

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of March 5, 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 7:02 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 Richard Collins and a second by Tony James it was voted to go into Executive Session to discuss contract negotiations 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 7:30 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 to Open Session at 7:37 P.M. Mr. Collins led the meeting in a moment of silence in memory of Alan Champagne. Mr. Collins introduced Shawsheen School students Airis Dodd-Nobel (Pre-school) and Allecia Dodd-Nobel (Grade 1) who led the meeting in a salute to the flag. Each of the students were presented a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Recognition of Achievement

1. Junior Congress members Alex Macheras and Henry Tian

AHS Liaison Alex Macheras said he and Henry Tian recently returned from a school trip to Washington, D.C. to attend the Junior State of America where they participated in a model Congress and debates. Alex and Henry each won awards for best speakers. Dr. Bach congratulated the students on their achievement.

Dr. Bach congratulated the AHS Boys' Track Team on winning the State Championship Title and recognized Chris McConnell who won the 50-yard dash, beating the State record. Dr. Bach also congratulated the AHS Girls' Track Team and the AHS Boys' Swim Team on their outstanding season.

Dr. Bach said the end of the year audit report submitted to the State came back without any corrections made and she credits the incredible work of Janet Wright, School Accountant for the stellar report.

Dr. Bach congratulated the Town of Andover and National Grid for being awarded the Summit Platinum Award from The New England Energy Efficiency Program in recognition of our commitment to energy conservation. Congratulations to Joe Piantedosi and all the building managers.

Mr. Collins recognized the following Bancroft students who read all twenty-five of the Massachusetts Children's Book Award books; John Crowley, Amanda Brosnan, Liddy Kasraian, Hannah Roos, Claire Glover, Francesca Lionetta and Phillippa Johnson.

B. Recognition of Achievement (Cont'd)

Mr. Collins commended Nick D'Innocenzo, of the AHS Boys' Swim Team on winning four State Titles; two individual awards, and two in the relay. Mr. Collins also commended Chris McConnell who did a wonderful job running the 50-yard dash at the State Track Meet by beating the state record.

Alex Macheras acknowledged Dr. Bach, the School Committee Members and Mr. Anderson for assisting with the paperwork to allow the students to go to Washington, D.C.

C. Communications

1. AHS Student Budget Group Presentation

Tony James said last fall it was suggested to Alex Macheras that he and other school students look at the budget to suggest from their perspective where reductions could be made. Peter Anderson brought the students together and Tony provided assignments and met with the students three times. The group composed of eight high school students, Alex Macheras, Caitlin Peterman, Cassie Huang, Charlie Shi, Ellis Heneghan, Emma Gendlerman, Erica Potts, and Gary Hinds presented their findings as follows:

Fees: Increase ticket prices for athletic events, charge a minimal fee for art classes and science labs, double the parking fee, and auction off some of the prime spaces. Smaller scale: outsource copy center and reduce paper usage, lower the heat in the building, and turn off the lights in the cafeteria. Medium scale: Reduce stipends for after school activities by half, streamline the elementary and middle school health program, waive physical education requirement for students who participate in after-school athletics, and reduce substitute teachers. Reorganize transportation (number of stops, busses) and have all school employees forgo their contracted wage increase for one year.

Mr. Collins feels strongly against increasing the athletic fees. Cheryl Todisco, Health teacher at South School applauds the students on their presentation but pointed out that Elementary Health Education provides a foundation and understanding of health and wellness which reduces student's participation in risky behavior. Deb Silberstein thanked the students for their presentation.

2. School Building Committee Update

Tony James said the Mass School Building Association (MSBA) approved Joe Piantedosi as the owner project manager for Bancroft School. Joe Piantedosi provides a great deal of expertise and as project manager it saves us money. On Monday, March 9* the Task Force, Town Manager and Superintendent will be meeting with the MSBA to discuss questions and concerns. The Conservation Commission approved the most recent designation of wetlands, and it appears there is more flexibility of where a building could be located on the Bancroft site; however, we will continue to explore other appropriate sites within the Bancroft district. Dennis Forgue said one of the requirements by the MSBA is to look at other options and to that end we are looking at land at the back end of Merrimack College, and a site located between Rte 125 and Rte 28 which does not seem to be a viable option. Dr. Bach said they are also looking at the possibility of putting a new Shawsheen School and Bancroft School on the same site.

3. Joint IT Town wide Project Update

The Town Information Technology Task Force is requesting the School Committee designate a school representative to the Town-wide IT Committee.

Motion: Dennis Forgue motioned to request that Dr. Bach appoint Ray Tode as the School Department designee to work with the Town Technology Committee for planning purposes. The motion was seconded by Tony James, voted 5-0 and approved.

C. Communications (Cont'd)

Dr. Bach announced the appointment of Francine Goldstein as Principal of Bancroft School. Francine has been the interim principal for the past year. Three finalists were chosen from the twenty resumes received. Dr. Bach said the search for a new Andover High School Principal is well underway with three finalists having been selected. Dr. Bach and Dr. Nicholson traveled to Austin, Texas, Hamilton/Wenham and Newton South this week for site visits and the three finalists will be visiting Andover High School next week. Dr. Nicholson said the three finalists for the high school principal position are outstanding, and the decision will be a difficult one. Dr. Bach recognized Susan Nicholson for heading the Search Committee and thanked the parents and staff who are on the Search Committee.

Dr. Bach thanked the School Committee and Andover High School Principal Peter Anderson for hosting the twelve principals from China at Andover High School last Friday. The principals were very impressed with the students and faculty at Andover High.

Dr. Bach said the IRS in Andover donated 117 flat screen computer monitors to the School Technology Department, twelve of which went to West Middle School.

Art Barber said he discussed the parking problem at Andover High School with Selectman Major. Parents were ticketed while attended the open house and were very upset. They will be meeting to discuss a system that would be more beneficial to all. Mr. Barber also said he received excellent feedback from the Division 1 meeting of the Mass Association of School Committee that Joe Piantedosi and Dave Keniston presented at. The next meeting will be held in Lowell on March 28th. Mr. Barber has attended several PAC and PTO meetings at the schools to discuss budget concerns.

Deb Silberstein asked the Committee to choose one of the three dates, April 1, April 13 or April 14th to meet with the AEA. Deb also asked for ideas on what we can do differently to engage more people in budget discussions. Ideas to consider include, using social networking sites, conference calls, and using a call-in communication to receive citizen input. On April 1st a meeting is being coordinated with PTO Presidents, Principals and School Committee members to discuss the role of the PTO's, how it is changing, and what they are hearing from parents and Deb suggested it might be a good idea to have a moderator for the meeting.

D. Consent Agenda

Warrant: Dave Keniston said the Warrants are in order. Minutes Regular Session Minutes of February 9, 2009

Motion: Tony James motioned to approve the warrant and the Regular Session Minutes of February 9, 2009. The motion was seconded by Art Barber, voted 4-0-1 and approved. (Dennis Forgue abstained)

E. School Calendar

1. Proposals for the 2009-2010 Academic School Calendar

Dr. Bach presented four calendar choices for the School Committee to review and consider for the 2009-2010 school year. The calendars provide an array of options from starting in late August and having a three-week February vacation to save on energy. A vote on the school calendar isn't required until the first of May but there have already been calls from parents who need to plan ahead. The calendars will be put on the school website so parents can look at them and provide input to the School Committee. Mr. Barber suggested the idea of proposing multi-year calendars rather than voting one year at a time. Tony James noted that Calendars C and D significantly extend the school year and suggested April vacation be eliminated. Dr. Bach will design a fifth calendar for the Committee to review. Deb Silberstein asked for a follow-up discussion and the recommendation from surveying parents.

F. Finances

1. Preliminary FY2010 School Dept Budget

Dr. Bach presented an update of her preliminary budget for FY2010, which currently totals 560,433,157; Personnel represent \$47,304,126 and Expenses \$13,129,031. In keeping with the core value that student needs come first, she will continue to incorporate ideas to generate income and reduce expenses. Proposed user fees for FY2010 total \$473,000 with the distribution of the remaining \$2,437,000 shortfall coming from three areas: Central Office \$771,000; high school \$528,000; middle schools \$530,000 and \$608,000 from the elementary schools. Staffing reductions will be at all levels with a reduction of 40.9 FTE's or 55 positions and possibly a total of 75 positions to reach the 3.2M shortfall. Special Education positions will be added to support the six in-district special needs programs, which save us money by reducing out-of-district costs.

Tony James said the budget does not make assumptions about assistance from the Federal and State levels, and we still don't know when the assistance will come in or how it is to be used. Dr. Bach understanding is that 1.6M will be designated for Andover and funneled directly to the School Department to cover FY09, FY10 and possibly FY11 with restrictions for use. Deb Silberstein met with Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas who indicated \$800M is coming to Massachusetts with 80% of the revenue allocated for education, but there is still some confusion. Dave Keniston said there is pressure from the Secretary of Agriculture in Washington to supply more support for student lunch programs. Deb Silberstein said the stabilization money is to stabilize businesses as a cushion to reset the economy and we cannot be sure when a return to normal will so we can't assume anything yet. It may be right before Town Meeting before we know what the budget number will be.

Dennis Fogue said a meeting was held with the leadership of the Teachers' Union to discuss the budget constraints. The response to the request for consideration of a wage freeze from the AEA Leadership was no; with a vote to unanimously not accept a wage freeze. Dennis suggests moving forward with budget meetings at levels; one for the high school, one for middle school and one for the elementary school level.

Discussion:

Jennifer Bentley has concerns about the preliminary cut of health teachers and requests we not take away the gift of healthy awareness from students. Cheryl Todisco, Health Education Teacher said Health Education is specifically designed to meet the changing needs of Andover students and impacts 2300 students in grades 1-5. Dan Kowalski, 24 Enfield Drive asked how additional funds would be disbursed between the Town and School Departments. Deb Silberstein replied that historically it has been a 65-35 distribution. Bob Willard, 76 Tewksbury Street deplores the decision to close the libraries at the three middle schools and encourages the School Department to keep them open. Jackie Salvesen, Health Education Teacher spoke to the comprehensiveness of the program and that by eliminating elementary health with the expectation that classroom teachers will take over the responsibility is not the right thing to do. Diane Costagliola, 24 Belknap Drive and Co-President of the AHS PAC said there are no easy choices or decisions and she is disturbed with the increased fees that will be imposed on parents of middle and high school students. She also said that parking fees cannot be changed just to generate revenue. Diane also if the timeline for meeting with the unions has been established, and said both the Town and School departments must share the burden of cuts. Deb Silberstein said everyone has to sacrifice. She would like to receive input from the community about the increase in fees, and suggests the AHS PAC send out a survey to parents. A definite decision on cutting the Health Program has not been made and there will be more opportunities for discussion. Jack Reeder, 80 Salem Street, suggested installing solar hot water systems to save money and if it was possible to consider outsourcing custodial services. Alex Macheras said everyone could be more responsible by picking up after themselves. K. Bonnaire, 38 Dufton Road whose husband is a school custodian said the custodians take ownership of their position and building. Denise Wall, 2 Blueberry Hill Road, asked if the number for freezing wages is accurate. Dave Keniston replied that we would see a 1.4 to 1.5 in COLA increases from freezing the teachers' wages alone. Art Barber asked if all unions accepted a one year wage freeze what the number would be to which the response was approximately two million dollars. Bill Gibson said the problem facing the Town is an expense revenue problem and he encourages discussions be held with the unions.

2. YTD Financials

Dave Keniston reported the Year-to Date- Financial presented are as of February 24th and noted the Salary account has a \$250,000 deficit due to a large number of long-term leave of absences. The non-salary account shows a deficit for evaluation & therapy and Special Education tuition and the Governor's 9C cuts total \$140,000. The total deficit stands at 1.5M. Resources available to alleviate the deficit include revenue from the Federal Economic Stimulus Package for 2009, a continuation of the budget freeze in non-salary expenses, and CIP. He is requesting approval for recommended General Fund Transfers as presented.

Motion: Tony James motioned to approve the recommended General Fund Transfers provided as part of the agenda packet. The motion was seconded by Dennis Forgue, voted 5-0 and approved.

G. Citizen Input

Peggy Kruse asked if the 9th Grade Social Studies class is going to be a mixed level class, and if so is this the beginning of the end of leveling at Andover High. Peter Anderson said leveling would never disappear at Andover High. Currently there are over 200 multi-level sections at the high school and approximately 67% of the students are in Level I. Mixing levels in Social Studies provides an opportunity for students to engage in thought provoking discussions. Marge Andreson asked why the change was not communicated to parents. Bob Willard asked if Edline was an item being cut from the budget to which Dr. Bach said it is not. Kathy Bonnaire suggested the school calendar be shared with the whole community not just the school community.

H. Motion to Adjourn

Dennis Forgue 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 10:38 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder