

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WORK SESSION

Minutes

Wednesday, March 11, 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, members of the public including city Collector/Treasurer M. Lane Kelly, GPS business manager Mark McLaughlin, Town Council members Mary Alice Sullivan, David Singer, Christopher Joseph, Bill Martin, Mark Maloney, Alfred Siano and the press.

- I. Call to Order: a quorum being present, the Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:43 p.m.
- II. 2009-10 Draft Budget: Superintendent Hollins presented adjustments to the original proposed budget for the coming school year. The superintendent recommends the following which brings the new total to \$14,997,992.
 - a. Funding for oversight of volunteers, to harness the energy of community members (\$10,000),
 - b. A Sports Fee Free Program, so income and fee pressure does not influence participation (\$15,000),
 - c. An 80% librarian for K-7 libraries next year (\$40,000),
 - d. Substitute coverage for teachers, allowing for parent meetings at convenient times for the teacher and parents and not having to release students from school (\$5,320).

She also recommends a new cost center called 'Choice Back Initiative' with no funds currently allocated, to allow for a possible future arrangement with the city whereby students choosing back to Greenfield might have money spent for choice in other districts reinvested. This could let parents know that returning helps build the Greenfield schools and provide the extra programs they seek. John Lunt would like to serve on a subcommittee to work on this.

The Superintendent discussed Green River School. Having recommended relocating the three programs nearer to student transition settings, she has since reviewed feedback and additional information. Her recommendation is changed and she now can see a way for a more gradual transition over time to give more access to mainstream opportunities. Ms. Calderwood clarified that Green River is still funded for operation next year in the Superintendent's budget, as requested.

Regarding administration, the Superintendent again reviewed that there are five principals and how all schools have administration and coordination. If Four Corners re-opens, one associate principal will be primarily assigned there. If no high school plain clothes officer is in the high school next year, the Superintendent clearly will need a second administrator in the high school. Currently the draft budget includes a part-time (e.g. 80%) second administrator for the high school. If eighth grade moves to GHS, there will be a full-time guidance counselor/floor leader with an office area with these students. Discussion clarified that the one building principal will have responsibility for the entire building but grade 8 will not be mixed in as a high school grade.

How much choice will families have regarding Four Corners? The questions resurfaced as to how students and families will have the option of attending Four Corners and whether or not any statutory regulations apply, e.g. redistricting.

GPS school committee
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Regarding other positions, additional administration in curriculum and grants would be useful as would be more nursing help. Right now the plan is for part-time nursing assistance so schools have additional help that accommodates the intensity of nursing needs at certain times. Current nurses feel each school should have at least a .5 FTE nurse.

Stimulus funds are tightly specified as for use and tracked accordingly. Title I and IDEA funds will be available and procedures for writing these grants are in place. Funds have to be allocated for proscribed uses, but a special education assistant/administrator would be appropriate.

The superintendent reviewed how circuit breaker funds had been transferred into special ed accounts with a school committee vote early this year so budget predictions would not show a crisis in underfunding. She recommends sustaining at least \$500,000 in this account as a hedge against unexpected special ed costs. This is one account where funds can be carried over into the following fiscal year.

Virtual school: superintendent will visit the program provider to discuss and will report back to committee. The different possibilities for working with online curriculum include sponsoring a virtual school; piloting online science curriculum; and/or creating a hybrid, high tech drop out prevention program.

III. Chairman Athey reported on conversations he has had with area school committee chairs including Mohawk's committee chairman and superintendent. Mohawk's superintendent is not opposed to establishing a superintendency union with Greenfield.

Mayor Forgey objected to this initiative, citing past votes where the committee decided it would not pursue unionization, especially without communicating with the rest of the board and without agendas being posted before meetings. The chair cited inadequate resources as the reason the appropriate procedures are not being followed, but the mayor stated the public has a right to know the agenda beforehand.

Greg Aubin moved to establish a 3-person committee to meet with Mohawk; 2nd by Maryelen Calderwood. Subsequently amended by Lunt: **the subcommittee is forming for purposes of investigation;** accepted by Aubin. Discussion centered on the potential forced consolidation versus destabilizing the district by announcing these plans. **Mayor Forgey offered an amendment: the committee will do its work, decisions will be made but the committee will not implement unionization until FY11.** Mayor Forgey wants to see the superintendent continue for another year which the committee hired her for. John Lunt stated for the record that having the superintendent be the last to know was disrespectful. Chairman Athey stated that losing Superintendent Hollins won't necessarily destabilize the system; uncertain funding is the destabilizing factor in his opinion. With Athey, Eastman, Aubin and Calderwood voting no, **the amendment did not pass;** Doyle, Lunt and Forgey voted yes. **The original motion as amended by John Lunt did pass,** with Athey, Eastman, Aubin and Calderwood voting yes; Doyle, Lunt and Forgey no.

IV. **Motion to adjourn** was made by Aubin, 2nd by Athey; unanimous, adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcia Day,
Recording secretary