

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2009

PRESENT:

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

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Rafael Glod and Brittany Bowes (left at 8:30 p.m.)

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: P. Comtois, Groton Landmark; J. Kulesz, Groton Herald; D. Twomey,
See attached sign-in sheet

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by the chair, P. Funch

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT

Children's Hospital - Poems from the Heart - Scott Middlemiss

Postponed to a meeting in March as students wish to participate in the spotlight.

Dr. Funch announced he would like to change the order of the presentations in order for Mr. Sheehan to leave early.

Rafael and Brittany read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

J. Sheffield announced GDEF will hold their second Reach for the Stars Benefit Auction on March 14th from 6:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Groton School. Tickets are \$40 per person in advance. GDEF is in their 12th grant cycle and the deadline for the spring grant cycle is March 2nd.

Dr. Genovese apologized for the difficulties with the Connect Ed message survey.

Dr. Genovese announced this is Kindergarten registration week and in their efforts to go green, the registration packets are posted on line. Application packets for substitute teachers and cafeteria workers have also been posted. He pointed out their staffing is limited and they will do their best to get information out as quickly as possible. They hope to have the district newsletter out this month.

Dr. Genovese announced he will be asking the committee to accept a \$5000 check from Brooks Automation, Inc. for the high school Robotics Club.

Dr. Rubel reported they received the November MCAS re-test results and all the remaining high school students have now passed.

D. Twomey invited everyone to attend the Girls and Women in Sports night on February 13th. They will be honoring three student athletes.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

Dan Twomey - Field Trip Approval

Varsity Ice Hockey - The varsity ice hockey team will leave for the Bourne Tournament on Thursday, February 19th and return on Friday, February 20th. The cost of the trip is \$35 for accommodations at the Comfort Inn in Plymouth and approximately \$40 for meals. Transportation is provided by Dee Bus Service and is paid for from the Athletics Revolving Fund.

Alpine Ski Team - The ski team will leave for Stratton Mountain on Friday, March 6th and return on Sunday, March 8th. The cost per student is \$275 and students will be responsible for paying for their own meals (approximately \$40.00).

Both trips will have students back in Groton before midnight. Dr. Genovese noted the new trip approval forms reference Policy IJOA.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE ACTION ITEM TO ACCEPT THE ICE HOCKEY AND ALPINE SKI TEAM TRIPS.

SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE ICE HOCKEY AND ALPINE SKI TEAM TRIPS AS PRESENTED IN THEIR PACKETS BY MR. TWOMEY. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Alice Lenhart - YRBS

Drug and Alcohol Counselor Alice Lenhart said the results being shown tonight are from the survey taken in March 2008. The survey was given in seven school districts and is taken by students in grades 6, 8 and 9 through 12. Parents have the opportunity to decide whether their child takes the survey and fifteen Groton-Dunstable students did not participate. The results show overall positive trends in the reduction of bullying, alcohol and other drug use, gambling and self-harm behaviors. She stated that while the data shows a promising reduction in risk behaviors in some areas, it is important to note that the numbers also reflect a continued need for further reduction efforts through education, enforcement, intervention and community partnerships. Areas where Groton-Dunstable data remains above the aggregate include some violence related behaviors, recent tobacco use, illicit use of oxycontin and some dietary behaviors.

The questions and associated data were reviewed and it was noted there were a couple of new questions in the survey. It was stated as they teach the students to practice healthy habits, the emphasis needs to be in partnership with parents to provide opportunities for kids to learn those behaviors. The information will be put on the district website and GDAY will be meeting with community stakeholders and scheduling a public forum in March or April. Dr. Rubel said she will get the information to the teachers and make sure issues are addressed adequately in the physical and behavioral health programs.

In light of what seems to be very high levels of average drug usage, J. Frey said it appears they may have more of a substantial problem than some people might believe is the case, and according to the way the kids have characterized it, it may be less than they think as well. He said data like this is very important for them to make the right policy decisions. Dr. Funch noted they can only eliminate drugs being brought into the schools and they can only stop it at their doorstep.

FY2010 Budget Presentation

T. Sheehan explained this budget has a new look with the use of function codes required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The format employs four digit function codes to aggregate and

collect data and makes it easy to see where the money goes at the macro level. He stated they are well aware of the economic climate with the recession and unparalleled declines in state revenues. The towns depend on local revenues and these are declining due to the housing slump and reduced consumer spending. The budget assumptions were reviewed and include a projected enrollment decrease of 54 students, targeted reductions of 5% to 10% for district-wide expenses and a 10% decrease in school site operating budgets allocated to principals, in addition to a 2-3% decrease based on enrollment. It was noted nothing from the FY07 "ought to list" made it into this budget.

Formerly known as a level service or roll forward budget, T. Sheehan said a maintenance budget was built identifying contractual salary increases and non-discretionary changes. In the past, a percentage increase for inflation was applied to the expense side of the budget and this was not done this year and everything in the budget is as accurate as they can make it. The maintenance budget is \$32,476,345, a \$1,108,784 over FY09, and is driven almost entirely by salaries. The debt service is going down but reimbursements from MSBA are also going down so the debt assessments for the towns actually go up. FY10 maintenance budget drivers include a total budget increase of \$1,003,502, a decrease in revenue of \$369,065 and a decrease in MSBA reimbursement of \$436,660. In order to fund the maintenance budget, they need \$1,809,227 and the only sources for that money are from budget cuts, an E&D appropriation and increases in town assessments. The revenue changes were reviewed.

In order to level fund the operating budget, the Administrative Council has identified \$930,800 in cuts, \$250,000 will be taken from E&D and \$628,427 in new town assessments for both debt and operating assessments. The actual FY2010 operating budget is \$31,545,545, an increase of \$277,984 (0.9%) from the prior year. The debt service budget totals \$4,357,931, a decrease of \$205,282 (4.5%) for a total budget of \$35,903,476 (0.2%).

The town assessments, including debt, were reviewed and Groton's total assessment increase is \$530,170 and Dunstable's is \$98,257. There was a large increase in the minimum town contributions as determined by the Department of Revenue and the DESE. The state is using a new formula to distribute Chapter 70 aid and in addition to the towns' property values, it includes aggregate personal income and that shows up in higher minimum town contributions. T. Sheehan reviewed the information in the budget request packet.

F. O'Connell asked if the MSBA reduction was scheduled and T. Sheehan said it was expected and the towns knew their assessments would be going up. F. O'Connell said the budget packet is comprehensive and very transparent but they cannot lose sight of the two reduction pages. Given the financial situation, Dr. Genovese stated the Administrative Team is freezing their salaries for FY10. T. Sheehan said the budget does not show all the cuts made from the expense side from the maintenance budget to the budget in front of them and he will get a list of those items for the next meeting. J. Frey would like an impact assessment on each of the affected service areas and was advised Dr. Rubel is working on it.

Dr. Genovese advised he met with all the unions to share the information and believes the leadership will go back to the members to see what options they see that may help save positions or do reductions differently.

B. Erickson said the Administrative Team showed great leadership by taking a pay freeze and hopes that filters down to other personnel.

J. Sjoberg asked the process for giving opinions about the cuts and getting answers to specific questions about budget trade-offs. C. McKinney said they need to talk about the numbers and not the source the money is taken from as the cuts are incorporated into the budget request. Dr. Genovese said questions can be forwarded to him. The budget public hearing will be held on February 25th and the committee has to vote to adopt the budget at their March 4th meeting.

Dr. Genovese acknowledged Mr. Sheehan and his staff and the Administrative Team for the many hours that went into the budget.

Since Groton's warrant closes on February 26th, P. Funch asked if the committee should ask for a "place holder" in the event they may want to consider a possible override. J. Frey suggested this be brought up at the joint meeting.

FY09 Calendar Modifications

Dr. Genovese said 70% of the staff weighed in and attending school on two Saturdays is the choice. With respect to the responses they were able to get from the Connect Ed call, it was pretty much a 50/50 split between not having April vacation and using two Saturday half days. Modifications to the calendar will include attending school for 180 days rather than 181 days, attending school for a full day on Good Friday, April 10th and, if by March 1st they use two more snow days, they would attend school on two Saturdays for a half day. He recommends they attend half days on Saturday, March 21st and Saturday, March 28th if necessary. Because of various contracts, volunteers will be needed to fill some obligations on the two Saturdays.

Advertising Policy

Members received a draft copy of the Advertising Policy and a list of sample applications. Dr. Genovese will take it to the Administrative Team to be sure it is clear. A public hearing will be held in the near future. It was suggested "signs" be included with "banners" on the example list. Feedback and questions can be sent to P. Carson.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

GDEA vice-president D. Ricci asked if the Round 2 budget cuts are definite. Dr. Genovese said yes and he will be having conversations with the unions about the impacts. She said it appears some groups are impacted at a greater percentage than other groups and asked if one group is valued more than the other. Dr. Genovese said a memo went out to the staff that talked about the fact that everyone is valued and appreciated and the reality is, they have to make reductions. They are looking at cuts that would have the least impact on teaching and learning. She is concerned that 9 women in the secretarial unit are the bread winners and are facing salary cuts.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - P. Carson reported they went over each of the policies that deal with drugs and alcohol. The administration will be creating an assessment of where we are and what needs to be done. There are things about drugs and alcohol in the weapons category but the law states certain sentences must be in the policy. The drug and alcohol policy will be revisited when the handbooks are revised and the administration will be giving a presentation in May. Their next meeting is Tuesday, March 3rd.

Budget & Finance - C. McKinney reported they met Monday and they will be meeting with town officials next Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in the high school library.

Communications Committee - J. Frey reported they will be meeting at Prescott at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.

Think Tank - B. Erickson reported they will be meeting at MSN at 7:00 p.m. tomorrow night.

Retirement of Facilities - No report

Report of Director of Business & Finance - See earlier budget presentation

Report of the Chair - Dr. Funch reported neither February 14th nor February 21st will work for the school committee focus group. Members agreed to meet at Prescott at 6:30 p.m. on February 16th if the facilitator is available.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: Non-Consent Action Items Discussion

None

VOTE: Consensus Action Items

The approval of the December 17, 2008 business meeting minutes was postponed due to a missing page.

VOTE: Approval of Business Meeting Minutes of January 21, 2009

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ACCEPT THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 21, 2009.
SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: Approval of Ice Hockey and Alpine Ski Team Trips

See earlier vote

VOTE: To Modify FY09 Calendar

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MODIFY THE FY09 CALENDAR IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER: FIRST, THE CALENDAR SHALL STIPULATE STUDENTS ATTEND 180 DAYS; SECOND, SCHOOL WILL BE IN SESSION ON FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009 AS A FULL DAY AND THIRD, THAT SCHOOL WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, MARCH 21ST AND SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH AS HALF DAYS IF TWO MORE SNOW DAYS ARE USED BY MARCH 1ST. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: To accept Policy Subcommittee Recommendation (if necessary)

No vote taken

VOTE: To Accept Gift From Brooks Automation, Inc.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT THE GIFT OF \$5000 FROM BROOKS AUTOMATION, INC., FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS CLUB, WITH DEEP APPRECIATION.
SECONDED BY J. FREY

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

ADJOURNMENT

B. ERICKSON MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:20 P.M. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachments