

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 8, 2017

District Office Conference Room

2 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman

Joel Favazza, Secretary

Melissa Teixeira

Tony Gross

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent

Gregg Bach, Asst. Superintendent

Tom Lafleur, CPA, Director of Finance
and Operations

Patty Wegmann, Special Education Director

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 – Amanda Tower, Child Care Director for the Cape Ann YMCA, addressed the committee regarding the use of the elementary schools during vacation weeks. She pointed out that they have licensed child care programs at all of the elementary schools and have about 70 families that need child care during vacation weeks. She stated that, depending on the school, she could service anywhere between 26 and 52 kids. She indicated she is currently sending Gloucester families to Rockport but they would love to stay in their own schools or neighborhoods during those weeks.

Ms. Tower indicated that she filled out building use applications but they were denied by the DPW because of the need to get work done in the schools during vacation weeks and the fact that they would need to turn the heat on. She stated that she is completely open to rotating which schools she uses for each of the vacation weeks. Chairman Pope stated that he does not believe the DPW is working on all schools during every vacation. Dr. Safier stated that he will make a request to the DPW to approve the use. Ms. Tower would like to use one school for Christmas vacation week and two schools for the February and April vacation weeks.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – Chairman Pope congratulated everyone who was elected yesterday and thanked everyone who ran but did not get elected. He discussed the importance of people running for office, which generates conversation and engages the community in what is going on in the city.

V. RECOGNITIONS – Dr. Safier recognized the Gloucester Daily Times for their November 3rd editorial mentioning the recent success of the schools. He also commended everyone

involved in the school department who has made a concerted effort to move the district forward over the last few years.

Mr. Favazza recognized Jason Grow for taking dozens of photographs at nearly every girls' varsity soccer game.

- VI. GHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL** – Gabriella Machado introduced herself and updated the committee on the following events at Gloucester High School: field hockey team, semiformal, first term report cards, presentation to eighth graders, and open house.
- VII. CONSENT AGENDA** – Dr. Safier noted that there is an upcoming field trip for the GHS Docksidiers that will be on the next Consent Agenda. Music Director Dan Fleury spoke about the field trip to New York City from April 12-14, 2018, which will include a Broadway show, a clinic with a Broadway musician, and visits to the Lincoln Center Theater, the Apollo Theater, the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, and other tourist destinations. He also discussed fundraising that is being done to finance the trip.

A. Approval of Minutes

- 1. School Committee & Executive Session Minutes of September 27, 2017

B. Approval of Warrants – Cover Sheets

C. Approval of Transfers

D. Referrals

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

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Consent Agenda as noted above.

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- A. Coordinated Program Review – Corrective Action Plan** – Dr. Safier, Special Education Director Patty Wegmann and Assistant Superintendent Gregg Bach reviewed the Corrective Action Plan Detail from the 2016-2017 CPR/Program Review. Dr. Safier reported that the corrective action plan was submitted on November 1st.
- B. Special Education Report** – Ms. Wegmann reported that the district currently has 773 students identified as having a disability, which is 24% of the total student population. Similar districts in the DART analysis range from 18.4% to 23.3% and the state average is 17.4%. Ms. Wegmann noted that this trend is growing nationally and is being attributed to the rapid growth in the number of students being identified with autism, which has increased 165% between 2005 and 2015. During that time, there was also a 51% increase in the number of students with other health impairments.

Ms. Wegmann reported that of the total number of students on IEPs, 56 are currently placed out of district and one student is tuitioned from a neighboring district into the high school. She indicated that four students who were placed out of district were brought back into the district, two at the elementary level and two at the high school.

Ms. Wegmann reported that yesterday was the department's first professional development day and that special education attorney Michael Joyce gave a presentation to the elementary teachers and paraprofessionals, which was well received. She also reported that the preschool hosted a family dinner on Monday night sponsored by the Open Door. She indicated that the current enrollment in the preschool is 118 students.

Ms. Wegmann reported that staff from the Department of Developmental Services and the ARC spoke to parents on Monday night about services for students with autism that are transitioning into adulthood, which was well received. She also discussed what is being done in the PBIS programs at O'Maley, Plum Cove and East Gloucester, the use of consultants at Beeman and West Parish, and the mobile kindergarten literacy classroom at Veterans.

Finally, Ms. Wegmann reported that there are three workshops scheduled through the Federation for Children with Special Needs in November, January and March.

C. Superintendent Evaluation Planning Process – Dr. Safier indicated that he will be able to submit his documentation by December 20th. It was the consensus of the committee that the superintendent's evaluation take place on January 10, 2018. There was a discussion about the meeting schedule for the rest of the year.

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

1. Halloween Haunting – There was a discussion about the principal's error in judgment in not removing the tombstone game when a parent complained to her about it, and Dr. Safier stated that he is confident that all of the principals are now acutely aware of the nature of their responsibilities in these matters.

Mr. Favazza asked for the name of the parent that brought the game in, and Dr. Safier stated that he is not comfortable answering that question in public session. Mr. Favazza stated that the parent was in a public school building in a crowd of people; therefore, there is no expectation of privacy, and he would like to know who did it.

Dr. Safier indicated that the information may become public soon anyway because it was requested by the newspaper. He stated that he has grave concerns that if he names the family, the threats, hostility and anger that was focused on the school and contained in emails and voice messages will be directed to that family. He acknowledged that the School Committee has a right to know but stated there is a moral question of what that knowledge might bring to bear on that family and what effect it will have on the children.

Mr. Gross asked Mr. Favazza what purpose it would serve to name the family, and he responded that it would educate the committee as to what happened at one of our schools. Mr. Gross responded that the committee knows what happened and questioned why it is important to know who did it.

Chairman Pope agreed that Mr. Favazza deserves the information but that it is more likely to reopen the issue and create a threat to the family for a situation for which they have already apologized. Mr. Favazza stated that he thinks it is incredibly dangerous to set a precedent of “sweeping things under the rug.”

Ms. Teixeira requested that if the intent is to reveal the name of the family, we work with the police department to put a plan in place to protect the family. Mr. Favazza stated that he assumed that everybody at West Parish knows who brought the game in, so he did not think he was asking for information that nobody knew. He thought he was just asking for information that he didn't know. Dr. Safier pointed out the difference between private conversation among individuals and public statements from a public institution, which is held to a higher standard.

2. Student Government Day

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

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed to accept the Superintendent's Report.

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Program Subcommittee of November 2, 2017** – Mr. Favazza reported that the Program Subcommittee discussed the sexual education curriculum at its meeting of November 2, 2017.

X. ACTION

A. Acceptance of Grants

1. Fidelity Charitable to Veterans' Memorial Elementary School in the amount of \$1,500.00 – Mr. Lafleur discussed the purpose of the grant.

After discussion, on a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mr. Gross, it was unanimously

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed to accept a grant from Fidelity Charitable to Veterans' Memorial Elementary School in the amount of \$1,500.00.

2. DESE FY17 Title I, Part A Final Allocation increase in the amount of \$1,775.00 (total amount is now \$521,729.00) – On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mr. Gross, it was unanimously

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed to accept a DESE FY17 Title I, Part A final allocation increase in the amount of \$1,775.00.

- B. Surplus Equipment Declaration** – Mr. Lafleur reported that the cost of repairing the refrigerator was about triple the cost of replacing it.

After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Gross, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed to declare as surplus the broken culinary refrigerator at Gloucester High School.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

A. MSBA Project Updates

1. East Gloucester/Veterans School – Chairman Pope reported that there was a tour of possible sites on Monday and that there will be another one tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. He also stated that the administration has decided to put off the request to the City Council for funding of the feasibility study until January. He indicated that the building committee will continue to look at the sites and eventually prioritize them.

Chairman Pope believes the committee should try to organize some social events between East Gloucester and Veterans so the families can get to know each other. Ms. Wegmann suggested that the PTOs could be helpful with that, and Ms. Teixeira suggested that the staff attend professional development together.

2. GHS Roof – Chairman Pope reported that the building committee met this morning and set a timeline for installing the RTUs during April vacation.

- B. Regionalization** – Chairman Pope reported that he and Dr. Safier attended the Cape Ann Caucus a couple of weeks ago and that the representatives from Rockport were complaining about how little money they get for choice-in students. They also pointed out that half of their junior class is choice-in students. In light of the fact that we have extra space at the high school and the middle school, Chairman Pope asked permission from the committee to draft a letter to the Rockport School Committee suggesting that we open discussions about regionalization. The committee agreed.

- C. Public Hearing Regarding Traffic at West Parish** – Chairman Pope stated that a public hearing will be held on Thursday, November 16th at 6:00 p.m. at West Parish School to discuss the traffic issues there, which will be posted as a School Committee meeting.

D. New Cape Ann YMCA – Mr. Favazza stated that it has been reported that the proposed new YMCA that may be going on the Fuller School site would have capacity for 100 preschool students, which will potentially affect our preschool enrollment.

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

VOTED: 4 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of November 8, 2017 at 8:53 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*