

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 28, 2013
City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium
7:00 p.m.

Members Present

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

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Assistant Superintendent
Hans Baumhauer, Dir. of Finance
and Operations
Phil Padulsky, Food Service Director
Ellen Sibley, Beeman Principal
Matt Fusco, Veterans Principal

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – Lisa Fornero of Addison Street addressed the committee on the Universal Breakfast Program. (See attached statement.)

Ira Yavner of 4 Hawthorne Lane asked the committee why there has been no public response to the allegations raised by Mrs. Fornero regarding learning time. If the facts she stated are correct, he would like to know how they will be addressed, and if they are not, he would like the committee to explain the discrepancies.

Chairman Pope noted that Dr. Safier responded directly to Mrs. Fornero about her letter. He stated that it is the opinion of the School Committee, based on the superintendent’s work, that the district is meeting the state requirements. If anyone does not believe that to be the case, the way to deal with it is to ask the state whether the district is complying with the requirements. Chairman Pope referred this matter to the Program Subcommittee to investigate opportunities to expand learning time in the elementary schools.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None

V. RECOGNITIONS – Dorothy Presser, president of MASC, recognized the School Committee for their work in the District Governance Support Program and presented each member with a certificate of participation.

Mrs. Gilman recognized Jen Luzitano and Leslie Sellers for their summer performing arts drama camp. She also recognized former West Parish PTO president Lisa Groleau for her leadership as a parent in advocating for smaller versus larger schools.

Chairman Pope recognized the Building Center and Timberline for their contributions to the grand opening of Newell Stadium, which will take place on Friday, September 6th with free admission.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. School Committee of August 7, 2013

On a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Mr. Garberg, it was unanimously

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

VII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- A. Update on Universal Breakfast Program** – Principals Ellen Sibley and Matt Fusco reviewed the planning document which reflects some of the work that has been done and reported on the progress of the program. Mrs. Sibley reviewed data from the state on the benefits of the program and activities that can be conducted during breakfast time, such as the Second Step antibullying curriculum and morning meetings. She noted that she has discussed the pilot program with parents at Beeman and that they are willing to participate and see how the program will help launch the school day in a more positive way. The program will be launched at Beeman during the third week of September and at Veterans in October.

Phil Padulsky demonstrated the coolers in which the breakfasts will be delivered and handed out sample breakfasts to the committee, consisting of two grains and 100% juice. Milk will also be available. He reported that Patty Wegmann, Director of Special Education, indicated to him that students in the Steps program would be happy to assemble the prewrapped breakfast items.

Mrs. Gilman reported on an article in the Boston Globe about the components of 21st century learning, which included universal breakfast at the top of the list.

Kathy Clancy and Tony Gross indicated that it would be helpful to see data on the impact of the program on behavioral issues. Kathy Clancy also reported that from what she has observed in her son's classes over the years, the teacher is always teaching and the students are always doing something, even during snack time.

The following matters were also discussed:

- Students on special diets/parent preferences
- Data on reduction in BMI
- Morning meetings
- Second Step curriculum
- Teachers' roles in the breakfast program

B. Opening of School

1. Student Enrollment – Dr. Safier reviewed an enrollment report showing the number of students at each school and average class sizes. He noted that the total of 3,062 is slightly misleading because it does not reflect actual preschool enrollment of 77 students. Therefore, the district total is actually 3,091 students. Dr. Safier reported that enrollment in grades K-9 has increased and that there is a drop in enrollment in grades 10-12. He and Mr. Baumhauer will review those numbers to find out where the reductions are coming from. Dr. Safier believes the class sizes at O’Maley are approximately 24 students and indicated that he will confirm that at the next meeting.
2. New Hires – Dr. Safier reviewed the list of new staff members for the 2013-2014 school year.
3. Facilities – Dr. Safier reviewed the school opening report showing work that has been done over the summer and work in progress at each of the buildings. He indicated that all of the schools will be inspected tomorrow to ensure that they are ready for opening day. He also noted that he is in negotiations with the Emergency Operations Department regarding their sharing space at O’Maley with the Transportation Department since there is not enough space for the buses to be parked at 2 Blackburn Drive. Kathy Clancy added that the air quality at O’Maley is no longer a concern due to the cleaning of the univents last year.

C. Move to 2 Blackburn Drive – Dr. Safier reported that the lease was signed in early August and that the preschool will be moving into the building tomorrow. There will be an open house on September 9th and the school will open on September 10th. Mr. Baumhauer reviewed the floor plan of the building and outdoor play space and indicated that the IT Department is wiring the building for internet and phones, after which the administration will be able to move into the building (end of September).

D. Leadership Retreat – Gregg Bach reviewed the topics covered in the two-day leadership retreat which took place on August 20 and 21, specifically a review of SMART goals, collection of artifacts of evidence, and observations and feedback.

E. Summer Professional Development – Mr. Bach reviewed the workshops taken by teachers over the summer, highlighting a four-day workshop on BSRI Math for K-5 and a three-day workshop on co-teaching for Veterans teachers. He noted that O’Maley has proposed to do all of their professional development in-house on November 5th, which will consist of 18 different sessions all taught by teachers who have developed expertise in different areas.

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

1. Updating the Policy and Procedure on Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Activities – Dr. Safier reported that the district must send a letter to the DPH by September 30th indicating that this policy has been reviewed. The director of nurses is arranging for that review to take place, and arrangements will be made for the Program Subcommittee to review the policy.
2. MDPH Sports Concussion Regulations
3. Capital Improvement Plan Submission – Dr. Safier indicated that the capital improvement plan is in the process of being reviewed. He noted that the administration is looking at including a text adoption cycle, library books and media, furniture, and a digital 1:1 learning environment at the high school. They have also begun discussing the evaluation and possible replacement of the math Investigations program. Mrs. Gilman noted that the Outdoor Classroom of the Future at O’Maley is no longer included on the draft capital improvement plan.
4. FY14 Academic Support Allocation Grant
5. Bullying Legislative Amendment
6. PARCC Field Test
7. Background Check Update

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

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

VIII. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Building & Finance Subcommittee of August 28, 2013** – Chairperson Clancy reported that the Building & Finance Subcommittee discussed the following matters at its meeting on August 28, 2013:
- School opening readiness
 - Communicating with parents about the online meal payment system
 - Update on elementary facilities assessment
 - Enrollment

IX. ACTION – None

X. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/NEW BUSINESS

- A. MSBA Update** – Dr. Safier reported that he, the Mayor, and Ms. Wegmann met briefly today with the MSBA Board of Directors to review what the district is looking for with respect to the building. He reported that there were some concerns about the

location of the OT/PT room, which is located next to the gym and adjacent to some of the custodial areas as opposed to being embedded with the SPED classrooms.

Dr. Safier explained that given the needs of some of the students, the proper location of the OT/PT room was in close proximity to the gym and physical education teacher. If things go according to schedule, the board will review the final schematic design for the feasibility study on January 29, 2014, and if it is approved, the city will have 120 days to approve funding for the project.

- B. Scheduling of Upcoming Meetings** – Chairman Pope indicated that this year, the Mayor has requested that capital improvement plans be submitted by September 6th. Therefore, Chairman Pope suggested that the Building & Finance Subcommittee meet with Mike Hale on September 4th to review the DPW’s capital improvement plan with respect to school buildings and then review the School Department’s capital improvement plan. Chairman Pope indicated that he will speak with the Mayor to request an extension of the deadline. In the meantime, a full School Committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for September 4th at 6:00 p.m. If an extension is granted by the Mayor, the meeting on the 4th will be changed to a Building & Finance Subcommittee meeting.

In addition, Chairman Pope reported that he received a request to move the September 25th School Committee from City Hall to another location. Kathy Clancy suggested conducting the meeting at one of the schools.

- C. Intradistrict School Choice Policy** – Chairman Pope referred this policy to the Program Subcommittee for review because he believes it contains language that tends to create problems for the elementary schools.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

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

VOTED: 6 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of August 28, 2013 at 9:12 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*

III.

School Committee remarks – 8/28/13

Good evening. My name is Lisa Fornero and I live on Addison Street. Tonight, I address you regarding my concerns with this school committee and administration's lack of focus on learning and instruction time. Here, in Gloucester, we are blessed with some of the best teachers in the world. They are dedicated, passionate and highly qualified. Our children love them and they each have earned excellent reputations.

However, by scheduling so few hours of instruction, you are robbing our children of the best those teachers have to offer them ~~– their instruction~~. We have put our children's education in your hands and you are failing them.

The state of Massachusetts Department of Education is extremely clear on its expectations of school districts. You are not meeting those expectations. The math Dr. Safier sent to me in his email of August 19th is simply incomplete. My question to this school committee tonight is: what are you going to do about it?

I urge you not to take my word for it. Do the math yourselves. You offer a 6 hour school day. There are 180 school days. 13 of those are scheduled to be half days. There is a 30 minute lunch, a 15 minute recess, about 15 minutes of transition times, about 10 minutes of homeroom activities, 15 minutes of snack, and now, another 10 minutes of breakfast. Even if you count snack and breakfast as working times, you're still not meeting the minimum timeframes. Do the math. Get out your calculators. I promise you, if you're being truly honest with yourselves, you will not like the numbers you see as a result.

We have an opportunity to make a really positive change in the Gloucester Schools. Although many students have reported getting excellent educations here, our standardized test scores are not showing that. We need to get better. We need to do better. And the first step is for students to be spending more time learning, not less.

I urge you to ask yourselves, what does it mean for a student to do poorly on a standardized test? Not what it means for the school district, not what it means for you, or for me. What does it mean for that student? For the rest of his/her life, they will be asked to live up to standards. However you feel personally about the validity of those assessments, is irrelevant. This is the standard by which students in Gloucester need to be assessed. By not giving students the time they need to learn the skills necessary to do well on those assessments, we are in essence, harming their futures.

Beyond our moral obligation, you have a legal obligation as well. It is not up to you to cut learning time. You don't have that right. This is why state mandates exist. There is no guesswork here. You MUST schedule more instruction time. Period.

Thank you.