

DOVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 23, 2010

Members Present: Bob Springett, Chairperson
Jennifer DaSilva
Peter Lert
Carolyn Ringel
James Stuart

Also Present: Valerie Spriggs, Superintendent
Dr. Deb Reinemann, Curriculum Coordinator
Christine Tague, School Business Manager
Cheryl Chase, Librarian
Betsy Ryan, PTO
Steven Bliss, Assistant Superintendent
Dave Stapleton, Warrant Committee

1. Call to order – Mr. Springett

Mr. Springett called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in the Chickering School Library. Mr. Springett welcomed Peter Lert, the newest DSC member.

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Dover School Committee minutes:

- Mr. Springett requested a motion to accept the January 19, 2010 minutes. Ms. DaSilva moved, Ms. Ringel seconded. The Committee accepted the minutes with the following corrections:

Page 1: Also present: ~~Steve~~ Jim Kinder

Page 1, 2. a) replace amendments with corrections

Page 4, f) 9th bullet:January DSC interim meeting that she was asked by the Committee

10-05- Vote: Unanimous

b) Mr. Springett noted the January 12, 2010 Dover Sherborn Regional School Committee minutes.

c) Mr. Springett noted the December 17, 2009 and January 14, 2010 Sherborn School Committee minutes.

3. Community Comments

- A community member asked for a walk through of the process of how Peter Lert was elected to the School Committee. Mr. Springett stated that at a joint meeting of the Selectmen and the School Committee the two candidates made statements about why they were interested in the position. The candidates were given questions from the selectmen and school committee that they responded to.
- A community member asked Mr. Lert what his motivation was given that he doesn't have kids at Chickering. Mr. Lert responded that all three of his kids have gone through Chickering, the youngest finished last spring. He is doing this out of concern and a sense of public service. Chickering was a very good school for his kids, and it could be better and that there was a need for someone to fill the role, so he volunteered. He feels that this is the most important thing going on in Dover.

4. Appointment of Secretary—Mr. Springett requested nominations for the Secretary. Mr. Stuart nominated Ms. DaSilva, Mr. Lert seconded. **10-06 Vote: Unanimous**

5. Reports

a) **PTO Report** – Ms. Ryan, Ms. Field and Ms. Nolan

- The February PTO newsletter was distributed to the Committee.
- Family Fun Night is scheduled for March 18th.
- The PTO will provide an Italian lunch for staff tomorrow.
- The PTO will provide dinner for teachers at the March 25th conferences.

b) **Business Manager's Report** – Ms. Tague

- FY '10 Budget Update

- Ms. Tague provided year-end projections for FY '10. A \$296,000 operating surplus is projected, of this \$243,000 (82%) is a potential variance in special education out of district tuition and transportation, \$23,000 is for regular transportation due to what is being expended vs. what was budgeted, and \$33,000 is in utilities which is primarily a result of the contracted oil rate. Ms. Tague also reported that we are seeing a slight decrease in oil usage vs. last year.
- Ms. Tague has reviewed the unfavorable variance in Classroom Instructional Technologies; most of the overage is due to a salary budget vs. what's being spent.
- Ms. Tague has reviewed the Custodial Overtime account with the Facilities Manager, he feels that vacation days are contributing to this variance as well as H1N1 preparation and getting the schools prepared to open on time with a shorter summer.
- Ms. Tague expects a \$2,500 savings in copier annual leases and payments. Three machines have been removed, two new heavy duty machines have been brought in to replace them.
- Mr. Springett spoke of the recent history of being fairly close on the regular education budget, but missing the mark on special education, he has typically seen \$250,000 swings, though he recognizes the volatility of the special education budget. Ms. Spriggs spoke of how Dr. O'Connell looks at this budget very carefully and how we need to be able to protect the system and cover the needs of any child moving in district. Mr. Springett spoke of how we fully fund this budget, have the circuit breaker available and we plan for every contingency. He asked if there are things we can look at further. Ms. Spriggs spoke of the Circuit Breaker belonging to the town, but that we can dip into it if needed.
- Transportation Bid – Ms. Tague reported that only one bid was received for transportation, which was from our current vendor. We are expecting an 18% increase which does not include a fuel adjustment. The bid includes a \$2.92 per gallon diesel price, within .05 there is no adjustment. Ms. Tague is putting together an analysis for the Joint Meeting. Mr. Stuart asked for the analysis prior to the meeting, Ms. Tague will send the analysis to all School Committee members when complete.
- Ms. Tague reported that last year's \$1,000 special education donation has not been spent. Dr. O'Connell has been notified that the funds are available.
- Special Education Equipment—Ms. Tague spoke with Dr. O'Connell about the FY '11 Budget request, there is a situation that could arise that the money will be needed for.
- Five Year Technology Capital Plan –
 - Ms. Tague provided the report to the Committee from Ms. Conkey.
 - Mr. Springett asked if there is any other infrastructure we should be considering. Ms. Spriggs feels there will be additional changes, but this represents what we know today.
 - Mr. Stuart pointed to the discrepancy in the amount requested on the memo vs. the spreadsheet for the wireless clocks and that it should be listed in the 2012 column, Ms. Tague will get a better estimate as we move through the process.
 - Mr. Stuart would like to further review the detailed phone system request with Ms. Tague. Ms. Spriggs spoke of difficulties with the system; there is more research to be done so the 2013 amount is a placeholder for the time being. Ms. Tague spoke of enhancements being made to the system for now. Mr. Lert asked who the lead is on this, Ms. Spriggs noted that one person from IT is handling it with support from community experts.
 - Mr. Stuart spoke of the separate plans for Technology and Facilities; he asked if there will be a combined plan. Ms. Tague spoke of the goal to develop a tool for each district. Mr. Stuart spoke of Wellesley's capital plan being a better format that is less confusing. Ms. Tague noted that the current format was requested by the Capital Committee but that she will review Wellesley's format.
 - Mr. Lert raised the issue that windows XP/OS support going away in 2012 and that it may impact computer replacements.
 - Mr. Springett spoke of the need to add replacement windows to the plan. Ms. Spriggs noted that the mature trees were not funded in the capital budget and that the current model of windows has been discontinued. Ms. Spriggs has asked Mr. Kelly to recommend solutions when there is breakage. Mr. Stuart spoke about proactively replacing all the windows or switching them out over five years. Ms. Spriggs thought that previously this wasn't an acceptable solution to DSC. Mr. Springett spoke about the need to have something reflected in the capital budget. Ms. Spriggs asked to have a more in-depth discussion to include Mr. Kelley to determine how to move forward.

- Mr. Springett spoke of the need to get additional information to the Capital Committee. Ms. Spriggs stated that she submitted the Technology piece on February 2nd. Mr. Springett asked if 2011-2013 should have window replacement money added.
- Mr. Springett spoke of the trees and replacement carpets not being approved by the Capital Committee, they have asked for additional information on how the trees would be watered and cared for as well as pictures of the worn carpet.
- Request for Business Office Support
 - Ms. Tague presented a proposal to have Fran Rush continue to assist her, Ms. Rush was brought in to help during the transition and her continued assistance will be invaluable to Ms. Tague.
 - Ms. Tague spoke of wanting to create a Finance Department where everyone knows what is going on.
 - This request will bring Ms. Rush to full-time. Mr. Stuart asked about the benefits impact, Ms. Tague responded that the position is already benefits eligible but that the benefits are paid out of the central office, Chickerings expense is salary alone.
 - Ms. Spriggs spoke about the extra help assisting in getting numbers quickly and that this is a solution to something that has been a long-term problem. This goes back to the conversations of having enough resources to do quality work.
 - Mr. Springett feels comfortable in approving for the current year. He spoke of the clerical operations needing a top down review of operations and technology.
 - Mr. Springett spoke of past assessments such as the Literacy Program and block scheduling where we hired experts to assist us in these reviews, there may be more efficiencies and effectiveness we can gain by bringing someone in from the outside.
 - Ms. Spriggs spoke of the newness of the team, and wanting to be more proactive vs. reactive.
 - A community member asked about the cost of this increase in staff time and if there are increases in workload. Ms. Tague stated that the workload has not been increased but there is complexity in managing six sets of books with a small staff which includes one payroll staff and two accounts payable staff.
 - Ms. Ringel asked who is doing the research for the capital plan, Ms. Tague stated that if she was freed up she would be able to get more in depth.
 - Mr. Stuart spoke of there not being the time or resources to look at how to gain efficiencies such as streamlining and getting away from six sets of books, this additional 10 hours will make it easier to get the reports out.
 - Ms. Spriggs spoke of having a consultant come in December 2009 to look at Ms. Tague's department, he did a study and worked with Ms. Tague and has provided a report and recommendations which Ms. Tague has used to implement changes.
 - Ms. Spriggs is working on a goal and plan, but for right now this is what we need to advance, we can research what it would cost to do a study.
 - Ms. Ringel asked if we complete the study and restructuring and we need to decrease the hours of Ms. Rush's position, will we be able to do so. Ms. Tague responded that the contract is renewed yearly so they can discontinue if needed.
 - Mr. Lert spoke of the size of the budget and the small number of staff managing it.
 - Mr. Springett requested a motion to reimburse the region for money to fund Fran Rush to support the Business Manager for Dover and Sherborn for 2010, and as an anticipated expense in 2011. Ms. DaSilva moved, Mr. Lert seconded. **10-07 Vote: Unanimous**
- c) **2009/2010 Grant Summary Survey--Mr. Bliss**
 - Mr. Bliss provided the Committee with the Grant Report. He spoke of the system that has been put in place to track all grants awarded.
 - For the three districts combined we have received just under \$1.1 million, of which Dover received \$317,000.
 - Mr. Bliss spoke of being sure not to turn our backs on any money we can get. In conjunction with Grant Managers, Finance and the Town we now go over all the grants to make sure we exhaust all the grants funds so that we don't have to go into our operating budget, or have to turn back money.
 - Mr. Springett asked what we receive the grant money for. Mr. Bliss spoke to several of the line items: Title I is for tutoring identified at risk students; Title II A is to support our mentoring program. This summer it will support an institute platform; IDEA -240 is a special education grant for services, consultants and staff.

- Mr. Bliss spoke of the enormous amount of paperwork and the application process for each grant. The Safe and Drug Free Schools grant has not gone through the application process yet, there are very strict guidelines that we want to be sure are in the direction we are going in.
- Mr. Bliss spoke of how we have a good process in place and that we are able to look for other grants such as the one he is currently exploring for \$10,000 from Verizon.
- Mr. Lert asked about the NCLB ACCEPT grant. Mr. Bliss reported that it is for training on the education data warehouse tool, and that the ACCEPT Collaborative manages the grant.
- Mr. Springett asked if we can expand to include foundation and corporate money. Mr. Bliss spoke about the time needed to pursue this. Mr. Stuart spoke about assessing if we should add staff to pursue this. Ms. Spriggs spoke of some grants not allowing a grant writer to be paid.

d) Site Map for the New Website – Mr. Bliss

- Mr. Bliss reported that we have contracted with *Get Fused* for the new website. Jean Conkey is the primary contact.
- They are currently mining the three existing websites over. We want to be sure the website is a robust and user friendly tool for all users. We are making sure that we have standard components that will appear in the same place but that the design will also allow for flexibility for each school. Looking to launch in April.
- Mr. Lert asked what the budget is, Mr. Stuart stated that it is \$14,000 for the region, \$3,000 for Dover and \$3,000 for Sherborn.

e) Principals Report – Dr. Reinemann

- Ms. Rosemary Comiskey is retiring after 35 years of service, Ms. Mabel Ellis will be retiring after 11 years of service.
- We are planning to post the Literacy Specialist and Nurse positions in March. Mr. Springett asked if we should wait until the budget is approved before posting. Ms. Spriggs and Dr. Reinemann raised their concern about holding off, Dr. Reinemann spoke of the literacy specialist being a teacher/coach/intervention position, Donna Shaw is currently doing the intervention, and Dr. Reinemann has picked up the coaching. We continue to use Tufts, but will only have 4 days budgeted for next year.
- Looking at ways to replace Mrs. Ellis' position, recommendation to be made at the next DSC meeting.
- Professional Development—Interactive workshop was held with the DESE to debunk the myths of MCAS. We scored our students results to the rubric and anchor papers, it was eye opening experience. The workshop has already been recreated for our teachers. The big takeaways were that a topic sentence is irrelevant, what they are really looking for is the evidence from the text. Dr. Reinemann emphasized that Chickering will not stop teaching topic sentences.
- Grade 5 teachers from Chickering and Pine Hill met with sixth grade English teachers to combine writing program assessment and work.
- Curriculum Coffees continue, the next session is tomorrow and the topic will be Science.
- Thursday is Kindergarten information night.
- The next SAC meeting will take place March 11th.

f) Superintendent's Report – Ms. Spriggs

- Strategic Planning Update—A meeting was held today with the subcommittee to address goals. June 1st will be the deadline to formulate action plans. Ms. Spriggs asked that community members wishing to participate contact the office.
- Mr. Kucher will attend the March 3rd DSC meeting to discuss Roles & Responsibilities.
- Policy Manual Update—
 - Ms. Spriggs welcomed Ms. Ringel to the Policy Group.
 - Mr. Robinson has submitted a proposed e-mail blast policy. Mr. Springett read the draft policy language to the community members. Ms. Ringel spoke of drafting 3(b) so that certain entities would not be excluded. Ms. DaSilva asked if the length of an e-mail should be addressed, Ms. Ringel responded that would be handled during the review process, Mr. Stuart recommend that we add the language to # 4. Mr. Lert spoke about adding to the policy that we don't give out e-mail distribution lists, Ms. Ringel will check to be sure it is in the policy manual.

- Mr. Lert also spoke about setting a precedent, for example, if the library wants a spelling bee announcement to go out, does that mean we will do it going forward? We should add language that it's on a case by case basis.
- The Committee discussed if we should identify a list of entities that will be allowed to submit. Ms. Ringel spoke about the feedback received from MASC and some of what we wanted wouldn't be legally possible.
- Mr. Stuart spoke about other school districts handling e-mail communication differently, he suggested the PTO could collect who wants to opt in/out and then send the blast.
- Ms. White suggested clarification around the definition of public entity.
- Mr. Stuart talked about further defining vs. only having Chickering related information included in the e-mail blast.
- Ms. Ringel asked the Committee for their feedback on option 3a or 3b to take to her meeting tomorrow. Ms. DaSilva and Mr. Lert prefer 3a, Mr. Springett and Mr. Stuart prefer 3b.
- Open Meeting Law—materials included in packet.
- Principal Search Update—Ms. Spriggs spoke of how the Search Committee has gone above and beyond to research the candidates. Interviews are in process and the first round will be completed Saturday morning. She will receive a recommendation of top three candidates and will develop a timeline/next steps.
- METCO Coordinator—The METCO coordinator position will be vacated by the end of the year. Ms. Spriggs reported that they will be looking for someone who also has program design talents and skill. Ms. DaSilva is the representative on this Committee.
- Special Education Study—With the vacancy at the Regional Schools, we are looking at where we are and will advise the School Committee of the findings.
- CDC Report—We will not be sustaining the Child Development Center (CDC) next year, we did not meet our fiscal responsibilities to be self sustaining. We may reinvest this concept under a different umbrella in the region. Mr. Stuart wanted to know more about how the Sherborn Pre-K programs works, Ms. Spriggs suggested having a site visit. Mr. Stuart asked if we could use their facility.
- Superintendent's Evaluation – Timeline included in packet, the model from previous year has been updated. Ms. Spriggs has not met with the Evaluation Committee yet. She will reconvene the Committee so they can review the instrument. Mr. Springett will speak with Ms. Hunter to have an orientation for the new instrument and process.
- Seat Belt Liability—Coverage is in place, we have blanket liability coverage which isn't impacted. We are in compliance with all state and federal regulations.
- Medicaid Reimbursement—The reimbursement has been rather small, but we are exploring further. Ms. Ringel spoke of Westwood's work on additional reimbursement, Mr. Bliss is looking at further benefits that may be available.
- Enrollment Age—Students starting Kindergarten must be 5 years old on or before 9/1. The Enrollment Age cutoffs were voted in January 1999. There can be an exception if testing/evaluation is done for development, maturity and need for academic challenge. Mr. Stuart noted this was not in the existing or new policy manual. Mr. Stuart would like this in the revision.
- Mass One Site—This is an online network with the DESE for educators and students only. Ms. Spriggs reported that no portals are available for School Committee members or parents.
- Conflict of Interest Law—Ms. Spriggs reminded the Committee to complete the required training before April.
- Role of Sub-Committees—Ms. Spriggs spoke of the sub-committee roles being varied and poorly defined. They are work groups that formulate a recommendation, not a voting body. The School Committee is charged with the vote. In the case of policy, it is written and brought to School Committee for a first reading, feedback and changes are made and the policy is brought back for approval. The Negotiating Committee has representatives which are entrusted by School Committee to negotiate the Committee's desire to a certain point. Still brought back to the Committee for vote. This includes contracts and negotiations. Mr. Stuart and Mr. Springett will represent the Negotiation Committee.
- Subcommittee List—The Committee discussed if they need a Building and Facilities representative. For Sherborn they have it because of past grant funds. Mr. Stuart will be the Building and Facilities representative, Mr. Lert will be the representative to the Technology Committee.

5) Special Items

a) **Parent Group – Ms. Ringel**

- Ms. Ringel spoke of a letter that was received in December that was signed by a group of parents and was previously discussed at DSC. The letter raised the idea of having a working group and the parents desire to understand the School Committee's roles and responsibilities.
- The School Committee has scheduled a separate meeting with Mr. Kucher of MASC. Ms. Ringel raised the question of televising the meeting and if Mr. Kucher could take follow-up questions from those who are unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Springett responded that Mr. Kucher has offered to come back for an evening meeting.
- Ms. Ringel wants to be sure that everyone knows that the March 3rd meeting isn't the end of the conversation, it's a continuing dialogue.
- A community member spoke of the working group being parents, administrators and others who can find the time to meet and have a working group with broad representation to achieve quick impacts. Ms. Ringel recommended Mr. Kucher come so we all get a baseline understanding, and then have a sign up for people who want to participate in a working group. Mr. Stuart suggested we follow-up the March 3rd discussion at the March 16th School Committee meeting and that the March 3rd meeting also be made available on DVD.
- Ms. Spriggs wants the School Committee to have the opportunity to share their thoughts about a collaborative relationship. This was voted on last summer during open meetings, but it has not been brought forward to share with the community.
- A community member expressed her concern with waiting to get things into place, with a new principal arriving on 7/1, they want a quicker timeline.
- Ms. Ringel spoke about the need to identify next steps, what the representation is and a timeline prior to having the March 3rd meeting. A community member felt that the meeting that was agreed to by School Committee between the Committee and the community should have taken place in January. Mr. Stuart spoke about where we are today, do we define things now, before the March 3rd meeting or after? Ms. Spriggs doesn't see this as being a broad stakeholder group as described, both the parents and the School Committee have concerns. Does the Committee agree to have an open circle meeting to have some open conversations about what we are concerned about? This is different than long term problem solving. Ms. Spriggs is hearing that the parents want to sit down and talk and work together. Ms. Spriggs asked Committee to give thought to doing this.
- A community member stated they envisioned someone from each constituent group, not just School Committee and parents. We need to come together as a collaborative working group with a short term agenda. Ms. Ringel spoke of having the March 3rd meeting with DVD access for parents/teachers who aren't able to attend and submitting names to Ms. Spriggs by March 12th, the group would have 3-4 meetings and come back with observations and recommendations by June 15th.
- Mr. Stuart thinks the two way flow of information vs. 2nd and 3rd party information being received is important.
- A Community member spoke of a third party, such as a teacher, picking the group rather than Ms. Spriggs.
- A community member asked if we've ever done a blind survey of the staff to express their concerns. Ms. Spriggs spoke of her concerns and better ways to assess information. Ms. Spriggs has met with the faculty, it has been very productive and insightful.
- Ms. Dawson spoke about the faculty not feeling they are part of the discussion of what's happening at Chickering, she thinks the faculty would want to have a learning community for the children and we all understand the issues in a productive way. She thinks that the substantive discussion that people want needs to be structured.
- A community member spoke of the working group figuring out how best to move forward.
- A community member spoke of the working group being the people who are here tonight, these are the people who are invested. Ms. Ringel wants to be sure all interested parents have the opportunity to participate, and the need to communicate this via an e-blast.
- A community member asked about the conduit between the staff and the Committee. Mr. Stuart spoke about the value that each member brings to the Committee, and how it's not necessary to have a child in the school to contribute.
- Ms. Spriggs asked if the entire School Committee agrees to have a working group. Mr. Springett responded that he wants to be sure of policy and open meeting issues. March 3rd will be a Roles &

Responsibilities discussion as well as be a forum for discussion of collaboration. A community member stated that the electorate is asking you to move forward to develop a working group. Mr. Springett stated that we are willing to have the working group, which is why we are having the March 3rd meeting. Ms. Ringel suggests an e-blast notifying of the meeting on March 3rd, the launch of a workgroup and the deadline for name submission of March 12th.

6. Future Business

- a) March Dover School Committee Agenda Items -- Mr. Springett
- Foreign Language Task Force
 - Technology presentation
 - Academic Update
 - Initiatives
 - Faculty Feedback

7. New Business

8. Routine Business

a) Enrollments as of February 1, 2010—reports distributed. Mr. Stuart asked for any insight into the decline in Dover enrollment for February (-9).

9. Adjournment-- Mr. Springett requested a motion to adjourn. Meeting Adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deb Savastano