

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of November 24, 2009
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Richard J. Collins, Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert, and David Birnbach, and AHS Liaison Charlie Smith

Others in Attendance: Dr. Claudia L. Bach, Superintendent, Dr. Susan M. Nicholson, Assistant Superintendent

I. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein opened the meeting at 7:03 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Joe Chartier, a senior at Andover High School. Mr. Collins presented Joe with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Recognition of Achievement

Dr. Bach congratulated the students and staff who performed in the AHS Production *The Sound of Music* this past weekend. Although she was out of town and unable to attend, she heard it was an outstanding performance. Dennis Forgue and Annie Gilbert both attended and remarked that the production was truly an exceptional performance.

Dr. Bach congratulated West Elementary Principal Liz Roos who became an honorary member of the Rotary Club in recognition of the support from the West Elementary School staff and students to the Beverly School in Kenya.

Dr. Bach and Dr. Nicholson attended the 31st Annual Harvest Festival at Sanborn School and stated it was a remarkable event attended by many. Deb Silberstein added that Dr. Bach was honored at the Harvest Festival.

Dr. Bach also recognized Joe Piantedosi and Ralph Knight on receiving funding in the amount of \$38,000 to be used for renewable energy sources. The funds gifted will be used to install a solar panel at DMS and a second solar panel at West Middle School.

C. Communication

1. Update on Superintendent Search

Chair Silberstein said Human Resources Director Candace Hall would present a formal report on the Superintendent search at the December 10th meeting. Focus groups have begun, a survey is available on the school website and a workshop is scheduled for December 17th.

2. Bancroft Feasibility Study – Update

Dr. Bach distributed a report prepared by interim Business Manager, Bernie Tuttle, showing student enrollment “if Shawsheen closed today”, and “how large Bancroft would be if Shawsheen closed today”. Dr. Bach noted that the enrollment numbers at West Elementary increase significantly and the enrollment at the other elementary schools increase, but are within School Committee Policy Guidelines. The Committee discussed the results of the report which they found very helpful.

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

2. **Bancroft Feasibility Study – Update (Cont'd)**

Annie Gilbert reported on the status of the Bancroft School Building Project stating that the School Building Committee, SMMA, and neighbors walked the site on Saturday, November 21st. SMMA was asked to prepare a rough estimate of the magnitude of the cost for a building of several sizes and to show what the differential would be. They reported that a 500-600 student population would be approximately \$2.2M and a 600-700 school population \$3.7M; and as you reach a higher threshold of students the core areas of the school need to be increased. If the school were built for 700 students and Pre-K were added the additional increase would not be as great because Pre-K does not affect the core facilities. SMMA spoke with MSBA who said they would be inclined to pay for the Pre-K classrooms if they were built at Bancroft because it would be perceived as a step towards closing a building.

Annie Gilbert also reported that Mr. Piantedosi was asked to provide information on what the cost would be to keep Shawsheen open during the Bancroft building project and the cost would range anywhere from \$50-\$150,000 in the interim, and if Shawsheen were kept open permanently he estimates the cost of renovating the building would be in the area of \$7M. Adding onto Sanborn School to house Pre-school would cost about \$2M and he recommends using modular construction. Dr. Bach will provide the yearly operating cost for Shawsheen.

Chair Silberstein is of the opinion that Shawsheen should be closed and Bancroft School should be built to house more than 500 students. The number depends upon what enrollments would look like by redistricting and changing capacities at other schools. She also requested information on housing the pre-school at two schools instead of one.

High Plain Elementary Principal Pam Lathrop spoke to the benefit of having the pre-school at one location which would allow resources to be housed in one place, improved delivery of service, space needs can be adjusted accordingly, and allocation of staff more efficient.

The School Building Committee will meet on December 10th at 7:15 P.m. with SMMA in the School Committee Room. Deb Silberstein said the Committee would vote on the size of enrollment for Bancroft at the December 10th School Committee meeting.

3. **Strategic Plan – Update**

Dr. Nicholson updated the Committee on the status of the Strategic Plan stating that the first meeting of the Steering Committee will be held on Monday, November 30th. Agendas, letters, and a draft of the retrospective have been sent out. There were a number of people with outstanding qualifications who applied; some will be on the Steering Committee and others on the pinpoint committees or focus groups.

Dr. Bach said there has been an enormous response to the flu vaccination on-line survey. Dr. Bach also reported that the refreshed Statement of Interest (SOI's) have been submitted to the Mass School Building Authority with Andover High School listed as the first priority.

C. Communications (Cont'd)

Dr. Nicholson said two West Elementary School teachers, Tim Harkins and Deb Powers, are offering a staff development course for K-5 Teachers to integrate Smartboards into the classroom. The course offering has enough participants to hold two classes, with a third course to cover those on the waiting list. David Birnbach would like to see three days of training allocated with subs to cover the teachers so all teachers will be proficient in the use of the Smartboards. Dr. Bach said that would be the usual plan to consider; however that is not possible this year due to the budget cuts made to the staff development and substitute accounts for this year.

D. Citizen Input

Bonnie Zahorik, 2 Granli Drive questioned the School Committee on the technology needs at Wood Hill Middle and High Plain Elementary Schools; specifically, what has been developed as a counter-proposal to address the issue of technology at these two schools. The Committee exchanged ideas on equity and technology requirements for Wood Hill and High Plain.

David Birnbach met with Ray Tode, Director of Technology, and the Principals of High Plain & Wood Hill to dialogue ideas on various options and priorities, which will be an on-going conversation to converge on a short-term solution balanced with Andover High School's needs. Deb Silberstein communicated with teachers and parents and visited the WHMS & HPE with David Birnbach and stated that the schools are falling behind by not having updated technology equipment and she wants to fix the inequity that exists. Mr. Collins is adamantly opposed to any inequity at the schools. Dennis Forgue feels it is important to support the investment in Smartboards by supporting an upgrade in laptops but he is not in favor of a three-year lease; and requests an understanding of what other alternatives are available. Ray Tode said the educational process and planning too support the schools' technology needs was put in to place several years ago, unfortunately we have not been able to fund it due to the budget cuts. Mr. Tode feels we need to sustain the technology that currently exists and what teachers have been trained on. Annie Gilbert reported that ACE is close to funding a \$120,000 investment for a Foreign Language Lab for Andover High School.

Norma Villareal who is a teacher at Wood Hill as well as a parent, said the middle school students' utilize the laptops to process and synthesize for themselves. The mobile laptops are in constant use by the students and have changed the path of teaching. There is value with every teacher in the building already trained on using the laptops. Wood Hill Principal Patrick Bucco said the laptops provide the opportunity for a differentiated learning environment but currently the laptops at Wood Hill are unreliable. High Plain Elementary Principal Pamela Lathrop said the schools are dying without the upgraded laptops; even the daily functions of attendance and lunch counts are affected causing frustration for the teachers, technicians are there daily, and time is being wasted.

Anne Gilbert said the direction of technology should be addressed through the Strategic Plan. We are trying to maintain stability in the school system after the drastic budget cuts and she feels it is a reasonable investment to replace the laptops at Wood Hill and High Plain and to forward from there.

On a motion by David Birnbach with a second by Mr. Collins it was voted 5-0 to approve the infrastructure investment of \$17,000 a year for three years for the infrastructure switches and routers.

C. Citizen Input (Cont'd)

David Birnbach motioned to approve the purchase of the laptops mapped to the Smartboards and to approve the purchase of laptops as requested by the administration along with an investment in training. Dennis Forgue seconded the motion. Deb Silberstein said the motion does not address the student laptops. David Birnbach withdrew his motion.

Annie Gilbert motioned to approve the request for 180 laptops as originally stated for High Plain Elementary and Wood Hill Middle School. The motion was seconded by David Birnbach and voted 3-1-1. Dennis Forgue abstained and David Birnbach voted no.

E. Consent Agenda

1. Field Trips: AHS Grade 11 & 12. February 13-20, 2010 to Cozumel, Mexico requested by Laura Hajdukiewicz, Scuba Club Advisor (to study marine biology).

Motion: Dennis Forgue motioned to approve the consent agenda items as listed. The motion was seconded by Annie Gilbert and voted 5-0 to approve.

Discussion: David Birnbach would like to defer to information from Town Counsel on the release of liability. Dr. Bach will bring the information on liability to the meeting of December 10, 2009 and the Committee will re-vote at that time.

F. Policy

1. Discuss Student Activity Accounts Policy – 2nd pass

The Committee will vote on the Student Activity Accounts Policy at the December 10th meeting.

G. Adjourn

On a motion by Dennis Forgue and a second by Annie Gilbert, the School Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder