

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

West Parish Elementary School Auditorium

7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Val Gilman, Vice Chairperson
Kathy Clancy, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira
Roger Garberg
Mayor Carolyn Kirk

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 7:04 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Chairman Pope reported that a Community Education Forum has been scheduled for May 1, 2013 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Cruiseport. The forum is entitled “Access & Empowerment: Technology as a Game Changer in the 21st Century Classroom,” and the guest speaker will be Alan November. The event is sponsored by the GEF and Comcast, and there is no charge for admission.

III. PUBLIC HEARING – Armed Security Guards in All Schools – Chairman Pope stated that security, well-being and health of students and staff is very important to the School Committee and noted that the committee discusses security issues at almost every meeting. He invited the public to look at meeting minutes on the website to see what the committee has been doing.

Chairman Pope asked the audience to limit their comments to the subject of armed security guards in the schools. He also asked them not to keep making the same points over and over and to submit any written statements to Mrs. Puglisi.

Chairman Pope welcomed City Councilors Melissa Cox, Bob Whynott and Greg Verga and thanked them for attending. He stated that the public hearing will be broadcast on Cape Ann TV on March 29th at 7:00 p.m. on Channel 20, March 29th at 11:30 p.m. on Channel 12, and March 30th at 9:00 a.m. on Channel 12.

Speaking in favor of the proposal were Amanda Kesterson, Lisa Fornero, Joseph Orlando, Julie Kesterson, Jennifer S. (indiscernible), Grant Harris and Richard Roberts. Speaking against the proposal were Police Chief Leonard Campanello, Amy-Beth Healey, City Councilor Bob Whynott, Amanda Cook, Sarah Grow, Dan Graham, David Adams, Tess Burnham, John Rosenthal, Martin

Delvecchio, Peter Dolan, Hugo Burnham and Linda Stockman. Speaking neither for nor against the proposal were City Councilor Sefatia Romeo-Theken and Graciella Paone.

Amanda Kesterson thanked the School Committee for listening to both sides of her proposal regarding safety in the schools and made the following statement: “On January 16th of this year, President Barack Obama issued executive orders regarding gun control. His 18th order was ‘provide incentives for schools to hire school resource officers.’ In doing this, President Obama expressed agreement with the exact same proposal by the NRA, and here in Gloucester, our major crisis plan is essentially a lockdown procedure. But unfortunately, this procedure is useless since some of our schools still have doors that don’t lock and some of our administrators don’t run the crisis drills regularly, if they run them at all. Clearly, school security in our community needs to have a lot more attention than we’ve given it, and I think in a lot of ways it’s understandable that we weren’t heavily focused on it before, but I think we need to give a lot more attention to it at this point since Newtown.

The proposal to have a police officer in each of our schools has several benefits. Chiefly, he would be the person who would ensure that the security measures which we do have in place would actually be used. Right now, even the pitifully weak security measures we do have, they’re just not enforced. Having a police officer who’s trained to recognize security issues of all kinds is vital. Teachers, principals and school secretaries, they’re not trained to do it. They’re not the right people to be enforcing security procedures. The police officer in the school would act as a friendly face for children looking to report issues including bullying, drugs and theft. It’s really disturbing to think that if someone got past our occasionally locked doors that the plan in place is for students to huddle in a corner and hope that the police get there in time. Parents send the loves of their lives to these schools, and you’re asking us to just hope for the best that we don’t have an attack on our school.

Superintendent Safier discussed whether children would feel less safe by having a police officer in the school, and I think it’s completely absurd. If children feel threatened by the presence of police officers, they probably shouldn’t attend Gloucester High School football games, the Fiesta, the waterfront festival, block parties on Main Street, or any parade that we have in this town. They also shouldn’t go to a sports stadium of any kind or walk through an airport. When I was in school, uniformed police officers visited our schools every week through the DARE program. There are thousands of students and teachers who pass by security personnel in their schools every day in this country. Children see police officers as local heroes. I think they should see them that way. If there was an officer in the school building each day, children would view him the same way they would view the principal or any of the teachers in the building.

Four days after the attack in Newtown, Plum Cove Elementary School, where my son attends, held its annual Christmas concert. Given the recent school massacre, tensions amongst the several hundred parents and children gathered in the gymnasium were running extremely high. There was an audible sigh of relief when a few fathers, who are also Gloucester police officers, walked into the gym in uniform. We’re all safer for this security, and everyone including children knows it.

A popular argument against this proposal has been the cost of it, and I wanted to address it right up front. In Gloucester, it’s essentially a non-issue. We have a \$5 million budget surplus, in addition to the money which has been put back into the school budget due to the closing of the

charter school. Mr. Safier recently announced over \$600,000 in ‘free cash’ that’s going to be awarded to the School Department to buy new cafeteria chairs and iPads for preschoolers. City councilors just voted themselves and recently the Mayor a raise. Are we really going to prioritize iPads, chairs and raises for politicians over the safety of our kids? Newtown just voted for a budget increase to install a police officer in each of their schools, but they had to lose 27 innocent people before they did this. Let’s not be the community that had a chance to prevent a tragedy and chose not to. I thank you all for listening.”

Police Chief Leonard Campanello stated that he is a parent of an 8-year-old and a 10-year-old, and he knows the emotional connection to this issue. There is no price tag on his kids or on our kids. He believes that what we’re here for tonight is not so much to make a decision on putting armed security personnel in every school but to start a serious and continuous dialogue about how we can improve things and mitigate risk in our schools. He noted that there is a difference between armed security guards and armed police officers. He is opposed to having any armed person in every school in Gloucester for a number of reasons. He does not think that that addresses the myriad issues that go on when we’re talking about school safety. We need to be thinking in terms of education, not only of staff, administration, collaboration with police and other organizations, but also education of our children. We should be talking about these things before they happen as leaders, as parents, as an informed group so we know how to deal with these circumstances when they come up.

Education of staff at the schools is a topic that he and Dr. Safier talked about well before Newtown. They had several meetings involving the continuous implementation of the STARS program, which is a response to threat that law enforcement and the School Department share and collaborate with. They have also talked about the idea of a school resource officer, which is a tool that can be used to mitigate these risk factors because that person can visit a number of schools, is available for information from students, and is accessible on a daily basis. With respect to arming every school, the reality is that it’s not going to mitigate the risk on a continuous basis. There is going to be vacation time involved; there is going to be times when an officer or security guard isn’t there. They’re not going to be standing behind sandbags with a rifle in their hands waiting for something to happen. They’re going to be doing paperwork; they’re going to be visiting with students, which is a great thing, but they’re not going to be hypervigilant to address the threat.

As each one of these tragedies happened, if there is any silver lining, law enforcement gained knowledge of the types of individuals who are committing these heinous acts, and they use that information in developing plans to move forward with the safety of the schools in mind. He thinks it’s important that we don’t automatically take the step of armed guards. It’s great that we’re continuing the dialogue that Dr. Safier started, and it’s important to realize there are educational steps involved here. There’s risk management in terms of not only the children but the educators and the police officers. In his professional opinion, putting an armed guard or police officer in every single school is not the answer because it does not prevent things from happening. It may deter but not to a point where it tips the balance to the right thing to do.

Lisa Frenero of Addison Street is a middle school teacher in Chelsea. There is an unarmed security team and a police officer stationed at the school. The police officer has become just like another one of the teachers in the building. Every morning he’s there and welcomes the kids just like the teachers do. Not one of her students has ever said anything about feeling uncomfortable

having him there. The only feedback she has received from parents has been positive; that they feel safer because their kids have this person there. In addition to his responsibilities of helping to keep the kids and the teachers safe, he also does drug prevention classes and weapon safety classes. When he is not there, another police officer replaces him. Today he responded to a problem in her classroom where he had to remove one of her students, and she was very grateful that he was there. Earlier in the school year, there was a situation where an irate person was outside the front doors of the school, and this person was believed to have a gun. The school went into lockdown for over 45 minutes while the school police officer went outside to handle the situation. That person never entered the building because the police officer was able to stop the problem before it started. Had he not been there, she believes it is entirely possible that that person would have been able to enter the building. Her biggest response to anyone who says that they're concerned that it would be like a militarized version of schools is that she doesn't believe that's a problem because when you have a police officer in the building, just like you do at football games or city council meetings or any other time when you have people present, the kids can get to know the police officer who's there everyday and feel comfortable with them.

Amy-Beth Healey of 13 Calder Street has three daughters in the school system. She read a statement collectively written by herself, her husband, her eighth grader and her ninth grader. "We believe in absolutely gun-free, zero tolerance, totally safe schools. That means no guns in America's schools, period. Such behavior in our schools should be prosecuted just as certainly as such behavior in our airports is prosecuted. (NRA Vice President Wayne LaPierre, May 1, 1999, 11 days after the Columbine massacre).

I have come tonight to voice my strong opposition to the proposal of armed guards in our schools. There is a great deal of emotion I can pile into this conversation. None of it is said better than quoting my daughter. Mikayla is a freshman who is busy at GHS's musical rehearsal instead of coming here tonight. Mikayla is one of many teens who put in long days, often 14 hours each, within the walls of Gloucester High School. Her first reaction when hearing of this proposal: 'No! I would be terrified! I wouldn't want to go to school, and I actually really like high school.' Please note what she is saying. She is not afraid someone will come into the school and hurt her. She would be afraid to have even a trained adult in the school with a gun. She already feels safe in school. All of my girls do. Guns have no place in America's schools, period.

On December 21st, when Mikayla had every right to an excused absence, fighting against the sea of terrified parents and thrilled kids leaving school early, Mikayla and I made our way INTO GHS, both of us knowing full well that if the administration and Gloucester Police Department had not felt the gun threat situation was under control the school would not be open. It is not our children who are afraid of these tragedies happening at school. It's the parents' fear, fed by the media, creating a crisis. Statistics show 1% of child homicides in this country happen in schools, according to 2010-11 data. That's 17 out of 1,500. Where are the other 99% happening? And people think an armed guard in the schools will keep their kids safe. Now, what is it going to cost to put these guards in place? Losing a teacher per school? Will that even cover the cost? How many times have we stood at these public hearings asking for smaller classrooms, asking for more one-on-one attention to our children, asking for better services and better education, more rigorous opportunities? This proposal takes away the things we have asked for in the past. The schools of Gloucester are amazing. We have unbelievably caring staff that go out of their way to help their kids academically, emotionally and socially. Paying for this proposal will make them have to do more with less yet again.

The School Committee and Superintendent have done their homework. They have probably beaten the topic to death and into very late hours. I know – I used to sit in on those meetings. No stone goes unturned. Trust them to do the job you voted them in to do. I know you, the committee, have the statistics. I am not going to try to recreate them in three minutes, but here is what sticks in my head. Neil Gardner was the armed guard on duty on April 20, 1999 in Columbine. He was unable to stop the boys there. If someone wants to do harm in our schools and knows there is an armed guard at the gate, why wouldn't they plan larger fire power to get past the guard? Now we have escalated the situation with our own fears. That is not the type of school I want my daughters in.

Let's put our money to good use. Let's lower class sizes so teachers have a chance to know the students even better and spot where they may need help. Let's hire the school psychologists, psychiatrists, guidance counselors, whoever is needed to help before anyone gets to this tragic point. Let's increase our programs so kids have productive ways to express themselves. Let Gloucester be a shining example of what to do to prevent children from falling into a destructive path, not teach our children within fortresses while we cower behind our walls and let the terrorists win. Guns have no place in Gloucester's schools, period."

City Councilor Bob Whynott stated that he is a card-carrying member of the NRA and a lifetime member of the Cape Ann Sportmen's Club. If he thought we needed to have an armed guard in the schools at this point, he would not be against it, but he doesn't think Gloucester is there yet. We haven't done the interim steps. He thinks it is a problem that you can walk into the high school and nobody sees you. No school should have more than one entrance, all other doors should be alarmed, and there should be some way to screen people. He thinks we should try those steps first, which cost less money and can be just as effective.

Amanda Cook has two children at Plum Cove and her husband is a teacher at the high school. She expressed her disappointment with the School Committee for holding the public hearing. The threshold of gathering 250 signatures on a written petition is part of the democratic process to make sure we all have an equal voice. Forgoing that process creates an inequity in our voices. She made the following statement: "We all want our children to be safe. That's why we're here. Luckily, school is statically one of the safest places for our children to be. There are so many threats our children face daily, threats which are certain and real. It is our job to fix the things we can control, the things that put our children in danger every day. In our schools, we need to make sure our buildings are secure, that communication between the office and classrooms is possible, and that the faculty and students know how to act in an emergency. We need to work hard to make sure every child in need of a psychologist's services is identified and given the help they need. In our communities, we need to fight to get all of our fire stations open. We can paint our crosswalks to make sure our children are safe. I'm a little disappointed, seeing as these schools are now taken care of by the DPW, to see that there's no representation here because many of these issues have to do with the DPW.

There are ways we can protect our children, ways that are proven to make them safe. It is our job to fix the things we can control. We must not depend on a single and unproven solution to a complex problem. In contemplating this hearing, I revisited my own history with gun violence and school shootings. Twenty years to the day before Newtown, my friend, Galen Gibson, was killed in a shooting spree at a small college in Great Barrington. I've spoken to his father,

Gregory Gibson, and have gone back to his book, Gone Boy. Reading it now as a parent as well as a friend, I am struck by some of Greg's words near the end. He writes about not giving in to the darkness, not letting what has taken his son take us as well. 'No one was ever better for having a gun,' he writes, and I believe him."

Joseph Orlando of Western Avenue thanked the members of the School Committee who voted to allow people to be heard on this important issue and read the following statement: "We all wish we lived in a world where adults did not hurt children. We all wish that the innocent were not the targets of the vicious and deranged. We all wish for a safer and saner world. Unfortunately, it is our duty to honestly assess the world in which we live. On this issue, the protection of Gloucester's children, we owe them a sacred duty to educate and to protect. I believe it is fair to say that every citizen and taxpayer recognizes the money spent on police protection, whether at School Committee hearings or in our schools, is money we wish could be spent elsewhere. The same is true for the countless billions of dollars we spend annually as a nation due to unexpected and random attacks such as occurred on September 11, 2001.

On September 11, 2001, this country was attacked and many people died. Up until that point, there hadn't been an attack on U.S. soil since Pearl Harbor. The terrorists used Logan Airport to attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The response from the government was to fundamentally change our transit security systems. No one seriously argued that we shouldn't make changes because attacks of that nature are isolated and rare. No one suggested that we should only make the changes at Logan Airport and no others. Rather, the events of that day were taken as a warning to Americans that we needed to protect ourselves against attacks which had previously not been a thought or concern to any of us. Now we all go through a myriad of security just to get on a plane, and while annoyed at the cost and inconvenience, we understand that the security is necessary.

Newtown, Sandy Hook, should be seen as another warning to this country. Schools are now the target of those who wish to hurt the most innocent and defenseless among us. The fact that a Newtown-style attack is rare should not deter other communities from taking the necessary steps to prevent such an attack in their schools. In most instances, communities don't want to spend money on school security. In light of the horrors of Sandy Hook, is that really a chance we want to take? Newton, Connecticut lost 20 children and 27 people in total that fateful day in December. It is now installing a police officer in every school and increasing the budget to allow for it. Previously, it had one officer circulating around from school to school. He wasn't in the school when the attacks occurred, leaving the children and teachers of Sandy Hook Elementary completely defenseless. Gloucester has had its share of school security issues. It is a town with a population very much like Newtown. Gloucester's children look to those adults charged with the duty to safeguard and to protect them. It's time for Gloucester to lead. Let's make the news as a community who heeded the lessons of Sandy Hook and said, 'That will not happen here.'"

Sarah Grow, a parent of three children in the Gloucester Public Schools and a member of the site-based council at O'Maley and GHS and a former member of the East Gloucester site-based council for eight years, made the following statement: "Tonight I am urging the School Committee to not make a kneejerk reaction to some of the extraordinarily rare horrors that have been happening nationwide in our schools and public places. Bad things happen, but spending thousands and thousands of dollars on armed forces in our schools will not make us safer. The armed guard outside Columbine didn't stop the bloodshed. Far better to invest in our children so

that no one is lonely or outcast. Invest in counselors. Invest in innovative and vigorous curriculum and a robust after-school program. Make them free so all can attend. Make them varied so all from the computer whiz to the artist or the athlete are engaged. Invest in our poor buildings. Guarantee all classes have a lock. It shouldn't take months to get secured doors in our schools, as has been the case. This city, above all, needs to invest in our schools so no child falls through the cracks or goes through life without a friend, so that all, no matter their income, interests or family background, are part of our community. What will prevent these horrors from happening here in Gloucester is engaging all our children and investing in our community, not guns and not armed guards."

Julie Kesterson of Reynard Street has five grandchildren in the Gloucester school system. She took a tour of Beeman, East Gloucester and Plum Cove schools today to look at them through new eyes. She went to Beeman as a child and thought it was a great school. She noted that the school now has big open windows floor to ceiling all the way around, which is very frightening. Plum Cove also has big open windows all the way around. It is very frightening as a grandparent knowing that anything can break through those windows. East Gloucester and Veterans seem to be newer schools. There were a couple of big windows at the entrance, but they have more brick and less windows and look safer. Her grandchildren go to Plum Cove, and it is very frightening to know what may or may not happen, hopefully not happen. But it's the world that we live in, and it's something to take into consideration.

Dan Graham of Bickford Way spoke as a child therapist. He works with kids who have gone through trauma, and one of the things that he sees is that having an armed guard in a school is messaging to kids that they're not safe; they need a gun to protect them. "It's not safe in the community. Be afraid." In the therapy world, what he sees with kids who are afraid is that they get a condition called failure to thrive. The function of a school is to make kids thrive. He wants them to have open windows and sunshine. He doesn't want them to have fear. If you go by Sandy Hook right now on the highway, there is a sign that says "Sandy Hook believes in love." Invest in the community. That's where change is going to happen. The schools have no guns now. Guess what the potential for gun violence is in a place without a gun. Now look at places that have guns. What happens? Accidents, unintentional consequences. What chance is an armed guard with a handgun against somebody with a military style assault rifle? It's another death. It's not going to do anything functional. Are we going to have armed guards with full body armor and assault weapons barricading themselves in front of our schools? "Go ahead, kids. You're safe. It's okay." Guns are not the solution. Fear is not the solution. Start investing in your community. Talk to your neighbors. Pay attention to the kids who are falling through the cracks. Reach out to them with some love and compassion. Talk to your neighbors. That's a solution. Guns lead to violence. He believes it was Gandhi who said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." Put a gun in your school, there's another shooting.

Jennifer S. of Centennial Avenue stated that she is not a parent but has five boys in her life that she adores and cherishes. She was in high school at the time of Columbine, and a bomb threat was called in the next day at her school. She left school the school, and the first thing she saw were police officers. She immediately turned around and walked back inside. Unfortunately, tragedies happen, but she would feel more comfortable knowing that these people are here to protect children. She is not saying military style riflemen at every entrance of every school but the comfort of knowing that they're there to protect the children.

David Adams, a government agent and former Gloucester police officer, is opposed to armed security guards in the schools for the reason that “you get what you pay for.” With the proposed \$500,000 budget, we are going to get inadequate security officers with insufficient training. Members of the police department and his agency train for hundreds and thousands of hours to do what they do. He recommended that the city work on the infrastructure of the buildings and create choke points and secure entrances at the schools. He stated that no matter what we do, we are never going to be safe because if there is somebody out there who is determined to do something, they are going to do it. There is a chance that an armed guard will be overpowered, which will result in another weapon in the school. He strongly suggested that if we are looking to put guards in the schools, that we look towards the police department. The average police officer gets approximately 800 hours of training at the police academy and continuous training throughout their career. He urged everybody not to rush to judgment and to take time to put a plan into place that is going to be effective.

Ms. Kesterson clarified that the proposal before the School Committee that led to the public hearing asks for a Gloucester police officer in each school.

Tess Burnham, a seventh grader at O’Maley, stated that when she heard about this situation from her father earlier today, she didn’t feel safe. She’s always had a fear of a loaded gun at her school. She goes to school to learn, not to be afraid. She has always felt safe in the Gloucester school district. When she was at Plum Cove, she actually liked the windows, looking out and seeing nature. She felt safe the whole time she was there. Having a gun at school really scares her and she thinks we are safe and maybe we should take baby steps.

John Rosenthal of East Gloucester is a gun owner and a strong believer in the Second Amendment. He is the one who put up the billboards on the Mass Pike about gun violence prevention in the state. We live in the safest state in the nation when it comes to gun violence. We’re an urban industrial state, and we have the lowest firearm fatality rate in the nation. But the problem is we’re surrounded by states that don’t even require a background check for gun sales, including Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. Another problem is we don’t support our law enforcement as we should. Someone mentioned that there were two armed guards at Columbine. They were outgunned by teenagers with military-style assault pistols and large ammunition clips. There was a 30-round clip used at Columbine and 30-round clips used in the Aurora movie theater attack, with a made in Massachusetts Smith & Wesson AR-15. In Newtown, it was a Bushmaster and an AR-15 with a 30-round clip. We give our law enforcement officers 15 to 17 rounds, but Congress and most state legislatures give criminals access to 30 and 100 rounds. So, before we arm schools with police officers with 13 to 17 rounds while we make 100-round clips available to criminals and the mentally ill, we should think about participating in our democracy, both at our State House and in Congress. Our state representative and senator, Ferrante and Tarr, have “A” ratings from the NRA and consistently vote against any reasonable gun laws in this state. He has spent time at the White House with the Biden Commission and the President on this issue. We’ll be lucky if we get a background check requirement for gun sales out of the U.S. Senate. So, Massachusetts is the leader in gun violence prevention. We do it because we treat guns as inherently dangerous products like automobiles. We need to support law enforcement, and before we arm schools, he thinks we should do what many people have said here, which is to pay attention to our kids. We have one of the greatest school systems in America. Before you arm the schools, let’s put the locks on the doors so they can have a lockdown, God forbid something happens. But a 13- to 17-round clip is going to do

nothing against a 30- or 100-round clip like those used by these mass shooters. Since Newtown, 700 kids have died from firearms, and they haven't died in schools. Kids are much more at risk going to people's homes where there are loaded and unlocked guns, so ask before your kids play anywhere if there's a gun in the home and how it is stored.

Martin Delvecchio has two kids at East Gloucester Elementary School. He read the following statement: "There are many valid reasons to oppose the proposal before the committee today. You heard many of them tonight, including the fact that armed guards are too expensive; armed guards aren't effective against a rampage shooter, as we saw at Columbine; armed guards are a misguided idea because children are safer in schools than they are elsewhere; armed guards increase risk, as was the case in Highland, New York, where an armed police officer hired right after Newtown fired his gun in a school hallway during the school day. Each of these reasons alone is sufficient for me to oppose this proposal. There is one truly compelling reason that stands above all the others. I don't want guns in my children's schools because I don't want my children to live in fear. I don't want my children to believe that their school is not a safe place for them to be. I don't want my children to internalize the fear that guns in the schools would represent. I don't want my children to develop a fear and paranoia to the point where they believe that the solution to the problem of guns is more guns. My children feel safe in their school. They feel that way because they are safe in their school. Please don't change this by introducing guns."

Peter Dolan, a parent of a seventh grader at O'Maley, thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak and read the following statement: "First, I'd like to publicly commend the superintendent for his thoughtful and sensible approach to caring for the health and safety of our school children and for taking the time to share his findings and conclusions and plans in our daily newspaper. The committee and the community need time to consider these conclusions, and I'm sure the public will have ample opportunity to weigh in. Tonight, due to a sense of urgency that has developed around just one of the many options we have for addressing the health and safety of our children, we're here to address a specific proposal to station armed police officers in each of our schools on a full-time basis. Often, we don't think clearly about risks. I was reading a newspaper article the other day about how many senior citizens are injured seriously, sometimes fatally, by falling in the shower. The author made the point that we exaggerate the risks of horrific events that are beyond our control, such as plane crashes, and we underestimate the risks of events we can control, such as the long-term health consequences of a poor diet. I acknowledge the concerns of the supporters of this proposal. The challenges of evaluating risks are particularly true when our children are involved. But I want to say for the record tonight I'm willing to accept the risk of sending my daughter to a school that does not have an armed guard or bullet-proof windows, riding to that school on a bus that does not have an armed escort. I don't want her to experience school as a place where she thinks she needs the continual presence and protection of armed guards. I would prefer she doesn't have to spend her day in close proximity to a loaded firearm that might be fired intentionally or accidentally for reasons other than the defense of Fortress O'Maley. I don't see your job as protecting my child against every imaginable threat. I do see your job as community leaders to stand up to the passions of the moment, use our resources wisely, and make your first priority ensuring that all our children grow up to be healthy, lifelong learners and good citizens. Thank you for your time, your hard work, and your service to our community."

City Councilor Sefatia Romeo-Theken thanked Ms. Kesterson for bringing the petition. She noted that her friends were able to walk into a couple of schools and no one asked them who they

were or where they were going. She stated that the Newtown shooter's mother was one of his victims and that she had asked for help over and over and got pushed away. We have to make sure that if we see a child that's in trouble, don't be afraid to report it because the family may be having problems at home. It's good that we are all communicating and saying our children have to be first, and this conversation proves that our children are first. She's concerned about who's going to hold the guns because we don't have the budget for it. If we don't fix our schools, what good is it to have someone at the front door if they're getting in the back door? We also need a communication system in the schools for convenience and the safety of teachers when they stay after school. She also suggested doing CORI checks on everyone who works in the schools after they're closed and making sure the schools are closed at night. She would love to see herself as a permanent therapist in the schools because sometimes people just need someone to talk to. Let's not live in fear. She suggested that Dr. Safier go to the Mayor and the City Council to request extra money to fix and brighten up the schools.

Hugo Burnham of Centennial Avenue is the father of Tess Burnham, who spoke earlier. He stated that he did not put her up to speaking tonight, that it was her own words and reflected what she heard. He is a college professor at an art school in Boston, and he has to deal with a lot of kids who fell through the cracks. He tells them that they start fresh there, and that points to the fact that it is the psychologists, the counselors, the parents and the teachers working together not to let kids fall through the cracks because that's where a lot of the risk comes from. It's not about the final barrier of having armed guards in uniform or out of uniform in our schools.

Grant Harris of Brooks Road is a parent of kids in the school system. He is for armed guards in the schools because we live in a very rural area. Dispatch time from the central office, which unfortunately we only have one, takes a long time for the police or fire to get there. An armed guard at the door adds seconds of time to put kids out the back door. Every minute an attacker is delayed coming into a facility, that's a minute or two they can get out of the building. When you're dealing with someone who wants to commit a crime, you can't stop them. But every time you put up a barrier to stop that from happening, that's important. He is a licensed carrier and owns many firearms, and he protects his family and his home because he knows the police can't get there when he needs them. He expects his kids to be safe at school. We all know the buildings are horrible and the doors are bad. Fix that. But we expect our kids to go into a safe facility, and locking the door is only the first step. There's nothing wrong with having an armed guard. We have the military to protect our people. We have the police protect us. Colleges have security, whether armed or not. It may not even be about having an armed guard. Maybe it's about having someone there, a presence. Not every campus has armed security. They have a body. Being able to figure out who's coming in and walking around the building is important. If they can't get into the building, that's important, but if they want to get in, they're going to get in. And if we can have any sort of resistance to them, he's for it.

Richard Roberts of 620 Essex Avenue works as an unarmed security guard at the North Shore Mall. If you come to the mall prior to 8:00, there's one door that's open. If you come in Sunday through Friday, you will see him sitting at that desk. If you don't sign in, you don't get access to the mall. That's how the school system should be, whether or not it's armed or unarmed. He does overnights at the mall and makes sure every door is locked twice a night. He's done this for ten years. He's worked with celebrities doing unarmed and armed security, and he is totally for having an armed or unarmed guard in the schools. People feel safe going through the airport because there's security there. If you have a problem in the mall, he's there. They actually had

an incident a couple of weeks ago where there was someone on the property with a gun, and they took care of it. He is for the armed guards in the schools, whether armed or unarmed.

Linda Stockman has a child at the high school, and she can't see any upside to putting guns in the schools. Statistics don't bear it out. If you look at the research from the CDC and from people who study gun violence, there's no discernible benefit to putting armed guards in the schools. The downside of putting armed guards in the schools is you've got armed people who are now not just holding off the disasters, but what else are they doing? If your child is truant, is the armed guard going to be walking your child back? If your child is mouthing off to the teacher, is the armed guard going to be coming down? That's not fantasy. In Philadelphia and Mississippi, there are cases where armed guards, with all the best intentions, are escorting second graders home in their police cars for violating dress codes and for mouthing off to the teacher. So, there's unintended consequences that need to be looked at very carefully before we take a huge step like this.

Graciella Paone of Cedarwood Road is a mother of two children at West Parish. She is very impressed with tonight's meeting. She thinks that just getting educated on both sides is important and we need to make some sort of changes, and the line of communication has begun thanks to Amanda. Together we can do so much more than just going back and forth. We all agree on one thing. We want our children safe. So, let's start making strides.

Mrs. Gilman noted that immediately after the Newtown tragedy, Dr. Safier addressed the School Committee regarding security plans, having met with Chief Campanello previously, and continued to do research and provide updates to the committee. Chairman Pope thanked everyone for coming and sharing their comments.

A 10-minute recess was taken at this time.

The agenda was taken out of order at this time.

XI. ACTION

- A. Annisquam River Crossing Water Main Project** – Larry Durkin, Environmental Engineer, reviewed the water main project with respect to GHS and indicated that as a result of the work, they will be replacing the backstop and a portion of the fence at the girls' softball field. They will also install new bleachers, as well as dugouts that are comparable to the boys' baseball field. Ideally, the softball field will be ready for use in the spring of 2014, assuming the grass is sufficiently restored by that time.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to approve the Annisquam River Crossing Water Main Project as it relates to the property at Gloucester High School.

IV. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

- V. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON** – Chairman Pope reported that there are 46 more students participating in spring sports this year, which he believes is attributable to the

recent reduction in user fees. Mr. Garberg stated that the committee should try to do better by reducing fees further in the future.

VI. RECOGNITIONS – Mrs. Gilman recognized Gloucester High School for receiving the award for 2013 Innovation School of the Year, specifically Eric Leigh, a biology teacher at GHS who has been applying for grants over the last five years. Students who were part of the award luncheon included 10th graders Maury Ronan and Jason Irwin. Mrs. Gilman also recognized the Gloucester Education Foundation for sponsoring programs in science and technology.

VII. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL – Chairman Pope stated that three students were at the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and that in light of the public hearing, he advised them to go do their homework and come back later.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Special Building & Finance Subcommittee of March 7, 2013
2. Building & Finance Subcommittee of March 13, 2013
3. School Committee of March 13, 2013

B. Out-of-State Field Trips

1. To approve an out-of-state field trip request from Gunner Rick Muth to attend National High School Drill Team Championship in Daytona Beach, Florida from Thursday, May 2, 2013 to Monday, May 6, 2013.
2. To approve an out-of-state field trip request from GHS Cheering Coach to attend Nationals in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina from Thursday, April 25, 2013 to Monday, April 29, 2013.

B. Acceptance of Scholarship – To accept the Paul & Dottie Souza Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$300.00.

C. Referrals – Admission of Students to Elementary Schools Policy File JF, Section 5.3 – To request that the Program Subcommittee review changing the date of notification to parents/guardians from June 1 to August 1.

Mrs. Gilman removed Item A.3 from the Consent Agenda.

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

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

Mrs. Gilman requested more information on the Comments from the Chairperson made at the March 13th School Committee meeting with respect to the statement that the “School Committee is going to move forward with a policy that will cut students off at some point if they have an

outstanding balance.” Chairman Pope clarified that his intention was to say that the committee is going to consider such a policy after getting input from the public on possibilities.

On a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to amend Section IV of the School Committee Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2013 by deleting the words “move forward with” and replacing them with the word “consider.”

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

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2013 School Committee meeting as amended.

IX. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

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

1. April 3rd Public Hearing on Proposed FY14 Budget
2. Kindergarten Registration
3. Principal and Mathematics Coordinator Committees – Dr. Safier reported that the district has received close to 35 applications for the Veterans principal position and approximately half a dozen for the Math Coordinator position.
4. Parent Email Account Acquisition Analysis – Dr. Safier noted that the 51.58% figure for Beeman is now in the 70’s. Mr. Bach reviewed the district’s efforts to obtain parent email addresses.
5. Cornerstone in Chapel – As a member of the Magnolia Historical Society, Ms. Teixeira offered to ask the President of the society to get in touch with Dr. Safier regarding this matter.
6. Reminder About School Choice Vote for 2013-2014 School Year – This item will be placed on a subsequent agenda for a vote. Dr. Safier stated that if the committee votes to accept school choice students in the upcoming year, the district will be advertising for same.
7. Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce “Focus on Education”

At Mayor Kirk’s inquiry, Dr. Safier stated that the last day of school this year is June 21, 2013, which is a half day.

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

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

- B. **2013/2014 Draft District Improvement Plan** – Dr. Safier briefly reviewed the District Improvement Plan and requested that it be referred to the Program Subcommittee for discussion.

X. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. **Building & Finance Subcommittee of March 13, 2013** – Chairperson Clancy reported that the Building & Finance Subcommittee discussed providing bag lunches for students on early release days at its meeting on March 13, 2013.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to authorize the Food Service Department to provide bag lunches for students on early release days.

XI. ACTION (Continued)

- B. **2013/2014 School Calendar** – Dr. Safier indicated that the GTA would like the School Committee to consider not having school on Good Friday, which is on the Friday before April vacation next year. Mrs. Gilman suggested adding a day at the end of the year to compensate for that day off.

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

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to amend the Draft 2013-14 School Calendar (3/15/13 updated) by adding a day off on April 18, 2014, by changing the last day for students to June 18, 2014, and by changing the last day for snow days to June 25, 2014.

After discussion, on a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Chairman Pope, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to approve the 2013-14 School Calendar as amended.

Mrs. Gilman expressed the importance of ensuring that the community knows what the four additional professional development early release days are for the elementary schools and that they receive information about the after-school services that will be available for students on those days.

- C. **Bag Lunches on Early Release Days** – See Item X.A.

XII. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/NEW BUSINESS

- A. **MSBA Update** – Dr. Safier reported that Dore & Whittier will be in the district this week and next to do an existing building conditions study for West Parish and Fuller. They

will also be participating in the MSBA kickoff event at West Parish next Tuesday. A second visit to the Avery Elementary School in Dedham has been scheduled for April 1st. Dr. Safier also reported that the building committee met on March 21st to discuss the next steps in the feasibility study (i.e. establishing communication protocols and a regular meeting schedule, identifying possible subcommittees, review of work plan/schedule, discussion of expectations, objectives and goals, etc.).

Mayor Kirk stated that one of the things to keep in mind is that a 21st century school also includes a state of the art security design and that the committee should begin to communicate that to the public, as well. Mr. Garberg noted that one of the larger messages he heard at the public hearing tonight was that schools are the safest places children can be, and he is hesitant to give the security issue more weight than it deserves. Mayor Kirk responded that the security design is just a talking point to add to the conversation about 21st century environments. Ms. Teixeira noted that security is going to be part of the conversation with respect to the new technical high school that is being built in Danvers. Finally, Dr. Safier indicated that the issue of safety will come up during the visit to the Avery School on April 1st (i.e. stairways, sprinkler system, etc.).

- B. Meal Payment Policy File EFD** – Chairman Pope reported that the consensus of the Building & Finance Subcommittee was that the School Committee have a public hearing before it considers changing this policy. He included a press release in the packet which addresses the issue of unpaid lunch fees. Ms. Teixeira expressed concern with developing a new policy before taking the actions outlined in the current policy (i.e. legal action to collect outstanding balances). Dr. Safier noted that the outstanding balance is now \$55,000, which would require an extraordinary amount of time and effort to collect in small claims court. Mrs. Gilman stated that she is extremely troubled with the possibility of not serving lunches to children. Mayor Kirk agreed and requested that the B&F Subcommittee brainstorm other options for collection. After a lengthy discussion, it was the consensus of the committee not to hold a public hearing on the policy. Mrs. Gilman suggested reminding parents/guardians about the POS system. Chairman Pope stated that the policy will remain in the purview of the B&F Subcommittee for discussion of possible changes. Ms. Teixeira noted that the policy needs to be forwarded to Mike Gilbert to be included in the School Committee Policy Manual.
- C. Proposed School Safety Bills – 2013/2014 Session**
- D. Minutes of Planning Meeting for Naming of Al Swekla Auditorium at O’Maley Innovation Middle School**
- E. Email from Chairman Pope (3/26/13)**
- F. Community Education Forum** – Mrs. Gilman reported that she is looking for recorders to sit at each table and type information that will show up on screens at the forum and suggested that members of the School Committee volunteer to do this.
- G. Banner for GHS** – Mrs. Gilman asked the committee for contacts for a possible banner celebrating the GHS innovation award.

- H. Renaming of O'Maley Innovation Middle School** – Chairman Pope asked the committee to consider having a ceremony before the end of the school year with respect to the renaming of O'Maley.

- I. Letter to Chairman Pope from Ann Marie Oliveira (3/26/13)** – Distributed by Chairman Pope at the meeting.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Chairman Pope, it was unanimously

VOTED: By Roll Call Vote

Mr. Garberg – yes
Mrs. Gilman – yes
Mayor Kirk – yes
Chairman Pope – yes
Ms. Teixeira – yes
Kathy Clancy – yes

To enter into Executive Session after a 10-minute break to discuss collective bargaining and to enter back into regular session for the purpose of adjournment only.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Mrs. Gilman, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of March 27, 2013 at 10:50 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*