

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
September 3, 2008  
(Approved September 17, 2008)

### **PRESENT:**

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

### **ABSENT:**

Ms Berta Erickson  
Mr. Jim Frey

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

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

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; B. Lavin, J. Gould, D. Mancini, M. Barker, K. Cochrane, P. McGrath

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

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

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT**

Dr. Genovese announced a couple of items have been added to tonight's agenda. Some minor typo's were corrected in the Memorandum of Agreement and the date in item 14 has been changed to 2012. A request to accept a donation from Annette Smith, an informational email that went out from Mr. Sjoberg, copies of tonight's presentations by Dr. Genovese and a debt assessment document from Ms McGrath were given to members this evening.

**Betty Lavin Retirement** - Prescott principal Betty Lavin was recognized for her 27 years of service with the district. Dr. Genovese highlighted her career, stating she was hired in 1981 as a 7<sup>th</sup> grade geography teacher and became principal at Prescott in 1996. Dr. Funch presented Ms Lavin with a Certificate of Gratitude.

Ms Lavin said it has been a honor and privilege to work in the district and it has been a great journey.

Dr. Genovese introduced High School Dean of Students John Gould, Middle School Assistant Principal Dina Mancini, Director of Food Services Maria Barker and District-wide Library Media/Instructional Technology Specialist Kim Cochrane. They each expressed their pleasure to be here and appreciate the warm welcome they have received.

Dr. Funch announced there was an article in the Globe about the state trying out an idea of giving a discount rate when a standard school building plan is used and the Groton-Dunstable high school design was one of the model schools for that program.

### **PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION**

**Review of Exempt and Non-Exempt Debt Projection** - With the debt exclusion votes coming up, P. McGrath reviewed a document that shows how this will affect long term planning for the communities over the next five years. With respect to enrollment, Dr. Genovese said they used the current school populations. P. McGrath noted that in most years, they see the total debt assessment is going down but it goes up in 2010

because the long first coupon for the Casella borrowing will put more interest into FY2010. The SBA reimbursement for the middle school also drops off, with the last payment in 2009, and this creates a temporary increase in debt assessment that year. After that, the assessment will continue to decrease.

Whether the Casella debt is voted to be excluded or not, the debt must be paid. If it is exempt, it is temporarily "on the books" and if it is non-exempt, it becomes part of the towns' and school budgets. It was noted the total amount is the same either way. Dunstable will vote next Monday and members would like to see a large turn out as this is an important vote.

**Policy Sections C and D** - P. Carson said these sections were reviewed last year and most of the changes were minor adjustments. There are still C & D policies that need further review. Dr. Funch pointed out minor corrections to DBC (added the word "ever" in the second paragraph), DJBA (change Business Manager to Director of Business and Finance), DJE (correct a typo to "maybe" in the 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph) and DKC (change department to district in paragraph 1 and capitalize School Committee in paragraph 2).

F. O'Connell asked if they are adopting the Groton Board of Selectmen's Recycling Product Procurement Policy DJAA-R . Dr. Genovese said this is an exhibit and alerts the committee that the town has a policy.

**Strategic Planning** - Dr. Genovese stated they had a three day Educational Summit this summer where the Administrative Team dedicated themselves to looking at the strategic planning process for the coming year. They focused on effectiveness rather than efficiency, with leaders who believe that people are the organization's greatest asset. The high performance focal groups include operational improvements, governance and the strategic plan that connects them together. He reviewed the elements, benefits and potential pitfalls of strategic planning.

The planning process flowchart and timeline was reviewed and it is hoped they will have finished the process by December or January. It is anticipated there will be a broad participation of stakeholders including parents, clergy, community members and businesses. While there is more work to be done, a lot of quantitative and qualitative data was collected in preparation for the EQA and data is available from the FTF III report. Initial focus areas will include discussion and categorization of key focus areas by the Administrative Team and getting responses from the general public at forums. Once the plan is drafted, it will be presented to the committee and the public.

Part of the plan will be using the professional learning community models they have in the schools that focus on learning, promoting a collaborative culture and emphasize results. The objectives of the focus group leaders were reviewed as were the desired outcomes.

F. O'Connell said he is most interested in the content of the plan itself and feels the process followed is up to Dr. Genovese. He encouraged him to involve as many stakeholders as possible. Dr. Genovese will provide a progress report to the committee each month. Since the focus groups will be relatively small, Dr. Funch suggested they bring in people who can talk about Turning Points schools and Professional Learning Communities to show the public some of the visions the district is considering. Dr. Genovese will discuss this with the Administrative Team.

**Review of Potential Prescott Utilization** - Dr. Genovese reviewed available space at Prescott for potential use for the administrative offices. The side door is handicap accessible. The cafeteria is currently being used as a central location for district supplies and this has saved on shipping charges. Among other things, repurposing may include outreach space for Sped PAC, centralized records storage, a partnership with MSEC and opportunities for additional partnerships. Items to consider include the electrical capacity for the building, relocation of the computer and telephone systems, investment in the heating system, the FY09 utilities budget for Prescott and Tarbell and the retirement of Tarbell. If things pulled together, Dr. Genovese said he would like this in place no later than mid-November but this may not be realistic. More research needs to be done before he can make a recommendation.

Dr. Genovese is recommending the committee act favorably on a one year collaborative with MSEC and he would support having dedicated space for Sped PAC. He has not had conversations with colleges to see if it could be used as a satellite or for adult education courses. The new Think Tank Committee may come up with other ideas.

J. Sjoberg feels there could be the perception that they disrupted the children in order to upgrade administrative office space. He asked if the committee is making a decision before the selectmen have a chance to make a proposal at the next committee meeting. If the central office moved here, Dr. Genovese said it would be a centralized location. He stated they made a prudent decision to utilize the present facilities by reallocating the Prescott students as well as reallocating and decreasing the staff because they did not have efficient use for a number of the staff. The building is supposed to be used for educational purposes and he believes community groups will be interested in using the gymnasium. It will be the committee's job to consider all the various options and they may ultimately decide to give the building back to the town. They have Prescott until 2015 and unless they notify the town ninety days before it expires, it automatically extends.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

P. Carson asked the status of getting the agendas and minutes on the website. He suggested Ms McGrath's debt exclusion table be put on there. He was advised it has been a busy summer for the staff. C. McKinney suggested the presentations be available on the website the day of a school committee meeting.

J. Sjoberg apologized for voting no at the last meeting and not giving a reason for doing so. He advised that Ms **Lazarus** sent a letter to "public comments" and consolidated concerns she and others have and he feels they should be given some attention. He advised he sent out a posting inviting people to come to a school committee meeting to ask questions and received a response from people that it was clear to them they were not suppose to do this and expect members to engage in a conversation. He feels they should discuss this policy as people feel they have no way to be heard. Dr. Funch stated people are welcome to come to a meeting and express a comment or question but the committee is trying to conduct extensive business. The committee cannot have a deliberative response to a question in a public forum. C. McKinney advised Ms Barrett presented a flowchart on how people can engage the district and school committee and it is on the website.

P. Carson said there are still questions and misconceptions about the debt exclusion and people are not getting the answers. Dr. Genovese said there has been a concerted effort in both towns to answer the important questions. People can call his office, the Finance Committees or Boards of Selectmen to ask a specific question. He advised members need to be careful about violating the Open Meeting Law when they communicate their opinion to someone directly.

C. McKinney thanked Dr. Genovese and Dr. Funch for their opening statements to the staff on Tuesday and for inviting committee members to attend the kick-off meeting. The teachers are bubbling with excitement and he finds this to be a great day.

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

**Policy** - P. Carson reported their meeting focused on the Advertising Policy and J. Frey has offered to discuss it with the Administrative Team. He has also volunteered to do section E in the same format as sections C and D.

**Personnel & Negotiations** - No report

**Budget & Finance** - C. McKinney reported the next meeting is at Tarbell on September 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

**Report of Director of Business & Finance** - T. Sheehan reported the HVAC system at the PAC is 95% complete, with some minor work remaining to connect the unit to the exterior of the building.

Installation of the security systems has begun and the middle school is their first priority. It is anticipated it will take five to seven work days to complete installation.

They do not have a firm date for the installation of the elevator at Swallow Union as they are waiting for the completion date on the fabrication of the elevator but it should be installed by the third or fourth week in September.

The end-of-year report worksheet has been downloaded from the DOE and is due on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms McGrath is working on the E & D certification and this is due at the DOR by October 15<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup>. They are working together to put together a new format for the FY10 budget.

### **Report of the Chair**

**Retirement of Tarbell** - Dr. Funch distributed a copy of Policy FCB - Retirement of Facilities and noted numbers 2 and 3 are not relevant. F. O'Connell feels this is premature without a clear direction for Prescott but Dr. Genovese feels they should be done concurrently. It was agreed C. McKinney and F. O'Connell will gather information and prepare a draft report.

**School Committee Member Roster** - It was pointed out J. Frey's business email address should be removed and F. O'Connell requested his work phone number be removed.

**Budget Calendar** - Budget and Finance was asked to come up with a calendar for the budget rollout.

**Communications Subcommittee** - Dr. Funch reported J. Frey has expressed an interest in starting this up and J. Sjoberg said he is also interested.

### **Report of the Superintendent**

**Transportation Subcommittee** - One school committee member, and possibly two, is needed to serve on this subcommittee.

**Sped PAC Proposal** - Members received a copy of this proposal in their packets. They are looking for a centrally located space that would allow them to create an education resource library to complement the staff resource libraries created at the individual schools. The space would also allow them to meet with parents. Dr. Genovese agrees this would be an asset and the proposal will be taken under advisement.

**Donation of Display Cases for the Middle School** - Annette Smith would like to donate two display cases to the Middle School and Principal Silverman would love to have them. Dr. Genovese recommends the committee accept the donation.

**Debt Exclusion** - An informational meeting was held in Dunstable and there did not seem to be any questions so people may have the answers they were looking for. Dunstable will vote on September 8<sup>th</sup> from noon to 8:00 p.m.

**Other** - The students come back tomorrow and the staff is excited about the coming year.

In order to allow time for the express bus to come from Swallow Union to Florence Roche, Dr. Genovese announced the two schools will not be able to start at the same time. The bus schedule was adjusted and the information in the newspaper is accurate.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

Approval of the executive session meeting minutes of June 18, 2008 was postponed.

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

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 20, 2008 AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

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

**Abstention:** P. Carson

**VOTE: Consent Action Items**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN ONE CONSENT MOTION: ITEM 1 - THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 18, 2008, ITEM 2 - THE MERRIMACK EDUCATION PROPOSAL AND ITEM 3 - THE MIDDLE SCHOOL DISPLAY CASE DONATION. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**VOTE: GIC Memorandum of Agreement**

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE GIC MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT AS PRESENTED WITH A MINOR CHANGE IN OUR PACKETS. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

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

**VOTE: Policy Sections C & D**

P. CARSON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE CHANGES, INCLUDING THE ONES MADE TONIGHT, TO POLICY SECTIONS C AND D, CATEGORIZED AS TYPE 2. AS IDENTIFIED IN THEIR PACKETS. SECONDED BY F. O'CONNELL

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURNMENT**

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:40 P.M. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary