before the principals and administrators is to propose a plan for fees, redesign the elementary school budget, propose options for use of Federal Stimulus Funds, options for possible further revenue reductions, and how to position the FY10 budget to help the district transition to long term organization changes while maintaining the core values and the goal to improve 21st Century Skills for All Students.

Peter Anderson addressed the plan for fees. He stated that education is driven by economics and we can no longer continue to give to everything, so we have to look at what we do well and concentrate on that. Parking fees at AHS will be raised from \$100 to \$200 raising \$33,000. Club fees will be eliminated. The \$33,000 from parking fees will be used for Club expenses and they are asking the High School PAC to cover the remaining costs. Transportation fees will be kept at this year's level. Athletic fees will be set at \$350 per athlete with a \$750 family cap. Gate receipts will be increased by a dollar for students and adults, rental rates of facilities will increase by 15% and they will realize a \$45,000 savings in transportation (due to favorable bid). The goal is to do nothing to discourage an increase in participation and to minimize the increase in user fees. Waivers are available for anyone who needs one.

Elementary Principals Brenda O'Brien and Colleen McBride spoke about the new direction elementary education will take to maintain high quality programs, to build upon sustainable long term goals, and planning for long term with the focus on integrating a wellness program taught through an expansion of Physical Education for Grades 1-5, Science Curriculum, Open Circle, and Second Step for 2009, and development of a strategic plan for Media/Tech and Integrated Arts for 2010. Stand-alone Health Program (4.6 positions), Instrumental Music (1.3 positions), and Technology (4.8 positions) will be eliminated.

Deb Silberstein said they would reach out to the AEA Leadership to schedule an informal meeting to discuss options other than wage freezes to help out. Deb asked the principals what they would restore assuming \$400,000 in Stimulus Funds were received. The Elementary Principals would restore the Instrumental Music Program and classroom assistant time; Middle School Principals would restore Guidance Counselors, Special Ed teachers and Media Specialists; and the High School would restore one Applied Technology and one PE Teacher which would eliminate 250 students from study halls for each. Peter Anderson is preparing an analysis of substitutes and how they are being used and will provide the information when completed.

Dr. Bach said plans for further reductions would include increasing class size at the elementary level for an approximate savings of \$340,00 in savings and consider closing an elementary school for an approximate savings of \$625,000. Shared Food Service Management, better transportation costs, new Reverse 911 Service, new rental charges for athletics, implementation of lease agreements for Technology purchases, and not replacing staff who resign or retire will contribute towards savings now. For the future, additional ideas under consideration include renegotiating new copy machine agreements and relocating the Copy Center, implementing a Special Education Audit, elimination of non-sports field trips, negotiating Special Education transportation costs, and the elimination of substitutes wherever possible.

Dr. Bach shared a video of "Getting Kids Moving in School" which showed how children improve their motivation, and decrease their anxiety through movement and exercise as they learn.

Workshop Session (Cont'd)

Deb Silberstein said the School Committee is excited about engaging in the development of a Strategic Plan and suggests the Committee think about looking at plans, and for Dr. Bach to designate Dr. Nicholson to receive the plans. After the plans are received, workshops will be scheduled to review the plans submitted then a formal presentation would be given to the School Committee.

Residents in the audience passionately expressed their concerns with the extent of the School Department cuts without seeing the same type of cuts being made on the Town side.

B. Town Meeting Warrants

1. Warrant Article #59 – Feasibility Study/Schematic Design-Bancroft Elementary School \$735,000

The Committee explained that WA#59 allows the School Department to explore options to include Shawsheen in the Feasibility Study. Surveys were sent out to both Shawsheen and Bancroft families to determine if they were open to exploring this option. The Bancroft Survey returns showed 98% were against including Shawsheen with 87% showing willingness to include Shawsheen. More input from the Bancroft and Shawsheen Communities is needed. Deb Silberstein feels it would be beneficial to all students to explore the option. Moira O'Brien, Principal of Shawsheen School would like to know if parents would think differently if they knew Shawsheen would close in five years. The Pre-school enrollment is growing and a solution for an Early Childhood Center/Preschool could be a solution.

The Committee discussed redistricting and school building capacity issues. The Committee does not envision a 1,000-student school at Bancroft. The Committee discussed the importance of presenting the two Warrant Articles without confusing the public. Atty. Mark Johnson said the wording in the Warrant Articles is very specific per MSBA Guidelines.

School Committee member Annie Gilbert motioned to recommend approval of Warrant Article #59 - Feasibility Study/Schematic Design-Bancroft Elementary School \$735,000. The motion was seconded by Dennis Forge, and voted 4-0 to recommend approval.

2. Warrant Article #23E – Contracts in Excess of Three Years

School Committee member Dennis Forge motioned to recommend approval of WA #23E-Contracts in Excess of Three Years. The motion was seconded by Annie Gilbert, and voted 4-0 to recommend approval.

3. Warrant Article #57 – Blanchard Street Ball Fields

School Committee member Dennis Forge motioned to recommend approval of WA #57 – Blanchard Street Ball Fields. The motion was seconded by Richard Collins, and voted 4-0 to recommend approval.

C. Other

The Committee discussed scheduling a School Committee meeting, staff breakfast meetings, and attending PTO/PAC meetings prior to Town Meeting. The Committee decided to meet on Wednesday, May 20th.

D. Adjournment

Dennis Fogue motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of May 5, 2009. The motion was seconded by Mr. Collins and voted 4-0 to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:16 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder