

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MINUTES

Meeting of July 9, 2009
GCTV Studio
Approved August 13, 2009

Present: Doris Doyle, Chair; Members Calderwood, Day, Mayor Martin, McCormic.
Absent, Members Athey and Lunt. Also present: Interim Superintendent Hollins, School
Attorney Smith, members of the press & public.

Introductory comments by Chairperson Doyle, speaking to the audience at home:
(interpretive summary) Last year the school system might be considered in recovery and this year will be focused on stability and progress. The school system is rebounding and our committee will dedicate itself to the progress of our public schools. We will have policy and strategy committees, chaired by Keith McCormic and Marcia Day, respectively. Under my leadership, we will have a community outreach initiative and my hope is that citizens who have had a leadership role in supporting the public schools will participate—such as Mike Phillips, Ellen Villani, and Pam Kinsmith, Our committee will have one regular meeting a month to conduct business and it will be televised through the GCTV.

I. Call to Order.

With a quorum present, the chair called the meeting to order at 6.17 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion by McCormic: To approve the minutes of June 25th by unanimous consent. There followed clarification of which members present tonight were present on June 25th and who could make and vote motions on minutes prior to July 1st.

Motion by Calderwood; 2nd Doyle: To approve the minutes of June 25th, 2009. Passed by the vote of prior sitting members Calderwood and Doyle with Day, Martin, & McCormic abstaining. Mr. McCormic then clarified that current committee members can affirm actions of prior members. All new members were present at prior general and executive session meetings & so have personal knowledge of what took place.

Chairperson Doyle then appointed Keith McCormic as School Committee parliamentarian.

Motion by Mayor Martin; 2nd McCormic: To approve the minutes of June 30th, 2009. Pass. Unanimous.

Motion by Mayor Martin; 2nd McCormic: To accept the minutes of July 3rd, 2009. Passed. Unanimous. Mr. McCormic's name spelling needs correction.

Motion by McCormic; 2nd Mayor Martin: **To approve the minutes of July 8th, 2009: Passed** on a 4:1 vote with Calderwood abstaining.

III. Reports:

Chairperson: Calendar of Meetings for 2009-2010. After discussion, it was determined that regular monthly meetings for conducting the business of the school department **will be held on the 2nd Thursday** of each month. Future meeting dates: September 10th, October 8th, November 12th, December 10th, January 7th, February 11th, March 11th, April 8th, May 13th, and June 10th.

The school committee's regular monthly meetings will be scheduled at GCTV on Main Street, Greenfield. Additional meetings may be called for work sessions, subcommittee work, or additional business meetings, and these may be at other locations, e.g. Davis building or in the schools.

Superintendent: Among materials for the meeting was today's print-out of the 2008-2009 budget giving the current year-end balance of \$605,634.31. This is not the true year-end balance but the status of entries processed through the city as of this date. The superintendent pointed out specific line items where the additional postings will primarily be seen. Most are in maintenance and facilities costs, special education contracted services and tuitions, and contractual obligations, as new decisions and bills are processed. Current year-end balance projection now is estimated in the range of \$200-250,000 and the committee has voted to reimburse the circuit breaker fund for the mid-year transfer. Projects taking place over the summer were reviewed briefly, particularly work at the high school in general and for the 8th grade. The chairperson suggested district-wide open houses the week before school opens.

IV. Public Comment.

Chairperson Doyle will have time on each agenda for public comment. If this is unwieldy, speakers will have to sign up to speak within the time allowed.

V. Old Business

a. Facility Work Over Summer:

The Superintendent explained facility projects including upgrading of the modular building in front of the high school that has several large classrooms and offices so this can be used in the future. The use of Green River School may be discontinued.

b. Virtual School Proposal

Attorney Smith gave an overview of the history of the virtual school project and proposal. He presented that latest version of a contract "which defines

services, terms, obligations of the school district, risks before both parties...” and explained that the negotiations and deliberations have taken a great deal of time. He explained the latest revisions based on the latest review of school committee members. The Superintendent explained certain topics raised for the whole committee and public, such as the latest revision having to do with computers for students and how the cost of replacements would be handled for equipment that is not returned. Attorney Smith explained his research into various issues raised.

He explained his research on the authority of the Greenfield School Committee to set up a virtual school or any school, including statutory provisions in Chapters 70 (dealing mostly with finance) and 71 (dealing mostly with public schools, powers and duties). He explained that in Massachusetts schools can admit students from other districts and also from outside of the state. He advised that nothing in the statutes preclude the school committee from opening another school or requires prior approval.

On the subject of cost, Attorney Smith explained that during negotiations all efforts were made to minimize any costs to the district. The virtual school plan is for the school to be self-funded and any overages will be covered by the program budget and K12. He and the Superintendent explained certain points such as K12 having a relatively long-term experience in virtual education, not only with courses but also with complete schools, something important in choosing a provider. That K12 has a national track record of positive achievement results and are large enough to take all the financial risks of this venture with Greenfield while also allowing Greenfield to share in some of the benefits of partnering with them. The Superintendent explained that K12 has experience with grant writing which could benefit Greenfield and that locally the plan is to develop hybrid programs where Greenfield personnel would provide teacher assistance for online learning. The Superintendent explained that in the current contract version the term is for three years, which can be renewed, and at 18 months the decision can be made to discontinue after the 3 years is completed.

Mayor Martin (who has attended several meetings and presentations over the last three months) commented that this was an opportunity for Greenfield in multiple ways. It is an opportunity for the school department to generate a new source of revenue and that there are multiple layers of protection for the schools and the city. He said that being first in the state to offer a complete virtual school requires Greenfield to create the path using existing law.

Mr. McCormic asked about the three issues the three committee members reviewing the contract last evening wanted to have addressed. Attorney Smith said he had talked with the company today and that the one issue that had not changed was the net asset fee, but that the first item to be paid was the 3% revenue or indirect cost provision for Greenfield schools. If the school reaches

2000 students this would be significant. On the topic of computers and the cost of unreturned computers, the company has rewritten the contract so that the program absorbs these costs, not Greenfield. Mr. Smith reported that other changes requested had been incorporated. The Superintendent then explained the provisions related to courses being available to our school students at no cost and that at the high school the courses being considered would not be courses taught at the high school, but different courses that allowed the high school to expand opportunities to students.

The last discussion had to do with how the funding would be handled and the setup of a revolving fund for receipts and disbursements. This program will be handled similarly to the food service program—all receipts and expenditures will be handled through a revolving fund and not involving general funds.

Motion by McCormic; 2nd Mayor Martin: To ratify the most recent copy of the K12 virtual school contract. Passed 4:1. Day, Doyle, Martin, McCormic voting yes. Calderwood abstained. Athey and Lunt were absent.

VI. New Business

a. Establishing a Policy Committee

Greenfield needs a policy committee established as soon as possible. The chairman asked Marcia Day to be chairperson. She agreed.

Motion by McCormic; 2nd Mayor Martin: To create a standing “Subcommittee on Policy, Procedure, and Operations” or “Policy Committee” in brief that shall investigate, discuss, and make recommendations to the School Committee regarding matters of District and School Committee policy and/or procedure except for administrative policy established by the Superintendent, extant (as opposed to pending) laws and regulations, personnel and day-to-day operational matters that rise to the attention of the School Committee, ~~spending and expenses for the current and past fiscal years~~, and similar topics as determined by the Chair or by the School Committee as a whole.

The discussion of the complexity and detail within the motion resulted in two subsidiary amendments, as follows:

Motion by McCormic; 2nd Mayor Martin: To strike “spending and expenses from the current and past fiscal years” (motion is to remove this phrase). Passed. Unanimous.

Motion by McCormic; 2nd Calderwood: To insert after “policy and/or procedures the following “except for administrative policy established by the Superintendent”.... Passed. Unanimous.

Vote on the original policy motion as amended: Passed. Unanimous.

Mr. McCormic then proposed a motion to establish a strategic planning committee: Motion by McCormic; 2nd Calderwood: Passed Unanimous.

Motion by McCormic; 2nd Calderwood: to amend the motion to insert matters of strategies (including aligning with town strategic plan). Passed. Unanimous.

Mayor Martin commented that the subsidiary motion to align with the town's strategic plan was good and it would encourage the town to update its own strategic plan. M. Calderwood commented that the school committee needed to keep its time and focus on the school system.

At this point, Chairman Doyle said no further motions to set up subcommittees would be address this evening and the discussion would be tabled until there is a full board meeting. Passed Unanimous. 8:29 p.m.

Chairperson Doyle appointed Keith McCormic, John Lunt, and Mayor Martin to the Strategic Planning Subcommittee.

Chairperson Doyle appointed Maryelen Calderwood to be the school committee's representative to the Hampshire Education Collaborative.

Other suggestions of members:

- Move VII to after executive session
- Provide school committee with a professional, consolidated email,
- Provide a charge for the strategic planning committee
- Set up a school committee retreat
- Peter Smith to provide additional information
- Meeting location for July 23rd—Davis Building

Clarification of Attorney Smith about non-public session and how tonight's meeting corrected any technical violation. He mentioned new ethics training on the open meeting law and invited committee members to dinner at his office the day of the training. M. Calderwood thanked the attorney for following up on the topic.

VII. Adjournment:

Motion by Calderwood; 2nd McCormic: To adjourn. Passed. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Hollins
Interim Superintendent