

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

REGULAR SESSION

Minutes

Thursday, May 14, 2009

GCTV Studio

Approved August 13, 2009.

Present: Committee members: Greg Aubin, Maryelen Calderwood, Doris Doyle, Donovan Eastman, John Lunt. Chairman Athey and Mayor Forgey were absent. Also present, Interim Superintendent Susan Hollins, School Attorney Peter Smith, members of the school technology staff, Treasurer M. Lane Kelly, and the press. Also present was guest Charles Zogby, former Secretary of Education in PA, now representing K12.

- I. Call to Order: With a quorum present, Vice-chairman Aubin called the school committee to order at 6:18 p.m.
- II. Approval of Minutes: Motion by Calderwood; 2nd Eastman: To approve the draft minutes of April 9, 2009; April 14, 2009; and April 23rd, 2009. Two small corrections were offered: one for April 9 plus numbering on the 9th, and one typo for April 14th. Passed. Unanimous.
- III. Financial Report: The monthly report was not in the package and will be forwarded. The Superintendent discussed heat and utilities, sharing a data sheet that compared 5 years of use and expenditures. The details showed that over \$100,000 is predicted to be saved in utilities this year and \$30,000 is expected to be overspent district-wide from estimations for heat with a net \$70,000 savings. Middle School heat is almost \$45,000 over budget. Davis building saved 40% from what was projected on heat and 25% from projections in electricity. Based on use of 18,000 square feet, Davis' cost this year is approximately \$1.66 per square foot.
- IV. Delegations, visitors
  - A. School Nurse Report. No nurse could attend this evening. The Superintendent recapped a memorandum from Nursing staff stating that the system was in good hands, nurses were working with the state and city around health issues, and there were no cases yet in the district of the flu under advisory.
  - B. Virtual School Model & K12: Charles Zogby had been invited to again discuss K12's virtual school option in terms of Greenfield's interests. The Superintendent introduced the topic, explaining for the viewers that there have been presentations and fact finding on this subject for several months in an effort to judge interest and enthusiasm for a virtual school as part of the Greenfield system. This final presentation was intended to help answer additional questions and provide information to the community. Materials were provided and were formatted by GCTV so viewers saw the same slides as were available to the committee.

Highlights: Virtual schools are popping up all over the country. They serve a small percent of US students but are a safety net and important option for these students. Mr. Zogby discussed how the 100+ courses were developed, how the programs are

administered, that all the courses have qualified teachers who interact with students, that hybrid models can be designed that combine in-school attendance and virtual courses, and how virtual schools can benefit a community, bringing jobs, students, additional courses that expand curriculum, and other resources.

Questions clarified 1) home vs. in-school options using virtual courses, 2) how special education is handled, 3) the % of students a virtual school might serve both in our schools and students participating from home, 4) the difference between home education and an accredited virtual school program, 5) data supporting academic success, 6) how much time is spent interacting with the teacher or other students, 7) availability of courses in art & music, 8) how this model applies to young students (e.g. the virtual portion is used mostly by parents), 9) how choice might work for out-of-district students, and other topics such as how a partnership might include helping Greenfield with grants.

There was no decision but the matter will come up at the next meeting when the full committee is present.

Attorney Smith. Transportation & Districting (there was consensus to address item VIII. d). There are no statutory or regulatory restrictions for opening Four Corners school and deciding how to district or arrange transportation. Attorney Smith explained the type of situations where there are guidelines—these are significant challenges usually based on racial balance. He said the types of statutory concerns are not relevant to Greenfield's situation. The committee has full rights as to how students are going to be assigned.

V. c. Franklin Technical School Agreement: A letter from invited representatives suggested the school committee attend the next FTS meeting in early June.

VI. Public Comment. There was no public comment.

VII. Superintendent's Reports & Recommendations

The Superintendent addressed transportation & results of the county-wide transportation bid—anticipated as the area where Franklin County communities would save the most money through regional cooperation. In fact, there was no savings in particular noted by districts. A bid by the current transporter for 2011 was received and will be reviewed.

The Superintendent reviewed the three prior votes to move forward with municipal and school department consolidation (one vote by the city and two votes by the school department). She discussed communications around this issue to date and recommended that consolidation be tried for six (6) months, during which time the details of how this might work be identified for a true proposal. Further, she suggested that any major remodeling expense to relocate Davis follow this initiative so it is clear the amount and configuration of space needed for administrative offices. There was a request to commit the suggestion to writing for the next meeting.

VIII. Unfinished Business

- A. School Calendar for 2009-2010: **Motion by Eastman; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lunt: To approve the calendar for 2009-2010 presented. Passed. Unanimous.** Comment: This is a much kinder, friendlier calendar for parents than the calendar this year.
- B. Summer Programs: **Motion by Lunt; 2<sup>nd</sup> Doyle: To accept and endorse the Superintendent's recommendations regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School summer programs and also expansion of the high school summer program as long as the school district has no additional cost.** Passed. 3:1 Aubin abstained.

IX. New Business

A. Superintendent Evaluation

Attorney Smith related that the superintendent had a two-year contract and the committee and Superintendent need to agree on an evaluation instrument and 2 or 3 agreed upon goals that form the basis of the evaluation. He clarified that no contractual date guidelines govern the 2009-2010 evaluation process.

B. Participation in the Hampshire Education Collaborative (HEC)

Member Eastman gave an update and explained the HEC proposal. He recommended joining HEC but not viewing the joining as exclusive of options to form a collaborative, suggesting that some needs of Greenfield would be better served by a smaller model.

**Motion by Eastman; 2<sup>nd</sup> Calderwood: that the Greenfield School District join the Hampshire Education Collaborative for one year—2009-2010—for a fee approximately \$2.50 per student based on Greenfield's October 1, 2008, student count—to show solidarity with other Franklin County school systems and to see what benefits may be derived for Greenfield schools. This does not preclude an other initiative this year to join an additional collaborative or to form a separate collaborative in order to address the interest of the Greenfield Schools.**

Passed. Unanimous. Vice Chairman Aubin recollected that the sum needed was added to the School Committee's proposed budget for 2009-2010.

Mr. Eastman also explained that the "Franklin County Advocate Group" is now referred to as the "Franklin County School Committee Caucus." At the moment this is an *ad hoc* group. No advocacy activity has been organized but the goal is having a political voice, speaking to representatives as a group.

C. Written Reports

Vice chairman Aubin suggested that the committee have written reports that summarize what is happening in the district so there is more information for the committee to consider. There was consensus to activate a policy subcommittee on the next agenda. The Superintendent said several sections of the policy manual need careful review and some revision.

D. Federal & State Audit Waivers

Vice Chairman Aubin clarified that the committee would like to know for which areas of reporting waivers had been submitted.

X. Reports of Special Committees

Maryelen Calderwood reported that Mohawk was still interested in collaborating with Greenfield in certain ways. Doyle asked for clarification of "certain ways" as the charge was recently clarified to narrowly address superintendency. Yes, this is what the committee will discuss "it's exactly the same subcommittee we started."

Donovan Eastman reported on the ESCO project—arguments for and against and how the borrowing is paid.

XI. Questions from Committee Members

Mr. Lunt requested that there be an executive session about contracts so that the committee can stay updated about changes in the state level of funding and the city and union situation.

XII. **Motion to adjourn, by Calderwood; 2nd by Eastman. Unanimous.** Meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Hollins  
Interim Superintendent