

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—August 18, 2010
Town Hall, Selectmen’s Chambers

PRESENT

Tom Ryan, Chair
Kevin Coughlin, Vice Chair
Tracy Driscoll
Dave Roberts
Joe Heisler
Dimitria Sullivan
Mayanne Briggs

ADMINISTRATION

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

Convened: 7:04 PM

Adjourned: 8:51 PM

The Chair opened the meeting and opened Public Comment for the audience gathered. It was requested that anyone with questions concerning AYP to hold them until AYP is discussed in full. Selectman Dello Iacono and many student athletes (represented by Carmen Dello Iacono Jr.) addressed the committee. They inquired about the use of the football field for the fall season. Mr. Ryan stated the Committee would take the matter under advisement. The SBRC expects construction to begin shortly and a fence to be erected around the field area by the end of the month. It was suggested that a meeting take place between the group, Principal Santamaria, and Michael Plansky, AD. Consigli Construction has been hired, with a notice to proceed as of August 23rd. Committee members would like to know the outcome of the meeting.

The meeting was interrupted to move to the Lower Conference Room due to the large audience.

Dedham Public School Calendar was requested to be re-voted to note the last day of school will be Friday, June 17, 2011.

Motion was made by Mrs. Sullivan, and seconded by Mrs. Driscoll to vote the 2010-2011 School Calendar as corrected. Approved: Unanimous, 7:0

Cafeteria Workers Contract vote has been tabled until September 8, 2010 meeting.

Sub Committee reorganization for the 2010-11 School Year.

There are three (3) town created sub-committees to be filled.

1. The Ad-Hoc Avery School Reuse Committee, Mr. Heisler volunteered to be appointed.
2. The Ad-Hoc Major Capital Facilities Fund Committee. The purpose of this committee is to research and recommend a policy that will guide the use of funds available through major capital facilities funds. Mr. Coughlin volunteered to be appointed.
3. The Ad-Hoc Financial Policies Study Committee. Mrs. Sullivan and Mrs. Briggs volunteered to be appointed.

School Council Liaisons for the 2010-2011 school year are:

Mr. Roberts – Oakdale
Mr. Ryan – Riverdale
Ms. Driscoll – High School
Mr. Heisler – Avery
Mr. Coughlin – Middle School
Ms. Sullivan – Greenlodge
Ms. Briggs – ECEC

Superintendent Doe introduced the new principal of the Curran Early Childhood Education Center, Ms. Jessica Hammond and the Committee welcomed her to the District.

Presentation of AYP and the Avery School: Power Point presentation made by Assistant Superintendent Cindy Kelly.

The Avery School did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) last year. All students must reach 100% proficiency by the year 2014. A plan is to be developed for improving student performance. Mrs. Kelly explained Composite Performance Index (CPI) which is the formula used to determine AYP. The results of AYP are embargoed until September but because of Avery's status, early notification was made to be able to offer school choice to Avery students because Avery is a Title I school. Avery was just recognized last spring by the DESE for their ELL population exceeding the state's expectations in MCAS. Mrs. Doe explained the administration received notification last Wednesday and were obliged to notify parents 14 days before the opening of school. The presentation included a preliminary plan, which includes the hiring of a math coach, of what services will go into place in September at the school. The DESE offers technical assistance to the district and will be working with the school to support Avery students to meet the target AYP.

Discussion from committee members:

Clarification that the plan discussed will be committed to immediately and the process will continue with regular updates on the progress. An immediate timeline recommendation would be to prepare a presentation of a solid plan on September 22nd. The School Committee is required to approve the improvement plan that will be presented to the DESE. A request was made for a meeting of the Budget Sub-Committee to discuss funding for the improvements. An additional request was made to look at the feasibility of full day kindergarten moving forward in the near future. Superintendent Doe stated she is a strong advocate for full day kindergarten and it is a worthy goal for the School Committee. She further stated the challenges faced by all school districts is that there is no control over lengthening the school day or the school year due to collective bargaining restraints, but instructional time during the school day is within our control. The recess schedule is being looked at. Needham, Walpole, Westwood, and Norwood all have less recess time than Dedham. AYP will progressively be more difficult to meet as we approach 2014. Mrs. Doe states there is full cooperation from the Avery staff. Progress reports will be issued every four weeks on each student. There is a short time line to make the decision on school choice. The administration is willing to meet with parents who are struggling with the decision. A response is needed from all parents; the administration will be contacting the parents who have not responded. A request was made to explain how the elementary schools were chosen for school choice. Transportation costs, class size numbers, and classroom space led to the decision to offer Oakdale and Riverdale.

Mr. Ryan recapped the meeting at the Avery School Monday evening. There were many positive comments, but also negative comments and criticisms. He offered a review of what would be done at the Avery School.

- year long remedial program
- Based on results from this year's MCAS, students who scored warning and needs improvement will be identified and given the opportunity to attend the program in mathematics.
- 10 week MCAS preparation (other schools offer 6-8 week program, at a cost) free to the Avery community
- Hire a math coach
- Additional professional development – money available already
- Increased time on learning
- Increased communication

Mr. Ryan stated over the past 8 years a great deal of progress has been made to improving MCAS scores and improving curriculum and professional development to increase the quality of instruction across the district. Mr. Ryan pledges to address the low scores and improve time on learning. There will be an equitable distribution of students so that every school is as balanced as we can make it.

General Public Questions:

Chairman Ryan opened the meeting up to questions regarding AYP.

SEPAC is looking for assurance that the level of services will be maintained for the special education sub-group as supplementary services are implemented. A parent expressed a belief the School Council at Avery is non-existent. Also expressed concern about the different levels involved in AYP improvement, specifically Level 4

and beyond. Parent felt blindsided and is concerned the administration doesn't have a handle on what is going on in the Avery. Will this affect the funding for the new Avery School? Discussion moved more toward recess and the concerns about eliminating it. Mr. Ryan stated a 15 minute recess really is more than that. We need to look at the impact on time on learning and keep the CPI vs. scores moving in the right direction. We have to push and work harder because the standards are getting higher. A parent questioned the amount of prep work that was done last year knowing it was a 50/50 chance of Avery being in the position faced today. Is the entire Title I funding considered in the 20% allocation to transportation or just Avery's portion? Which member of the School Committee was on the school council last year? Mr. Heisler responded.

A parent thanked the committee and administration for being responsive after the meeting Monday night. If a parent is not satisfied with the progress at Avery half way through the year, would they be able to change their mind. Superintendent's recommendation is every parent will receive a progress report every 4 weeks on their child's progress. If the parent is not happy with the progress 4 weeks into the school year, that would be the time to speak up. Communication should be made as a partnership with the parents and teacher. Ultimately the Principal and the Superintendent will also be informed. A parent expressed an interest in having a town wide PTO meeting to navigate MCAS information. A parent expressed advocacy for recess and urged research on the benefits before making any decision. A parent suggested bringing the TREK program into younger grades.

Mrs. Doe restated that the amount of services being directed to the Avery School to address the AYP shortfall is significant.

Chairman Ryan concluded the question period.

In summation hopes the information has been helpful. Any specific questions concerning your child or the school, direct them directly to the Superintendent. For clarification, Principal Sullivan is out of state. She has worked all summer and had a scheduled vacation and therefore the reason for her absence. Meetings can be scheduled for Monday and Mrs. Sullivan and the Superintendent will be available.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Roberts, and seconded by Ms. Driscoll. Approved: Unanimous

Open meeting adjourned at: 8:51 p.m.