

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium

7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Val Gilman, Vice Chairperson
Kathy Clancy, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira
Tony Gross

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
CFO Tom Markham
Principal William Goodwin
Principal Gregg Bach
Councilor Paul McGeary (8:49 p.m.)

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – Chairman Pope stated that he received a letter just prior to the start of the meeting from someone who could not stay for the meeting. That letter will be read into the record later.

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

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

VOTED: By Roll Call Vote

Chairman Pope – yes
Ms. Teixeira – yes
Kathy Clancy – yes
Mrs. Gilman – yes
Mr. Gross – yes

To enter into Executive Session at 7:08 p.m. to hear a Level 3 grievance and to discuss contract negotiations and then to enter back into regular session to resume the meeting.

Chairman Pope reconvened the meeting at 8:49 p.m.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None.

V. **RECOGNITIONS** – Mrs. Gilman recognized and thanked Dr. Bill Goodwin for his years of service, hard work and dedication at GHS. Kathy Clancy, Mr. Gross, Ms. Teixeira and Chairman Pope also thanked Dr. Goodwin and wished him well in his retirement.

VI. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Approval of Minutes**

1. Ad Hoc Policy Manual Subcommittee of June 4, 2012
2. Program Subcommittee of June 7, 2012
3. School Committee of June 13, 2012
4. School Committee Executive Session of June 13, 2012 – **Confidential**

B. **Acceptance of FY13 DESE Grant** – FY13 Innovation Schools Implementation Grant in the amount of \$50,000.00

Dr. Safier indicated that this grant is due for submission on June 29th and he expects that it will be approved. The School Committee's acceptance of the grant in advance will allow the administration immediate access to the funds upon approval, which can then be used for some of the developmental work that will be taking place over the summer.

C. **Acceptance of GEF Grants**

1. Summer Literacy Program at Veterans' Memorial School in the amount of \$4,000.00
2. Additional payment for Advancing Engineering Program in the amount of \$4,564.00

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

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

VII. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT/DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES**

A. **Presentation of School Improvements Plans**

1. O'Maley Middle School – Principal Debra Lucey presented highlights of the O'Maley Middle School SIP, including goals for the innovation plan, intervention and remediation, and continuation of the SAILS program. She also reported on advanced level math classes and the transitions from the elementary schools to O'Maley and O'Maley to the high school.
2. Gloucester High School – Principal Bill Goodwin thanked the committee for their kind words earlier and presented the Gloucester High School SIP, including goals for increasing college applications, reducing the freshmen failure rate, common planning time, code of conduct, family and community relations, and improving the safety and cleanliness of the school. He noted that this year, 84% of students are taking four years of math, up from 42% in 2009. There was a discussion about implementing a community service program for students.

On a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to approve the School Improvement Plans for O'Maley Middle School and Gloucester High School.

Ms. Lucey and Dr. Goodwin left the meeting at 9:34 p.m.

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

IX. ACTION

- E. Second Reading and Approval of Elementary Attendance Policy** – Chairman Pope stated that the elementary school principals have been wrestling with issues of attendance and tardiness for a long time and developed the attendance policy to address these issues, which has been deliberated upon extensively over the last couple of months. Dr. Safier reviewed data from the elementary schools regarding attendance and tardiness and stated the importance of consistent attendance. Mr. Bach reviewed research regarding the impact of attendance on student achievement, the relationship between behavior and attendance, and the effects of tardiness on all children in a classroom. He noted that one parent's attendance at a pre-CHINS meeting ended a year-and-a-half of high absences and tardiness by one student. Ms. Teixeira reviewed the advice she received from Attorney Naomi Stonberg regarding the number of absences allowed per year before state intervention occurs and the requirement of a supervisor of attendance for the district.

Chairman Pope stated that he received a letter on this subject from Sherri Lewis before the start of the meeting. She wanted to speak during Oral Communications but was unable to stay for the meeting. Without objection, Recording Secretary Maria Puglisi read the letter into the record (see attached).

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to waive the second reading of the Elementary Attendance Policy.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to adopt the Elementary Attendance Policy as presented this evening.

Ms. Teixeira thanked Ms. Lewis for her letter and noted that school personnel are mandated reporters and do not need this policy to file a CHINS petition or a 51A report. She assured the public that by law, these actions may already be taken. In addition, she expressed the hope that there will be an opportunity during the requested parent/guardian conference to discuss any problems that may be going on in the home. Mrs. Gilman reported that, according to her research, other communities have included the filing of a CHINS petition in their attendance policies, as well.

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

X. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/NEW BUSINESS

- C. Update on Administrative Searches** – Dr. Safier reported that Eric Anderson signed a contract to be the next high school principal and updated the committee on Mr. Anderson’s experience. He stated that there will be interviews on Monday for the assistant principal and the two deans of students positions, in which Mr. Anderson will be participating. In addition, Dr. Safier anticipates that the candidate for principal of East Gloucester School will sign her contract tomorrow. The West Parish principal search committee began interviews today, and there is a strong likelihood that somebody will be named by late next week.

Mr. Bach left the meeting at 10:12 p.m.

VIII. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Building & Finance Subcommittee Meeting of June 20, 2012** – Chairperson Clancy stated that the matters addressed during this subcommittee meeting were addressed at the June 20, 2012 School Committee meeting.
- B. Building & Finance Subcommittee Meeting of June 27, 2012** – Chairperson Clancy reported that the Building & Finance Subcommittee reviewed the City/School Committee MOU on facilities at its meeting of June 27, 2012 and that it is close to being finalized.

IX. ACTION (Continued)

- A. Acceptance of School Improvement Plans** – See Item VII.A.
- B. Adjustment of FY13 School Budget** – Mr. Markham reviewed the proposed cuts to the FY13 school budget in order to meet the City Council appropriation. Ms. Teixeira expressed concern about elimination of school payment for AP testing at GHS and suggested that the school pay for half of the testing fees. Mr. Markham noted that school payment of those fees was cut a year ago and that in FY12, parents and students paid for the testing.

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

VOTED: By Roll Call Vote

Kathy Clancy – yes
Mrs. Gilman – yes
Mr. Gross – yes
Chairman Pope – yes
Ms. Teixeira – yes

To reduce the FY13 school budget by \$467,742.00 as outlined in CFO Working Document 16.0 dated June 26, 2012 and presented to the School Committee on June 27, 2012.

- C. Approval of FY13 School Budget** – On a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: By Roll Call Vote

Mrs. Gilman – yes
Mr. Gross – yes
Chairman Pope – yes
Ms. Teixeira – yes
Kathy Clancy – yes

To approve the FY13 school budget in the amount of \$35,398,748.00.

- D. Ratification of Contracts** – Ms. Teixeira reviewed the terms of the School Committee’s contracts with Food Service, Noon Supervisors, and AFSCME-B.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the Gloucester School Committee and Food Service – Teamsters Local Union #4.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the Gloucester School Committee and the Noon Supervisors.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to approve the agreement between the Gloucester School Committee and Clerical Employees – Unit A of AFSCME.

Ms. Teixeira thanked everyone who helped with the negotiations.

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

- H. Purchase of iPads for School Committee** – At the request of Ms. Teixeira, Councilor McGeary spoke about the City Council’s use of iPads and recommended them highly. He stated that he has not received any complaints from the public about councilors looking at their iPads and not listening to conversations.

Councilor McGeary asked whether it would be useful to have another joint City Council/School Committee meeting on the topic of the facilities MOU. Chairman Pope suggested having a meeting in the fall after the MOU has been finalized and the DPW has had some time to work with it.

F. Endorsement and Reaffirmation of Plan for Effective Learning Communities –

Dr. Safier reviewed the research he examined and the conclusions of the survey conducted by the district supporting smaller community elementary schools. He recommended that the School Committee endorse and reaffirm the Plan for Effective Learning Communities.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to endorse and reaffirm the commitment to smaller community elementary schools which are consistent with the Plan for Effective Learning Communities based on educational merit.

Chairman Pope referred the matter of the disposition of Fuller School to the Building and Finance Subcommittee.

G. First Reading of Amendment to Comprehensive Health and Sex Education Policy, File IHAMB –

Mrs. Gilman reported that she consulted with Mike Gilbert of MASC, who felt that the School Committee should conduct a reading of the policy tonight. However, she would like to waive the reading of the entire policy and read just the section that has been amended. Dr. Safier noted that health education and sex policies in education are predicated on M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 32A and that the amendments to the policy are consistent with that law.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to waive the full reading of the Comprehensive Health and Sex Education Policy, File IHAMB, and only cover Section 2, “The Role, Rights and Responsibilities of Families.”

Mrs. Gilman read Section 2 of the policy, and there was a discussion about the content of the curriculum that will be placed on the district website.

After discussion, on a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to amend Section 2 of the Comprehensive Health and Sex Education Policy, File IHAMB, as follows:

- a) The administration shall provide full and timely parental/guardian notification of all aspects of this policy.
- b) The curriculum shall be placed on the district website.

- c) Parents/guardians shall be made aware that on written request, they may withdraw their child(ren) from any portion of the sex education curriculum, confident that no child so withdrawn shall be penalized by reason of such a withdrawal.

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to continue the School Committee meeting of June 27, 2012 until 11:30 p.m., with a five-minute break before the continuance.

A short break was taken at 11:05 p.m.

H. Purchase of iPads for School Committee (Continued) – Kathy Clancy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gross, to purchase iPads for the School Committee with a portion of the end-of-year FY12 available balance. Without objection, Dr. Safier read the following email from Ruth Pino to Mrs. Gilman sent at 6:22 p.m. tonight:

“Thank you for the opportunity. While I don’t attend School Committee meetings on a regular basis, I do attend a fair number of City Council meetings. I have observed over the last few years that City Councilors have at their seats laptops, iPads and cell phones. While nothing is wrong with having technology at their fingertips, and the ability to search for old minutes or reports pertaining to a particular subject is helpful, it appears that no one is paying attention to the speaker at the podium. Some would argue that they are listening while reviewing something on their laptop, etc., but I think it looks rude and inattentive, so the perception is that what the speaker is saying is not important. It takes a lot for someone to approach the podium. They should be given, at the very least, the respect of eye contact.”

Dr. Safier also read an email received by all committee members this afternoon:

“Dear Gloucester School Committee members: My first reaction upon learning that the School Committee is considering the purchase of iPads for members was surprise. At a time when there are any number of worthy underfunded programs and initiatives in the district, I can’t help but wonder if this is wise. Before voting on this expenditure, I hope all committee members will ask the following questions: Does this expenditure fit within the budget objectives set out by the committee? Will the availability of iPads to members truly result in significant financial and time efficiencies in committee operations? Would this expenditure, had it been a line item in the school’s budget, have stood up to public scrutiny? Being confident and clear about the answers to these questions will help prevent this expenditure, should it take place, from being perceived as self-serving and therefore clouding the committee’s good work. Respectfully, Beth T. Morris, 363 Essex Avenue, Gloucester, MA.”

Mrs. Gilman amend the motion to state that the purchase of iPads requires an update of the committee’s operating protocols that members refrain from sending or receiving any or all electronic messages, including texting and use of internet, unless special permission is requested publicly through the chair. Kathy Clancy seconded the amended motion. Chairman Pope stated that this amendment is not appropriate because the committee is in the process of establishing its operating protocols. He reported that he discussed with Dorothy

Presser the committee's need for a protocol regarding use of electronic devices at meetings and she suggested that the committee draft such a protocol and send it to her for inclusion with all of the operating protocols being considered by the committee. Therefore, Mrs. Gilman withdrew her amendment to the motion.

Mrs. Gilman stated that she will not be supporting the motion because she feels that the committee's number one responsibility is to the district, its teachers and students. She believes that iPads are a luxury, and it is difficult for her to accept one when there are people in the district who do not have them. She is also conflicted about members scrolling through documents during meetings. She believes it can be tough to be a good listener in that case and that unless your skills are really strong, you can spend a lot of time searching for things. She also believes that there are some big concerns about transmitting electronic information in and out of meetings, including texting, emailing and internet, because that becomes public information.

Mr. Gross understands the perception that iPads are a luxury but noted that most people do not understand the volume of material that the committee receives and how public that information is. His home computer is now being used as a public portal that is subject to state law, and it would be far safer and more in tune with the Open Meeting Law to have a district-owned device for all School Committee business. The ability to access the archive of past materials and policies on an iPad would also be very helpful. He believes that if the motion passes, the members need to make a conscious effort to be aware of appearing rude and inattentive at meetings and be respectful of the public. The technology is quite affordable and is extremely helpful and efficient.

Ms. Teixeira stated that she appreciates Ruth Pino reaching out to the committee on this matter. She gathers that Ms. Pino is not necessarily against the purchase of iPads but is concerned about how they are used at meetings. Ms. Teixeira does not see iPads as a luxury but as a tool that will help her work more effectively as a School Committee member, especially in contract negotiations. It will also be helpful to be able to access the city charter, Open Meeting Law and policies and save on paper and toner. She noted that the committee has talked about 21st century skills for students and should be using that technology themselves.

Kathy Clancy will not be supporting the motion. She noted that Mr. Markham's analysis of the savings that would result from not making copies of School Committee packets shows a savings of only \$180 per year. Therefore, she believes there is no financial justification for swapping copying costs for the purchase of iPads. She also noted that supplies are being cut, that there are programs that cannot be properly funded, and that the \$4,000 cost of iPads would go a long way for any teacher. She questioned whether the district's two IT employees will be expected to support the iPads, which concerns her greatly. She noted that members already have dedicated email addresses and some of them choose not to use it. She believes that iPads are a luxury and a convenience, not a necessity. She is not convinced that there will be any efficiency as a committee by having them compared to how the committee works now. She also stated that she is very uncomfortable with the fact that this motion was made seven days ago in subcommittee, and she doubts many people know it is on tonight's agenda.

Chairman Pope stated that in his business, if there is a tool that saves time, you always buy the tool. He puts a lot of time into his School Committee job and also has a couple of other jobs, and having an iPad will save him time. He also supports the idea of having a dedicated device for School Committee business.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Mr. Gross, it was

VOTED: 3 in favor, 2 opposed (Mrs. Gilman and Kathy Clancy) to purchase iPads for the School Committee with a portion of the end-of-year FY12 available balance.

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

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

- B. Request from City for Transfer of Land Adjacent to Newell Stadium** – Chairman Pope referred this matter to the Building and Finance Subcommittee and stated that it is somewhat time sensitive in that they need to get the land ownership finalized before construction is started on the project.
- A. Appointment of Liaison to Special Education Parent Advisory Committee** – This item was tabled. Mrs. Gilman suggested that anyone interested in being appointed send an email to Chairman Pope.
- C. Protocol for Use of Electronic Devices** – Chairman Pope asked the members to think about a protocol regarding the use of electronic devices by School Committee members during meetings.

XII. FYI

Amended School Committee Minutes of May 23, 2012 and May 30, 2012

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTED: 5 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of June 27, 2012 at 11:36 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*

Sherri A. Lewis
117 Magnolia Avenue
Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930
978.290.3281

6/27/12

Dear School Committee members,

This letter is in regards to the new attendance policy guideline. While I recognize the great need to address this serious issue in short order; I do believe the ultimate consequence of CHINS far exceeds the circumstances. We have gone from minimal admonishment to full scale punishment of children, which may lead down a road of unknown consequence due to the environment in which they may be placed.

Our budget is cut to the bone in my opinion. We don't have enough money for the libraries, the arts programs, teachers and properly trained paraprofessionals to help the kids that do come to school. I find it hard to justify the money spent on a Truants officer to correct the behaviors of adult in most cases rather than children.

As a taxpayer, I feel that it is irresponsible to burden the community further.
If a child is placed on CHINS - they will be required to do the following

- Leave school to attend the court hearing.
- Parents Loss of pay - (although deserved)
- The principal will need to attend
- A court appointed advocate will need to be present
- A School Committee Rep (prosecutor)
- A judge
- And any number of other employees will be employed to do there part weather it be paperwork or guarding the proceedings.
- And perhaps a case worker.
- Time allotment is unknown as courts run very slow these days Est.1 -3 hours

I don't have the exact numbers but this looks to be an extremely expensive day. This is just the first day. There will be a follow up appearance in 3 months and depending on the mood of the court we may have a continuance and then a final. This is a minimum of a 2-3 day procedure. Low balling the estimate, \$1500 - \$2000 cost per kid.

As I understand it, there are policies in place that would allow for billing of parents regarding tardiness and absences of \$25.00. I am not sure this has been properly explored. I feel that 75% of the problem would disappear if parents were hit in the pocket book. I understand staffing is tight and may not allow for billing. My remedy for this is to out source. Personally, I am not looking for a job but I would be willing to take on this corrective response for the cost of postal supplies used, 15% return on all fees collected. If that is not acceptable I am sure another out sourcing possibility is close at hand.

I am grateful to all of you for making this important issue a priority. It is vital to the strength of our community for everyone to do there part; even if it is as simple as getting out of bed and going to school on time. I hope you will take my words into inconsideration before you pass this new policy as written. I would like to see all revenue avenues and public education through the help of PTO's, exhausted. I feel your policy should be put in place but a more temperate scale of punishment is warranted to the circumstances.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Sherri Lewis