

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—July 25, 2007
Selectmen’s Chambers, Town Hall

PRESENT

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

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Christopher Campbell, Asst. Superintendent
Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent
Alan Winrow, Principal
Timothy Ruggere, Principal

Convened: 7:10 PM

Adjourned: 8:30 PM

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ADMINISTRATORS

Ms. Doe introduced Tim Ruggere as the new Principal of Dedham Middle School. She noted he was Assistant Principal of High School last year.

Mr. Ruggere announced that the Middle School has received a SCORE peer mediation grant through the District Attorney’s office. He said that training in peer mediation will be offered to Middle School students along with aggressor violence and bystanders’ education. He said he also intends to apply for grant to fund a full-time conflict resolution coordinator. Ms. Doe added that the district had applied for the mediation grant in the past and did not receive it until this year.

Ms. Doe introduced the new Middle School Assistant Principal Andrew Boles. Mr. Boles stated that he was an Assistant Principal for five years in Taunton prior to accepting this position. He reviewed his professional background and stated that he is excited by the opportunity to work in Dedham. He noted that the Middle School would also be applying for a math grant to support MCAS.

Ms. Doe then introduced Jo-Anne McCormick, who is coming to Dedham from the Brockton Public Schools. Ms. McCormick briefly reviewed her background and experience and said she was looking forward to working at both the Middle and High Schools.

SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE

Ms. Doe announced that the High School received a letter from NEASC in response to the High School’s five year progress report. She highlighted the association’s positive remarks about the High School’s attention to social and civic expectations and its impact on school culture and climate. NEASC also had positive remarks about the High School’s activities to support both academic and social achievement, its focus on multicultural and diversity awareness, and its practice of evaluating student assessment data to improve curriculum and instruction.

Ms. Doe asked Mr. Winrow to comment on the advisory program they are preparing to pilot at the High School. Mr. Winrow said there were many faculty committees that addressed NEASC’s recommendations, and one of these committees made the recommendation to appoint advisors to the students. He said the intent is to assign one adult to ten students. The adult’s role is to take a special interest in the student thereby developing a relationship and hopefully positively impacting the student’s social and academic development.

Ms. Doe noted that the High School would be submitting its initial assessment report to NEASC in February 2009. She said the use of Blackboard for posting rubrics and generally encouraging its use would be addressed in that assessment.

Ms. Doe congratulated the High School on its five year report. Mr. Winrow thanked the staff for its support in accomplishing the goals set out for them.

Ms. Doe announced that 60 students participated in the TREK summer program. She said the program was expanded to include a third staff member this year. The program was run by Mr. Langenhorst, Cathy Oravetz and Karen Jones, who was new this year. Ms. Doe said she has received many positive comments from parents and students. She said TREK students had the opportunity to complete their summer math packets during the program. She encouraged parents to make sure their children were completing both their summer math and reading requirements. She also mentioned that the honors English students would be moved to level I if they did not receive a passing grade by August 17.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Ms. Driscoll thanked the Budget Task Force and the Town Administrator for funding the School Department's budget an additional \$100,000. She said the Superintendent gave a strong argument for the department's personnel needs and the Town graciously supported it.

Ms. Driscoll thanked the Board of Selectmen for addressing their concerns about the new housing development and its potential impact on the schools. She said that working together to plan and manage the situation will yield positive results.

Ms. Driscoll said that there was a meeting with the Town on July 13 to discuss the proposed initiative of combining oversight of the Town's and School's facilities under one department. She said that a committee to study this would be formed and would include the Town Administrator, Superintendent, Police and Fire Chiefs, the budget managers for both the Town and the School Department and one representative each from the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS

There was none.

RIVERDALE CLASS SIZES

Ms. Doe reported that additional funding from the Town allowed the School Department to hire another grade 1 teacher for the Riverdale School, which will reduce the class sizes. She said three classrooms are in place and the students are being scheduled to them. She said they continue to monitor the class size as they go forward.

Ms. Doe said they are currently identifying a candidate for the High School English position and an instructional aide for grade 5 at Oakdale.

BULLYING – LAURIE REISNER

Ms. Laurie Reisner addressed the committee concerning its bullying policy. She said her son, who is a freshman this year, experienced a problem with bullying during the school year. She

thanked Ms. Cynthia Kelly, Ms. Geri Kelly and Mr. Tim Geary for their support of her son during the bullying and for their efforts to resolve the problem. She said they did a good job with the tools they had. She said, however, that a tightened policy might help to deter future bullying and offer better support to bullying victims. She provided the committee with a copy of Cambridge's policy to consider. She said it was important to address cyber-bullying, which is a new phenomenon. She said she could not over-emphasize the impact of cell phones, home phones and instant messaging as forms of bullying. She said victims of bullying need to know there is a support mechanism in place and to make bullies fully aware of its detrimental effects.

Ms. Matthews asked what the Cambridge policy had that Dedham did not. Ms. Reisner replied that Cambridge spells out that it will not tolerate bullying and includes the threat of court action. She said Dedham needs to have a mechanism that helps to make patterns of bullying apparent.

A parent said that there is a lack of consistent discipline; there is no clear cut response to instances of bullying. She said she knows the School Department cares about this issue, but there is no consistency.

A parent asked if Dedham uses the Tribes program. Ms. Doe said it is used consistently at Greenlodge and in varying degrees in other schools in conjunction with different programs. She said elementary staff will have training on the responsive classroom in the fall in an effort to gain consistency across the schools. She said social behavior is part of curriculum. She said that the Origins program would be implemented in the Middle School.

A parent asked about the responsive classroom. Ms. Doe said she has literature on this topic and would make it available on the website. She said the Middle School also has an advisory curriculum and the High School has a pilot for an advisory program.

Ms. Driscoll said the committee could look at Cambridge's policy to address the particulars of its program. She invited Ms. Reisner to attend that Policy Subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Doe commented on cyber-bullying. She said the administration could work with PTO's to educate parents on how to deal with this type of bullying.

Ms. Dimitria Sullivan stated that the Riverdale PTO would be presenting a bullying and diversity program to the school on October 25, and they were interested in offering this training to the district.

Ms. Doe said work would strategic plan in the fall. She said parents could be involved in these discussions, particularly as they relate to school safety and climate. She said it would be a good time to raise these issues.

Mr. Santamaria invited Ms. Reisner to attend the High School School Council meetings when the handbook is reviewed. He stressed that the High School addresses all forms of harassment. He said there are strict passages relating to harassment in the handbook, and he has gone to court over such issues.

Ms. Flatley stated it is necessary to make sure that bullying was dealt with the right away by making the school environment safe enough for students to inform teachers and staff of instances of bullying.

A parent asked for better supervision at recess to help mitigate this problem at the elementary level.

Ms. Doe stressed that the parent education component is important. She said parents need to teach their kids what acceptable behavior is.

SUPERINTENDENT'S GOALS

Ms. Driscoll said there would be no vote on the Superintendent's goals this evening. The vote would take place at the next meeting.

Ms. Matthews briefly reviewed the process of the goal development. She said that she and Mr. Ryan agreed to lead the development of the goals. The committee's comments on potential goals were discussed with Ms. Doe. Goals in three areas: facilities, teaching and learning and community relations were developed.

Mr. Ryan said he would like the goals in place before school begins.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 13, 2007

Ms. Driscoll stated that the vote on the minutes would be postponed until the next meeting.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Roberts updated the committee on the Middle School project. He said he spoke with Mr. Dore yesterday and there would be a School Building Rehabilitation Committee meeting tomorrow, July 26. He said work is continuing on the punch list, which is getting shorter. He said it takes some effort to coordinate the subcontractor work, which is why it is taking time.

Mr. Roberts said most people see the outside and it is getting closer to completion. He said the sub-base and binder are down, which is where the drop off area will be constructed. The grading of the field area is ongoing and should be ready for hydra-seeding fairly soon. He said the committee is confident they are on schedule with the drop off for the start of school. He said the lighting in the back was adjusted to accommodate neighbors. He reported that the photovoltaic cells are in place and they work. This was part of the Green School initiative. He said the wall is 90% complete and looks very good.

Mr. Ryan thanked Mr. Roberts for serving on the building committee since its inception and remarked that the school looks terrific. He asked about the status of the leak in the roof. Ms. Doe said it has been addressed. She said Mr. Lynch has been instructed to replace ceiling tiles so that this can be confirmed with the next rainfall.

Mr. Roberts said the fence, which has been sagging, is going to be addressed at tomorrow's meeting. Ms. Doe said the new fence is also going up. Mr. Ryan asked about the drop off area. Mr. Roberts said it should be ready for the beginning of school. Mr. Ryan asked about the responsibility of watering hydra-seeded field. Ms. Doe said the irrigation will be controlled by the Middle School. The field is otherwise managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Ms. Connolly said she is worried about the roof. Ms. Doe said it is under warranty; the contractors are still responsible.

Ms. Geri Kelly asked if there is a problem with ventilation in the gym. She said it became too hot to safely exercise in it towards the end of the school year. Ms. Doe said the issue has been reported to the architect and is being addressed.

Mr. Roberts remarked that adding the commissioning process to the project was helpful to getting the building up and running and maintained successfully. Ms. Doe said the building looks great and it is operating well.

Ms. Doe updated the committee on the central administration's move to the High School. She said the maintenance department and the custodians have done a great job on the renovation. She said the finance department and support staff are ready to be moved at the beginning of August. She said the administrative offices are underway, and the HVAC bid is tomorrow.

Ms. Doe stated that they have been discussing the need to update Dedham's educational model with NESDEC and NESDEC has submitted a proposal for a study of all the elementary schools.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Driscoll stated the next agenda would include the Superintendent's goals and the re-organization of the board liaison designations and the subcommittees. She mentioned that they need to draft the district's goals.

Ms. Driscoll stated there was a need for executive session under exemption three to discuss negotiations and a grievance. The committee would not come out of executive session to adjourn.

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

VOTED: by roll call. Mr. Roberts – aye, Mr. Ryan – aye, Mr. Healy – aye, Ms. Connolly – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Ms. Matthews – aye, and Ms. Driscoll – aye.