

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—May 30, 2007
Gymnasium, Avery School

PRESENT

Tracy Driscoll, Chair
Margaret Matthews, Vice Chair
David Roberts
Thomas Ryan
Margaret Connolly
Joanne Flatley
John Healy (7:10 PM)

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Christopher Campbell, Asst. Superintendent
Michael La Francesca, Business & Finance
Cynthia Kelly, Principal
Elizabeth Cummings, Principal
Clare Sullivan, Principal
Jacob Santamaria, Asst. Principal

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Katerina Katsinis

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: 9:05 PM

NAMING OF HIGH SCHOOL FITNESS CENTER

Mr. Santamaria presented the request to name the High School Fitness Center in honor of John Kenney, who passed away this year. He stated that the request was in line with the requirements of the School Committee's naming of facilities policy and was reviewed and approved by the Policy Subcommittee.

Mr. Santamaria said that Mr. Kenney was instrumental in the refurbishing of the center. He said the plan would be to have a formal dedication ceremony on the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend. He said the Boosters would pay for the reception and the commemorative plaque.

Ms. Connolly and Mr. Roberts stated they were honored and proud to move and to second respectively, and it was

VOTED: to name the Dedham High School Fitness Center in honor of John Kenney.

EDUCATIONAL CHANNEL FUNDING

Mr. Dellot requested that the School Committee vote to request the Town transfer cable access funds identified for the educational channel to the School Department. He said there was approximately \$147,000 in funds available for the educational channel and these funds would be used to purchase equipment and improve programming. He said this money had been held in escrow while the contract negotiations with the cable company were completed.

Mr. Roberts moved, seconded by Mr. Ryan, and it was

VOTED: to request a transfer of the Town's cable access funds to the School Department.

AVERY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Principal Sullivan introduced the School Council: Janet Matozzi, Michael Bradley, Maureen Tannetta, Michele Pedzewick, and Lisa Moran. She stated that council members Charles Krueger and Michael Butler were not present. She said David Roberts is the School Committee liaison.

Ms. Sullivan highlighted the accomplishments of the 2005-2007 plan. They were in the areas of student achievement, the school environment, facilities, home and school communication, and incorporating the arts. She then had several students speak about various facets of student life at the school.

Student Jack Moran spoke about his experience as the chairman of the student council. He said the council is now in its third year. He stated that council members must agree to uphold the council constitution and serve as role models to the students they represent. He said that this year the council hosted the annual holiday party for the senior citizens living in senior housing, raised money for a cancer foundation, and are working with army division in Afghanistan to help local children there. He said they would also participate in the Flag Day parade on June 14.

Student Stephanie Matar spoke about the student job program. She said it was modeled after the Oakdale School's program, and that students must apply to the jobs. She reported that 28 students participated this year.

Students Joe Hamilton, Arleen Springer, Jack Moran and Stephanie Mater spoke about the American History Field trips they took this year. Ms. Sullivan stated the field trips were funded through a grant that Avery teachers had applied for. She thanked Ms. Pace for spearheading this effort. The students spoke about their visits to the Museum of Fine Arts, the Freedom Trail and Old State House, the Old South Meeting House, the State House, the North End, the Lexington and Concord Minute Man Museum, Old Sturbridge Village, and Boston Harbor.

Ms. Sullivan then presented the 2007-2009 school improvement plan. She discussed the areas of focus to improve student achievement. She said the target areas are based on Dr. Ladd's templates for creating instructional changes. The target areas comprise English Language Arts, math, ESOL, science and test taking strategies. Ms. Sullivan talked about the need for students to work on fractions, decimals and math vocabulary. She also said they need to focus on science, as scores have not been ideal. She said they have made improvements to the curriculum, including the addition of a geology unit.

Ms. Sullivan spoke about the goals for improving school culture. She said the goals were informed in part by the results of parent and faculty surveys they had conducted. She said parents were interested in seeing an increase in extracurricular opportunities for students. She said one of the things they are planning is to have foreign language classes for students after school next year.

Ms. Moran presented the communication piece of the plan. She said parents were looking to see more home/school communication and opportunities for parent involvement. She said that is addressed in the plan. She noted that there were increased opportunities for parental involvement this year, as well.

Ms. Sullivan addressed the facilities component. She said they were ready to advocate for a new facility, but the focus is on the current school, to maintain and to repair it. She said the safety of the building is important, and one of the goals is to get a means of communication to the lunch preparation area.

Ms. Sullivan commented that she was pleased that they received 129 survey responses for 256 students.

Mr. Ryan said it has been nice to see photographs of Avery activities and events in the local paper. He thanked Hana Hield of the *Dedham Times* for assisting in this effort. He also said he was very impressed with the fifth grade field trip series and would like to see that implemented in all four elementary schools. Ms. Sullivan said that Ms. Tannetta, Ms. Pace and Ms. Moran worked to make these happen. She mentioned that TEC supplied one of the grants.

Ms. Connolly said she was also impressed with the field trip series. She said she likes the new format of the improvement plans, particularly the concreteness of the objectives.

Ms. Flatley said she appreciated seeing the survey results. She asked how they managed to get such a high response rate. Ms. Sullivan answered free homework passes and the teachers' encouragement. Ms. Flatley asked about the parking issues. Ms. Sullivan said that parking has been and will remain an issue, but there is not much that they can do to improve it short of leveling the hill out front. Ms. Flatley asked if it is a safety issue. Ms. Sullivan said only marginally. Ms. Flatley asked if they could use High School students to do translations. Ms. Sullivan said that they use staff and parents to try to get some of their documents translated.

Mr. Roberts commented on the survey. Ms. Sullivan said that Dimitria Sullivan assisted by getting the survey put on-line. She said they got 20 results that way.

Mr. Roberts asked Ms. Matozzi how long she has been on the council. She said she has been a member at large since 1993. He thanked her for her dedication to the school.

Ms. Matthews asked about the status of the school's Blue Ribbon nomination. Ms. Sullivan explained that the school was nominated based on the fact that it has a significant population of students within a low socio-economic demographic that have made notable improvements in their MCAS scores. She said they were disqualified by the grade 5 results. She said federal standards use the highest level in the school and the lower scores in this grade, which is a newly added grade for testing, eliminated them from contention. Ms. Matthews said it is a prestigious award and congratulated the school on its nomination.

Ms. Driscoll asked about the surveillance camera. Ms. Sullivan said they are looking for partners to fund some of these types of items. She clarified that the current camera is not a safety issue; it still works.

Ms. Sullivan introduced the Avery staff present at the meeting.

DEDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ms. Susie Durocher, Education Committee Chair of the Dedham Historical Society, spoke about the society's programs for Dedham's students. She said the goal of their programs is to create an awareness and appreciation of Dedham's rich history. She said their outreach efforts are aimed at both the elementary and secondary levels. She said they also do outreach to the Boy and Girl Scouts and senior citizens.

She discussed the program for third graders, which has been in place for years. She said it used to be a fifth grade program, but was changed to a third grade program in response to a curriculum shift. She said the third graders visit three stations on their visit to the society: Dedham Pottery, the artifacts table, and the library and archive. She explained some of what the students learn through these hands on activities. She said that three of four elementary schools have participated in the last two years.

Ms. Durocher said the society is working on an eighth grade program this year. She said it is a walking tour, which would be conducted in the fall. She said it is intended to be a full day event with five areas of focus: early Dedham, architecture and artistry, industrialization, neighborhood development, and Dedham as Norfolk's county seat. She thanked Leslie French for working with the society to develop this program.

Ms. Durocher said they are looking forward to working with the new social studies chair to develop a program for tenth graders. She said they have some ideas to explore, citing aligning a project with curriculum goals and MCAS requirements and having students help with actual research and develop materials for greater usage (film, exhibit, articles) as examples.

Ms. Doe thanked her for her work and the society's interest in the schools.

THE EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE (TEC)

Dr. John Connolly, Director of The Education Collaborative, said that the collaborative is one of the best kept secrets in Massachusetts. He said collaboratives create efficiency. He highlighted TEC's Special Education programming as one of these efficiencies and specifically mentioned the program they have in place at the Riverdale School. He said that it is unfortunate that the DOE and the legislature do not consider collaboratives in delivering services to districts because they would be able to offer more to local districts if they were incorporated into the process.

Dr. Connolly stated that professional development programs are another efficiency a collaborative provides. He referenced a brochure with the course descriptions of their current professional development offerings for the committee to review. He also referred to TEC's organizational chart and stated that he reports to a board of directors made up of the fifteen TEC collaborative towns. He stated there are three major components to TEC: educational services, student services in special education, and a finance piece. He spoke about the financial savings TEC towns accrue through TEC's cooperative purchasing.

Dr. Connolly referred the committee to a document that outlined where TEC's programs were located. He noted that they have a special education program at TEC, at Riverdale, and at the High School. He said he hoped to establish one in the new Middle School as well. He said TEC's objective is to get as many out of district placements into collaborative programs. He pointed out that every student in a Dedham program is a savings to the district on special education transportation costs. He referred the committee to a comparison of TEC program tuitions and private placements. He said TEC makes programs available to non-TEC towns, but at a higher cost than a TEC town.

Dr. Connolly spoke about the professional development program. He said 82 Dedham teachers have been involved in a TEC professional development course this year. He said 8 teachers are in licensure programs. He also mentioned the history grant TEC provided to the Avery School for its field trips and the 13 internships it offers to the high school students. He said the internships are typically offered at reduced cost to the students through the generosity of Dedham Savings Bank.

Dr. Connolly spoke about the Job Alikes, through which staff in like positions meet once a month to discuss the issues they are facing to work out solutions.

Dr. Connolly spoke about cooperative purchasing and the economies of scale that allow TEC to offer savings to the district. He said he would like to work to modify purchasing laws to maximize savings. He said he has hired a lobbyist to work for to promote TEC's issues. He

referred the committee to his TEC 2007-2008 legislative agenda brochure. He said the main goals are to improve instruction for all children and to ensure adequate funding for the school districts that TEC represents.

Dr. Connolly said the short term funding lobby objective is to keep them alive. He said that the Hudson superintendent calculated that the state funds only 11.5% of special education services. Dr. Connolly felt that such a low percentage could potentially be the next litigation the state faces. He said the state could not justify funding at that level. He also talked about the circuit breaker and remarked that the calculation has no logic. He said the state currently funds 75% of the cost over a \$30,000 threshold for students requiring special education services. That figure is four times the foundation budget. He said he is proposing an amendment to drop the level to three times the foundation budget.

Dr. Connolly stated that transportation was another issue. He said there are no dollars for special education transportation. He said the state has looked at how collaboratives could help with this. He said the state would need to make private school the focus so that transportation could be better coordinated.

Dr. Connolly spoke about an adequacy study. He said that an adequacy study determines the dollars required to pay for all of the resources necessary to meet state standards. He said that legislators have no idea what this cost might be and he is advocating for such a study to make this determination. He said that funding for special education could be addressed through this. He said by way of example that if a regular education student would require \$10,000, a special education student should be weighted accordingly in adequacy dollars. He said the debate then turns to state versus local dollars. Dr. Connolly noted that 40 states have completed an adequacy study. He said he would like to do the best he can to educate legislators about the issues.

Dr. Connolly said the last piece of the financial component is the mistaken assumption that Massachusetts is the most taxed place in the world. He said the data does not support this and it is necessary to review how taxes and spending are measured in Massachusetts. He said that in education, the state is 48th out of 50. He said the state is also 48th out of 50 in tax revenue per capita spending.

Ms. Flatley asked about the tuition rate comparisons he provided. Dr. Connolly said it is not apples to apples; it is a sampling of the options if the student did not go to one of TEC's programs. She asked if they were 10 or 12 month programs. Dr. Connolly said they were twelve months. She asked if TEC is held to the same standard that private schools are for rate increases. Dr. Connolly answered that TEC's rates are driven by their operational cost. He said that they do attempt to keep costs low. Ms. Flatley asked if TEC has considered offering parent professional development. Dr. Connolly said they have been initiating those types of programs.

Dr. Connolly pointed out that he has reduced assessments 25% in recent years. He said he would like to become more entrepreneurial to eliminate the need for assessments. He said purchasing could potentially be a means to do this. He said he would also like to have a full time grants writer. He said a challenge TEC faces is buildings and space. He said he appreciated Dedham making space available to TEC for its programs.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Ms. Doe stated that the Boosters Club hosted the spring sports banquet for High School athletes this evening.

Ms. Doe stated the last day of classes for grades 9 to 11 is Tuesday, June 12. She said exams are June 13-19.

Ms. Doe announced that the senior class evening would be June 4. She said there would be a band performance at 6:30 PM and the award presentation would follow.

Ms. Doe announced that commencement ceremonies would be held on Wednesday at 5:30 at Veterans' Field, weather permitting. She stated that retiring teacher Greg Dellorco would be the featured speaker.

Ms. Doe stated that the academic recognition dinner was held last evening. She said it was held at the MIT Endicott House and honored the top 30 students and their parents.

Ms. Doe announced there would be a meeting for parents of incoming 9th grade students at the High School on June 11.

Ms. Doe announced that 60 students would be participating in the Core Leadership Academy next week.

Ms. Doe announced that bus transportation forms are available at the Middle School and High School. She asked that they be returned by July 6.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Ms. Driscoll announced that the spring sports team with the best academic record would receive gift certificates for their accomplishment. She said Ms. Connolly was coordinating this effort.

Ms. Driscoll stated that she attended the recognition dinner last night. She said it was a beautiful setting and thanked Ms. Doe for providing this recognition to the students.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S UPDATE

Katerina Katsinis said the seniors finished up last Wednesday. She said that Mr. Ruggere wants to make some changes to exam week next year.

She stated that graduation is next Wednesday night and an all night party would begin that evening. She said she is leaving for Mexico the following day. She thanked the committee for their donations to support the mission.

Miss Katsinis said that Fallon Ambulance was conducting a CPR certification class next week for a large number of students and she would be participating in that.

She thanked the School Committee and the Superintendent for the opportunity to serve as the representative to the committee. She said she learned a lot about the process of running a school district and gained an appreciation for what they do.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS

There was none.

BID REQUEST – DEXTER SCHOOL LEASE

Mr. La Francesca stated that the administration would be vacating its space at the Dexter School this summer. He stated that the Town of Dedham would not have a need for the space at that time and requested to put the lease of this space out to bid in conformance with procurement law.

Mr. Roberts moved, seconded by Ms. Connolly and it was

VOTED: (following the discussion below) to go out to bid.

Mr. Roberts asked who would do the bidding. Mr. La Francesca said that the committee needed to vote to agree to have Town put the space out to bid.

Mr. Ryan asked about time table for moving central administration. Ms. Doe said, optimistically, special education and finance would be relocated by mid July. She said the administrative offices would be moved by mid August.

Ms. Flatley asked about the space to be bid. Mr. La Francesca said it was 7,600 sq. ft. and the lease would be awarded to the highest bidder.

Mr. Ryan wanted to make sure that the space would be bid with the leasing restrictions it has had in the past and that the maintenance for the building would be addressed.

MINUTES

May 16, 2007

Ms. Matthews moved, seconded by Mr. Ryan, and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the May 16, 2007 minutes.

DONATIONS

Ms. Doe announced that the Dedham Women's Exchange donated \$1,000 to the Greenlodge School's Krueger Art Project and \$1,000 to the Middle School library for books. Ms. Doe reported that the Boosters Club donated \$1,500 from its bingo proceeds and the Dedham Savings Bank donated \$500 to help defray the cost to students for the Core Leadership Academy. Ms. Doe reported that Ms. Jayshri Patel donated \$200 to the Riverdale student activity fund and Clifford Smith and Mellon Bank donated \$2,000 in advanced placement statistics textbooks for the High School.

Ms. Matthews moved, with grateful appreciation, seconded by Mr. Ryan, also with grateful appreciation, and it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the donations.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Flatley said that Mr. La Francesca provided her with the FY 07 actuals and they are looking at a balanced budget. She said that fuel costs are excessive, and the administration is working hard to cover these costs. She said that Mr. La Francesca has also provided an update on the FY 08 budget. She said this was prepared for the anticipated Budget Task Force meeting. She reviewed the budget cuts made to meet the \$700,000 budget gap, and stated the reinstatement priorities are one High School English teacher, an elementary teacher and an instructional aide. Ms. Matthews clarified that the priorities were identified should funds become available. Ms.

Flatley said that administration would continue to look at enrollments to make decisions about the priorities.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The June 13 agenda would include a vote on the policy manual and an update on the Senior Center design from the Building Construction Committee. Ms. Connolly asked for a presentation from the High School on community service.

Mr. Roberts moved, seconded by Ms. Flatley, and it was unanimously

VOTED: by roll call to go into executive session under exemption three for collective bargaining. Mr. Healy – aye, Mr. Ryan – aye, Ms. Connolly – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Mr. Roberts – aye, Ms. Matthews – aye, Ms. Driscoll – aye.

The committee would not be coming out of executive session to adjourn.