

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of March 17, 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: 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 6:30 P.M. in the School Committee Meeting Room in the School Offices. Present were: Chair Deb Silberstein, and Committee Members Tony James, Arthur Barber (arrived at 6:35 P.M.), Richard Collins, and Dennis Forgue. On a motion by Richard Collins and a second by Tony James it was voted to go into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining strategy and to return to Open Session. Roll Call Vote: Chair Silberstein-Y, Members, 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 7:04 P.M. Roll Call Vote: Chair Silberstein-Y, Members, A. Barber-Y, D. Forgue-Y, T. James-Y, R. Collins-Y.

II. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein reconvened Open Session at 7:10 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Shawsheen School students, Brendan Gruenberg (Pre-school), Jack Gruenberg (Pre-school) and Josh Gruenberg (Grade 2). Mr. Collins presented each of the Gruenberg children a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Recognition of Achievement

Dr. Bach announced the appointment of Jonathan Harris of Austin, Texas as the new Principal of Andover High School. Jonathan Harris currently serves as the Senior Associate in the Office of Strategic Compensation/Curriculum for the Austin Independent School District, and prior to that he was the Director/Principal of the Austin Academy of Scientific Inquiry and Design, an Assistant Principal at Anderson High, a teacher, department chair, and he began his career as a teacher for Teach for America. Dr. Bach thanked Dr. Nicholson, who led the Search Committee, Candace Hall, Director of Human Resources for coordinating interviews and site visits, and the members of the Search Committee for their efforts. There were three outstanding candidates to choose from which made for a difficult choice.

Dr. Nicholson recognized the students, staff, and parents at South Elementary School for the outstanding production of *Alladin Jr.* performed by the students this weekend at West Middle School. Dr. Nicholson attended the play with her nephew Conrad, who thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful event. Art Barber also acknowledged the fine performance the South School Community once again produced.

Deb Silberstein recognized outgoing School Committee member Tony James who has served two terms on the School Committee and has been an invaluable colleague. Tony was a pioneer in the founding of ACE, promoted engineering in the middle schools, an advocate for education, and continuously worked to increase funding for education; he was instrumental throughout contract negotiations and realizing health insurance changes. Tony also established the list of sweet sixteen communities we compare Andover to. Deb presented Tony with the book, *Becoming a Leader*, by Warren Venice. Other members of the School Committee expressed their

appreciation for the work Tony has contributed to the Schools. Dennis Forgue appreciates Tony's friendship and help in his first year, Mr. Collins wishes him the best, and Art Barber said he and Tony began their service to the Committee together, worked on the founding of ACE together and attended many meetings and discussions; he wishes Tony the best of luck in his retirement. Alex Macheras recognized Tony for his help with the AHS Budget Group. Tony said he would remember the last six years with enormous affection. He is impressed with all of the work the Central Office Staff does, the professionalism of the principals and administrators, and the teachers who are the backbone of the system. They are all a truly remarkable group. Andover has excellent schools because we have excellent students. Parents have been very supportive providing talent and revenue. He hopes the community comes together to focus on what's best for kids.

Art Barber thanked AHS Social Studies Teacher, Mary Robb who invited him to attend her democracy class. The students held a candidates forum, and asked difficult, challenging questions.

Mr. Collins commended Chris Bergeron, Athletic Director and Brian McNally, Director of Physical Education and Health for the wonderful job they do at Andover High School.

Alex Macheras thanked Dr. Bach for including students in the high school principal selection process.

C. Communications

1. School Building Committee Update

School Building Task Force members Mark Johnson and Tom Deso reported on the status of the Bancroft School Building Project. The MSBA accepted the Statement of Interest for Bancroft and a refreshed Statement of Interest was submitted for Shawsheen School; which proposes the question does the School Committee want the Building Committee to submit a feasibility study to include Shawsheen as part of the project to replace on the Bancroft site. The MSBA had a positive reaction but did not provide a commitment to include Shawsheen. Right now we have the approval for a Feasibility Study for Bancroft only. The Building Committee is requesting guidance from the School Committee on what the educational objectives are, if Shawsheen would be a part of the campus at the Bancroft Site and how the Committee envisions going forward. If Shawsheen is included, a warrant article requesting additional feasibility funds need to be submitted.

Discussion: The Shawsheen School is aging and something has to happen either way in the foreseeable future. Merging a K-2 and K-5 on one site would be a difficult sell. Consider constructing a building on the Bancroft site that would allow for additional building later. The number of students is important, it is critical to the design of the building as it will determine the size of the school and classrooms. The uniqueness of the Shawsheen Community (Pre-K -2) is attractive to parents.

Deb Silberstein said the School Building Committee is holding an informational meeting for the community on March 25th at 7:00 PM and encourages everyone to attend. She suggested the School Committee meet with the School Building Committee at 5:00 P.M. prior to the start of the 7:00 PM meeting.

2. Joint IT Town-wide Project Update

Dr. Bach reported that Phase I of the project review of the Town Information Technology is complete and the next step of the Joint IT Committee is setup a meeting with the Town Manager, Superintendent, and Len Innocenzo to discuss a review of the School IT services. Ray Tode will join the Committee as an advisory consultant for the School Department. Dr. Bach will report back to the School Committee when the Scope of Services is developed completed.

C. Communications

Dr. Bach said the Principals from the China Exchange Initiative were very impressed with everything about the Andover Schools. They were intrigued with their conversation with Deb Silberstein and impressed with American morality. They stated the Andover principals work harder with fewer resources than the Chinese do.

Dr. Bach thanked the ACE Foundation for their generous donation of \$1,000 to the AHS PAC in support of a new Language Lab.

Dr. Bach said the secretarial office space in the Superintendent's area has been upgraded and made more secure. Alison Phelan has more visibility and a better space with which to work.

The Andover Fund for Education's Annual Spelling Bee will be held on Friday, April 3rd at 7:00 P.M.

A panel discussion with PTO / PAC Presidents and school principals to discuss the budget and how decisions are made is being planned. Eric Nadworny will moderate the discussion which will be taped and played on the local school channel. Dr. Bach is also meeting with the AHS Student Budget Group to tape their presentation of what they learned about the budget and their ideas.

Susan Nicholson said she and Dr. Bach attended the West Elementary Readers and Writers Conference and congratulated Principal Liz Roos, staff, and students who participated in the play on a job well done. The classroom presentations by students at each grade level and unique pieces of artifacts created by students were outstanding. Congratulations to all the students for their hard work.

Tony James reminded everyone of the League of Women Voters Candidate Debate starts at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, March 18th at Memorial Hall Library.

D. Consent Agenda

Warrant: Dave Keniston said the Warrants are in order.

Minutes: Regular Session Minutes of March 5, 2009
Tri-board Meeting Minutes of February 9, 2009

Field Trip: Bancroft School - Grade 5 to Nature's Classroom in Greenfield, NH (outdoor education) September 29-October 2, 2009. Requested by Kim Santos and approved by Principal Goldstein.

Motion: Tony James motioned to approve the Warrant, the Regular Session Minutes of March 5, 2009 the Tri-board Meeting Minutes of February 9, 2009, and the Bancroft School Grade 5 Field trip request.

Dennis Forgue requested the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 5th be revised to reflect additional comments.

Tony James moved that the motion be amended to exclude the Minutes of March 5, 2009. The motion was seconded by Dennis Forgue, voted 5-0 and approved.

Art Barber moved to approve the Field Trip Request, and the Tri-board Minutes of February 9th. The motion was duly seconded and unanimously approved.

E. Finances

1. Receive Preliminary FY2010 School Department Budget

Dave Keniston, Business Manager, presented a review of the FY2010 Preliminary Budget. The Budget for FY2010 totals \$60,433,157; of which \$47,484,533 is Salary Expense and \$12,948,605 Operating Expense. The budget shows an increase of \$1M from FY2009. Salaries has a net increase of \$100,123 and Expenses \$899,877. Staff reductions of 40 FTE's are from all levels effecting more than 50 positions system-wide. Budget assumptions include elementary class size is preserved; the middle school maintains the team concept, and a staff turnover of \$270,919 for teachers and \$50,000 for assistants. At the high school level one position will be cut from each department; Science, Math English, Technology, Business Social Studies, Physical Education, as well as two instructional assistants. Central Office will realize reductions in Administration (1), independents (1) and clerical staff (3). Custodial Services will realize a 25% reduction as well.

The budget reflects the track and step increases. Significant fee increases are reflected for Pre-school, full day kindergarten, transportation, athletic fees, extra-curricular activity fees at Andover High and the Middle Schools. The balanced budget requires \$3.2M in cuts from a level service budget. Estimated enrollment for FY2010 for Kindergarten through Grade 12 is 6,220 students. Mr. Keniston displayed various scenarios of the budget: by salary and non-salary, by function, by object, and by grade level.

Questions and comments regarding the budget can be submitted by email to Mr. Keniston at dkeniston@aps1.net as well as to all School Committee members. The preliminary budget is on the Andover School Website at www.aps1.net.

Discussion:

Deb Silberstein would like to frame the budget discussions in areas by levels, to ask questions publicly encouraging dialogue with the community, and to communicate a better understanding of the implications of the budget cuts on students. Small group meetings could be held to discuss and filter questions with Dave Keniston. The target date for submission of questions should be April 1st and then opportunities for discussion established. She would like a group composed of PTO/PAC Presidents and Principals to attend meetings to provide clarification on how the cuts will affect their schools. Deb would like to look at how the Technology/Library Media Teachers are coordinated, if there is any duplication, and would a merger save positions. She would also like to discuss fees and the impact of paying for school supplies as one category and receive feedback from parents.

Tony James noted the Evaluation Therapy line item is about 50% of the Out of District Services and suggest we re-think how to deliver those services. Dr. Bach has scheduled a meeting with GLEC to discuss their proposed increases. Dave Keniston said an audit analysis of Special Education costs by Future Health, a firm recommended by the Mass School Superintendents' Association, is being considered. Future Health conducts a friendly audit of Special Education practices, procedures, and schedules and provides recommendations. The time frame for when a review could be done and data supplied is a few months.

Art Barber said tonight's meeting is an opportunity to open the dialogue and discuss what the priorities, challenges, and opportunities are. It is important we provide the community with an overall outline of what our plan is. The preliminary budget is a live document and a final budget won't be realized until before Town Meeting. Work Sessions should be established to respond to questions and issues. Mr. Barber suggested Finance Committee Liaison, Jon Stumpf attend the work sessions to help with the process. Mr. Stumpf agreed and suggested reflecting back on the presentation given by Dr. Fink at a prior Tri-board Meeting, which was well done, and clearly answered all questions raised.

1. Receive Preliminary FY2010 School Department Budget (Cont'd)

Dennis Forgue suggested questions submitted by the School Committee be made available to the public so they can see what questions are being raised as well as what the recommendations and alternatives are and why. He would like to see a moving spreadsheet made available showing possibilities that could occur if Federal Stimulus Dollars are realized.

Tony James noted that several broad categories appear significantly different than what was approved and suggests having a forecasted notation. He also asked if the cost of transportation for next year is the same as this year. Mr. Keniston said bids are in the process of going out and the budget assumes they will be the same as last year.

Deb Silberstein said the starting point for the process is to communicate the agenda of the meetings. She will construct a memo reflecting the process and have it put on the Andover School Website.

2. Revised CIP Request

Dave Keniston reported that the School Committee previously voted for a CIP total of \$1,184,283. The Town Manager's recommendation for SCH-1 General Maintenance, SCH-2 Health and Safety, and SCH-3 Technology is \$830,000 which is level funding of the School Department CIP from FY2009 totals. Mr. Keniston requests a motion to reduce the School CIP to \$830,000 as per the Town Manager's recommended budget.

No action taken.

F. Personnel

1. Human Resources Report

On behalf of Candace Hall, Director of Human Resources, Dave Keniston reported that reasonable estimates on unemployment costs and information on staff sick leave would be provided to the School Committee in their Friday packets. There are many variables to be considered with regard to unemployment; and the Town has \$280,000 in the Employment Fund. An analysis of teachers on long-term leave of absence replaced by permanent substitutes, which has been extensive this year will also be included in the packet on Friday. Paying for the teacher on leave and the cost of the permanent sub at a rate of B1-\$39,000 increased the cost by \$304,000 due to duplication of expenses. Deb Silberstein stated there has to be a way to reduce the \$435,000 estimated for substitutes for FY2010 which is a significant increase over FY2009. Dr. Bach said she will discuss this at school faculty meetings.

G. Town Meeting Warrant Articles No Action Taken

H. Citizen Input

Dan Kowalski, 24 Enfield Drive asked how residents should submit their budget questions. Deb Silberstein said they should email all members with a copy to Dave Keniston.

Martha Ciguere speaking on behalf of the Music Department and as a parent, said she finds many pieces of the budget disturbing. Cuts to instrumental music will affect 743 students by cutting just one person. How will the whole program feed out from the cuts, how it will filter down, and what will the ramifications to the foundation of instrumental music be?

H. Citizen Input (Cont'd)

Laura Gregory, 5 Emerson Lane said that because of the economic climate, it is hard to know how to approach the large amount to be cut. What do these cuts mean? Are children losing PE and Music all together or just portions? How will the cuts affect the children? Will there be fewer teachers? From a parent's perspective what does it mean – what is the impact to the classroom, to the day to day schedule?

Dr. Bach said implications of some of the cuts is in her presentation on the Andover School website (www.aps1.net). Laura Gregory requested the document be something parents can understand. Dennis Forgue believes we need to be concrete on what the cuts mean. Tony James said the School Department doesn't have much room to cut, but the Town Departments do.

Julie Diehl, Parent and Andover Music Teacher said the 3rd and 4th grade recorder, 3rd grade instrumental strings will not be in the program at all. Page 3 of the budget for Grade 3 Instrumental Music should reflect all components that will be cut.

Judy Rich, 33 Ballardvale Road, asked for an update on the discussions with the Unions. Deb Silberstein responded that the AEA is not interested in opening the contracts, the School Committee tried to schedule a meeting for today and the AEA asked to reschedule to April 14th. We will keep trying to do everything we can to keep everyone working. Dr. Bach said all pre-professional staff will receive lay-off notices by April 14th.

HI. Motion to Adjourn

Tony James motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the School Committee. The motion was seconded by Art Barber, voted 5-0-0 and approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:03 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder