

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

**School Committee Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

District Office Conference Room  
2 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930  
7:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Jonathan Pope, Chairman  
Kathy Clancy, Vice Chairperson  
Joel Favazza, Secretary  
Tony Gross  
Michelle Sweet  
Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken (8:05 p.m.)

**Administration Present**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent  
Dr. Arthur Unobskey, Asst. Superintendent  
Tom Lafleur, CPA, Director of Finance  
and Operations  
Patty Wegmann, Special Education Director  
James Cook, GHS Principal  
Dr. Telena Imel, West Parish Principal

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

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- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.
- II. **SALUTE TO THE FLAG**
- III. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** – Cheryl Olson of 591 Essex Avenue, a math teacher at O’Maley, requested that the School Committee resume negotiations with the GTA and bargain for fair contracts with all educators. She also pointed out that the School Committee approved a calendar for next year that does not include evening parent conferences.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON** – None.
- V. **RECOGNITIONS** – Dr. Safier read and presented a citation to JROTC instructors Richard Muth and Carcel Dubose for leading the drill team to success in the recent championship in Texas. Chairman Pope read and presented a citation to the JROTC team for winning the national championship in the unarmed exhibition drill, as well as third place in the unarmed regulation drill at the championship. Finally, Kathy Clancy read and presented an individual citation to JROTC cadet commanding officer Soo Ae Ono for earning first place and receiving a perfect score while commanding the color guard at the championship.

Kathy Clancy thanked GHS students Jarrod Martin and Roy Kirwa for regularly attending School Committee meetings and providing news of what is happening at the high school. She also recognized the students who performed at the “Be Our Guest” dinner and show at O’Maley last week to raise money for the O’Maley Academy summer program.

Lastly, Chairman Pope reported that the Gloucester Education Foundation celebrated their tenth anniversary last week and recognized their enormous contributions to the Gloucester Public Schools.

**VI. GHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL** – Jarrod Martin introduced new treasurer Sam Gross and new vice president Caroline Enos and updated the committee on the following senior events at Gloucester High School: drunk driving presentation, Spirit Week, pep rally, and progress reports. Caroline reported on the junior event and Sam reported on the scheduling of next year’s semiformal and prom. Jarrod thanked the committee for inviting the Student Advisory Council to attend meetings and report on what is happening at the high school.

**VII. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Minutes**

1. School Committee Public Hearing Minutes of April 5, 2017
2. Program Subcommittee Minutes of April 6, 2017

**B. Approval of Warrants – Cover Sheets**

**C. Approval of Transfers**

**D. Referrals**

**E. Acceptance of Donation** – \$100.00 from the Women’s Community Club of Magnolia to the Mad Hot Ball Student Activity Fund

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

**VOTED:** 5 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Consent Agenda as noted above.

**VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

**A. Special Education Update** – Patty Wegmann reported that there are new procedures in place for the MCAS alternative assessment (MCAS-Alt). She reviewed who should take the MCAS-Alt, goals and outcomes of the alternate assessment, other assessment options for students with significant disabilities, grade level and competency portfolios, and next steps for IEP teams.

Ms. Wegmann reported that there are also new procedures in place for the Coordinated Program Review (CPR). She reviewed the current CPR cycle, the new process of monitoring, the tiered support model and the various tiers, and tiered focused monitoring.

Ms. Wegmann reported that there are currently 57 students placed out of district, two students at Recovery High School, and three choice students who were placed out of district by their choice school. She stated that two out-of-district students will be

turning 22 during the 2017-18 school year and three students will be returning to the district this fall from out-of-district placements. There was a discussion about Gloucester being responsible for out-of-district tuition for students who have choiced out to neighboring districts.

**B. School Improvement Plans**

1. Gloucester High School – Principal James Cook presented a slide show on the GHS School Improvement Plan. There was a discussion about homework, the advantages of 1:1 technology, and the effective use of SchoolBrains.

*(Mayor Theken joined the meeting at 8:05 p.m.)*

2. West Parish Elementary School – Principal Telena Imel presented a slide show on the West Parish School Improvement Plan. She reviewed the district-wide elementary school goals and West Parish’s individual goal of respect and maintaining a clean school environment.

Mr. Gross noted that this week is Teacher Appreciation Week and recognized the district’s wonderful staff.

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

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept the School Improvement Plans of Gloucester High School and West Parish Elementary School.

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

1. Newcomer Academy Structure – Dr. Safier spoke about this transitional program and Dr. Unobskey explained that it is aimed at assisting elementary school students. Mr. Cook discussed how newcomers at the high school are supported and expressed appreciation for teachers’ flexibility in teaching these students.
2. Teacher Mentoring Program Action Plan
3. Choose Gloucester: A Plan to Create a Series of Videos that Promote Gloucester Public Schools – Mr. Favazza stated that he appreciates that people are willing to volunteer their time to assist with producing these videos but expressed concern about relying on volunteers to come up with high quality videos designed to entice families to choose Gloucester schools, noting that his cell phone takes better videos than Cape Ann TV’s equipment. He cautioned that the committee should ensure that the volunteers are skilled marketers and understand how to generate really great videos. He also stated that he would be personally willing to try to find money in the budget to hire a firm that would treat the district like any other paying client.

Chairman Pope indicated that one of the volunteers, John McElhiney, is the Director of Communications for Brandeis University and that Lisa Smith from Cape Ann TV will be providing background footage for the videos. Kathy Clancy noted that Mr. McElhiney has had an extensive career in public relations and marketing. Mayor Theken stated that professional volunteers who live in and know the community will do a better job than an outside firm.

Finally, in response to a question by Kathy Clancy, Dr. Unobskey discussed the reaction of students to the new MCAS 2.0 assessment.

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

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept the Superintendent's Report.

## **IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

- A. Personnel Subcommittee Meeting of May 2, 2017** – Chairman Pope reported that the Personnel Subcommittee discussed the release of GAEP employees, namely the school secretaries, to the AFSCME bargaining unit at its meeting of May 2, 2017.

**(At this time, the agenda was taken out of order.)**

## **X. ACTION**

### **B. Letters to Unions**

1. Letter to GAEP – Chairman Pope reviewed and the committee discussed the request from GAEP to allow the school secretaries to transfer to AFSCME.

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

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 0 opposed to direct the Superintendent to write a letter to GAEP stating that the School Committee has no objection to the secretaries in its bargaining unit transferring to another bargaining unit.

2. Letter to AFSCME – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 0 opposed to direct the Superintendent to write a letter to AFSCME stating that should the secretaries in the GAEP bargaining unit become part of the AFSCME bargaining unit, those new positions would be subject to negotiation.

**IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS (Continued)**

- B. Program Subcommittee Meeting of May 4, 2017** – Chairperson Clancy reported that the Program Subcommittee continued their discussion of the O’Maley Innovation Middle School plan renewal at its meeting of May 4, 2017.

**X. ACTION (Continued)**

- A. Acceptance of DESE Grant** – Dr. Unobskey reviewed the purpose of the grant.

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

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 0 opposed to approve a grant from the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the amount of \$13,000.00 for Enhancing Supports for Students in Poverty.

- C. Appointment of Gregg Bach as Assistant Superintendent** – Dr. Safier reported that Dr. Unobskey signed his contract with the Wayland Public Schools on Monday. In anticipation of that vacancy, the position was posted, one resume was received, a committee was formed, and an interview was conducted. Dr. Safier reported that he is asking the School Committee to appoint Gregg Bach as Assistant Superintendent, subject to contract negotiations. He spoke about Mr. Bach’s background and noted that he previously spent 19 years in the district. Dr. Safier indicated that having this appointment done now will facilitate collaboration between Dr. Unobskey and Mr. Bach.

Mr. Favazza expressed concern that unofficially announcing that Mr. Bach was leaving Rockport to come back to Gloucester to take this job dissuaded other candidates from applying for the job. He believes that giving Mr. Bach the job sends a message that the district was not interested in casting a wider net to find other qualified applicants because of a foregone conclusion.

Mr. Gross noted that Mr. Bach was at the forefront of turning the district around when Dr. Safier first came onboard and he believes that hiring him is the correct decision because he is a known commodity. Chairman Pope stated that the administration never announced that they were going to hire Mr. Bach and that the foregone conclusion was that Mr. Bach was going to apply for the job. People then made an assumption that he was going to get it.

Mr. Favazza stated that he believes we are shortchanging the district by not exploring other options. He noted that we have a duty to the taxpayers, students and staff to find the best candidate for the job, and there was no opportunity to vet Mr. Bach against other candidates. Mr. Favazza also brought up the fact that procedures were waived at a recent School Committee meeting in order to hire Mr. Bach as interim principal at Beeman and that, obviously, Mr. Bach was not looking to come back to the district for 9/10 of a year. Mr. Favazza believes the signal was that Mr. Bach was getting his old job back.

Finally, Chairman Pope clarified that the School Committee was not involved in the search. He indicated that it is the Superintendent's decision and the committee simply votes yes or no.

After discussion, on a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was

**VOTED:** 5 in favor, 1 opposed (Mr. Favazza) to authorize the Superintendent to enter into contract negotiations with Gregg Bach for the position of Assistant Superintendent, effective July 1, 2017.

## **XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/OLD AND NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. MSBA Project Updates**

1. West Parish School – Chairman Pope reported that the West Parish building committee is meeting tomorrow.
2. East Gloucester/Veterans School – Dr. Safier reported that he has submitted a draft of the educational profile questionnaire to the district's MSBA liaison. It will be reviewed by the MSBA and sent back for corrections.
3. GHS Roof – Dr. Safier reported that there was a walk-through for potential contractors on May 4th. The bidding is now taking place and will close on May 24th. Work is expected to start on June 21<sup>st</sup> and should be completed by September 15, 2017. He stated that summer activities at the high school will be transferred to O'Maley. However, the GHS office will remain open during the summer. Finally, he noted that the field house roof will be done first.

**B. Report to City Administration Regarding Consolidation of Services** – Chairman Pope indicated that this report is currently being reviewed by the city administration and that they may come back and ask for the committee's input. Mr. Favazza stated that he had hoped the committee could discuss the report because he has questions about it. Chairman Pope indicated that until the city responds to the report, there really isn't anything to discuss. He suggested that Mr. Favazza send his questions in writing to the people who put the report together, since many of them are not present at the meeting (i.e. Grant Harris and Ryann Maltese). Kathy Clancy stated that Grant Harris discussed this matter at a Building & Finance Subcommittee meeting this winter at which the IT budget was being reviewed.

Mr. Favazza pointed out that there are a lot of conclusory statements made in the report that have no basis. He would like the School Committee to be informed as to why the district felt it was able to draw these conclusions. He believes the information in the report is poisoning the well and that there is no open-mindedness.

Kathy Clancy noted that this topic has been discussed for over a year and she was surprised that this information was requested again by the city. She pointed out that the city and school department work together when they can and that there is a very limited staff dedicated to serving the school department.

Mayor Theken took exception to Mr. Favazza's negativity. She stated that there is no money in the budget to consolidate and if we do, we will lose services. She suggested that Mr. Favazza attend the City Council budget meetings. Mr. Favazza responded that he is trying to find positive solutions for the city and that the negativity is the summary of the report that states consolidation will not work and we can't afford it. He stated that the positive solution is to explore other options.

- C. School Committee Operating Protocols and Rules of Procedure** – Chairman Pope suggested that a workshop be scheduled for Thursday, June 1, 2017 at 5:00 p.m., to be facilitated by Mike Gilbert, in order to review the operating protocols and rules of procedure. Ms. Puglisi pointed out that there is a Program Subcommittee meeting scheduled at that time. At Mr. Favazza's suggestion, the workshop was scheduled for 5:30 p.m. after the subcommittee meeting.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT** – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of May 10, 2017 at 9:33 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*