

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 24, 2016

District Office – Conference Room

7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Kathy Clancy, Vice Chairperson
Joel Favazza, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira
Tony Gross
Michelle Sweet

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Dr. Arthur Unobskey, Asst. Superintendent
Tom Lafleur, CPA, Director of Finance
and Operations

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

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 – None.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None.

V. RECOGNITIONS – Kathy Clancy recognized Leslie Sellers and Jessica Linquata for doing a great job with the O’Maley Performing Arts Summer Camps. Chairman Pope reported that Friday’s performance was unbelievable, considering that there were 100 kids involved and that they were only there for two weeks.

Mr. Gross reported that the Countdown to Kindergarten was extremely well attended, and Dr. Safier recognized Amy Larsen of Pathways for spearheading the event. He also acknowledged the many sponsors of the event.

VI. GHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL – None present.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. School Committee Meeting of August 10, 2016

B. Approval of Warrants – Cover Sheets

C. Approval of Transfers

D. Referrals

E. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations

1. Donation of \$440.60 from Ohiopyle Prints, Inc. to Gloucester High School

Ms. Teixeira removed Item A.1 from the Consent Agenda.

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Consent Agenda as noted above.

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

A. Back-to-School Readiness/Opening Day – Mr. Lafleur reported on the work done on the buildings by the DPW this summer, and Dr. Safier reported on staffing and the teachers’ first day.

B. Elementary School Master Plan Draft Proposal – Chairman Pope explained how the draft proposal was prepared and reviewed the plan, which indicates that if a site can be located, the committee will consider consolidating East Gloucester and Veterans. He reported that Dore & Whittier believes that the Swinson’s Field site has potential as a buildable site. During the feasibility stage, money will be allocated for a site assessment to determine whether that is true, and the committee will then be in a position to determine how best to consolidate Beeman and Plum Cove.

Kathy Clancy and Ms. Teixeira expressed support for the plan. Ms. Teixeira suggested including what the next step will be if the Swinson’s Field site is not viable. After discussion, it was the consensus of the School Committee to add the following language to the plan: “Should an alternate site not be viable, the School Committee will consider pursuing the Beeman Memorial Elementary School option.”

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept the Elementary School Plan Proposal, as revised.

Ms. Teixeira stated that she was initially concerned about the idea of consolidating schools. However, after seeing the new West Parish School, which is much bigger but houses the same number of students, she realized that a school of that size is still a community school and is not too large for an elementary school. Kathy Clancy added that this consolidation plan will provide a better facility for more students in a shorter amount of time. She also requested that notice go out to families regarding the plan.

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Massachusetts School Building Authority that the committee has modified the Statement of Interest for East Gloucester Elementary School to consider consolidation of East Gloucester and Veterans' Memorial Elementary Schools should an alternate site be determined.

The committee will take public input on the plan at its meeting on September 14th at West Parish School.

- C. Charter School Referendum** – Chairman Pope reported that “Great Schools Massachusetts” is the major backer of the referendum. However, in looking at their website, he found there is no way to contact them. He then contacted the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association by email twice and did not hear back from them.

Chairman Pope stated that he invited Peter Dolan to speak to the committee in opposition of the referendum. Mr. Dolan discussed the failed Gloucester Community Arts Charter School and the lack of oversight of charter schools state-wide and encouraged the committee to oppose the referendum and to be vigorous public opponents of Question 2, which would raise the cap on charter schools in Massachusetts.

Mr. Favazza indicated that he would like to have a balanced discussion on this issue, and Ms. Teixeira agreed that the committee should make every effort to hear from both sides. She also believes it is the committee's responsibility to educate the public on this matter. The committee had a lengthy discussion about the problems with charter schools, and Mr. Favazza stated that he will try to find a proponent of the referendum to come and speak to the committee on September 14th.

- D. Superintendent's Report** – Dr. Safier updated the committee on the following matters:

1. City Council Vote Regarding Polling Location
2. Traffic Control for West Parish Open Houses
3. Next-Generation MCAS Contract Awarded – Dr. Safier reported that they are looking at software programs and other ways to teach typing to elementary and middle school students.
4. Free and Reduced Lunch Numbers to Date – There was a discussion about the threshold difference between eligibility for free lunch and reduced lunch. Dr. Safier also reported on the percentage of special education students at each school and indicated that the district's percentage is higher than the state average of 17 percent.

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

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

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS – None

X. ACTION

A. Acceptance of DESE Grant Amendment – After discussion, on a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept a DESE 21st Century Community Learning Centers Continuation Grant in the amount of \$124,952.00.

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

VOTED: 0 in favor, 6 opposed to reconsider the vote to accept the above-referenced DESE grant amendment in the amount of \$124,952.00. The motion failed.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

A. MSBA Project Update – Open house for the West Parish community on Thursday and for the public on August 28th.

B. Public Relations for Elementary School Plan – Mr. Favazza suggested that the committee consider looking into public relations firms to work with the committee on the elementary school plan. Chairman Pope noted that the Mayor mentioned the same thing to him.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor 0 opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of August 24, 2016 at 8:50 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*