

NASHOBA REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

January 27, 2005

School Committee in Attendance: Nancy Fleming, Don Adams, Tricia Kelly, Chris Way, Cathy Giunta, Ellen Sturgis, Mary Beth Yentz, Monica CampoBasso, Ex-Officio Member Kristin Squires

Absent: None

Administration in Attendance: Michael Wood, Superintendent; John Antonucci, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance; Ken Tucker, Florence Sawyer School Principal; John Smith, Nashoba Regional High School Principal; Jeremy Roche, Nashoba Regional High School Assistant Principal; Ron Larrivee, Pompositticut/Center Schools Principal; Linda Winin, Pompositticut/Center Schools Assistant Principal; Bill Spratt, Director of Facilities; Patricia Linenkemper, Mary Rowlandson School Principal; Patrick Perkins, Assistant Principal of both Rowlandson and Burbank Schools; Samuel Pawlak, Luther Burbank Middle School Principal; Lois Ducharme, Director of Special Education; Sally Sullivan, Director of Teaching and Learning; Margaret Morgan, Hale Middle School Principal; Ann Farrell, Nurse Leader; Joel Bates, Florence Sawyer School Assistant Principal and Janet Milliken, Florence Sawyer School Assistant Principal.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Fleming called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION

Chris Way made a motion to approve the minutes of January 13, 2005 as amended. Seconded by Monica CampoBasso. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

| <u>WARRANT NO.</u> | <u>DATE</u> | <u>DESCRIPTION</u> | <u>AMOUNT</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1045 | 01/28/05 | VENDOR | 359,075.06 |
| 1046 | 01/28/05 | BENEFIT | 507,728.52 |
| 1047 | 01/28/05 | PAYROLL | 897,301.60 |

MOTION

Cathy Giunta made a motion to approve the warrants as detailed in the memo dated 01/27/05 and noted above. Seconded by Don Adams. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

Ms. Giunta, Warrant Subcommittee Chair, discussed the Cash Flow Projection prepared by District Treasurer, Charlotte Noponen. The Cash Flow Projection reflects all of the cash that the District has in the bank. Ms. Fleming commented that cash flow is much better since the towns have agreed to pay their assessments quarterly.

CORRESPONDENCE

NEASC Finding on Supervision - Letter from John Smith – A copy of a memo reporting administration and faculty response to the NEASC finding which concerns lack of supervision of students was distributed. The faculty has agreed to provide study supervision in the cafeteria throughout the school day for the remainder of the year. This is being done within the parameters of the Unit A contract of 25% of a teacher's time unassigned. Ms. Yentz would like to see more discussion on this issue.

Approval of Technology Plan – A copy of the letter from Commissioner Driscoll approving the District Technology Plan was distributed.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Today Mr. Wood and Mr. Antonucci attended the MASS (Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents) Mid-Winter Meeting. Governor Romney spoke to the group about his just released FY06 Budget. Mr. Wood discussed the highlights of the budget that will impact this district as outlined by Dave Tobin of the MASS. SPED Circuit Breaker funds will increase. K Expansion, Regional Transportation, and Non-Resident Transportation will be level funded. This is an early representation and all of the Governor’s recommendations must be approved by the house and senate.

There is action before the house at this time addressing Lancaster’s tax base; specifically the large number of publicly owned properties that do not pay taxes in the town.

There was flooding at the Nashoba Regional High School over the week which affected 16-18 rooms. It was discovered at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday evening. The cause of the pipe burst appears to be a recent redesign of the venting door on the roof which is letting in too much air. Mr. Spratt and a group of four or five custodians worked until 1:00 a.m. Monday morning and then that night until 11:00 p.m. to prepare the rooms for classes on Tuesday. Mr. Wood thought it best to close the whole District for the day to save an additional day of buses after the other schools have closed for the year. We have put in a claim with our insurance company and Mr. Antonucci believes that we have a \$1,000 deductible.

Mr. Wood discussed the inclement weather day on Wednesday, January 26th. He checked the climate conditions at 4:00 a.m. and there was no snow activity. Early reports stated that we would receive 2 – 4 inches of light dry snow. This did not present a problem. Unfortunately, the early reports were incorrect and by the time the heavy snow began to fall, it was too late to cancel school for the day. It was a tough day and there was one bus unable to do its pick-ups due to traffic. Connect Ed could not be used for a single bus route delay because of time constraints in setting the system up to get the word out.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Early Childhood Committee

Ms. Maxfield introduced Dr. Alan Bernstein, who has conducted an evaluation of the full day kindergarten pilot. Dr. Bernstein surveyed parents of students who participated in the full day kindergarten pilot, parents of all first graders, kindergarten and first grade teachers. Teachers’ assessments of first grade readiness measured cognitive, emotional, social, and physical readiness. Analyses of this data failed to yield any advantages favoring either a full-day or half-day kindergarten program choice of one over the other. The parents’ assessment of these skills resulted in the same finding. A majority of parents felt that full day kindergarten should be offered but that it should remain optional. There was a concern that the 2 hour and 45 minutes half day class was too short and the full day too long. When kindergarten and first grade teachers were asked to respond to a series of questions about kindergarten programming, both groups answered that individual differences in children were the key factor in determining which type of programming would be of greater benefit for a given child. It was recommended that the District continue to offer the option of a half or full day of kindergarten, review the length of the day in both the half day and full day programs, review the methods for granting tuition assistance, consider evaluating students during pre-kindergarten screening to make recommendations about the best program for each child, and to review the lottery method of student selection. Ms. Maxfield informed the Committee that if it is determined in screening that a child has needs that require a full day placement, she has strategies in place. For instance, some children profit from the repetition of attending a morning and afternoon session of kindergarten because of their particular needs. The Committee would like the study to be done again and it was suggested that an assessment be done when these students are in the third or fourth grades when standardized tests results can be included. Ms. Way

stated that if a full day of kindergarten is offered to all kindergarten students, Pompositticut Elementary School will have a space issue.

Ex-officio Report by *Kristin Squires*

Ms. Squires updated the Committee on the high school activities. Sunday, June 5, 2005 is Graduation Day for the Class of 2005. Students are glad that mid-terms are over and that the second semester is beginning. The snow has been wreaking havoc on the winter sports schedule. Most of the winter teams have a record of about 500 and are working hard trying to qualify for tournaments. There are only a couple of weeks left in the season. The Boys' Basketball team has been beaten by less than three points in their last three games and is looking forward to meeting these teams a second time. Girls' Basketball is also going well and the Girls' Freshman Basketball Team is undefeated. The Ice Hockey and Wrestling teams, which are co-ops with Clinton, are also doing well. It is ironic that the ski teams have had to cancel races due to snow but they are also doing well. Guidance continues to be busy with acceptance letters and scholarship application forms. Quinsigamond College accepted 21 students today. The Kaplan SAT course for juniors is starting next week. The Adam Frey Concert was a huge success. Over \$2,000 was raised for the Michael Magazu Memorial Fund. All-state Music Auditions are January 29, 2005 and many have qualified to audition. Two clubs have formed; a Book Club and a Science and Engineering Club. Each meets weekly. The class plays will be held on Friday, January 28, 2005. Several classrooms have been out of use due to the flood but there has been little disruption to classes. Classes are meeting in empty classrooms. The Relay for Life has been rescheduled to June 10th and 11th due to a conflict in May. The CPR Marathon was a huge success raising \$4,325. The event was heavily covered by the media and the students are in the process of getting final signatures to send in to The Guinness Book of World Records. Ms. Squires brought forward a couple of concerns on behalf of the Student Council. The first is the condition of the parking lot. Students are paying a higher fee this year and the parking lot is icy and there is very little sand in the parking areas. Ms. Squires did talk to Mr. Smith about it and he said that he would contact Mr. Spratt, to see if this situation could be corrected. The second student concern is the mid-term schedule. At present students take two 2 hour mid-terms in the morning and then attend classes in the afternoon. This leaves them little time to prepare for the next day's tests. Students believe that they would perform better on these exams which may count as much as a final if they were scheduled as the finals are with morning testing and release after the second exam. Mr. Smith explained that there may be time-on-learning issues with this. This is an important issue to many students and the Committee is asked to keep it in mind with any future scheduling.

Stow School Building Committee by *Chris Way*

The Committee met on January 18, 2005. The Committee is trying to pursue land options but there are limited choices. They authorized the payment of the last bill for Pompositticut renovations which was the installation of the carpet. They will meet again on February 7, 2005.

Transportation Subcommittee by *Ellen Sturgis*

The Subcommittee met this afternoon. They reviewed the bids received on January 21, 2005 and the low bid in particular. The low bidder, First Student, was the low bidder for a two tiered plan as we have now but was not the low bidder if the district needed to go to a 3 tier system. Because this is a multi-year contract, this is a great concern. Mr. Antonucci will discuss the situation with the perceived low bidder and report back to the Committee. They will meet again on Wednesday, February 2, 2005 at 7:30 a.m. in the Office of the Superintendent to determine next steps.

User Fee Subcommittee by *Tricia Kelly*

The Subcommittee met on January 20, 2005. They voted to keep the high school user fee for FY06 the same at \$150 per student, per sport, without a family cap. Raising the middle school user fee from \$55 per student, per sport, to \$75 per student, per sport, without a family cap in order to fund uniform and equipment requests was discussed. The Subcommittee decided that prior to voting on this fee; Mr. Wood and Mr. Antonucci will ask the administrators what their specific needs are. At a future meeting, the

subcommittee will also discuss the pros and cons of instituting a fee for all other activities. The \$150 high school user fee was used in calculating the Superintendent's Recommended FY06 Budget and has maintained the athletic program at the high school. The Committee will postpone this vote until all of the user fee recommendations can be made.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Second Quarter Financials

Mr. Antonucci discussed the second quarter financial update dated January 24, 2004 with results of operations through January 19, 2005. He identified three potential areas of savings; Health Insurance, Unemployment Insurance, SPED Out of District Tuitions and Collaboratives. Areas to monitor for the remainder of the year are; School Choice Tuition-Out Assessment, Salaries and Heating Fuel. Mr. Antonucci will conduct bi-weekly analysis of the salary accounts. He is uncertain of the status of the snow removal account but will have those figures for the February 10th meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Professional Development and 2005-2006 School Calendar

Mr. Wood has combined these two items on the agenda because the calendar is for students, community and our professional pursuits. After meeting with parents, faculty and administrators, the calendar has a few significant changes. The first change is the starting date of students. It is after Labor Day. Because the weeks before school are so hectic for the administrative offices and administrators in the hiring process, preparing for new staff and the staff development days, it makes better sense to start school after Labor Day. This may not be possible every year but when possible the District should start at this time. The next issue is the switching of professional development early release days from Wednesdays to Fridays. Although Mr. Wood prefers Wednesdays to Fridays, he does not think that it is critical to the success of the District's professional development program. Staff and parents prefer Fridays for a number of reasons. Teachers are noting that the Wednesday afternoon early releases are creating a start/stop attitude mid-week for most students. Parents say that it is easier to make day care arrangements on a Friday afternoon and the consistency of every other week makes for easier planning. The third change is that parent conference days will consist of one day and one evening only. For the second year in a row, no religious holidays are observed. Mid-year switch of the kindergarten sessions was discussed as it was noted as a hardship for parents. Mr. Wood will discuss it with the Administrative Council. Ms. Kelly and Ms. CampoBasso feel that it is too early in the professional development focus to make any changes. It is felt that teachers and parents have not had enough time to get used to these ideas. They prefer that these sessions stay on Wednesdays when staff is more focused. Wednesdays will allow teachers to share and discuss with their colleagues. They are already seeing differentiated instructional strategies implemented and feel that if we communicate better with the community about the instruction that teachers are receiving the entire program will be better received. She would like to have the professional development documentation that she received today put on the website. Mr. Adams feels that consistency is the key. Mr. Wood stated that the quality of the professional development is the reason for this change, not the day of the week.

MOTION

Don Adams made a motion to continue New Business after 9:00 p.m. Seconded by Ellen Sturgis.
VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.

Carole Makary of Stow participated in the discussion of the Wednesday early release days last year as a School Committee member. She is pleased with the clean look of the calendar but believes that there are layers of issues with Wednesdays. They appear to be sporadic in nature and short notice was given to many. She feels that there would be a better acceptance this year once people have gotten used to it. Helene Katz of Stow discussed the celebration of Jewish Holidays and the calendar. Although the district has a policy concerning no homework, no tests, and no introduction of new material on Religious Holidays, it is not being implemented consistently or at all in some cases. This puts the Jewish student at

a disadvantage as they must choose between their religion and their education. A parent reported that her daughter was asked if she was Jewish so that the teacher could plan for a Jewish Holiday approaching. She went on to say that it seems that these students are always trying to catch up after the fact as no one is implementing the district policy. She agrees that this is a complicated policy to enforce. She also feels that the district calendar does not address the goal of differentiation at all. Darcy Mickus has three children in the district and she stated that there have been cross country meets and math tests on Yom Kippur. Children have to make difficult choices about whether to attend services or school. Johnna Doyle of Lancaster was pleased that Mr. Wood listened to the parents and tried to please them in the planning of the calendar. She feels that there is no loss of educational benefit by moving the early release days to Friday. The teachers are professionals and they should have the same energy level and enthusiasm whether they are teaching a class or taking a class on Friday or on Wednesday. This calendar addresses a lot of issues parents and teachers have. She remains concerned about the number of early release days but at least some of the parents' concerns are being heard and she appreciates that. Jean Campbell of Stow stated that she didn't care which day is chosen but that she would like to see the absenteeism rate if these early release days are held on Fridays. She would also like to be told the content of the professional development day as a parent. The calendar will be voted on at the February 10, 2005 meeting.

Hale Middle School Improvement Plan

Ms. Margaret Morgan, Principal of the Hale Middle School presented the Hale Middle School School Improvement Plan 2005-2006. Focus areas of the plan are the core values, mission and belief statement and the accomplishment of the three major goals. These goals are: Goal #1) to prepare our students for academic success and emotional well-being during their high school tenure and beyond. Goal #2) to provide a comfortable, safe, and respectful school environment so that all members of the school community may thrive. Goal #3) to strengthen school-community ties. The Hale School Advisory Council's core values were reworded so that they read: Respect Yourself, Respect Each Other, and Respect Your Environment. A mission statement which is based on these core values was also developed this year for the Hale Middle School. Ms. Morgan was complimented by Stow Selectman Kathy Farrell for her professionalism, effectiveness and energy as Principal at Hale.

Superintendent's Recommended FY 06 Budget

Mr. Wood presented his Recommended Budget for FY 06, "Building Capacity for Change". Priorities addressed in the budget are: 1] Program availability at Nashoba 2] Class Size Stability (PK-12), and 3] Professional Development – Focused, responsive and timely. This budget builds on last year's zero based budget; applying priorities to our needs, and continues a multi-year planning process to address identified needs with a lower priority. At this time the recommended budget totals \$35,321,981 or a 9.24% increase over the FY 05 budget. Ms. Yentz asked if it was possible to have the amount of the increase due to increased enrollment broken out as this is an area over which we have no control. Mr. Wood stated that at the elementary level all of the increases with the exception of health instruction are enrollment driven. The budget will be discussed in detail over the next few weeks and Committee members were asked to email any questions that they may have to the superintendent so that he can be prepared to answer those in open session. He stated that the revenue figures are the least confirmed that we have. In the Governor's Budget we are flat funded and we understand that the minimum contribution figures are being reviewed.

CITIZEN INPUT

Dave Lindsay of the Bolton Advisory Council asked why the percentages of increase in the town assessments are all higher than the percentage of increase in the recommended budget. Mr. Antonucci explained that the percentages are not calculated in the same way. He will share the calculation formula with Mr. Lindsay. All of the assessment numbers are soft at this time.

Bill Joss of Stow Concerned Citizens noted that there was a 1.1 million increase on the existing teachers' salaries. He wondered what that percentage of increase in teachers' salaries was. Mr. Wood answered this question by saying that there are a variety of figures which impact that amount and a variety of staff. A settlement amount is not a factor in that figure.

Mr. Joss would like a copy of the projected enrollment and how he may get access to one of the administrative budget books. There will be a budget book in each town office and one will be available for public review in the superintendent's office. The enrollment figures will be posted on the web along with the budget numbers.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

Mary Beth Yentz made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Monica CampoBasso. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen McKinstry
Executive Assistant