

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
August 20, 2008  
(Approved September 3, 2008)

### **PRESENT:**

Ms Berta Erickson  
Mr. Jim Frey  
Dr. Paul Funch, Chair  
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair  
Mr. Frank O'Connell  
Mr. Jon Sjoberg, Secretary

### **ABSENT:**

Peter Carson

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent  
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; D. Twomey, D. Goodell, T. Callahan, F. Dillon, J. Degen

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and the Committee voted to adjourn to executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 23B-3. The meeting reconvened in open session at 7:11 p.m. and was called to order by the chair, P. Funch

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT**

Postponed - Betty Lavin was not available

### **PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION**

#### **Fall Athletics Update - Dan Twomey**

D. Twomey advised football started on Monday with 54 players and the rest of the high school fall athletic programs begin on Thursday. About 300 students participate in fall sports and he reviewed the number of participants in each program. Several new coaches have been hired and they have retained several experienced coaches. The Football Club has generated about \$35,000 in start-up monies with \$6,000 of this coming from the New England Patriots. The Groton-Dunstable Athletic Booster Club provided \$10,000 of seed money and they have deposited about \$13,000 in user fees so far. He stated they are in the ballpark of about \$60,000 in revenue for the program. Seven home games have been scheduled. T. Sheehan advised the new football revolving fund is up and running.

#### **MSEC - Donna Goodell, Tim Callahan**

A video highlighting the Merrimac Special Education Collaborative programs and services was shown. The MSEC currently has a program at the high school and follows the school calendar. This summer they used Prescott to meet their summer space needs.

D. Goodell reviewed a proposal for using space at Prescott School to house a C.O.A.P. (Center for Occupational Awareness and Placement) classroom. The goal of the program is to provide the fundamental skills necessary for students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities to obtain entry-level employment and the highest level of independent living possible. One of their largest business partnerships is Bristol Myers Squibb and they have recently bought land in Devens. They have invited MSEC to expand their business

partnership to their new location.

MSEC has many students from Groton, Westford, North Middlesex and surrounding areas and transportation time and costs will be reduced by having classroom space in Groton. They are looking for two classroom spaces, an office with a phone and a small clerical space. It is anticipated the initial classrooms would include approximately fifteen to twenty students, a teacher and two job coaches. They would pay for utilities on a prorated basis and hope to move in by mid-November. Two Groton students would be involved in the program and the district would receive \$6000 in revenue as well as a savings in transportation costs. This program will not require any capital expenditures to the building.

### **Initial Policies Review - Classification 2 Changes, Advertising Policy**

J. Frey said the Policy Committee is working through completing changes in process from last year. Members received classification 2 changes to Sections C, D, E and F which change some of the wording. It was noted that some of the proposed corrections listed in the October 30, 2007 notes have been made to the policies while others have not and members would like the policies to be complete. It was agreed the proposed changes will be made and new copies distributed. Members also received a draft of the Advertising & Partnerships Policy for review. Dr. Genovese reminded members of the policy on revising policies. He invited members to attend an Administrative Team meeting to get their feedback on this policy.

### **Think Tank Committee Update - Berta Erickson**

B. Erickson thanked everyone who sent in their interest form and those who accepted a role on this committee through her request. She noted no parent from Boutwell or the middle school responded but there may be an overlap with some of the other parents. There was no response from a staff member nor from the business community. Ms Erickson and Dr. Funch will recommend a list of members and the school committee will appoint them at their September 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

### **Review of GIC (Group Insurance Commission)**

About a year ago, the legislature gave municipalities the ability to join the GIC as a way to help address healthcare costs. C. McKinney said the timeline did not work for the district at that time but over the past year they have been discussing staff preferences and analyzing the nine offerings within the GIC. A consultant has analyzed the current offerings relative to the GIC offerings and the potential savings to the employees and the district looked apparent. The information was presented to the staff units and after taking votes, they have indicated they would like to join GIC.

By law, the committee needs to take several steps by October 1<sup>st</sup> and the first step is to adopt Chapter 32B, Section 19 this evening. This is basically the enabling legislation that says they can set up a group to negotiate and prepare to adopt an agreement that will be presented to GIC. Subsequently, the committee will need to ratify the negotiated agreement and they will be entered into the insurance company on July 1, 2009. The net savings will be about \$300,000 to the district and is a long term investment. C. McKinney stated the staff/retiree representatives were very cooperative.

### **Non-Consensus Action Item Discussions**

In an effort to move the meetings along more efficiently, Dr. Funch explained using a consent agenda will put routine actions such as approval of minutes and acceptance of donations, which require a vote but not discussion, will be voted as group.

It was agreed the June 18, 2008 business minutes will be removed due to a missing page and the ratification of IUOE Local 877 contract, declaring three full day Kindergarten school choice seats and the adoption of Chapter 32B, Section 19, will be voted separately this evening. C. McKinney noted discussion can be held once the motion is on the table.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

C. Long asked if MSEC paid rent for the summer use of Prescott and Dr. Genovese advised the program was previously housed in the high school and it made sense to keep the program in the district. MSEC will pay

\$6000 for the use of Prescott from October through June 30<sup>th</sup> and the money will be put toward a portion of the utilities. She asked if there is an estimate of insurance savings for the employees and C. McKinney said this is difficult to answer because of co-pays and deductibles. The employees may pick any of the nine offerings.

## **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Policy** - See Initial Policies Review presentation

**Personnel & Negotiations** - A contract for the van drivers will be ratified this evening.

**Budget & Finance** - C. McKinney deferred to Mr. Sheehan.

### **Report of the Director of Business & Finance - T. Sheehan**

**FY08 HS Building/Land Acquisition Account** - A Dunstable resident had requested, through Mr. Frey, the balance in these accounts and how the money was spent and specifically, if any was used to support the Casella land settlement. Members received an e-mail with the amount of money that was applied as well as the account balances and what the administration intends those monies to be used for in the future. Approximately \$120,000 to \$130,000 was added to the \$2.5M from the bonds to make the \$2.8M final settlement, leaving a balance of about \$30,000 in the land acquisition fund that will likely be expended this fall when they go out for permanent long-term funding. There is approximately \$120,000 in the high school building fund and this is being reserved for future capital needs and in particular, continued improvements to the water system. The money can only be used for long-term capital projects that are bonded for the same period of time as the high school.

**Capital Improvement Projects Update** - The heating and ventilation replacement unit for the PAC at MSS was installed on the roof last Thursday and it is now being connected with the new duct work. It is anticipated this will be completed before school begins.

There has been a delay with the elevator project because of fabrication lead time needed to produce the unit. They are looking for it to be installed in September and traffic patterns will need to be changed at Swallow Union to keep the area secure.

The high school/building security improvement plan will likely be completed in early September due to the contractor pulling his technicians from the job to go on an emergency replacement job for two elementary school alarm systems destroyed by lightning. It was hoped the middle school would be finished but there is no priority list. It is anticipated it will take five to seven days of work time and the material is available.

**HS Student Activity Account Audit** - He personally audited the account for FY08 and this was done primarily because of there was a change in the custodian of the account. All the monies were accounted for to the penny.

**QuickBooks - MS/Flo Ro** - The system will be running as MS by tomorrow. The student activity fund has been installed on QuickBooks at the elementary schools and this will make it easier for the principals and secretaries to maintain the balances by club.

**Point-of-Sale System - Elementary Cafeteria** - He had hoped this would be installed before school started but they have given up the attempt because they did not want to rush the training. This is a card system that would make it easier for parents to send in money and have it credited to a lunch account. It should eliminate a lot of the paper processing of checks and teachers would not have to collect cash. The cards will be distributed to the students as they go into the cafeteria. The cashier keeps the card to charge the lunch and the cards are put back into the teachers' mailboxes for the next day.

**FY2010 DOE Function Codes** - The budget format for FY10 needs to be changed to match the DOE function codes and this will make it clearer as to how much of the budget is going directly for student services. They

also want it to be a two year outlook on the budget.

**E & D Certification and DOE EOY Report** - The end of year spreadsheet from the DOE is now available to be downloaded and most of his time in September will be spent working on this report. Accountant Polly McGrath has an October 3<sup>1st</sup> deadline to complete the consolidated balance sheets. These are submitted to the DOR to certify their E & D for next year.

**Surplus/Obsolete Electronic Equipment** - G. Babin compiled a list of surplus and obsolete electronic equipment he would like permission to dispose of and the disposal of equipment is covered by a Groton-Dunstable policy as well as Chapter 30B, the Uniform Procurement Act. The value of the equipment is \$158, assuming they could find a buyer, and they have found a vendor who will take it away for free. He is asking the committee to vote to declare the material as surplus. He will check to be sure the company disposes of it in an environmentally approved way.

### **Report of the Chair**

**Meeting Dates** - Dr. Funch clarified the committee will meet on September 3<sup>rd</sup> as well as on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Debt Exclusion Meeting Update and Letter** - A meeting was held with the Groton and Dunstable selectmen and representatives from the school committee to talk about the debt exclusion ballot question coming before the voters in both towns. There is a great deal of interest in getting the information out on what the debt exclusion ballot questions mean and what the impacts are if they are passed or not passed. An ad-hoc committee put together a fact sheet for each town. He put together a letter based on the fact sheets and he would like the committee to consider approving it to be submitted to the local newspapers.

Groton Selectman J. Degen said the BOS have discussed this and feel it is prudent to have this re-voted since the public believes a lot of information was not given forthright. The information about the impacts to the services of the communities at large, as well as the impacts the district may suffer, need to be made known if this does not pass at the ballot. He feels it is incumbent on the school committee and superintendent to be leading this since this is school debt. The selectmen signed a letter for release that has a "question and answer" that explains a debt exclusion versus an override and explains the impacts. A copy will be posted to the town website. Groton Selectman F. Dillon said the BOS voted to place the debt exclusion on the ballot on October 7<sup>th</sup>. They also voted to accept the fact sheet that was put together and put it forward in a "Letter to the Editor".

Dr. Genovese said they have the support of the Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees endorsing this and it needs to be a united effort to make sure the public understands this approval is in the best interest of the towns. J. Degen stated this debt needs to be paid one way or another and it will be very difficult if the ballot fails. Dunstable's ballot question will be voted on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Funch read the "Letter to the Editor" and members voted unanimously to submit it to the local media. Since Mr. Carson was not here to vote, he will not be included since they do not have his permission.

J. Degen asked committee members to review and endorse the Board of Selectmen's debt exclusion fact sheet. This will be taken up at the next committee meeting. J. Frey stated a similar outline was adopted in Dunstable and put on their website.

**Alternative Uses of Prescott Ideas** - A meeting was held with the Groton selectmen to discuss future utilization possibilities of the Prescott school and there will be a full discussion at the September 17<sup>th</sup> school committee meeting. J. Degen said the Board of Selectmen has an affordable housing consultant working for them and his number one choice was Prescott. The consultant will present a conceptual idea at the meeting.

**School Committee Goals** - Members held a workshop on July 20<sup>th</sup> and came up with a set of goals for the year.

1. Initiate an early, progressive and deliberative budget process.
  - Communicate regularly with stakeholders
  - Include focus on cost saving activities
2. Focus on policy compliance and review policies in the context of compliance issues.
3. Develop and approve a policy on advertising.
4. Support GDRSD's Strategic Plan development by driving public engagement.
5. Re-establish a Communications Subcommittee.

### **Report of the Superintendent**

**Reutilization of Prescott** - The central office staff took a field trip to Prescott to view the third floor and they had a very preliminary discussion on how the space could be used for the central office. They would need to look at the electricity and air conditioning. A plan will be put together for the committee to look at and if things were to line up, he would like the central office to move in by November. Exploration of uses for the middle floor, which is handicap accessible, will continue. The use of the bottom floor for the maintenance/custodial supplies will be included in the plan.

**Retirement of Tarbell** - Members received a copy of Policy FCB, Retirement of Facilities, and Dr. Genovese asked the committee and chair to consider appointing a committee to look at retiring Tarbell.

**Strategic Plan Process Update** - The process began yesterday with the Administrative Team and they focused on what the process will look like. They used the services of Lyle Kirtman to talk about unique approaches for the district and what the focus groups might look like. The administrators have all ready partnered up in who will be going out to talk with groups to gather information.

**IUOE Local 877 Contract** - This is a two year contract (one year has expired) for the van drivers and they provide excellent services for the district. The contract keeps the option open to look at options that may be available in the best interest of students. They will look at the potential of a collaborative with other districts.

**School Choice** - Florence Roche Principal Goguen is confident the committee could declare three full day kindergarten seats for school choice and Dr. Genovese supports this recommendation.

**Other** - The sub-committee meeting dates listed on the agenda were reviewed. It was noted the Policy subcommittee will be meeting at Tarbell and the Budget & Finance subcommittee meeting has been moved to September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Genovese said there will be a Transportation sub-committee by the end of September.

An outline of the program presented by Ms Goodell was distributed.

Dr. Genovese received a call from the program coordinator assurance chairperson and he advised the district is doing a very good job in the compliance areas for special education services and there were no findings. J. Frey would like this information to be in the newspaper and spread around any way possible as it is important for the communities to know the district is passing these external reviews.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **VOTE: Consent Action Items**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE COMMITTEE APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS 1. (Executive Session Minutes 06/04/08), 2. (Executive Session Minutes 06/18/08), 4. (Business Meeting Minutes 07/23/08), 5. (Donation of Ping Pong Table to PTYC) AND 8. (Donation of Volleyball System from GD Athletic Booster) LISTED ON THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AGENDA. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

**VOTE: Surplus Equipment**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THEY DECLARE THE LIST BY GARY BABIN AS SURPLUS MATERIAL AND DISPOSE OF IT ACCORDINGLY TO THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY DN. SECONDED BY J. FREY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

**VOTE: Declare 3 Full Day Kindergarten School Choice Seats**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE DECLARE THREE FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL CHOICE SEATS AVAILABLE AT THE FLORENCE ROCHE SCHOOL. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

J. Frey asked if there are any other seats available in the district and Dr. Genovese said no. J. Sjoberg asked if it costs more to bring in a school choice student. T. Sheehan said adding three students does not increase the fixed costs of the district which represents a substantial portion of the annual cost to educate a student and it would be a net gain. C. McKinney supports the motion but feels the district would prefer to see kindergarten classes at a level of 16 or 17.

**In Favor:** J. Frey, F. O'Connell, C. McKinney, P. Funch, B. Erickson

**Opposed:** J. Sjoberg

**VOTE: To Ratify IUOE Local 877 Contract**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE RATIFY THE IUOE LOCAL 877 CONTRACT WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

**VOTE: Adoption of Chapter 32B: Section 19 - GIC**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT SECTION 19 OF GENERAL CHAPTER 32B, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS THROUGH THE GROUP INSURANCE COMMISSION. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

J. Frey asked when the committee might see the agreement and Dr. Genovese said they should have it for the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL**

Dr. Funch recognized and thanked Mark and Cindy Sandman for their donation of a ping pong table to the PTYC and the Groton-Dunstable Athletic Booster Club for their donation of a new volleyball system to the new girls varsity volleyball team.

**ADJOURNMENT**

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:49 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

(Transcribed from video tape)