

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 13, 2013

City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium

7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Val Gilman, Assistant Chairperson
Kathy Clancy, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira
Roger Garberg
Tony Gross

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Assistant Superintendent
Hans Baumhauer, Dir. of Finance and
and Operations

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
- II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**
- III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** – Amanda Kesterson of 293 Washington Street made a statement regarding a “Petition to Enact the Protect Children Act.” (See statement attached.) She submitted a copy of the petition to the School Committee and indicated that she will submit the original signatures to the City Clerk once she has them. Chairman Pope noted that the superintendent has prepared a response which will be discussed later in the meeting, after which the committee will discuss how to move forward on this issue.
- IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON** – Chairman Pope reported that the food service is \$50,000 in arrears from uncollected lunch fees and that the committee will be addressing how to recover those funds.
- V. RECOGNITIONS** – Chairman Pope recognized the DPW for the hard work they did in getting the schools cleared out after the blizzard, and Mrs. Gilman recognized Al Swekla, who passed away recently, for his dedication to the Gloucester Public Schools.
- VI. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL** – None present.
- VII. CONSENT AGENDA**
- A. Approval of Minutes**
1. Amended School Committee of January 9, 2013
 2. School Committee of January 23, 2013
 3. Ad Hoc Policy Manual Subcommittee of February 4, 2013
 4. West Parish Ad Hoc Communications Committee of February 11, 2013

B. Acceptance of Grants

1. Gloucester Education Foundation, Inc.
 - a. Career Initiative in the amount of \$500.00
 - b. Sailbot Project in the amount of \$3,000.00
2. Massachusetts DESE Safe & Supportive Learning Environments in the amount of \$10,000.00

On a motion by Mr. Gross, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to approve the Consent Agenda as noted above.

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

A. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Safier updated the committee on the following matters:

1. Chapter 222, An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Services and Exclusion from School
2. Students with Disabilities in Extracurricular Activities
3. Anticipated Grant Opportunity: Extending the School Day – Dr. Safier stated that he is interested in looking at the possibility of an extended day at Veterans. He remains open to the possibility that students from other schools would be able to attend if space is available, depending on the content of the program. There was a discussion about extending the school day for only one of the five elementary schools. Dr. Safier stated that right now his greatest concern is strengthening the program at Veterans.
4. Food Services: Performance-Based Funding Certification Approved – Ms. Teixeira requested that this information be posted on the district website.
5. HD918 and HD927 – With respect to HD 918, Dr. Safier reported that a study group would be formed to examine the elementary and secondary education funding and distribution formula, focusing on areas including demands added to the curriculum over time, changes to time and learning standards, advances in technology, mandated data analysis capacity, regulated instructional supervision and evaluation, and the need to provide mentor coaching that improves learning and instruction but is not calculated as part of the foundation budget. The study group would also examine health insurance assumptions in the foundation budget to reflect actual costs, increasing the assumed special education students percentage by a minimum of .25% for all districts, sustainable options to ensure consistent and full funding of Circuit Breaker, increasing the allowance for low income students who qualify for free lunch, adjusting salary allowances closer to average actual teaching professional salary, continuation of the use of actual

inflation factors in calculating the foundation budget, and any and all areas of the formula that the group deems necessary to more accurately, consistently and equitably allocate funds.

With respect to HD927, Dr. Safier stated that he is still inquiring as to whether this bill will have an impact on the nature of the billing for students eligible for Medicaid and whether there is a cost benefit to the district. Mr. Baumhauer indicated that an outside agency handles the district's Medicaid billing and that any payments received from Medicaid under this new bill would likely go to the city and the School Department would have to be reimbursed by the city.

Dr. Safier indicated that he would provide the committee with copies of both bills.

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mrs. Gilman, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to accept the Superintendent's Report.

At this time, a 2-minute recess was taken.

- B. Mid-Year Benchmarks Literacy and Math** – Mr. Bach presented a mid-year report on the K-5 DIBELS data, including a description of the measures, results, and reports by grade and school. He also presented color-coded charts completed by the teachers during the most recent professional development day, identifying which standards they believe are most important, when each standard should fall during the year, and whether they need training on a specific standard. Finally, he reported results of a survey completed by the teachers after the professional development day.

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Personnel Subcommittee of February 4, 2013, February 5, 2013, February 6, 2013, February 11, 2013 and February 12, 2013** – Chairperson Teixeira stated that all of these meetings were negotiation sessions and not subcommittee meetings. She will send a calendar of the March negotiation sessions to the committee members by email.
- B. Ad Hoc Policy Manual Subcommittee of February 4, 2013** – Chairperson Teixeira reported that the Ad Hoc Policy Manual Subcommittee reviewed Section J of the GPSD Policy Manual at its meeting on February 4, 2013. The next meeting will be held on March 18, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. to review Sections K and L.

At Kathy Clancy's request, the agenda was taken out of order at this time.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/NEW BUSINESS

- A. MSBA Update** – Dr. Safier reported that on February 5th, he, Mayor Kirk and Kathy Clancy attended a designer selection panel meeting at MSBA, the purpose of which was to get MSBA's approval to go into contractual negotiations with a particular

designer. After some deliberation, Dore & Whittier was approved by the designer selection panel. That firm will assess and develop for us three possible alternatives, either repair of the building, renovation of the building, or construction of a new building. One of those options will be selected based on its educational efficacy and cost efficiency.

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS (Continued)

C. West Parish Ad Hoc Communications Committee of February 11, 2013 – Kathy Clancy reported that the West Parish Ad Hoc Communications Committee discussed the following matters at its meeting on February 11, 2013:

- Selection of a designer and its implication on communication
- Tour of the Avery School
- Community kick-off meeting at West Parish
- Project website

X. ACTION

A. Funding to Reduce User Fees – After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to withdraw the previous request to the Mayor for \$75,000 for the reduction of athletic fees and transportation fees and to request \$75,000 for the reduction of fees.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

B. Safety/Security Update – Dr. Safier read his opinion letter on armed guards in schools, which references several reports on school safety.

Mrs. Gilman, made a motion, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, to schedule a public hearing on the “Petition to Enact the Protect Children Act” based on the anticipated signatures. Mr. Garberg expressed concern about holding a public hearing when the committee has not received the petition and noted that it seems to be doing a disservice to the work that the superintendent has done in response to the individual request for a public hearing.

Kathy Clancy agreed and indicated that she would be happy to vote in favor of a public hearing when the appropriate signatures come in. She also expressed concern that the petition references the “Protect Children Act,” which has not been identified, and expressed dismay that even though the committee has provided research to the public via its meetings, people are only paying attention to the business the committee does on a regular basis when there is controversy involved.

Chairman Pope read the petition into the record, as follows:

Tragic school shootings demonstrate the need for communities to take action to protect our children and teachers. As such, we, the citizens of Gloucester, MA, petition our Mayor, City Council, and School Committee, as appropriate, to enact the *Protect Children Act* in Gloucester, to allocate funds to the Gloucester Police Department to allow for armed police officer(s) in each of Gloucester's public schools during each school day, for the entirety of the school year, to protect our children and teachers from any threat to their safety.

Chairman Pope stated that there are a substantial number of electronic signatures on the petition, as well as a number of handwritten signatures received this evening. He reported that Ms. Kesterson informed him that the *Protect Children Act* does not refer to any law but is simply a name she gave to the petition so that it could be referred to easily.

Mrs. Gilman amended her motion, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, to state that based on the anticipated signatures coming forward, we hold a public hearing on the topic of armed security officers in our existing school buildings. Mr. Garberg expressed concern with the process of voting to hold a public hearing on a petition from a single individual and stated that the idea of acting in anticipation of future signatures does not give the public a clear signal on when, in fact, the committee will act on petitions like this. He stated that he is very uncomfortable with the idea of acting in anticipation of an event that may or may not happen.

Mrs. Gilman amended her motion again, as follows:

After discussion, on a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was

VOTED: By Roll Call Vote

Ms. Teixeira – yes
Kathy Clancy – no
Mr. Garberg – no
Mrs. Gilman – yes
Mr. Gross – yes
Chairman Pope – yes

To hold a public hearing on the topic of armed security guards in the existing school buildings.

Mrs. Gilman noted for the record that shortly after the Newton, CT incident, the superintendent gave a presentation to the School Committee, which she sent to Ms. Kesterson for her information. Mrs. Gilman hopes that Ms. Kesterson will be complimentary to the fact that the committee has been very proactive with their oversight and self-assessment of the security issues at the schools. Finally, Mrs. Gilman requested that the public hearing not be made a platform for other matters going on in the schools and that concerns about individual incidents regarding safety be taken up privately with the principals.

- C. Free Cash Update** – Dr. Safier reviewed the free cash appropriation received from the city in the amount of \$614,118, which is \$77,200 less than what was requested. The credit recovery system in the amount of \$20,000 was cut from the free cash request, as well as \$57,200 in technology.
- D. FY13 Budget Update** – Mr. Baumhauer briefly reviewed the budget report for FY13.
- E. Request to Name O’Maley Auditorium in Memory of Al Swekla** – Mrs. Gilman suggested that Chairman Pope contact Lee Swekla to request her input. This item was tabled until the next meeting.
- F. Letter to Cape Ann Moose Lodge #1471 and Women of the Moose Chapter 896 from Chairman Pope and Vice Chairperson Gilman**
- G. Policy JM, Sawyer Medal** – Ms. Teixeira referred this policy to the Program Subcommittee for review.
- H. Meal Payment Policy** – Chairman Pope referred this policy to the Building & Finance Subcommittee for review.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

XIII. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Mr. Gross, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of February 13, 2013 at 9:19 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*

III.

To School Committee...

Last night, the City Council "acted" on the Petition to Protect children by referring it to you. Tonight, you have this matter on your agenda, with the knowledge that there are 330 Gloucester residents who have signed it and asked that you immediately schedule a public hearing to discuss this proposal.

In circulating this petition, there are many people who have expressed their own opinions of what is needed in our school buildings in order to make them safe for our children. Many parents are concerned about the decisions and procedures which are currently in place in our schools. They wish for you to listen to them in a public forum where ideas can be freely exchanged, questions answered, and suggestions debated. Since the attack in Newtown, CT, communities around the country have increased the security in the schools in many different ways. It is past time that we discuss it in Gloucester.

As the group of leaders elected to make decisions about our children's schools, it is imperative that you listen to the concerns of those who have signed this petition so that when you do move forward to make decisions regarding what actions to take for our schools, you have done so fully informed of the community's feelings and beliefs on the topic.

I thank you for your consideration.