

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.

Special School Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 28, 2011

School Committee Chambers – District Office

6:00 p.m.

Members

Val Gilman, Chairperson
Melissa Teixeira, Vice Chairperson
Kathleen Clancy, Secretary
Roger Garberg
Michelle Sweet (*6:15 arrival*)
Tony Gross (*left 6:50*)

Administration Present

Interim Superintendent Dr. Joseph Connelly
Assistant Superintendent Shayne Trubisz
CFO Tom Markham
Debra Lucey, O'Maley School Principal
Jean Perry, West Parish Principal
Ellen Sibley, Beeman Principal
Bill Goodwin, GHS Principal
Gregg Bach, East Gloucester Principal
Tammy Morgan, Plum Cove Principal
Ann McCarthy, Preschool Director

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gilman called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Chairperson Gilman asked Jared Gilman to lead the salute to the flag. She then stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools, thanked Cape Ann TV for covering the meeting, and recognized Debra Lucey, Ellen Sibley, Gregg Bach, Jean Perry, Tammy Morgan, Andrea Pretzler, Ann McCarthy, Leslie Sarofeen from One Gloucester, several members of AFSCME-B, Shayne Trubisz, Tom Markham, and Fran Quinn from the Gloucester Daily Times. Chairperson Gilman noted that Mayor Kirk will not be at the meeting and that Michelle Sweet will be late.

III. DISCUSSION

- A. Continue Deliberations on Proposed FY 2012 Budget** – Dr. Connelly indicated that in preparation for Wednesday night's public hearing, the summary budget has been expanded to include more detail in each category. He stated that the Draft 2 budget reflects the actions taken by the School Committee at the March 7th and March 16th meetings. However, since that time, the mayor has reaffirmed that the School Department will be required to function next year with a level funded budget. Therefore, the School Committee may face the need in the future to cut the budget by another \$684,752. Dr. Connelly reiterated that all school officials recognize that all of the reductions are harmful but have tried to identify the cuts that will have the least impact on the quality of education.

Note: Committee Member Michelle Sweet and GHS Principal Bill Goodwin joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Chairperson Gilman itemized the Tier II budget reductions, and Dr. Connelly reviewed them in detail. He stated that the elimination of the teaching positions would not have an effect on class sizes due to a decrease in enrollment next year. With respect to the elimination of a SPED teacher, Dr. Connelly indicated that both JoAnne Reiss and Cherylann Parker feel they can get by with three resource rooms instead of four and still service students effectively.

Debra Lucey addressed the elimination of an ELA teacher at O'Maley, which will result in 21 students per class due to a decrease in enrollment. She stated that we will still be in compliance. There was a discussion about how students feel about being in a smaller house than the others at the middle school and the elimination of a PE/health teacher.

Dr. Connelly stated that he does not anticipate any action at tonight's meeting. However, since the School Committee may get questions at the public hearing on further cuts that may be necessary, the purpose of tonight's meeting is to discuss the Tier II cuts. He stated that these reductions are recommendations from the leadership team as cuts that are more harmful than the tier one least harmful cuts voted on to date. However, the School Committee is free to consider other options.

Dr. Connelly indicated that over the next few weeks, he anticipates getting resignations and further retirements and will bring them forward immediately. He stated that there may be another \$100,000 in savings due to staff changes.

A discussion was held on early retirement incentives being used in place of Tier II reductions. Dr. Connelly stated that since most of the positions are critical positions that would need to be filled if a person retires, the only savings would be the difference between the outgoing person's salary and the incoming person's salary.

Note: School Committee Member Tony Gross left the meeting at 6:50 p.m. to attend another meeting.

Dr. Goodwin addressed the elimination of the clerical position and history and biology teachers at the high school. Dr. Connelly reiterated that the leadership team does not support any of the reductions unless proven to be absolutely necessary.

Kathy Clancy read the memorandum from Mayor Kirk to the School Committee regarding the FY12 budget status. Dr. Connelly addressed how the health insurance modification would affect the Tier II reductions. Ms. Teixeira indicated that the Public Employees Committee is meeting on Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. to continue the health insurance discussion.

There was a discussion about the MEDEX Retired line item. Mr. Markham stated that because this line item has been historically underfunded, the large increase is based on what we anticipate spending this year with a known increase of benefits going forward next year.

A discussion was held on the requirement to give employees “pink slips” by April 15th. This date will be researched in all contracts. Dr. Connelly indicated that we should try to give any employee that could be impacted the earliest notification possible and that we also have to abide by the contractual date of notification. He is in the process of identifying the least senior employees (noontime supervisors, paraprofessionals, nurses and teachers) and recommends notifying them as soon as possible. Mrs. Sweet questioned whether performance reviews are being considered in addition to seniority, and Dr. Connelly responded that we must abide by what is contained in the contracts.

The following matters were also discussed:

- Planning time for specialists at the elementary schools.
- Seniority bumping and the learning curve for a replacement person

B. Consider Further Budget Reduction Action to “Tier II” Cuts – The School Committee agreed to respect Dr. Connelly’s recommendation that no action be taken on further reductions at tonight’s meeting.

Dr. Connelly stated that the people identified on Tier II are not yet aware that their positions may be eliminated. The principals were notified of all three tiers of reductions, but names were not discussed. It was reminded that the School Committee voted to table Tier III cuts. Dr. Connelly will work with the principals to give out the notices by the required date on the contracts.

Since this meeting allowed the committee to request input from the staff on positions in Tier II, Chairperson Gilman agreed to allow community member and One Gloucester advocate, Leslie Sarofeen, to be recognized. Ms. Sarofeen suggested that the School Committee put this budget consideration forward at the public hearing in the context of the long history of reductions in the district beginning in 2002. She believes it is critically important to the budget consideration because hundreds of positions from 2002 forward have been eliminated, and the public needs to understand this history. She also stated that when you take away the paraprofessionals, teaching and learning is impacted because the teachers’ workloads are increasing. If it impacts the teachers, it impacts what we want for our children.

Dr. Connelly and Chairperson Gilman again thanked the administrative team for their cooperation, involvement and participation in the budget process.

- C. **Final Preparations for FY 2012 Budget Public Hearing on March 30, 2011** – Chairperson Gilman stated that she made an “all call” at 6:30 p.m. tonight to all parents and staff about the public hearing. She would like to get consensus on the PowerPoint slides so they can be put on the website tomorrow morning. Kathy Clancy also did a “My View” column for the Gloucester Daily Times, which will hopefully be in tomorrow’s paper.

The School Committee reviewed and revised the draft slides to be presented at the public hearing on Wednesday night and discussed the following matters:

- Emphasizing that we are losing students and revenue to the charter school and school choice
- The possibility of Dr. Connelly visiting the schools and letting people know that the School Committee and administration are pained by these reductions
- Adding slides defining “level service” and “level funded” and cuts that have been made over the years
- Other slides that would be added to the presentation
- Mentioning the Beeman Memorial award in the slide presentation

Chairperson Gilman reviewed the documents that need to be put on the website, including the slides and budget document, the Tier I reductions, and Kathy Clancy’s “My View” column. Because the “all call” tonight referenced the budget presentation availability on the website, she asked that the amended public hearing presentation from tonight’s discussion be posted first thing in the morning.

She also asked the committee members whether they had made a commitment to meet with their City Council liaisons to go over the budget book.

Chairperson Gilman thanked Dr. Connelly again for the work that he and his team have done.

IV. **ACTION** – None

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Special School Committee Meeting of March 28, 2011 at 8:10 p.m.

All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent’s office.

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*