

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MEETING

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 26, 2009

Voted and approved April 9, 2009

Present: School Committee members: Greg Aubin (chairing), Maryelen Calderwood, Donovan Eastman, Mayor Forgey, Doris Doyle, and John Lunt. Also present, Superintendent Hollins, Interim Superintendent; members of the public including Christopher Taggart, Hampshire Education Collaborative (presenting); Administrators Donna Woodcock, Acting Principal, GHS, and Gary Tashjian, Acting Principal, GMS; City Finance Director M. Lane Kelly; and others.

I & II. Call to Order:

With a quorum present, Vice Chairman Aubin called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. Roll call was taken by Calderwood.

III. Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Eastman; 2nd Lunt: To table approval of minutes. Passed. Unanimous Minutes of March 11th and 12th to be included.

IV. Financial Report: The Superintendent distributed a general fund expense report, printed 3.26.09 and directed the committee's attention only to the balance listed, page 6.

Mr. Athey joined the committee at 6:20 p.m.

Year-end Projections: Hollins reported a review this day of expenditures—many items are not yet spent or encumbered, e.g. last term coaches, supplies, etc. She reviewed how at year's beginning choice funding was used to cut class size and \$350,000 was transferred in, anticipating this need mid-year. At this time, the year-end projection is more favorable. The projection now is adequate funding to reach year's end without overage and possibly without obligating choice-in funds. There was no accurate, reliable base line funding for this year due to upheaval, overages, and other reasons. Forecasting seems to have been amazingly close with the noticeable over-estimate in substitute funding needs. Positions have been re-instated during the year as funding availability has been clarified. Some balances in personnel accounts are due to late starts. Certain 08-09 personnel expenditures are for ending salary payments to administrators leaving.

Mr. Athey asked that the report he had requested previously be provided—year-end vs. budget from the prior year (to be provided by city). He also mentioned concern about payroll warrants that have been available for his signature after payroll was paid and requested at least 24 hours notice for signing.

Stimulus Funding: The Superintendent mentioned stimulus funding and the guidelines (federal and state) for use of these funds. General Fund allocation is \$271,225 and Special Education \$282,491 and \$10,973 (general and early childhood). The Mayor clarified that the general stimulus funds will be in grant form, wherein the school system applies and the funding goes directly to the schools and not into the city's general fund. **Motion by Athey; 2nd Calderwood: That the Superintendent provide information to the school committee as soon as she receives it via email** (process for receiving stimulus funding). **Passed.**

FY 2010 Budget Status: The Superintendent proposed a draft budget which was reviewed, amended, and then voted by the school committee. This proposal had line item definition. The mayor has been so notified. The Superintendent has no additional information. [The Mayor then clarified that her budget will go to Town Council on March 30th—2 weeks Council hearings will take place in April and May. A required budget vote is within 60 days after submission (end of May).]

Regarding the line item budget and any transfers, the Superintendent clarified that a line item budget was proposed and she has been working with this since then. Efforts continue to bring the accounting documents in line with budget line items.

V. Visitor/Presentation:

Christopher Taggart, Hampshire Educational Collaborative, described the three after-school programs currently operating in Greenfield Public Schools: Federal and Newton Street Schools, and Greenfield Middle Schools. Priorities are academic learning and good relationships with adults. For schools with Extended Day grants, after school begins when ELT ends. Their funding ends this year and they intend to request funding for another three years. No student is turned away for lack of funding. They would consider expanding.

VI. Communications: No public comment.

VII. Reports and Recommendations of Superintendent.

- a. FirstinMath program is popular and students are still highly motivated.
- b. A Gill representative met to gather information re Greenfield and Gill's consideration of future options for its town's education.
- c. Early kindergarten registration was quite positive with twice the usual number usually identified in June. This helps advance planning.
- d. Recommendations Requested:
That the School Committee formalize its intentions regarding Grade 8 having its education in the high school building for 2009-2010. High school and middle school are working together to ensure developmental and school cultural needs are addressed. **Motion by Calderwood; 2nd Mayor Forgey: To move Grade 8 to the High School Building for 2009-2010. Passed. Unanimous.** Principals Woodcock and Tashjian described results of meeting with families of eighth-grade students and proposed program details. Principal Tashjian

said faculties are working together to form a grade 8-9 instructional team. Questions from parents regarding special education are being addressed. Several teachers at the high school were former middle school teachers and are sensitive to middle school philosophy and continuing this.

That the School Committee formalize its intentions regarding re-opening Four Corners Elementary School for 2009-2010. **Motion by Athey; 2nd Lunt: To re-open Four Corners School for grade K-3 for 2009-2010, including one special education program. Passed. Unanimous.** Discussion included how students would be selected, keeping the same demographic profile, equal education opportunities, estimating approximately 80 – 120 students, now having senior staff willing to transfer, and detailed planning that will begin both for instructional programming and facility (with city).

That the School Committee review the Franklin County Technical school agreement, as discussed at a prior meeting. Mr. Athey asked that this be an agenda item at the next meeting.

Motion by Calderwood; 2nd Lunt: To move agenda item #10 (special committee reports) in place of agenda item #8. Passed. Unanimous.

X. Reports of Special Committees:

Member Calderwood reported on the first meeting with a subcommittee from Mohawk, March 24th. Ms. Calderwood contacted Sen. Stan Rosenberg who said he was unaware of any deadline involving regionalization of public school systems or any education funds released as a result of an April decision. Christine Lynch presented at the meeting and described the difference between a Superintendency Union (statutory) and a shared superintendent. Calderwood feels another meeting in line with Mohawk's schedule would not be harmful.

Motion by Calderwood, 2nd Eastman: To set the next school committee meetings for Tuesday, April 2nd, for shared Superintendency. Discussion ensued as to whether or not Greenfield's school committee should first meet themselves to formalize issues and questions, to be "seen as independent and acting in the best interests of Greenfield" and "to have our own data." A friendly amendment was approved by Eastman. **Amended motion: To set the next joint committee of the subcommittee to meet on April 2, 2009 at 7 pm and for the Greenfield Subcommittee to meet alone on March 31st, at 6:30 p.m. Passed. Unanimous.** Discussion of quorum ensued when one member is *ex officio*.

Motion by Mayor Forgey; 2nd Calderwood: For the Greenfield School Committee to ask Attorney Peter Smith for an opinion on *ex officio* member participation in regard to rules of quorum and to ask for an interpretation. Passed. Unanimous.

Regarding other member participation: “Nothing prevents anyone from showing up.” Chairman Athey shared his impressions of the informational session with Mohawk RSD school committee, saying he thought the Mohawk calendar was unrealistic and saw no way Greenfield could meet their schedule. “The whole of it is not realistic.”

Motion by Lunt; 2nd Eastman: That the March 24th, 2009, from Chairman Athey to Mr. Robert Aeschback, Chairman of the Mohawk Trail Regional School Committee be read into the school committee record and ratified. Passed. Unanimous. Chairman Athey then read the letter into the record (scanned and posted). It had six (6) points.

VIII. Unfinished Business.

IX. New Business.

b. Measures of Student Achievement & MCAS. Principals Woodcock and Tashjian reported on supports and interventions in place in both schools. Principal Woodcock stated that last year every student passed the MCAS & one teacher analyzes data. GHS has individual monitoring. They also use an Accuplacer exam for college readiness screening. Students scoring between 220 and 240 have an intervention broken into modules. Tutoring helps students improve scores and then retake the MCAS exam. One students reach a score of 240, individual monitoring ceases. MCAS tutoring is available through a grant.

At Greenfield Middle School, the school has intervened by aligning curriculum standards, integrating math into all areas of curriculum, and the new use of data walls (explained). He explained that at the high school students are motivated because the scores relate to graduation but this motivation is not the same at earlier grades. The superintendent that the administrators discuss achievement regularly and she will soon post to have a data analyst for each school.

The superintendent agreed that scores should be higher and reflected on the stressed conditions in the district last year, during the time of the MCAS. Higher scores or achievement at the conclusion of elementary schools are needed to better position the middle school for higher achievement. For this reason, she initiated Accelerated Reader and First in Math as early as possible this year. She recommended that Principals Joan Schell and Tracy Crowe who could not be present this evening present to the school committee regarding elementary efforts to monitor and raise achievement. There was agreement.

Chairman Athey requested that the superintendent distribute MCAS scores.

Member Calderwood excused herself from the meeting.

c. Nurse Appointments as per Chapter 71, Section 53.

The Superintendent mentioned the requirement for appointing nurses and requested a motion to assure this was done and also to appoint new nursing staff. Current and newly-engaged nursing personnel were mentioned: Serena Brechenser, RN (1,2000), Donna Murphy, RN (9, 1987), Jane Smith, RN (3,2000), Julia Forrestall (RN (10, 2001). Joining the nursing staff: Christine

Bressler, LPN (March 2009—part-time), Lillian Russell, RN (March 2009—part-time), Cicely Legg, RN (March 2009). **Motion by Mayor Forgey; 2nd by Eastman: To appoint nurses as mentioned. Passed. Unanimous.** John Lunt and Maryelen Calderwood were not present for this vote.

XI. Recommendations or questions from Individual Committee Members
The Mayor offered that she can share some personnel resources to help with school committee agenda preparation and distribution.

The Mayor also said while appreciating the simplicity of DESE recommendations, she feels there is “flailing about” in the community and questions that need to be answered related to Greenfield being a city. Town Council must fund the school department budget including such elements as retirement, future hires, discipline, workers’ comp, and collective bargaining inconsistencies. The Mayor recommends that the school committee’s counsel and city attorneys immediately begin to address these matters.

She then read into the record a letter from Town of Greenfield Attorney R. Kos (posted with minutes) wherein he states that the “concept being explored raises several questions which I think should be addressed before you go forward.” **Motion by Mayor Forgey; 2nd Lunt: To ask school committee Attorney Peter Smith to participate with town labor attorney, Hayes, and Greenfield municipal attorney (Kos) to explore inconsistencies with the city charter and agreements.** Discussion included hesitation over directing the attorney to do anything without checking with the attorney first. Mayor reiterated her concerns about the liability of the city and how the schools are a department of the city in Greenfield. **Lunt offered a friendly amendment that Attorney Smith review Attorney Kos’ opinion, write a brief as related to the advisability of consulting with other attorneys, and if that brief does not raise immediate objections, Attorney Smith proceed to meet immediately.** Mayor Forgey did not accept the amendment as each of the attorneys has expertise and one should not be asked to review another’s concerns. **Vote on the first motion, unamended. 3: 3 Motion failed.** Voting Yes (attorneys meet together): Doyle, Forgey, Lunt. Voting No: Athey, Aubin, Eastman.

Mr. Eastman said he would like to consult with the school committee’s attorney first and moved: **That the Mayor’s memo be entered into the record and the attorney’s opinion about it be sought, and direct the chair to direct the attorney to proceed with discussions if that is the opinion of the attorney.** Vote: Yes: Athey, Aubin, Eastman. No: Doyle, Forgey, Lunt.

XII: **Motion by Athey; 2nd Lunt: To adjourn. Passed. Unanimous.** 9:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Hollins
Interim Superintendent