

NASHOBA REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 10, 2005

School Committee in Attendance: Nancy Fleming, Don Adams, Tricia Kelly, Chris Way, Cathy Giunta, Ellen Sturgis, Mary Beth Yentz, Monica CampoBasso

Absent: Ex-Officio Member Kristin Squires

Administration in Attendance: Michael Wood, Superintendent; John Antonucci, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Fleming called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION

Don Adams made a motion to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining and to include Superintendent Michael Wood and Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance John Antonucci. Seconded by Cathy Giunta. **In Favor:** Nancy Fleming, Don Adams, Tricia Kelly, Chris Way, Mary Beth Yentz, Ellen Sturgis, Cathy Giunta, Monica CampoBasso **Opposed:** None **VOTED AND PASSED.**

The Committee reconvened in open session at 6:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 10, 2005 MINUTES

MOTION

Chris Way made a motion to approve the minutes of February 10, 2005 as amended. Seconded by Don Adams. **In Favor:** Don Adams, Tricia Kelly, Chris Way, Mary Beth Yentz, Ellen Sturgis, Cathy Giunta **Abstain:** Monica CampoBasso (not present at that meeting). **VOTED AND PASSED.**

APPROVAL OF THE WARRANTS OF FEBRUARY 25, 2005 AND MARCH 10, 2005

The School Committee has two sets of warrants to approve this evening. The first set of warrants dated February 25, 2005 were approved by the Warrant Subcommittee as the date occurred outside of regularly scheduled school committee meetings.

<u>WARRANT NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
1052	02/25/05	VENDOR	260,284.66
1053	02/25/05	BENEFIT	494,187.55
1054	02/25/05	PAYROLL	948,925.71
1055	02/25/05	BENEFIT	685.09
1056	03/11/05	VENDOR	417,749.64
1057	03/11/05	BENEFIT	28,521.19
1058	03/11/05	PAYROLL	862,176.26

MOTION

Cathy Giunta made a motion to approve the warrants as detailed in the memos dated 02/24/05 and 3/10/05 and noted above. Seconded by Don Adams. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

CORRESPONDENCE

Certified Excess and Deficiency Funds - A letter from James Johnson, Director of Accounts at the Department of Revenue, was shared that certified the amount of unencumbered excess and deficiency funds/surplus revenue available on July 1, 2004 as \$840,874.

Pamela Kurtzer Calendar Letter – A letter concerning the school calendar and the inclusion of High Holy Days.

Barbara and Craig Michaelsen – A letter concerning the school calendar and the inclusion of High Holy Days.

Ava Cohen Gross – A letter concerning the inclusion of Good Friday and the High Holy Days in the school calendar.

Suburban Coalition – Invitation to School Committee members to attend the Legislative Breakfast on Tuesday, April 5, 2005 at the State House in Boston at 9:00 a.m.

Richard Martin – Letter concerning the amount of the budget increase and concern that there was not full disclosure in the fiscal crisis. Mr. Wood will respond.

MASC Day on the Hill – MASC Day on the Hill is scheduled for April 26, 2005.

Soccer Celebration – The State Champion Girls' Soccer Team will be honored at a reception on Tuesday, March 15, 2005 at 7:15 at the high school. Mr. Richards is organizing this event and the team will be invited to a school committee meeting in the near future.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Wood mentioned the full day professional development day scheduled for March 11, 2005. Also, the first change made to this year's school calendar is approaching on Wednesday, March 23, 2005. This will be an early release day for parent conferences in grades PK-8 as will Thursday, March 24, 2005. Friday, March 25, 2005 will be a full day of school. The Freshmen Math League finished second in the final competition of the Worcester County Math League.

Tri-Town Meeting of March 2, 2005

Mr. Wood reported that there is a Tri-town group being formed that will address regional school building needs. At the present time, there is a major property in Bolton that is coming on the market, Future Electronics. It is over 300,000 square feet and is in immaculate condition. It is being investigated to see if there is a way for the district to take advantage of this property's availability. Perhaps it could be purchased through a private/public trust, and leased to one of our towns that need space for PK-8 enrollment or offices or in some other way. Ms. Yentz is concerned that Lancaster just built a school and renovated another and that they would be paying for this new building. It is still in the discussion stages. Tri-Town also discussed the changes to the regional agreement that define capital projects. There is a discrepancy in the regional agreement for apportionment of costs, whereby assessments are based on a five year rolling average enrollment and capital is based on a single year's October 1 enrollment. Tri-town officials agreed that they believe that both should be based on a five year rolling average. Mr. Wood will seek the input of counsel and include this in the warrant article requesting amendment of the regional agreement.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Advisory Board by Ms. Fleming

There will be a Finance Advisory Board meeting on Monday, March 14, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. in the Office of the Superintendent.

Policy Subcommittee by Ms. Fleming

There will be a meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2005 at 3:15 p.m. in the office of the Superintendent.

Stow School Building Committee by Ms. Way

Ms. Way reported on the February 22, 2005 meeting. The group discussed the Future Electronics building in Bolton previously discussed by Mr. Wood. They also discussed allocation of the remaining funds that were earmarked for use of the Stow School Building Committee. They asked to retain \$150,000 for possible use as fees for purchase of land, a conceptual plan and architect fees. They met again on March 7th and determined that the Kane property has enough land to build a PK-5 school. A fourth article discussing their progress is being prepared for the newspapers. This group will not be sponsoring a warrant article for the spring town meeting.

Transportation Subcommittee by Ms. Sturgis

After two rounds of bids, the Committee is recommending the low bidder of Dee Bus Service, Inc. as the District's transportation provider for the next three years. This is a family owned company that has an excellent reputation.

MOTION

Ellen Sturgis made a motion that the Superintendent enters into a three year contract with Dee Bus Service, Inc. according to the pricing schedule as outlined in Appendix B, Item 9, dated February 28, 2005. Seconded by Tricia Kelly. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

FINANCIAL REPORT

Transfer 05-02

Mr. Antonucci asks the Committee to approve a transfer of \$50,000 from the General Repairs account of the Facilities budget to the Heating Fuel account. This is to cover an impending deficit. Although Mr. Spratt has managed the heating software system extremely efficiently this year and reduced the amount of fuel used, the price has gone up significantly. This transfer should carry us through the end of the fiscal year. Barring any unforeseen events, the general repairs fund will be okay.

MOTION

Mary Beth Yentz made a motion to accept the recommended budget transfer 05-02 dated March 10, 2005 transferring \$50,000 from the general repairs account to the heating fuel account. Seconded by Monica CampoBasso. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS CONTINUED

Ex-Officio Report by Ms. Sturgis

Ms. Squires is absent from tonight's meeting so that she may attend the MASC Spring Leadership Conference at the Cape. She prepared a written report of high school activities which Ms. Sturgis read. Underclassmen have registered for next year's classes and junior have begun the college application process by enrolling on the software program Naviance. Leah Shoer, a national merit finalist, has been nominated for the Worcester Telegram and Gazette achievement award. In music news, the Jazz Band A received a gold medal at the annual IAJE festival and Jazz Band B received a bronze medal. The Chorus Concert on March 3rd went well and all non-jazz band and chorus groups are preparing for the MICCA competition on April 2nd and 3rd. Spring sport try-outs will take place in two weeks. The Student Council will sponsor a blood drive on March 14th and sponsored the volleyball tournament. Habitat for

Humanity will work on March 19th and the 26th. Nashoba Regional High School seniors from Stow talked to Stow grade 5 DARE students last month about making good choices. In the art department, senior Drew Milligan won a gold key at the Boston Scholastic art competition and his piece, a chain mail dress, will now be displayed in New York. Greg Vierakant won a room design contest and Joya Smith and Sean McCarthy will represent Nashoba at the art all-state weekend at Clark University. Destination Imagination teams will compete on March 12, 2005 at the Ayer High school complex. There are three from the high school and six in the district. Amnesty International will sponsor a fund raiser trivia contest and travel to a "Get on the Bus" protest day in New York City on April 25th.

NEW BUSINESS

Mary Rowlandson Elementary School Improvement Plan

MOTION

Mary Beth Yentz made a motion to approve the Mary Rowlandson Elementary School Improvement Plan presented to the School Committee on February 17, 2005. Seconded by Don Adams. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

Appointment to Collaborative Executive Boards

The Nashoba Regional School District belongs to three collaboratives: CASE (Concord Area Special Education Collaborative), FLLAC (Fitchburg, Lunenburg, Leominster, Ayer and Clinton Collaborative), and the Assabet Valley Collaborative. The Executive Boards of these collaboratives require the School Committee to appoint a representative. In the future, this appointment will be made when appointments to subcommittees are made.

MOTION

Don Adams made a motion to appoint Michael Wood to the collaborative executive boards of the following collaboratives FLLAC, Assabet Valley and CASE. Seconded by Monica CampoBasso. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

Mabel Hale Fund Donation

Ms. Sturgis, as the Committee's representative to the Mabel Hale fund, has been researching the fund. \$35,000 was left in the will of Mabel Hale for the use of the Hale School. As outlined in the will, a Mabel Hale Committee makes recommendations for expenditures of these funds to the School Committee who must then approve. The gazebo at the Hale Middle School has been vandalized and Timothy Bolton, as his Eagle Scout project, has volunteered to repair it. The cost of materials is \$200.00 and Principal Morgan asks that this money be donated from the Mabel Hale Fund.

MOTION

Ellen Sturgis made a motion to approve \$200 from the Mabel Hale Fund to be paid to Timothy Bolton for materials to fix the damaged gazebo at Hale Middle School. Seconded by Chris Way. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

Adoption of the FY 06 School Budget

Ms. Fleming outlined the process the Committee used to arrive at the final recommended budget for FY 06. After weeks of presentations by department heads and principals, and deliberations in workshops, the Committee has once again agreed upon a needs based budget. The focus areas of this year's budget were the restoration of necessary programs at the high school, grade appropriate class size, and professional development for staff. The Superintendent's recommended budget was at a 9.24% increase. The Committee asked administrators to calculate how reductions of 1%, 2% and 3% of this amount would impact the schools. At the last workshop on March 8, 2005, the Committee was in full agreement that they would support the budget recommendation of \$34,494,663 for FY 06, an increase of 6.68%. Ms. Sturgis asked that it be noted that she is still concerned about full day kindergarten tuition and that it is

well under the comparable rate in the Stow area. She is concerned that this program is not state mandated and because we subsidize this program by providing classroom, equipment and supplies, other programs are harmed. It was agreed at the previous workshop that a tuition comparison will be conducted. Ms. Way stated that full day kindergarten is only a piece of the overcrowding problem at the Pompositicut School and this space issue preexisted. Excess and Deficiency funds are being used as a revenue source during the budget cycle as is appropriate.

Mr. Bill Joss of the Stow Concerned Citizens asked about the status of collective bargaining and how it might impact the budget. Mr. Wood stated that this is the budget that we must live within once it is voted. Ms. Fleming stated that people are still at the table negotiating responsibly.

Mr. Brian Burke of Stow asked if the Committee was confident that the Finance Advisory Board would approve the use of the E&D Funds. It was explained that this is the responsible thing to do. As long as we replenish we can use during the budget cycle.

MOTION

Don Adams made a motion to accept the proposed FY 06 operating budget of \$34,494,663 as outlined in the Program and Location Summary dated March 10, 2005. Seconded by Monica CampoBasso. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

FY 06 District Budget Town Warrant Articles

The towns have requested warrant articles for the spring town meeting from each department. Mr. Wood has drafted general language articles that do not include the actual assessments. Actual assessments will not be determined until the state budget is more firm.

MOTION

Chris Way made a motion to adopt the general language outlined in the memo concerning Warrant Articles for Town Meeting dated March 10, 2005. Seconded by Tricia Kelly. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS.**

OLD BUSINESS

2005-2006 School Calendar

Mr. Wood discussed draft 6 of the 2005-2006 school calendar. The change in this calendar is that all students will begin on Tuesday, September 6, 2005 rather than just students in PK-9. Although, the DOE gives specific direction concerning freshmen orientation, it must be an additional day to the 180 day requirement for all students. Mr. Smith and Mr. Roche will have a recommendation concerning freshmen orientation at a future meeting. Mr. Wood reported that 19 staff members have requested Good Friday off so far and that eleven took personal leave on the High Holy Days in October.

Pam Kurtzer wanted to impress upon everyone how it felt to be a minority, not be included or respected and not feel welcome. She felt this calendar supported these feelings.

Gary Horowitz encouraged members to vote against the proposed calendar because our current policy addressing observance of religious holidays is seriously flawed. He suggests that the Committee adopt a policy observing Good Friday and Yom Kippur as religious holidays with no school and suggested how this could be accomplished.

Ms. Fleming stated that the Committee often votes not for what is right or wrong but what is best. Ms. Sturgis felt that diversity must be discussed in the schools and lack of understanding cannot be changed with a school calendar. Ms. CampoBasso remains concerned about attendance on early release Fridays and she would like these figures next year. The Policy Subcommittee will be studying the current policy

dealing with religious observances. At present, no new concepts can be taught or tests or quizzes given on school days with religious observances.

Mr. Horowitz feels that it should either be a day of school or not and that this middle ground is not good.

Ms. Kathy McHale, Foreign Language Teacher at the high school resents that there is an impression that there is nothing going on in school on these days when school is in session but High Holy Days are being observed. She also did not like the innuendo that teachers take many Fridays off if there is a Professional Development Day. She feels that Fridays are more relaxed for teachers to learn when they do not have to prepare for the next day.

MOTION

Ellen Sturgis made a motion that the Committee accepts Draft 6 of the 2005-2006 School Calendar. Seconded by Cathy Giunta. **In Favor:** Don Adams, Chris Way, Mary Beth Yentz, Ellen Sturgis, Cathy Giunta, Monica CampoBasso. **Opposed:** Tricia Kelly. **VOTED AND PASSED.**

CITIZEN INPUT

None.

Ms. Sturgis asked if future meetings could be held at the high school in the media center as the space was more comfortable for all than the superintendent's office.

Ms. Fleming complimented Ms. McHale on the Foreign Language buffet held at the high school on Wednesday. Ms. McHale said that each of the 650-700 foreign language students brought a dish and that it was enjoyed by all.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen McKinstry
Executive Assistant