

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—October 3, 2007
Distance Learning Lab, Middle School

PRESENT

Tracy Driscoll, Chair
Margaret Matthews, Vice Chair
David Roberts
Thomas Ryan
Margaret Connolly
Joanne Flatley
John Healy

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent
Alan Winrow, Principal
Clare Sullivan
Elizabeth Cummings
Holli Armstrong
Doris Claypool
Heidi Dineen
Jacob Santamaria

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: 8:15 PM

STUDENT RECOGNITION

The committee recognized Carolyn Sliwa, Timothy O'Connor, and Peter Hynes (not present) for their outstanding performance on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in 2006. Nicole Ezell was also recognized as an outstanding participant in the 2008 National Achievement Scholarship Program.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Ms. Doe reported that the High School held its first open house this Monday. It was a mock schedule which allowed parents to get an idea of the class schedule of their children. She stated the second open house would be October 16. She said parents that could not attend Monday's open house could call the High School to arrange individual meetings with teachers, if interested.

Ms. Doe reported that progress reports would be distributed on Friday. She said the school copy must be signed and returned by October 10.

Ms. Doe announced that on Wednesday, October 17, the High School would administer the PSAT to all sophomores and juniors during the school day.

Ms. Doe announced that Robert Santamaria earned the High School's nomination for the National Association of Secondary School Principals Leadership Award.

Ms. Doe announced the newly-elected officers of the junior class: President – Andrea Hage, Treasurer – Jennifer Canaday, Vice-President - Rory O'Hanlon, Secretary – Rachel Nash, Public Relations - Michael Brennan, Matt Fay, Melissa Hallisey, Kevin Hutchinson, Sarah Maki, Alexia Marmanides, Joe McIsaac, Amy Munchbach, Amanda Nemet, Meredith O'Connor, Jessica Robinson, Michelle Totino and Melissa Conklin.

Ms. Doe reported that guidance counselor Andrea Andrew accompanied seniors Peter Hynes and Michelle O'Connor to the 16th annual Harvard Book Awards Breakfast on October 3. She said each year the Harvard Club of Boston honors the students who received the Harvard Book Awards as juniors with a special gathering that recognizes their outstanding achievement and potential.

Ms. Doe announced that Homecoming weekend begins with the football game at 7:30 on Friday evening, October 5. Dedham will play Braintree. She said the queen and her court would be introduced during halftime. The Class of 2008 Homecoming Queen is Brittany Walker. Her court includes Kayla Cammarata, Katie Timmins, Carolyn Sliwa and Rebecca Kozak. Ms. Doe stated that the Class of 2009 Homecoming Court consists of Andre Hage, Sarah Maki, Amanda Nemet, and Jessica Robinson. Ms. Doe said the Homecoming dance would be held on Saturday from 7:00 - 11:00 p.m. in the High School gym.

Ms. Doe announced the Dedham High School marching band is hosting a New England Scholastic Marching Band competition on Sunday at 1 PM. She reported the marching band won first place in the Weymouth competition last weekend.

Taken out of order.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Nancy Baker and Brad Dore were present to speak about the update to the master plan. Mr. Dore said the update was being looked at as part of the School Building Authority's program. He noted that one of the results of the master plan is the new Middle School. He said this was the first phase of the plan that was done in 2003. He said that it is time to look at the plan again to make sure the priorities are still the same and to address the timelines. He stated the Avery School is the next phase of this plan and they need to look at what issues are affecting this school.

Mr. Dore stated the update would include a site investigation, analysis of enrollment projections, and an investigation of building options. He said that to move forward the district would need to know what its capital plan would be and what schools will require the attention. He said the update should also include a review of the educational programming to ensure it still encompasses the philosophy of the community. Mr. Dore said the original plan was a significant undertaking. He said that all of the updated information would be taken and incorporated into the master plan with the guidance of the committee. He said the current objective is to look at Avery and the ECEC.

Mr. Ryan asked Ms. Baker about the proposed development on the MBTA land. Ms. Baker replied that the MBTA had an opt out clause with the Baron Companies. She said that Boston and Mayor Menino also had veto power. She said the purchase agreement with the Baron Company was canceled and the company will not be pursuing a development at this site. She said the MBTA will begin remediation to address the contamination. Mr. Ryan said that development obviously would have impacted the master plan. He said there is still potential for development at this site, but it is not immediate.

Ms. Flatley asked where the master plan could be found. Mr. Dore said he was not sure where other copies were, but he had one. Ms. Baker said they would try to come up with a copy so the school could have one for reference.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Ms. Driscoll reminded parents in the community that the Dedham Public Schools will continue with residency checks. She stated the checks are done every year in the first few weeks of school and again at mid-year. She said they now have a document available in several languages for parents and guardians to sign off on so they understand the checks are happening. She said they do take place at night so parents should be aware. She noted that the checks are done by the attendance officer and are not meant to intimidate or scare. She said that it is expensive to

educate children and the checks are done with the interest of spending the community's dollars on its residents.

Ms. Driscoll stated that the Dedham Education Foundation dinner is scheduled for October 25 at the American Legion. She said most of the School Committee would be attending. She said that the honorees are Christine Cummings, Pat Dennehy, Gail Kelley, Mike Dewar, Don Gosselin, Don Owens, and Ellen Donovan.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS

There was none.

WELLNESS POLICY UPDATE

Gail Kelley and Jeanne Johnson were present to update the committee on the implementation of the wellness policy and to speak about the allergy policy. Ms. Johnson said that over the past five years there have been many changes to the food service program. She said the fry-o-lators are gone. She said she occasionally serves baked fries, but only with a meal. She stated that snacks follow the policy's nutrition standards. She said she is trying to go whole grain and is promoting fruits and vegetables. Currently, they have a program in place at the elementary schools promoting fruits and vegetables. She is no longer serving whole milk and the ice creams they serve are on the "A List", which a nutrition standard for snacks that can be found on the Framingham State College website. She said Dedham is completely in compliance with these guidelines. She said the students are eating the snacks and she is proud of the dietary changes they have made.

Ms. Driscoll stated that generally nurses are responsible for notifying teachers of students' allergies. She asked Ms. Kelley how that is working out and what types of accommodations are having to be made. Ms. Kelley said parents must submit documentation of their child's allergy as well as the health care plan for the safety of the child in the classroom. She said the majority of the staff is trained in recognizing allergic reactions and responding to them.

Ms. Matthews asked Ms. Johnson what the students' reactions have been to the diet changes. Ms. Johnson said she transitioned in increments easing the pain of the changes. She said she made the more major changes at the beginning of each year because the students have been away from school for the summer and therefore less likely to notice the elimination of a particular food item. She said she is open to parents' and students' concerns and she said their response to her is typically accepting and supportive.

Ms. Kelley said parents have been receptive to the allergy response in the classroom and required accommodations. She said they make reasonable changes to support the children's needs. Ms. Flatley asked what the major allergies are. Ms. Kelley said they are peanut, milk and tree nut. Ms. Flatley asked for the numbers. Ms. Kelley said there are at least fifty. She said all teachers are trained in Epi-pen administration.

Heidi Dineen spoke on behalf of her elementary colleagues regarding the application of the wellness policy as it pertains to classroom celebrations. She said that the staff is vigilant about allergies and cited a recent example of a lunch aide preventing a student with an allergy from eating an item that would have caused an allergic reaction. She said the elementary administrative team is encouraging parents to bring healthy foods or non-food items to classroom

celebrations. She said they have provided parents with alternative options to celebrate birthdays to get away from food items. She said the principals do work together to maintain consistency.

Ms. Driscoll said that the feedback has been that parents would appreciate consistency in all elementary schools and in all classrooms.

Summer Reading Update

Ms. Claypool said her update includes math and at Riverdale they call it “summer work habits”. She said Riverdale sent home 229 packets in June and 174 were returned completed, which is a 76% return rate. She said grade 1 was the most successful grade, which was unique. She stated that they celebrate the summer reading on the same day as Constitution Day, September 17, and the students are presented with a small gift to acknowledge their work.

Ms. Sullivan said all the schools do something similar to this. She said Avery had an academic award ceremony last Friday. She said they received 153 completed packets out of 237. She said that grade 1 receives its reading assignment from the ECEC but Avery also gives out writing and math work. She said reviewed the participation which was lowest in grade 1 and was at 75% in 5th grade. She said the readers get a scholastic voucher for a free book and the students that completed their math work get a certificate to spend at the school store. She stated that the 4th and 5th graders had to read a book and send a postcard to their teacher with information about the book.

Ms. Cummings said their consulting teachers of reading worked hard to have individualized reading lists by grade level. She said the students keep a log during the summer and fourth and fifth grade do have a required reading. She said the postcard is supposed to contain thoughts, opinions and questions about the stories. She said that on first day of school there is an assembly at which the students turn in their work. She said they are encouraged to turn it in at this time although they have the week to turn it in. She said the postcards are put display through the open house and the students’ names are posted for recognition. She said the participation was 66% for grade 1, 94% for grade 2, 82% for grade 3, 92% for grade 4, and 90% for grade 5. Ms. Cummings said there is a lot of effort on the part of the teachers and support from parents to make sure that it is done.

Ms. Armstrong stated that Oakdale’s participation was lower than she would have liked. She reported that it was 71% in grade 1, 70% in grade 2, 53% in grade 3, 58% in grade 4, and 88% in grade 5. The combined participation rate was 68%. She said is she exploring creative ways to get greater participation in the future.

Ms. Flatley asked if this was the first year of kindergarten reading. The principals answered it was not.

Mr. Ryan asked about the statistics for the math participation. Ms. Cummings said it was typically the same students that did both. Ms. Sullivan said she had some variation.

Ms. Matthews said in her house the postcard project never quite got off the ground. She asked if that was the measurement for the summer reading. The principals said that it was not. Ms. Cummings said the students are provided with a postcard prepared for mailing so the parents do not have to coordinate that.

Ms. Doe asked for an update on the final phase of the Middle School project from Ms. Baker and a review of the MSBA report and Dedham’s potential for funding from Mr. Dore.

Middle School Project

Ms. Baker said the punch list is all but complete. There are two outstanding issues, the roof and the fence. She said they continue to work to resolve both of these. She said phases 2 and 3 are done. She said there are a couple of issues with the landscaping, but they hope to have these items finalized by the end of the month to be able to submit for reimbursement to the SBA. She said the treasurer will be issuing bonds for the final phase. She said the Town had 14 respondents to the bid request with an estimated interest rate of 4.2%, but the winning bid came in at 3.875%. The bonds include \$4 million in borrowing for the Middle School. She said the total picture, despite the \$2.5 million added to the project, still results in savings for the taxpayers of a quarter of a million dollars.

School Building Authority

Mr. Dore said the SBA's new process for reimbursements is evolving but communities are beginning to gain an understanding of its expectations. He reviewed the old SBA process, which was to make a determination of need and to submit a request in June. He said generally the project was put on the list, but the problem was that the funding was not guaranteed. He stated that reimbursements could be up to 90%, but were typically between 50 and 70%. He said the Middle School's reimbursement rate was in the mid 60's. He said the base reimbursement rate was based on a community's ability to pay plus other qualifiers. He said that is still pretty much the case, but the threshold for reimbursement has gone down. He said the MSBA has not offered specific reimbursements to communities yet, but he has heard it would be 50%. He said there is now a cap on the number of buildings that could be done in a year.

He stated that the process for SBA reimbursement began with a Statement of Interest (SOI) for the Avery School. He said there were 422 SOI's submitted to the SBA this year. He said that up to \$500,000,000 is available for school projects. He noted that building is becoming very expensive and this amount will only go so far. He said it is generally understood that the MSBA would be convening in December to decide on the projects it would fund. He said there may be some prior construction projects, completed during the moratorium, considered first. Ms. Matthews asked if the 422 included the earlier projects. Mr. Dore said he believed that to be the case.

Mr. Dore said the new projects will be rated by the SBA. A team from the SBA has looked at all of the buildings. They are looking at conditions: structural issues, overcrowding, inability of the school to meet the program within a district, overall condition, facilities, and energy issues. He said the MSBA website is informative as to the process.

Mr. Dore said that a team has visited Avery a two times. He said the school is rated a four, which is the lowest possible rating. He said this may be a positive for standing with the MSBA. He said the district has to do its homework and be ready to respond to SBA interest in funding. He stated it is a competition as well as a political process.

Mr. Dore noted that the SBA has changed its reimbursement method. He said they will now reimburse as elements of the project are completed, not at the end. This will reduce the overall interest burden and lower costs in the aggregate.

Mr. Healy asked how many fours filed a Statement of Interest. Mr. Dore said they are on the website, but he thinks about 40.

Ms. Matthews said Dedham's SOI is filed, but now the SBA is going to determine the district's ability to pay for the project. Mr. Dore said the SBA begins with a diagnostic. Then a senior study is done, which he has not seen yet. He said one was done for Avery. He said there would be a next step, perhaps a feasibility study. He said the SBA would fund the study and provide its own architects. He said if the SBA supports Dedham's SOI, Dedham would have 120 days to line up local support to move the project forward.

Ms. Driscoll asked if this process would be completed by the end of the year. Mr. Dore said they have heard the projects would be selected in December, but there may be a second wave. He said it was hard to know. Mr. Dore recommended the committee and interested parties promote the project. It is an important factor.

BUDGET CALENDAR

Ms. Flatley stated that the committee received a proposed budget calendar. She reminded the committee that Town Meeting is pushed back this year. Ms. Baker said it would be May 19. Ms. Flatley said the dates on the calendar would be modified accordingly. Ms. Baker said she would send the Town's budget calendar to the committee.

Ms. Flatley said the FY 08 actuals are reviewed on monthly basis. She said the uncontrollable costs, which include Special Education and utilities, will be monitored. She said they are within budget for the first quarter.

DONATIONS

There were none.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOALS

Ms. Driscoll asked for a motion on the School Committee goals.

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

VOTED: to accept the goals as presented in this week's packet.

Ms. Matthews did not understand what the asterisks meant. Ms. Flatley said they do not signify anything.

Ms. Driscoll said they should establish a timeline for accomplishing the goals. Ms. Flatley asked that they be put on the web.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Driscoll said that Officer Huyler is having difficulty changing the November program date for his series and asked what the committee would like to do about the meeting they have scheduled for November 28. The committee decided to meet on Tuesday, November 27.

Ms. Driscoll asked for changes to the second installment of School Committee dates to be forwarded to her.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Driscoll stated the next meeting date would be October 17 and it would include the October 1 enrollment figures. Ms. Doe said they would not be available until November.

Ms. Doe said she would like to put the district curriculum accommodation plan and the document for re-framing the student assistance teams in all the schools on the next agenda.

Ms. Driscoll stated there was a need for executive session.

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

VOTED: to go into executive session under exemption three for an update on negotiations.

Mr. Roberts – aye, Mr. Healy – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Ms. Connolly – aye, Ms. Matthews – aye, Ms. Driscoll – aye.

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