

DOVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 19, 2011

Members Present: Carolyn Ringel, Chairperson
Tim Caffrey
Lauren Doherty
Dawn Fattore
Karl Johnson

Also Present: Valerie Spriggs, Superintendent
Steven Bliss, Assistant Superintendent
Christine Tague, School Business Manager
Dr. Theresa Nugent, Principal
Dr. Deb Reinemann, Assistant Principal
Cheryl Chase, Librarian
Bob Cocks, Warrant Committee
James Stuart, Warrant Committee

1. Call to order

Ms. Ringel called the meeting to order at 6:33pm in the Chickering School Library.

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Dover School Committee:

- Ms. Ringel requested a motion to accept the November 15, 2011 minutes. Ms. Fattore motioned, Ms. Doherty seconded. **Vote 11-28: Unanimous**
- b) Ms. Ringel noted the Dover Sherborn Regional School Committee minutes of November 1 and 9, 2011.
- c) Ms. Ringel noted the Sherborn Regional School Committee minutes of November 10, 2011.

3. Community Comments –

- Community members Ms. Stone and Ms. Fisch stated their opposition to the proposed elimination of Jewish Holidays from the school calendar.

4. Reports

a) PTO Report – Missy Gramer, Gina Doyle

- Ms. Gramer reported that author/illustrator Suzanne Bloom came in to talk to the 1st grade about the process of writing and illustrating a story.
- Chickering Apparel was sold on conference days
- The 5th grade food pantry drive received over 150 items which were donated to A Place to Turn. The Cub Scouts assisted with the sorting and bagging.

b) Special Education – Dr. O’Connell

- Ms. Spriggs stated that she requested Dr. O’Connell provide an overview of how OOD placements take place. There have been comments made at previous Committee meetings that have concerned the Special Education parents so we are taking this opportunity as a teaching moment. A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.
- Mr. Johnson arrived at 6:43pm
- Ms. Ringel asked if once the determination is made that OOD is the best, from a financial perspective what can we do on the tuition if we have several students there, do we have any purchasing power? Dr. O’Connell stated that the Operational Services Division sets the rate; it is the same rate whether in Boston, Dover or Springfield. We can create programs within the district, such as the Language Based Program. When there is one child needing a certain type of service we look at the ACCEPT Collaborative first, then at private placement. We have also utilized public school settings in larger districts that have programs in place. In terms of transportation we make sure the kids receive the same transportation when possible. Mr. Caffrey asked how much we pay vs. the parent rate. Dr. O’Connell responded that the parent rate is about \$6-\$7K more. Ms. Doherty asked if the transportation goes out to bid, Dr. O’Connell reported that it does via TEC and ACCEPT.
- Dr. O’Connell introduced Paige Kolligian, Special Education PAC President for the Region.
- Ms. Doherty asked if there is a process on an ongoing basis that looks at bringing the students back in. Dr. O’Connell responded that there is, they look for a less restrictive environment when that is an option for the kids. They visit the students on site, the full evaluation is every three years, but the IEP re-evaluation is every year. The students still belong to us even when they are OOD. Ms. Spriggs spoke of the students that we have helped within the system and how they have graduated and moved on to college.

5. Strategic Direction Goals

a) Goal 1 – Academic Excellence

*Grade 1 Report--*Judy Cronin, Andrea Marchildon

- A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.
- Ms. Ringel asked if all kids know how to read when they come in September and how much variation is there in the reading levels vs. mid or end of year? Ms. Marchildon stated that it varies year to year; she had seven levels at the beginning of the year, now she has five. Ms. Cronin stated that they don't expect all the kids to be independent readers, the Kindergarten teachers do a great job, but it is a developmental skill.
- Ms. Ringel asked if full day Kindergarten gives the 1st grade teachers kids with more like abilities or will it be the same. Ms. Cronin stated that the more you give, the more they will be prepared, but it is developmental.
- The First Grade DRA Benchmark is 3 for entering, and 16 when leaving.

Full Day Kindergarten – Ms. Spriggs

- Ms. Ringel stated that this is a follow-up to last month's discussion on what would happen with the day and how we would measure success.
- Ms. Spriggs provided a handout on the Benefits of Full Day Kindergarten related to Academic Achievement, Social, Emotional, Physical and other benefits. The extra time would allow us to address the differences in how the kids come in to Kindergarten. We have the opportunity to help the kids or reinforce the instruction to make sure they have the skills they need.
- Ms. Spriggs thanked Ms. Delaney for sharing her information with Sherborn. Sherborn has voted to approve full day Kindergarten.
- Ms. Doherty asked what data is available that we can measure against at the end of next year to see if we are successful. Ms. Spriggs stated that we could look at the existing data, but it varies each year. She hopes we might see some differential, but it will vary based on what they bring in upon entry, if they are struggling and if a special need is identified during the year. She also suggested following up with the first grade teachers to see what they see after the kids come there.
- Mr. Johnson stated that he would have liked to have seen the information prior to the meeting, he cannot vote until he reviews the material. He wants to see the opportunities, where the focus will be and where the time is distributed. Ms. Spriggs apologized for the late delivery of the information and offered to share with the Committee a folder of information that she has. Ms. Spriggs stated that she will not ask the teachers to design a curriculum until this is approved. Mr. Johnson asked what we intend to do with the time, is it a straight line of today or something else like one or two areas they want to focus on. Ms. Doherty spoke about how recess is sometimes being taken away from the kids on the three half days because there is not enough time in the day, also the social competency time seems to be more limited. Ms. Cohn stated that in 1997/1998 they researched different models and that they did not have all the high standards for the different components or the assessments that we do now.
- Ms. Fattore motioned to approve full day Kindergarten starting with the 2012/ 2013 school year, Mr. Caffrey seconded. **Vote 11-28:** Ms. Fattore- yes, Ms. Doherty-yes, Mr. Caffrey-yes, Ms. Ringel-yes, Mr. Johnson- abstained.

Principal's Report:

- Dr. Nugent spoke about the Whole Teacher, professional development, the craft of teaching and their soul. We have been looking at the soul of the community.
- Monthly teaming activities are being held. We have focused on supporting teachers who are having medical issues. In January a faculty volleyball game will be held. We are focusing on places where we can laugh and reduce stress.

b) Goal 2 – Outstanding Teachers— Professional Day – Mr. Bliss

- Mr. Bliss thanked everyone for the continued support of Professional Development.
- Teachers have continued with the Skillful Teacher course sponsored by RBT.
- A Group of thirty four teachers have begun a multicultural course.
- Dr. Sam Goldstein presented an overview on Executive Functioning. Mr. Bliss expressed his thanks for the Special Education Grant funding.
- About eighty community members attended the Professional Day.
- A session was offered on Language Based Learning Differences.

- c) Goal 3 – K-12 Effective and Efficient Districts
 - FY '12 Budget Update:
 - Ms. Tague provided the revised generator cost of \$160,500 which is based on power to limited areas only.

6. Special Items/New Business

Proposed School Calendar 2012-2013

- Ms. Spriggs stated that the Superintendent brings the calendar forward in December in preparation for vote at the January Joint Meeting. A copy of the calendar is also shared with the Teacher's Association. There is a presentation that will be made at the Joint Meeting from the MOU Committee that proposes that school would be in session the Friday before Labor Day and that all Religious Holidays be eliminated. Ms. Spriggs stated that this is not something she could support with School Committee. Though it may be something the Teachers Association wants, it will be an issue with other contracts. She has been bombarded with feedback from people on the elimination of the Jewish Holidays and Good Friday.
- Ms. Fattore spoke of giving each Committee separate time to discuss this prior to the Joint Meeting. It was her understanding that the three or four other contracts did define days that are off, where as the teachers contract is wide open. Ms. Spriggs reported that the food service, custodial and secretaries support contracts are three year contracts.
- Mr. Johnson spoke of the objective of the negotiation team to improve time on learning. It was the goal of the group to go through this process for the next round of negotiations for the next cycle. Ms. Fattore spoke of it being what we can change to make the ideal academic calendar. Next September would have one full week of school the whole month if we keep it as is. The teachers that sat on that Committee spoke of September being so important and this was agreed by the majority of members on the Committee. Mr. Johnson stated that he would like to hear about the other things that were not agreed to by the majority. Mr. Johnson spoke of looking at the calendar void of any labels on vacations or holidays and the number of days or number of hours per day.
- Mr. Caffrey asked about the survey, Ms. Fattore responded that it was nixed.
- Ms. Spriggs stated that the calendar has always been controversial, some want to start later, some want to end earlier, it gets to be more complex when you open it up and try to come to consensus. Mr. Caffrey spoke of it being a sensitive issue and needing more thought before we vote in January.
- Ms. Ringel referred to the policy manual statement that you can't teach on religious holidays, which doesn't seem helpful to creating a system that teaches more. She thought we were going to do something big in the next three years to create something new and cutting edge that best educates our students. Ms. Fattore stated that was not the directive they were given to work with, in hindsight it is not the group to do what Ms. Ringel was looking for, they started out more narrowly focused. Ms. Spriggs did attend a meeting to help provide more clarity to the group.
- Mr. Johnson stated that it was a flaw in the committee design not to have a MOU member on the committee, Ms. Spriggs agreed. Ms. Ringel asked if we should revisit the structure and how we can maximize the education the kids are getting at the next Joint Meeting instead of rushing forward a proposal. Ms. Spriggs reported that Sherborn also has another idea they would like to bring to the table.
- Ms. Ringel stated that personally she sees the proposed elimination of holidays as the equivalent of going to school on Christmas. Ms. Fattore stated that we have only been taking these holidays for six years. Ms. Ringel stated that we do it now and it is deeply important to people.
- Mr. Johnson stated that many private businesses running on eight holidays with two floaters; a significant chunk of the community goes to work on those holidays. Ms. Ringel stated that the business community works during school vacations, but we have lots of vacations we can look at if we want to restructure this calendar vs. these three holidays. Ms. Fattore raised the concern about the impact to the MCAS schedule. Ms. Spriggs asked if the Committee would recommend additional time to look at this. Ms. Spriggs stated that either she or Mr. Bliss will attend the future calendar meetings. The Committee agreed they would like more time to look at this more thoroughly.

FY '13 Budget Discussion

- Ms. Spriggs thanked Ms. Tague and Ms. Ingersoll for their work on the budget and the new format.
- Ms. Tague reported that the budget is anticipated to increase by 2.88% or \$237,000 which includes full day Kindergarten, net of transportation savings.
- Salaries represent about 65% of the budget. The Benefits are on the Town's side. Mr. Johnson spoke of the savings that will also flow through to the Town as a result of the decrease in enrollment.
- The Other category goes down significantly, primarily due to the FY12 contract settlements which get reflected in FY13 as well.
- Special Education transportation increased 2.7% or \$8,000.

- Building and Grounds (non-personnel) represent the cost of the building and it is increasing approximately \$4,000 or 1%, there is a reduction in electricity of \$7,000, but another \$10,000 has been requested in the extraordinary maintenance line item due to the discussions that have taken place on what is Capital vs. Maintenance. Because of all the storms we only have \$4,000 left in FY '12 and need to defer some projects. Mr. Johnson asked what it was spent on, Ms. Tague reported that it was spent on the exit lighting, exterior lighting wiring and fire alarm issues due to the power outages. Ms. Tague reported that we still need to start the work to fill the asphalt cracks which is now estimated to cost \$10,000.
- Ms. Spriggs reported that a number of conversations have taken place around it being the school's responsibility to maintain the asphalt. Ms. Doherty asked about the landscaping, Ms. Fattore responded that it is being discussed between Parks & Recreation and the PTO. Ms. Spriggs spoke of the PTO taking on the work to weed and plant at the beginning of the school year.
- OOD tuition K-12--Mr. Caffrey asked about the budget doubling in three years. Ms. Tague stated that the Town fully funds the Special Education budget. FY '10 is after the circuit breaker, the FY '11 will be adjusted afterward. Mr. Johnson asked if we could compare apples to apples, Ms. Ringel offered to provide those figures that Ms. Tague provided for her presentation to Warrant. Ms. Spriggs stated that all of the adjustments are not included yet. Ms. Fattore asked how we already know we have three new cases. Ms. Tague reported that they are potential cases that are already being looked at. Ms. Doherty asked about the potential for students to come back in. Dr. O'Connell stated that at the moment she does not expect any students to return. Ms. Spriggs spoke of trying to keep more students in the school, besides the language based program there phenomenal things being done here to keep those students here. It has a direct impact to the operating budget.
- Mr. Johnson asked about a data request that looks at cost drivers for running the building vs. population trends to see how we manage the costs vs. declining student enrollment. He also asked if we should establish ratios for Classroom Aides so we have a policy/parameters to look at during the budget cycle. We have a lead teacher policy and should have a similar one for the aide's as well. If it varies by grade level we document why so we all understand what the ratios are. Ms. Spriggs stated that she, Mr. Bliss and Ms. Tague are working on the graph that he requested, but they have a couple questions. Mr. Johnson stated that he would like FY '13, FY '12 forecast, FY '11, FY '10 so that we can see the trends and see how the mix of costs are changing so that we can show the costs don't come down in a linear fashion as the enrollment declines, though some of the staffing costs will come down, other will not such as Principal and Librarian.
- Mr. Caffrey asked about breaking out the Special Education costs separately.
- Ms. Doherty asked about looking further back to when the Town was at its peak. Ms. Spriggs offered to have the data ready for the January meeting. Ms. Doherty asked if the Administration salaries are allocated by enrollment or fixed, Ms. Tague responded that they are fixed, but the allocations vary by position.
- Ms. Fattore referred to the \$20,000 we added back to the classroom supplies budget; we may have some savings there.
- Ms. Spriggs stated that a 2.88% first run is great, it hasn't been an easy budget and they have been respectful of the Town's direction. Mr. Johnson asked about the RAF issues, the host of things related to people coming back and the new staff we would like not to lose. How do we make sure we have the best sources in the building? Ms. Spriggs responded that it is not an issue of seniority in the contract but an issue of performance.
- Ms. Spriggs stated that in January she will be asking for Extra Compensatory requests for next year's budget.
- Ms. Ringel requested a motion to approve Draft 1 of the FY '13 Budget. Ms. Fattore motioned, Mr. Caffrey seconded. ***Vote 11-29: Unanimous***

7. Future Business

Dover School Committee Agenda—January 17th

- Ms. Ringel requested that the meeting begin at 7:00pm.
- Agenda Items--Extra Compensatory Requests, 2nd Grade Presentation, Fixed Cost Spreadsheet/Budget Round 2, Full Day Kindergarten, Policy recommendation on classroom aides ratios.

8. Routine Business

- a) Enrollments as of December 1, 2011—reports included in packet.
- b) Subcommittee Reports –Ms. Fattore reported that TEC is going through a strategic planning process.

9. **Adjournment**—Ms. Ringel requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Johnson motioned, Mr. Caffrey seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deb Savastano