

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2008
(Approved – 10/01/08)

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

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; J. Degen, D. Heaton, A. Elliot, J. Ryan,
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 read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Dr. Genovese congratulated the girls varsity volleyball team for being off to a great start. He announced the football team won their first game against Maynard.

Dr. Genovese reviewed the handouts members received this evening. He asked that anyone interested in attending the Basic or Advanced Chapter 70 and Net School Spending Workshops on Monday let him know. The GIC Memorandum of Agreement has been signed and mailed. Susan Wells will be assuming the position of Administrative Assistant to the superintendent beginning next week.

The Big Book - Betsey Sawyer

The school committee approves late night/overnight field trips and since the trip to the UN is scheduled to leave at 3:30 a.m., Dr. Genovese feels it is important they approve this trip.

B. Sawyer said the Bookmakers and Dreamers Club is in their fifth year of continuing their quest to build the biggest book in the world on peace. They are thrilled to be given this historic opportunity to be one of four student groups to speak to an audience of over 900 youth delegates at the United Nations for International Peace Day. They have to check in at 8:30 a.m. on Friday and this is the reason for the early start.

Students will be videoconferencing with students in Sudan, Liberia and Afghanistan and all the GDRSD students will be participating in breakout groups led by several internationally known peace celebrities. There will also be a nation-wide text messaging activity to the world leaders of the UN. B. Sawyer invited members to include a letter in their book.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE VOTE ON THE LATE NIGHT TRIP APPROVAL. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE LATE NIGHT TRIP FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS AND CHAPERONES TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2008. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

P. Carson said he supports the trip but is very concerned with the time they will be leaving as statistics show the roads are more dangerous. He asked if they had considered leaving the night before and B. Sawyer said they did not know they would be chosen to speak and have to leave this early. J. Frey asked if there will be any relief for the driver and was advised he will have a break while the conference is taking place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and will be encouraged to rest.

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

Abstention: P. Carson

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION Macky Garvey

M. Garvey explained he would like to begin construction in November of an outdoor amphitheater in the area outside the cafeteria of GDRHS . He has met with the Conservation Commission and construction will be more than 200' away from the wetlands. The amphitheater would not be impacted in the event an addition needed to be added to the high school. Sports teams, drama productions and musical groups will be able to use the 12'x20' stage and twenty benches that will seat sixty to eighty people. Landscaping will surround the stage and seating areas. Scouts, student volunteers, faculty and community members will do the construction. Benches may be sponsored by individuals or groups at a cost of \$250 each and a plaque will be placed on each bench. Six benches have all ready been sponsored. The total cost for the entire project will be about \$6500. The benches will pay for themselves and fundraising efforts for the rest of the project will include car washes and bake sales as well as donations from businesses, local builders and individuals.

P. Carson asked if it will make a difference to a business sponsor being restricted to just having their name and not their logo on the plaque. M. Garvey said no and he is looking for the majority of the sponsors to be families. Dr. Genovese said the plaques will be placed in a consistent manner.

Anyone interested in helping can contact Macky at 448-3725 or by email at tmg3@charter.net.

Re-Use of Prescott - J. Degen and D. Heaton

J. Degen explained the Board of Selectmen has retained the services of Dick Heaton to do a study of affordable housing in Groton and Mr. Heaton has studied about 450 acres of town owned land to see which sites would be best used for the creation of an affordable housing town sponsored project. His number one recommendation was Prescott. Now that the school is offline, it seems to be a valuable resource.

J. Degen said they have been thinking about an adaptive re-use of the facility where it could be completely gutted and have a mixed use of condominium office spaces on the first floor and retail use on the second floor. The third floor would be rehabbed, at no expense to the district as part of an RFP, and be made for use for administrative purposes along with the basement being used for HVAC, heating and the district's distribution point. A new building could be built at the rear for affordable housing and 100% of the 40 to 80 units would be affordable. They could ask the Planning Board to consider a rezone of the site to work in conjunction with the Station Avenue Overlay District.

D. Heaton stated they focused on the categories of people they want to provide housing for and these include

Groton seniors who want to downsize, town employees who cannot afford to buy in town and young adults just starting out. After looking at all the properties, it was obvious that Prescott was the most attractive and appropriate facility. The advantages and disadvantages of using Prescott were reviewed. He stated there is a deed restriction that the building is only to be used for education and B. Erickson and P. Carson said this would need to be clarified. J. Degen said they have two similar legal interpretations of the deed and there are two routes that could be taken - maintain an educational attribute of the district within the building or petition the court to change the restriction since they cannot find an heir or successor to the people named on the deed. While this would take time, it is not an insurmountable task. P. Carson questioned whether they should be changing the use that was requested by the donor. J. Degen said this is a conceptual plan he came up with and it has been discussed with the selectmen but no vote has been taken. Before they spend any money, they need to see if the district is amicable to the idea and would consider working on an RFP. He noted the entire process would take two to four years.

C. McKinney said they would be giving up overflow space and J. Degen said limiting the square footage and number of bedrooms in the units would limit the student population. He said the Station Avenue Overlay District needs an impetus and the selectmen need to stimulate things through economic development through Main Street development and Prescott is the linchpin to drive it. Being able to move into an upgraded building with a long term lease would be a benefit to the district.

F. O'Connell asked the amount of debt left on the building and was told about \$17,000. He asked if there would be a market for smaller units and D. Heaton said a marketing plan would be paid for by a developer. Ms Elliot said she would not be in favor of surrendering control of the property to a developer. C. McKinney feels it makes sense to move the administration to Prescott while they let the enrollment data of the next three to four years play out. He asked where Tarbell is on the list and was told it is one of the top three choices but it does not have access to town sewer as of today, it is relatively small and it would not add a lot of affordable inventory.

The next steps were reviewed and include having support from the school committee and working with them to develop design guidelines, presenting a plan to the selectmen and issuing an RFP. It was agreed questions, issues and suggestions will be collected by Dr. Funch and shared with Mr. Degen and Mr. Heaton. They will attend the October 1st school committee meeting.

J. Ryan asked how much it will cost to move the administration to Prescott and Dr. Genovese said about \$12,000 to \$13,000. J. Ryan asked what the projected vision is for Prescott and Dr. Genovese advised he is in the process of developing a plan.

Think Tank - B. Erickson

B. Erickson reviewed the names of the Think Tank members and consultants. They will meet in the MSN library on September 25th at 7:00 p.m. to elect officers, review their charge and get a feel for who would like to serve on the various groups.

Advertising Policy - KGD

Policy sub-committee members met with the Administrative Council and members received a copy of the draft policy dated September 10, 2008. P. Carson said they talked about having a public forum since the changes will affect the PTA's and other organizations. The sub-committee's intent is to keep advertising out of the classroom areas and fields during the day. Sponsors of events will still be able to use pamphlets and banners but the district will not sell tee shirts that have sponsorships or logos. An example of what cannot happen would be bringing a robot, bearing an advertising logo, into the school unless the logo was covered. The sponsor/organization would however, be acknowledged.

Members feel there are still some inconsistencies with the policy and they will fill out the required form with their suggestions/recommendations. It was requested that exhibits be presented that list what "is in and what is out" as well as what they currently do that gets moved out. The sub-committee will also review related policies.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

K. Anderson asked why the administration is moving out of Tarbell and was advised no decision has been made.

J. Sjoberg asked how they get the communications sub-committee started and J. Frey advised they will organize and make a report at the October 1st meeting.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**Report of Director of Business and Finance**

4th Quarter Financial Report FY08 - Members received a copy of the report in their packets. T. Sheehan reported the district ended the fiscal year with sound results in all areas of the district's financial operations. He noted that any excess revenue (\$78,513) and operating budget surplus (\$117,501) roll into E & D for the following year. In addition, SBA reimbursements for the high school exceeded projections by \$178,357 and it is anticipated the committee will vote to appropriate this sum to reduce the towns' debt assessments for FY2010.

They were able to set aside \$254,284 in Sped circuit breaker funds for use in FY09 and these must be completely expended by the end of the following year. They reduced or eliminated negative balances in certain revolving funds (athletics, food services and the PAC) by \$45,111. It is projected the FY08 E & D should be in the range of \$1.2 to \$1.4M and it is highly likely appropriations from E & D will be needed to balance the FY2011 and FY2012 budgets.

P. Carson asked how the balance in the high school building fund will close out and T. Sheehan advised by law, this can be used for any other building project that is bonded for the same time as the high school project. The money is being held in reserve for any future capital needs for the high school and while they have not identified anything of substantial expense, they would expect to use it for any repairs or modifications to the water purification plant. He noted about \$152,000 was taken to fund the final settlement for the land acquisition. T. Sheehan explained what the various budget line items cover.

B. Erickson asked which school is not using QuickBooks and T. Sheehan said Boutwell is not since they have very low activity and the maximum they can keep in their checking account is \$750. The principals and secretaries are finding management of the student activity funds to be much easier. C. McKinney acknowledged Mr. Sheehan's time and effort putting this in place.

Draft FY10 Budget Timeline - Members received a revised budget timeline which reflects the addition of a few internal dates for the Administrative Council. The school committee is required to approve the budget forty-five days prior to the first town meeting and the target date for publishing the budget request is mid-January. T. Sheehan said the new format will be quite different with fewer line items and amplifying information will be available. Dr. Funch would like the school committee to have a view of the budget before it is presented to the towns. Budget and Finance will be making regular reports to the committee and members may attend their meetings.

Sale of Bonds for Land Acquisition- The district's financial advisors are proceeding with the details necessary to go out to market and they expect the bonds to be sold by mid to late October. They anticipate they will be able to employ the long coupon option and there will be no principal or interest payment on this bond during FY09.

Policy - P. Carson reported their next meeting is October 14th.

Personnel and Negotiations - P. Carson reported he, J. Sjoberg and B. Erickson are on this sub-committee and they will be working on the superintendent's evaluation tool.

Budget and Finance - C. McKinney reported they discussed the direction and environment that has been created around athletics and in particular, athletic funding. They are working with Dan Twomey to hold a public

forum to discuss the future of sports programs in the district. A copy of the B & F discussion document was distributed. They believe the community does not have a clear view of what the athletic department's decision process will be on re-instating or expanding athletic programs or how Budget and Finance will provide guidance in how they can work together to offer opportunities to whatever extent they can. He does not believe they want to create an MOU with every parent group that wants to launch a new sport and then that becomes the bar. P. Carson questioned why athletics is being singled out since other programs, such as the arts, have also been going down and asked if this shouldn't be a broader topic.

Due to the late hour, members continued with the agenda items.

Report of the Chair

Retirement of Tarbell - C. McKinney, B. Erickson and F. O'Connell are forming a Tarbell retirement sub-committee and they will be looking for community members to join them in deciding the options for the building. C. McKinney reported F. Dillon, and possibly S. Byrne, have agreed to be on the sub-committee.

Transportation Sub-committee - No one has volunteered to be on this sub-committee at this time.

Other Appointments - J. Frey, J. Sjoberg, B. Erickson and J. Boroshok have been appointed to the Communications sub-committee.

Report of the Superintendent

Prescott Update - Dr. Genovese reported research is ongoing. It was discovered the building has 400 amps of service and the heating boiler was upgraded about three years ago. It would take about a day to reallocate the phones and computer systems. If it was agreed they would move out of Tarbell, the heat would be kept at a minimum and the cost savings would be used toward utility costs at Prescott. He will provide members with a more extensive report.

Strategic Plan Update - The Administrative Team is individually sending him topics they think are important and as a group, they will chose the major themes they would like to receive community input on and will then develop the central questions. There will be training with Mr. Kirtman and two facilitators from the Administrative Team will meet with community groups to get their input on each topic. Information received from the focus groups will be pulled together and brought back out once more before the final report is written. They will be meeting next Tuesday.

Donations - Lawrence Academy would like to donate twenty-two printers and the Groton and Dunstable Granges would like to continue their practice of giving dictionaries to all third graders.

ACTION ITEMS

VOTE: Non-Consent Action Item

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO ACCEPT THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2008.
SECONDED BY P. CARSON

In Favor: F. O'Connell, C. McKinney, P. Funch, J. Sjoberg, P. Carson

Abstention: J. Frey, B. Erickson

VOTE: Consent Action Items

J. FREY MOVED TO APPROVE CONSENT ACTION ITEM #2 - DICTIONARY DONATION - GROTON AND DUNSTABLE GRANGES AND ITEM #3 - COMPUTER EQUIPMENT DONATION FROM LAWRENCE ACADEMY. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL

VOTE: Field Trip - United Nations

See earlier vote

ADJOURNMENT

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:20 P.M. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

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SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

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Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

With attachments