

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORK SESSION

Minutes

Saturday, February 14, 2009

Voted and approved April 9, 2009

Present: Chairman Dalton Athey; committee members: Greg Aubin, Maryelen Calderwood, Doris Doyle, Donovan Eastman, Mayor Forgey, John Lunt. Also present, Interim Superintendent Susan Hollins, Director of Special Services Kathi Titus, GHS principal Donna Woodcock, members of the public including city Collector/Treasurer M. Lane Kelly, Lucy Fagella, Diana Schneider and the press.

- I. Call to Order: with a quorum present, Chairman Athey called the school committee to order at 1:20 p.m.
- II. 2009-10 Draft Budget: Superintendent Hollins presented the proposed budget for the coming school year. Following discussion about assumptions upon which the budget should be based, committee consensus was basing enrollment on current enrollment and basing school use on schools being used now plus opening Four Corners, as discussed.

A number of initiatives are included in the plan, such as offering the grade 8 program at GHS, piloting a virtual science curriculum at the elementary level, and creating a pilot math and science program for grades at Four Corners.

Middle school and high school athletic fees were discussed. The Superintendent's preference would be to reduce or eliminate sorting children by who does and does not have funding for fees and just enable all students to participate. The committee was supportive of this initiative and thought parents would welcome this, also.

GPS business office is sharing space with city administrators due to the current repair need of a section of the Davis Street roof. This close proximity, while difficult, promotes good communication and as a result, school business functions (as regards communications and smooth working with the city) are much more efficient now.

A copy of the regional agreement with Franklin County Technical High School was included in the budget materials. The formula for recruiting from each town dates back to 1974. This needs to be reviewed and updated. Greenfield has approximately 100 grade 8 students this year. The recruitment guideline seems to be the same for the Technical School from the years when Greenfield had 250 students.

The superintendent explained the types of grants for which the district qualifies and currently receives funding, including: Title I, IDEA (special education), Title II, Extended Learning, Community Partnership for Children, and Universal

Pre-kindergarten. The funds available from these sources have to be allocated to the programs and for the purposes intended and awarded. Generally, all of these grants are supplemental to basic education functions. Grant funds almost always cannot be allocated to other projects or to supplant general operating costs. Also, the administrative burdens of managing, tracking and reporting program costs and outcomes are the hidden costs of relying on grant funding.

The district has not yet had meetings to discuss its position on continued ELT programming for next school year. At this time the schools understand that funding will be available next year for current districts receiving Extended Learning Time grants.

Other special revenue sources are: School Choice Receiving (approximately \$5000/student); Student Tuition accounts for special education students from out of district; Circuit Breaker funds (state reimbursements for extraordinary special education tuition costs); and the Food and Nutrition program which is effectively self-sustaining under Bernie Novak's management.

Choice-in funding (students choosing Greenfield schools from out of the district) are not restricted and can be allocated to any item without additional authorization. Circuit breaker funding is available next year should the budgeted \$1.45 million for special education tuitions prove insufficient. Also the superintendent held back choice funds from 2008-09 as a hedge against next year's shortfall in the choice-in account. It takes one annual budget cycle for the funds available to reflect the numbers of students who choiced in to the district previously.

Ms. Kelly informed the committee that the deadline to finalize the school department budget is extended to March 27, 2009.

Ms. Titus reviewed the Special Education section of the budget with the committee.

Dr. Hollins noted the bus drivers have not had an increase in four years and are working far below market rate (which is now approximately \$14.25). She said that employees should not have to be in a union to be treated fairly within the system and the lack of attention to drivers needs to be addressed. She would like to increase their hourly rates from \$10/hour and has included funding in the budget for this. No other salary adjustments are in the proposed budget.

There was a question about a regional transportation bid currently in development. Dr. Hollins indicated Greenfield Public Schools will participate but with reservation. The concern is that sometimes a large business will give a low bid for the first sequence and local businesses will be put out of business. These concerns are addressed by the bid specification developed for use. To be fair, the local carrier needs to be allowed to respond to this call for bids.

Chairman Athey asked the superintendent for a breakdown of personnel who had been added or removed from payroll. He also reiterated he will be asking area school

GPS school committee

committees whether they are interested in a superintendency union with GPS. The answer will determine one variable of the budget development process.

At the Jan. 22, 2009 meeting, a motion to close Green River School did not pass. Discussion centered today on where the administrative offices might be housed. Ms. Kelly will solicit cost information on modifying buildings to accommodate the offices.

The next work session will be February 23, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. following the combined school committee meeting at Greenfield High School library. The committee approved publishing a summary of this budget seven (7) to fourteen (14) days before the public budget hearing scheduled for February 25, 2009.

III. Meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcia Day
Recording secretary