



DRACUT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Minutes

DATE: September 26, 2011

LOCATION: Harmony Hall

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mrs. Bonita Elie, Chairman
Mr. Matthew Sheehan, 1st Vice Chairperson
Mr. Michael Miles, 2nd Vice Chairperson
Mr. Ronald Mercier
Dr. Michael McNamara

SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND OTHERS PRESENT:

Dr. Stacy Scott, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Thomas Rose, School Business Administrator
Attorney Edward Morris
Attorney Kevin Murphy
Cynthia Curtis, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER:

The Regular Session Meeting of the School Committee was called to order by Chairperson Bonita Elie at Harmony Hall at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Chairperson Elie called for the pledge of allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Motion by Mr. Miles, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to approve the September 12, 2011 regular session school committee meeting minutes.

Vote: Unanimously Approved

2. Motion by Mr. Miles seconded by Mr. Sheehan to approve the August 19, 2011 policy sub-committee meeting minutes.

Vote: Unanimously Approved

3. Motion by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Dr. McNamara to accept the September 1, 2011 Finance Sub-Committee meeting minutes.

Vote: Unanimously Approved

APPROVAL OF BILLS AND PAYROLLS:

Bills and Payrolls were signed as follows:

Warrant 20120007 by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Miles and Dr. McNamara

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PRESENTATION OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

Britney Tobey was present to give an update on the visit from the NEASC visiting committee. Plans are underway for spirit week at the high school. Britney also gave an update on athletics.

COMMUNITY INPUT:

No community input.

NEW BUSINESS:

Greenmont Avenue Playground Committee

Ann Marsden was present to give an update regarding fundraising efforts for the Greenmont Avenue playground. The committee has been raising funds for two years and has raised approximately \$15,000. To help raise funds various events were held such as spaghetti suppers, coin drives, food promotions with local business, Old Home Day booth, and notices on Facebook. They are making available the purchase of bricks or stones to be incorporated into a walkway. The Greenmont Avenue Playground committee is looking for town and/or school committee for assistance. The desired start date is for the end of the school year with construction to start during the summer. Flyers will be sent home to families in addition to other schools in the district. Mr. Andrew Graham will assist with advisement on cost savings. A suggestion was made to contact DATV to place an advertisement on local access television.

SUPERINTENDENT'S INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Enrollment Update

The committee received an update on enrollment with September 22nd enrollment figures. Dr. Scott indicated that he will continue to monitor the larger classrooms to see if additional support will be needed. Dr. Scott emphasized that the need for additional paraprofessionals is not only because of a larger class size but the need for support in classrooms where students have IEPs.

Dr. McNamara suggested looking at the possibility of having the recent .4 paraprofessional in grade 2 at Campbell School transfer to grade 2 at Greenmont where the enrollment is higher.

Attorney Morris left the meeting at 8:22 pm

Attorney Murphy arrived at 8:22 pm

Dr. Scott will take under advisement the suggestion of Dr. McNamara; however, Dr. Scott does not foresee moving a Paraprofessional from Campbell School to Greenmont as he believes there is a need at Campbell School. Dr. Scott will continue to review the enrollment and if needed will propose to the Committee additional support at Greenmont.

Dr. McNamara requested the numbers of Paraprofessionals in each school building. Dr. Scott will provide this information for the Committee.

Alicia Brangan, mother of a 1st grade student at Greenmont addressed the Committee. Ms. Brangan has concerns that her son's IEP is not being met within a larger classroom. Ms. Brangan also indicated that Greenmont Avenue has the only kindergarten classroom in the district without assistance to the teachers. Ms. Brangan is seeking assistance for teachers at Greenmont.

Christine Maraganis, Betty Ann Lane, addressed the Committee regarding her child in 2nd grade at Greenmont. Ms. Maraganis expressed concern that students are not receiving attention and proper services needed. Ms. Maraganis indicated that her son is not receiving services needed and this is causing the district to be out of compliance. Ms. Maraganis suggested that the district hire additional full time assistants. Ms. Maraganis also indicated that there is no Occupational Therapist at Greenmont Avenue and that services at Englesby are also not being met.

Raeda Alkhateeb has a 2nd grade student at Greenmont and expressed her concern with her child being in a larger classroom. Raeda Alkhateeb is also seeking assistance for the teachers.

Discussion continued regarding the decrease of three classes to two. Dr. Scott will address the issue of the lack of an Occupational Therapist and will review this issue to ensure that the student needs are being addressed. Mr. Miles asked that the Committee be updated regarding this issue. Dr. Scott will report back to the Committee after his review.

Mr. Sheehan suggested holding a Finance Sub-Committee meeting if it is warranted after review of this topic.

Karen Bernier who has a son at the Campbell School addressed the Committee. She indicated that students' needs are not being met at the Campbell School as well and that speech services are not being met.

Dr. Scott thanked the parents and asked that they contact him via email if their needs are not being met by the school teachers and principals. Mr. Sheehan thanked the parents and informed them that Dr. Scott has an open door policy and they could contact the school committee members as well as Ms. Barry, Executive Director of Student Services. Dr. McNamara asked that the Principals are made aware of issues in their buildings so they can be reported to the Superintendent. The Committee and Dr. Scott thanked the parents for attending the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

High School Renovation Project Update

Al Cuevas, Joe Miele and Andrew Graham addressed the committee regarding the issue of the modular classrooms at the high school.

Al Cuevas, Mt. Vernon Group and Joe Miele, OPM for Dracut and representative from RF Walsh. Currently the project is in the development phase. There are ten portable classrooms at high school currently. Dr. Scott proposed a permanent location for longer term for the district. Three proposals were presented.

Option 1 is to relocate the ten classrooms to another part of high school site. The estimated cost will be \$300,000. With this option there will be the need to move the modular unit after the project is completed resulting in additional costs to town.

Option 2 is to relocate the ten modular classrooms to the junior high school permanently. With this option an adjustment would have to be made to the baseball field and there will be a loss of parking that will be relocated. The estimated cost will be \$425,000.

Option 3 is to relocate only six modular classrooms to the junior high school. With this option an extension of the corridor is needed to gain access. The estimated cost will be \$411,000.

Mr. Graham addressed implications of each option. Mr. Graham indicated that the 1st option is not an ideal situation and the modulars would be relocated at a cost to the district or discarded. If relocated to another location we need to pay for this within budget. Option 2 would be more ideal and will assist with the future alignment of grades. The 3rd option would require moving less modular classrooms for approximately the same amount of money. Mr. Graham suggested to the Committee Option #2.

Mr. Mercier inquired about the extra space currently at the junior high school. Dr. Scott indicated that all space will be used to house the current students and in September 2012 the 8th grade students moving to 9th grade will remain at the junior high school.

4. Motion by Mr. Miles, seconded by Dr. McNamara to recommend Option #2 as presented to relocate 10 modular classrooms permanently to the junior high school.

Discussion was held regarding where the additional costs would come from. Dr. McNamara suggested the use of School Choice money as a possibility. Dr. Scott indicated that he does not see the need to use School Choice funds. Mr. Miele informed the committee that there is 2.7 million in the contingency line.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Mercier	Yes
Mr. Miles	Yes
Dr. McNamara	Yes
Mr. Sheehan	Yes
Mrs. Elie	Yes

Mr. Sheehan suggested a joint meeting with the Permanent Building Committee in the early part of November and to invite the architects.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Sub-Committee Meeting:

The Finance Sub-Committee met on September 22nd. At this meeting the sub-committee discussed the end of year report which is due on September 30th. Administration is completing all necessary grants. Dr. Scott has received a draft of the end of the year report and a draft has been provided to the town also for their review.

Amendment of School Committee By-Laws

Mr. Sheehan asked that in the absence of no executive session to have the start of the regular meeting at 6:00 only if there is no need for executive session

5. Motion by Mr. Sheehan and seconded by Mr. Miles to change by-law as stated in Section 2 to have the meeting start at 7:00 pm or at a time announced by the chairperson

Mr. Mercier expressed concern of not being able to meet the 6:00 pm start time. He also stated there has been a lot of participation at open meetings lately and it may be difficult on public if not known the start of the meeting.

Mr. Miles indicated that the 6:00 time for executive session is already in place and that there will be ample time to get message out to public of a different time change. He also expressed that this

is not being done to get out earlier it is just to start earlier which is more advantageous so there is not a wait until 7:00 pm.

Dr. McNamara would like to leave the start time at 7:00 unless in an emergency.

Dr. Scott indicated that the earlier time change could have an advantage with longer conversations being able to start earlier and this will offer the opportunity to have longer conversations.

Discussion was held that notification of the time could be made on the school website, local newspaper, town hall and on cable television.

Mr. Sheehan indicated that he would like to see meetings held at least once at the various schools. This could be helpful for parents and the community. Mr. Sheehan indicated his intent was that at times there are larger agendas and an earlier start time could be more beneficial.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Mercier	no
Mr. Miles	Yes
Dr. McNamara	no
Mr. Sheehan	Yes
Mrs. Elie	Yes

Motion failed by lack of a 4/5 vote as per School Committee By-Laws.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

October 4 th	Scholarship Craft Fair
October 5 th	½ day of schools
October 11 th	Campbell PTO meeting
October 12 th	Junior High Progress Reports issued
October 13 th	Elementary Progress Reports issued; Special Ed PAC Meeting
October 14 th	High School Progress Reports issues
October 18 th	Junior High PTO meeting
October 19 th	Brookside PTO meeting
October 21 st	Campbell PTO Halloween Party
October 22 nd	Dracut Scholarship Craft Fair
October 24 th	School Committee Meeting; high school wellness fair
October 31 st	Halloween

Dracut Junior High National Honor Society is holding a community service pajama drive for the American Red Cross. Pajamas can be new or gently used for people of all ages. Collections will be held through November 10th and can be dropped off at the junior high school.

The Junior High School National Honor Society will be holding a pajama collection. Items can be dropped off at the junior high school.

SUPERINTENDENT'S INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Staffing Announcements

The search for a technology director has been completed and the director of technology will begin on the September 29th. Dr. Scott will introduce the candidate at the next school committee meeting.

The district is currently recruiting for speech and language therapists.

There is a proposal for needs in the choices program at Dracut High School. Dr. Scott has recommend reassignment of one teacher and to replace this individual and add one instructional paraprofessional. If the needs are not being met then there will be a need to go out of the district which will cost more money for the district.

Dr. Scott is proposing one Counselor/Special Education Teacher and one Instructional Paraprofessional.

6. Motion by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Miles to approve the recommendation of one counselor/special education teacher and one instructional paraprofessional in the senior high school choices program.

Funding for these positions will come from the special education tuition line.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Mercier	Yes
Mr. Miles	Yes
Dr. McNamara	no
Mr. Sheehan	Yes
Mrs. Elie	Yes

Motion passes 4-1

Dr. Scott will come back to the committee with an update prior to next meeting indicating a need, if any, regarding additional support at Greenmont Avenue.

MCAS Update

Dr. Diaz was present to give a summary on the recent MCAS scores for the schools. In the next two months principals will share their data and compare progressions in the years. Additional professional development will be offered addressing the new curriculum and teachers' needs are being addressed. Immediate training is being provided to teachers and more coaching is being provided at the lower levels.

OLD BUSINESS:

Proposed Out-Of Country Business Trip

Mrs. Elie passed gavel to the 1st Vice Chair, Mr. Sheehan, and did not participate in discussion as she will be attending the trip.

Dr. Scott indicated that he is working with partners to advance learning. Last fall he began exploring sources of support to enhance the language program and would like to expand the foreign language department. Dr. Scott is proposing a delegate team to attend China. This team will consist of the Foreign Language Department Head, Superintendent of Schools, Chief Academic Office and the Chair of the School Committee.

Dr. Scott indicated that he has spoken with other colleagues. Some former participants that attended the trip had their expenses paid by Hanban while others used professional development funds. Dr. Scott indicated that no district funds will be used and will seek personal contributions to fund trip.

The Executive Director of Student Services will cover the Superintendents absence. Dr. Scott is looking for support from the committee.

Mr. Sheehan indicated that he supports broadening the foreign language program as long as no funds will be used from the budget.

Attorney Murphy indicated that a vote is needed because school employee trips funded in part by a non-public entity is necessary to satisfy ethics laws and a disclosure is needed to their appointing authority. The two school employees appointing authority and disclosure is to the Superintendent of Schools while the Chair of the Committee will make a disclosure that this trip is a legitimate public purpose to the Town Clerk. The Superintendent must make a disclosure to the School Committee. Attorney Murphy indicated that the vote of the Committee is that the trip serves legitimate public purpose enabling superintendent to attend trip.

7. Motion by Mr. Miles, seconded by Dr. McNamara that the superintendent's participation on the China trip serves as a legitimate public purpose.

Discussion continued regarding the trip. Dr. McNamara questioned if there were any surveys completed or data collected on the part of students to see if there is a need for Chinese language in the district. Dr. McNamara conducted a survey of area districts and reported that most area schools offer only Spanish and French with Italian as the next common. Dr. McNamara indicated that he does not have an issue with expanding offerings only a concern as to why the district has to send delegates to China.

Dr. Scott indicated there was an informal survey done in town talking to parents. Dr. Scott stated that going to other districts is not the same and it would be more beneficial to send a delegate.

Dr. McNamara referred to Roberts Rules of Order in regard to Mrs. Elie not voting on this topic. Dr. McNamara read excerpts from Roberts Rules of Order indicating that no member can be compelled to refrain from voting simply because it is perceived that she may have some conflict of interest with respect to the motion under consideration. If a member has a direct personal interest in a motion under consideration not common to other members, the rule is that she should not vote on such a motion, but even then she cannot be compelled to refrain from voting

Attorney Murphy stated that Roberts Rules of Order has no bearing on this issue. Attorney Murphy reviewed this issue with the state ethics and indicated that state law supersedes Roberts Rules of Order.

Mr. Mercier expressed concern about asking local businesses for donations and if there is a need to teaching Mandarin then why not have them come to the district. Mr. Mercier also indicated that with technology we could use Webcams or online teaching. Mr. Mercier referred to the recent MCAS results and the need to address programs to help in Math and English before offering another language.

Dr. McNamara asked if Dr. Scott would be willing to take vacation time in order to attend the trip. Dr. Scott indicated that he would consider this suggestion however thought it was inappropriate to ask his staff to take personal time.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Mercier	no
Mr. Miles	Yes
Dr. McNamara	no
Mr. Sheehan	Yes

Motion failed.

Mr. Sheehan asked for a personal privilege and stated there is a need to work together as a Committee and is disappointed over issues the past couple of meetings.

Mrs. Elie returned to the table.

Mrs. Elie expressed her concern of this issue and indicated that Dr. Scott has already paid a non-refundable fee for the trip. Mrs. Elie indicated that this trip is not costing Dracut anything.

Mr. Mercier asked for a personal privilege and indicated that a Board member has the right to vote whichever way they want and should not be belittled because they vote a certain way.

Report Request

No reports at this time

NEW BUSINESS:

MASC Conference and Proposed Resolutions

Mr. Sheehan asked that this item be tabled until the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

- 8. Motion by Mr. Miles, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to adjourn the regular session meeting of the Dracut School Committee.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Mercier	Yes
Mr. Miles	Yes
Dr. McNamara	Yes
Mr. Sheehan	Yes
Mrs. Elie	Yes

The regular session meeting of the Dracut School Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cynthia Curtis
Recording Secretary

List of documents and exhibits:

- 1. School Committee agenda packet