

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
October 1, 2008 - (Approved 10/15/08)

### **PRESENT:**

Mr. Peter Carson  
Ms Berta Erickson  
Mr. Jim Frey  
Dr. Paul Funch, Chair  
Mr. Frank O'Connell  
Mr. Jon Sjoberg, Secretary (Arrived at 7:13 p.m.)

### **ABSENT:**

Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

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

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:**

Rafael Glod and Molly Nicol (Left at 8:30 p.m.)

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Beckert-Long, **Groton Herald**; J. Degen, R. Heaton, A. Elliot, P. O'Sullivan,  
See attached sign-in sheet

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the chair, P. Funch

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT**

Dr. Funch apologized to Macky Garvey for the committee forgetting to bring up the vote to approve his Eagle project at the last meeting and advised they will do so tonight.

Dr. Funch hopes everyone saw an editorial dedicated to the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District on how to achieve academic excellence that was in the **Lowell Sun** yesterday and stated they are proud of the students and staff for their performance.

Dr. Genovese introduced student representatives Rafael Glod and Molly Nicol.

### **HS Student Advisory Committee Reps**

R. Glod stated five juniors decided they wanted to be part of the committee and they divided the meetings amongst themselves, with two representatives attending each meeting. Dr. Funch encouraged their participation and advised they may leave after the Discussion portion of the agenda so they will not be out too late.

### **GDEF - Bea Loos**

B. Loos announced the opening of GDEF's eleventh grant cycle. This cycle is open to mini-grants, which are capped at \$500 each, and the cycle closes on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Approved grants will be announced the first week of December. She noted their Annual Giving Campaign will commence in November.

B. Erickson said the trip to the U.N. was an outstanding experience and a privilege. The most moving experience was when a Liberian student spoke over a video conference and described how her family was killed. She said the students' behavior, maturity, demeanor and presentation can make the towns proud. A video is available on the U.N. website.

**PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION****Washington, D. C. Trip - A. Snodgrass**

A. Snodgrass said the trip will cost \$647 per child. About two hundred eighth grade students attend and they will leave on Tuesday, May 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 a.m. and return on Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 p.m. This year they are planning to attend an Orioles or Nationals baseball game but if there is no home game scheduled, they intend to book a couple of hours at a recreation center. They will be increasing the number of adult chaperones by two so the administrator and trip coordinator are not tied to particular groups, thus providing more flexibility.

He reviewed how this trip ties into the curriculum. Students will compile a scrapbook of their experiences that will include pages for every subject. They will write an essay considering the question "What are the best and the worst aspects of the history and culture of our country?". He noted the journalism museum has a gripping exhibit on 9/11.

**Think Tank - B. Erickson**

Their first meeting was September 25<sup>th</sup> and they reviewed their charge. There will be two groups, one for creative ideas "out of the box" and the other will study expanding what the district already does. Kevin Welch gave some ideas on motivations for saving money and Nancy Ohringer presented her idea on recycling. With the exception of Debbie Bermudez being elected secretary, the election of officers was postponed. Each group will have their own secretary and group leader. They will be meeting at 7:00 p.m. at MSN on October 9<sup>th</sup> and October 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Advertising Policy - KGD**

Members were to turn in their feedback forms tonight for the Policy committee to review at their meeting tomorrow. Dr. Funch reviewed his suggestions shown in Draft 7 of the policy which was distributed. Dr. Genovese said "co-curricular activities" should be used rather than "extra-curricular activities" as these activities should support what they are doing in the schools. It was suggested they differentiate between a donation and a sponsorship.

P. Carson said they recognize they cannot write a policy that covers every case and sometimes it will be a judgment call. F. O'Connell is concerned about the statement referencing revenues since he feels they need to remain creative going forward and he does not want to close the door on any opportunity. A public forum will be held after the school committee has supported/approved a draft of the policy. An example sheet of "what's in, what's out" will be created as an exhibit.

**Superintendent Proposal - Reuse of Prescott**

Dr. Genovese recognized Mr. Byrnes for the research work he has done. He said the move to Prescott will cost about \$13,500 for slight modifications to the rooms and electrical, computer and telephone modifications. The efficiencies of the move will include having a centralized record keeping room and taking advantage of a more efficient building. Radiators will be turned off in the rooms that are not used. The utilization of the space was reviewed.

Dr. Genovese stated the insurance costs would be about \$8,000 higher if Tarbell is vacant and Prescott's insurance would be over \$18,000 if left vacant. The target date to move is the week of November 17<sup>th</sup>. The custodian that works between the middle school and central office would work between the middle school and the central office at Prescott and this would not change the FTE.

Since there is no definition for the term "offline", J. Sjoberg commented it should not be used when making presentations. He said "closing" is in the policy and there is no policy for taking a building "offline". Dr. Genovese said he has defined it as re-purposing. Dr. Funch noted a closing study is going on for Tarbell but it has not been decided it will close. J. Sjoberg asked if it is correct they will see savings in year two and was told yes.

P. Carson asked for a clarification of MSEC's use of space at Prescott. He was advised they look where there are clusters of students and provide a service in a collaborative way. Prescott provides an excellent location

for their school-to-work program.

J. Frey asked if any thought has been given to reaching out to other organizations to build tenancy and pay rent. Dr. Genovese said there have been conversations and it is an expectation Budget and Finance has but none have been actively pursued. J. Frey asked if the entire building needs to be made handicap accessible if it is reopened as a public building. Dr. Genovese said the building never closed so they do not have to upgrade to ADA compliance. He noted Tarbell is not handicap accessible.

F. O'Connell is not convinced they have been as aggressive as they should be looking at all alternatives for Prescott and feels they should see if there are opportunities to offset the \$17,000 debt per year and \$30,000 in energy costs. Dr. Genovese advised MSEC has a one year deal to use the facility. They want to take the time to explore who the best clients would be to use the building for the right level of rent. B. Erickson asked if Prescott could be used for a future Charter School and was advised the cost would come off their Chapter 70 money. She suggested someone might want to rent Tarbell in the short term.

Dr. Funch asked how the window air conditioner units from Tarbell will be used at Prescott and S. Byrnes advised they will be put in the back windows and they also have portable units they can use.

### **Town Proposal - Reuse of Prescott**

Answers to questions provided by members since the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting were addressed in a letter from Mr. Heaton.

D. Heaton said a developer will look at Prescott and realize the building has significant value because it has water and sewer and is located downtown. The uses of the property would be described in the RFP and the developer would be asked to provide the value. It was noted the assessed value of Prescott is \$2,039,709 and Tarbell is assessed for \$952,856.

It was clarified the district leases the buildings and the town owns them. Depending on how carefully the RFP is put together, J. Degen said the district would be allowed to have renovated space at little or no cost. He said they are asking to craft an RFP that meets the needs of both the town and the district jointly and they are looking for representation from the school committee to work with the Board of Selectmen and Mr. Heaton. Once the RFP is responded to, a decision is made to be sure the district's and town's needs are met and then a joint vote is taken on whether or not the RFP is awarded. He recognizes there are unknowns that need to be resolved. An RFP typically costs between \$5,000 and \$7,000 and takes about 3 months to develop.

Dr. Genovese asked if an RFP could have a component that said if central office moved back to Tarbell, some investment would be put in for upgrades. J. Degen said this could be discussed but the more a developer has to put in, the less the value would be. P. Carson asked if the town is satisfied that the central office use meets the deed restriction that the building be used for educational purposes. J. Degen said they would have to go to court for a ruling on the deed and this would be done very early in the process. He said it was the consensus of the selectmen to move the plan forward for discussion with the school committee but it was not unanimous.

If the school committee votes "yes", Mr. Heaton would ask the Board of Selectmen if they would like to join with the district and do an RFP to explore possible alternative uses for Prescott. The proposed motion to support an affordable housing RFP was read by Dr. Genovese. J. Degen was not comfortable with the wording as it allows the district to throw out the RFP if they do not like it. Dr. Genovese said he would encourage the committee to explore this proposal and see what their options are. J. Degen said the committee needs to be cognizant that stretching the use of Prescott too far would cause it to have no value to a developer.

B. Erickson asked if two RFP's could be done simultaneously and J. Degen said Tarbell is a beautiful building but has a lot of development constraints. He would not be comfortable doing two simultaneous RFP's.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

P. O'Sullivan stated the towns voted to purchase the Casella land for \$1.8M and it was taken by eminent

domain. The court decided additional funds were owed and with interest, they owe \$2.5M and this is what the debt exclusion vote is for on Tuesday. This money has to be paid from somewhere and if the vote fails, it would be devastating to the operating budgets of the town and district. With the reduction in state aid, he said the towns have to commit more funds to paying the bills. He has been told the cost to the taxpayer is \$12 per \$100,000 of evaluation and there are other debt exclusions coming off the books this year. He noted this is not a Proposition 2 ½ override that stays with them forever. He encouraged people to vote yes on Tuesday.

B. Erickson said the communication flow within the district is very important and people want to know how to get answers. She said they have a communications flowchart that was put together by C. Barrett. She noted one should always go to the source - i.e.: the teacher if there is a classroom problem, central office for budget questions and the bus company for bus problems.

### **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Policy - Level 2 changes to Policy E** - J. Frey listed the policies that received Level 2 changes that were agreed to by the subcommittee in February and March. He noted policies requiring Level 3 review are not being proposed at this time. Dr. Funch feels the change to EEA is more substantive and requires discussion. J. Frey said the intent is to submit simple changes for approval so they can do the two-round review on substantive changes. Dr. Funch has additional changes to ECA and EFC and it was agreed members can submit changes to the committee for their review tomorrow night. The October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting has been cancelled.

Members are encouraged to submit policy changes they feel should be made to the subcommittee at any time.

**Budget and Finance** - F. O'Connell reported they met September 25<sup>th</sup> and discussed Prescott and Tarbell. They also discussed some questions Dr. Genovese fielded from the public and how they are being addressed. Dr. Genovese said a response was sent out and he suggested the individual meet with himself and Mr. Sheehan to discuss a couple of follow up items. J. Frey commented that not everyone may understand the language being used (i.e.: Circuit Breaker) and suggested someone look through a future communication for public readability.

**Personnel and Negotiations** - P. Carson reported they met and went over the superintendent's evaluation instrument. Another meeting date has not been set but they hope to set one for next week.

**Report of the Director of Business & Finance** - T. Sheehan reported the HVAC work at the PAC has been completed. The installation of the security measures on the main doors of the buildings are about 90% complete and he noted they can expect some minor technical issues once it is up and running. No date has been set for the elevator installation at Swallow Union.

The end of year report is about 85% complete and they hope to send it to DOE by the end of the week. Ms McGrath is working on the E & D certification amount for FY08.

Due to the volatile financial markets, they are exploring alternatives for bonding the Casella land.

**Report of the Chair** - Dr. Funch thanked Ms Erickson for calling the newspapers and asking them to reprint their Letter to the Editor. He noted Dunstable voted in the affirmative for the debt exclusion and they hope Groton voters will support the debt exclusion on Tuesday.

He has requested Dr. Genovese provide administration salary and contract information to members as required by policies GCBA and GCBB. P. Carson has requested information on the staff hired this year relative to policy GCF. These requests are meant to be informational.

### **Report of the Superintendent**

**Strategic Plan Update** - Dr. Genovese distributed a copy of his draft vision statement and asked members to review it as he will be looking for their input. It has also been submitted to Lyle Kirtman and the Administrative Team. These three data points will be merged into a shared vision statement that will guide the district.

**MCAS Results** - The AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) data sheets were distributed. Massachusetts has decided that MCAS will be used as the deciding factor for whether they are making AYP. He stated they have made AYP in all the subgroups but in some of those cases, it is because they exceeded their target in previous years. Meeting AYP means they are following the federal benchmarks toward having every student proficient by 2014. There are areas (math, ELA) where they declined from the previous year so they have more work to do.

Dr. Rubel will provide a more extensive overview at the next meeting and questions can be forwarded to Dr. Funch and in turn, he will forward them to Dr. Rubel.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Non Consent Action Items**

None

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

J. SJOBERG MOVED THAT THE COMMITTEE APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEM #1- BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2008, ITEM #2 - FIELD TRIP TO WASHINGTON. D.C. AND ITEM #3 - EAGLE PROJECT - MACKY GARVEY. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Approval of Level 2 changes to Policy E was postponed

#### **VOTE: To Accept the Superintendent's Proposal Regarding the Reuse of Prescott**

B. ERICKSON MOVED THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE REALLOCATION OF CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF IN NOVEMBER FROM TARBELL TO PRESCOTT, AND THAT IN ADDITION TO THE COLLABORATIVE USE BY MSEC, A ROOM BE DEDICATED TO SPED PAC, AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, TO CREATE A RESOURCE LIBRARY/OFFICE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

J. Sjoberg feels this move makes sense logistically. F. O'Connell would like to see a plan that addresses both Prescott and Tarbell and P. Carson is not comfortable with leaving Tarbell vacant for two years.

So voted by roll call

**In Favor:** B. Erickson, P. Carson, J. Sjoberg, P. Funch, J. Frey

**Opposed:** F. O'Connell

#### **VOTE: To Allow Consideration of Other Town Uses for Prescott**

P. FUNCH ENTERTAINED THE MOTION TO MOVE THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR AUTHORIZE THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS TO DEVELOP AN RFP FOR AN ALTERNATIVE USE OF PRESCOTT THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT AND THE TOWN OF GROTON.

MOTION MOVED BY J. FREY AND SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:07 P. M. SECONDED BY J. FREY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

With attachment