

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—June 24, 2009
Lower Conference Room, Town Hall

PRESENT

Dave Roberts, Chair
Margaret Connolly, Vice Chair
Thomas Ryan
Tracy Driscoll
John Healy
Kevin Coughlin - Absent
Joe Heisler

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent
Michael La Francesca, Business Manager

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: 8:30 PM

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Superintendent introduced the new Middle School Principal, Ms. Debra Gately. She is an experienced middle school educator from the Waltham school district. Ms. Doe and Ms. Kelly conducted a site visit to Waltham, where they spoke with many of her peers who are reluctant to see her leave. Ms. Gately said she sent the faculty an introductory letter from her with her summer hours and said the parents would receive a letter also. Will work on an on-line parent survey for parents to give feedback, pose questions, comments, concerns and a hard copy will be sent home as well. Ms. Driscoll was on the search committee that appointed Ms. Gately. There was a very good candidate pool to choose from and Ms. Gately very quickly rose to the top. She gave a very impressive interview.

Ms. Doe recognized Mr. Ruggere in his departure from Dedham to Arlington. We wish him well. He was with us for three years and did a great job.

All four elementary schools held promotion events or had assemblies last Friday. The Superintendent met with each 5th grade soon to be 6th grade students. Our compliments to each school for their well planned events. The Middle School promotion ceremony was held on Monday. Praise for organizing and presenting a lovely ceremony. Thanks to Mr. Ruggere and Mr. Boles and the support staff for all their hard work. It was a wonderful turnout. This is the first class coming through the school for the full three years. It will be interesting to track these students as they transition into the 9th grade. Professional development is currently being held for 32 teachers participated today in the Everyday Math training. There are a significant number of summer programs being held for academic enrichment and special education programs throughout the district starting up this week.

Ms. Doe recognized members of our staff who are retiring:

Acting Principal Ron Dziergowski., Betty Ouellette, Jim Downs, Karen Giannangelo, Sal Fazio, Bob Hughes. Thanks for their significant years of service. Ms. Doe announced we are looking for parents who have a background in education or library science – parent volunteers to help out in our elementary schools. Please contact any of the elementary principals.

Math books and materials have arrived. We are officially expanding our new elementary math program – Kindergarten through grade 4 will be involved with Everyday Math in September. This is quite an accomplishment and we are a year ahead of implementing

this program. This is mainly due to the \$10,000 donation from the DEP. The grants and donations are significant in helping move these programs forward. New Social Studies textbooks are ordered for 6th grade. We received a letter from NEASC to Principal Santamaria at Dedham HS applauding the efforts to successfully implement a grade 9-12 Advisory program. The Middle School recently held an 8th grade seminar. Recently the Guidance Department reached out to members of Dedham community to speak about careers. The speakers included:

Dr. Noreen Troccoli spoke about manufacturing and managing a group of clinicians in the bio-pharmaceutical industry.

Susan Hamilton spoke about life as a clinical nurse and the opportunities working in Boston Hospitals.

Ralf Heilmann spoke about growing up in Germany, his interest in science, work that he does daily and the importance of exploring your options as a student. Suggested volunteer work, internships and talking to friends, family and neighbors about career options. (works as the principal research scientist at the Space Nanotechnology Lab at the Center for Space Research at MIT).

Chuck Jenest spoke about research in the pharmaceutical industry.

Bernadette Chirokas spoke about microbiology and about being a nurse.

Members of the Secret Service:

Dave McKeown, Rich Souza, and John McMahon, showed a video on the history of the Secret Service and what it takes to be in the Secret Service. The three agents spoke of their career paths and training. They talked about the importance of having “good character” (defined by them as doing good things even when no one is looking), shared personal stories and encouraged students to keep out of trouble.

Honorable Mentions: Dale Fried, Sunshine Millea, Jean Lyons, Linda Di Raffaele
This was an extra add-on piece to the program that has proven to be very successful and the plan is to incorporate it into the Seminar. Also, the School Librarian added a in a reading component to the program. She has a report to be shared at another meeting. Math and science teachers are working on math curriculum and coordinating it with the Seminar curriculum. A special thanks to the members of the community for their participation.

Received a letter from The Schools to Careers Partnership informing us they are providing programming and scholarships to DHS students. The students selected from DHS are: Cameron Keefe, Cody Abbott, Julia Bednar, and Brynn Hogan, Victoria Sliwa and Matthew McLaughlin. Students were selected through their teachers, guidance and local team leaders.

Received a letter from Barbara Rouse, Chief Justice of Superior Court thanking us for allowing our students to participate in the 150th anniversary celebration. Thanks to Department Chair, Andrew Morton for setting up this event.

Superintendent Doe recognized Russ Poole who has volunteered to put together Science Kits for elementary schools.

CHAIR’S UPDATE

The Chair took a moment to echo the comments of the Superintendent on the promotion ceremony at the MS. It was nice to see parents there, to take the time.

The Chair read a statement. At the June 10th meeting of the School Committee, Mr. Brian Keaney requested to be placed on agenda for the next meeting for the purpose of

requesting the Superintendent grant him an interview. The Chair responded to that request: The question of whether the Superintendent gives you an interview is up to her and not the School Committee. She has discussed the topic with you and has also spent a significant amount of time dealing with numerous written requests from you. This issue will not be placed on an agenda for a school committee meeting.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Cecilia Emery Butler: I have one comment. I watched a rerun of SC meeting. People need to use the microphone because people can't hear at home.

Question: Where are we with the Abitibi project? This is a program to place paper recycling containers placed at all the schools.

Mr. Lafrancesca responded – Mr. Lynch is working with the organization. We are going to start with one school and depending on success will expand the program. A by-law concerning dumpsters needed to be re-written and it was approved last November.

Brian Keaney: I received your letter yesterday. Asked how the Chair reconciled his decision in the letter because his interpretation of the policy it doesn't give the Superintendent the freedom to ignore it. The Chair responded that the prepared response he received was reviewed by our Counsel after reviewing all our policies. Mr. Keaney replied - as he sees it the committee has three options: discuss it now in open session, the Superintendent can grant me an interview, or I can continue to come back and ask questions. Mr. Keaney began to ask more questions and was stopped by the Chair who said this is not the time or place for this discussion; this is a business meeting, not a press conference or a debate. Mr. Keaney said it wasn't his choice to go the public records route. The Chair responded to Mr. Keaney that he was entitled to his opinion. At this point the Chair requested to move on with the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ACTION ITEMS

Extension of Dexter School lease with TEC

The Education Cooperative has requested a one year extension beginning September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2010 with an increase of 10% to cover the costs of utilities.

Mr. Ryan spoke on behalf of the Budget Sub and their recommendation was to approve lease extension.

Motion made by Ms. Driscoll and seconded by Mr. Healy to approve the Dexter Lease extension for TEC for a period of one year, September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010.

Approved: Unanimous

REPORTS

Summer Reading Program Review for HS and MS – Dr. Laflamme

Changes at HS: The goals for summer reading are to continue the learning process and prevent students from learning some of the skills they acquire. Summer reading is one component of the total literacy program. We have a very structured vocabulary program. A consequence for honors students not completing summer reading would be to drop them down a level. That has caused scheduling problems for the school. To continue to stress the importance of summer reading, students will not be allowed to submit an essay during the first term that relates to summer reading and that grade will be recorded as a zero. Level II and Level I don't always complete summer reading. We are reaching out

to parents to have open discussions with students and monitor their summer reading progress.

Changes at MS: The teachers came up with a new approach to program. Previously it was a Read, Write, Win program. This program is still in existence. The other component in place now requires students keep journals. List of suggested reading is lengthy but they are not restricted to this list. Work must be submitted at the beginning of the school year. Work is graded, students given feedback and the grade is recorded as part of the first term.

Mr. Ryan asked, is there a way if the student takes the test and doesn't pass it but the parents know they read the book to allow parent input? Students should speak directly to Dr. Laflamme and they can bring in a note from home. The teachers will also monitor the progress as well. The test is available to take in September as well, especially with the heavily attended end of summer test sessions.

Mr. Heisler had a question about the required reading. Are those books incorporated in class work during year? The books are selected from ones the staff would like to work with but there is never enough time and then during first term an essay is assigned in Level I and Honors classes that deal with the specific requirements and the students are responsible for information in these books.

Academic Reporting – Joanne McCormick, Director of Guidance

Data for grades is not yet complete. We are still accumulating end of year grades.

The scheduling process is completed but is still fluid. Master schedule has been created and we have generated schedules for the students. There are still some conflicts and issues to be worked out. Significant change in math next year – the incoming Academy students and the 10th grade Honors class will be taking geometry.

Another significant change relates to EPP MCAS. EPP's were generated for all students who fell between the range of 220 and 240. We offered those students the exam and 5 students passed. If students do not pass it they will need to take an extra year of math.

A new course that is being offered is Personal Finance and Business Math. This is a CP2 class for students entering the labor market directly out of high school. English courses added are English II H – American Literature (Freshmen Academy), English III – AP Language and Composition. Psychology Honors level has been added for next year.

European History – AP is not being offered next year. In Science, new department chair is on board. The biology and lab has been combined to meet in one period. Three AP science classes are being offered at the same time. French I and Spanish I CP1 have been added this year. School wide changes: Academic Center students will be able to get credit when they are regularly scheduled into the center. This provides additional support services for all students. The new schedule with the directed study will begin next year.

AP Grant information update: We continue to send the message that students enrolled in the most rigorous courses available to them is what colleges look at. Additional support is built in because of the grant. Our goal of having 120 students to enroll and we currently have 146 students in AP classes.

Ms. Driscoll asked what the sequence would be after geometry. Ms. McCormick replied the reason for this is students were more ready for Algebra II after having geometry.

Students will be better prepared for MCAS. There are about 20 students on educational proficiency plans.

Mr. Heisler asked what is an EPP? For any student who takes MCAS exam and doesn't score proficient – below 220 the range is 220 – 240 has to demonstrate proficiency in another way. Draw up contract with students.

Mr. Roberts asked to expand on the bullet in Ms. McCormick's handout that the target goal was exceeded. Ms. McCormick replied one of the purposes of the grant was to increase enrollment in AP classes. We were helped in establishing goal with people from MMSI. Ms. McCormick said it was really gratifying to sit with students individually after reviewing PSAT data to see their expressions when they were told they had a significant chance to score 3 or better on AP exams. This is real data they can use to compare and push students to try harder.

Mr. Murray added a few points. The Calculus Honors course, only 8 students signed up, so we interviewed them and convinced them to take Calculus AP – gently nudged to move forward.

Ms. Doe said part of the grant is pre-AP. It is taking a look from sixth grade on. Major effort is underway to target non-traditional students – our responsibility to identify them. We are looking at the MS curriculum to raise the standards to prepare to enter 9th grade. We have seven staff members participating in pre-AP training.

Mr. Heisler asked if retirements or layoffs affect the ability to offer courses. Ms. Doe replied, no. The good news, FY09 balanced out and we are in good shape. FY10 we're still not sure, we are waiting on the State. In terms of our programs, every program offered this year will be offered next year. Every program was held in place. We are one of the few districts that have not had to cut programs.

MINUTES

Motion made by Ms. Connolly and seconded by Ms. Driscoll to accept the June 10, 2009 minutes. Approved – Unanimous

DONATIONS

Riverdale School received a \$50.00 donation from Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kramer, the parents of twin boys who attend the school.

Riverdale School also received a \$300.00 donation from Mr. George Balis in memory of his wife; Tracy worked as a lunch aide at Riverdale.

The School department received a \$10,000.00 donation from the DEP for math books for the elementary schools.

Motion to accept all donations was made by Mr. Ryan with grateful appreciation and seconded by Mr. Healy with grateful appreciation. Approved: Unanimous

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Ryan spoke on the Budget-Sub met today for the FY09 budget – balanced books. FY10 continued struggle for final numbers. Meet and work over summer.

We signed a lease for ½ the Dexter – reports in paper – VNA departing. Suggested – reach out to TEC if they are interested in building. Close off that side of building to shut down heat and utilities to reduce costs. Discuss need to put out to bid lease building.

Mr. La Francesca added he received a call from VNA, they have requested to be allowed to lease month-to-month extension – so every child is placed. Meetings with independent day care providers to take over location.

Requested a Budget Sub meeting Wednesday July 1 – 8:00 a.m. to discuss different options to work with VNA. Keep Town Administrators informed.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The Chair announced they would not meet until end of August unless there is a necessity. Mr. Heisler asked when the Committees will be reorganized. Mr. Roberts replied at the August meeting.

The Chair announced a need to go into executive session under Ch. 39 section 23B for the purposes of collective bargaining and pending litigation. Vote taken by roll call: Ms. Driscoll – yes, Mr. Heisler –yes, Mr. Healy – yes, Mr. Ryan – yes, Ms. Connolly-yes, Mr. Roberts – yes.

Voted to Adjourn.