

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

**Special School Committee Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, July 17, 2012

Gloucester High School Library

6:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

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

**Administration Present**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent  
Asst. Superintendent Gregg Bach (6:09 p.m.)

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

**II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None**

**IV. DISCUSSION/NEW BUSINESS**

**A. MSBA Enrollment Projections for the School District and West Parish School –**

Dr. Safier reviewed the letter from the MSBA dated June 22, 2012 regarding enrollment projections, in which the MSBA recommend a design enrollment of 355 students for West Parish. He reported that he, Chairman Pope and Mayor Kirk signed the certification attached to the letter and it was submitted to the MSBA.

Mayor Kirk indicated that Jim Duggan spoke with Katie Loeffler of the MSBA, who stated that 355 is a “take it or leave it” number and that there is no room for negotiation. That figure does not include the potential for the preschool to be located at West Parish, which would be an allowed reimbursable use (approx. 75 students). Kathy Clancy noted that the committee also discussed moving some of the special education services to West Parish in order to free up space in other schools. Dr. Safier stated that the enrollment projection is subject to change as district plans change (e.g. redistricting, concentration of specialized programs).

Mayor Kirk believes the most important element in the design of the school is the number of classrooms. As long as there are 18 classrooms (three per grade), more students could be added to each classroom up to a point where the cafeteria and gymnasium could not accommodate them.

Kathy Clancy noted that the School Committee met on June 27th and that the MSBA's June 22nd letter was not presented at that meeting, nor was it included in the packet or sent out by email. She expressed concern that the chair signed the certification as a duly authorized representative of the School Committee when no other member of the committee was aware of it. She stated that she received calls from panicky West Parish parents and believes the article in the newspaper would have had a different tone if the committee had reviewed the letter.

Mayor Kirk explained that the letter to the editor from West Parish teacher Cynthia McNamara regarding the conditions at the school triggered an inflammatory editorial. When the Mayor got a call from the reporter, she called Chairman Pope to let him know that her office is going to release the MSBA information to counter the letter from the teacher, which she did.

Dr. Safier stated that he does not recall seeing the MSBA letter before getting the June 27th packets together. Chairman Pope indicated that he met with Dr. Safier on June 28th, which is the first time he saw the letter, and they discussed the options. On July 2nd, Dr. Safier informed him there were no options, and Chairman Pope signed the certification. He apologized for not distributing the letter to the committee before signing the certification.

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

**VOTED:** 7 in favor zero opposed, to support the signing of the MSBA West Parish Elementary School Design Enrollment Certification.

Mayor Kirk stated that it was not her intention to leave anyone out of the loop but she believes there should be some leeway to get through some bumpy times. Mrs. Gilman reiterated the importance of distributing information to the entire School Committee and expressed concern that members of the committee would be privileged to information and quoted in the newspaper about something that the rest of the committee has not heard about, which blindsides them. This type of document needs to be included on the next School Committee agenda and included in the packets so that it is a public document, and she believes Dr. Safier should lead the committee in that process.

- B. Community Relations Regarding West Parish School Project** – Mrs. Gilman stated that she wants to make sure the committee understands its obligations and develops a plan with respect to communication about the MSBA process. She indicated that she spoke with Susan Beckmann, former chair of the Manchester Essex School Committee, and Sara Creighton, chair of their building committee, about their roles in the MSBA process. Mrs. Gilman believes the School Committee needs to find ways to communicate with the community about the importance of the West Parish project and expressed concern about the negative press. She shared Ms. Beckmann's best practice recommendations as well as notes from Ms. Creighton.

Kathy Clancy indicated that she has reviewed websites of other communities that are building schools which talk about the building process and include a message from the principal, what they are hoping to accomplish, proposed designs for the school, etc. Mayor Kirk noted that the next news story to come out will be that the MSBA voted for the feasibility study and that there should be a spokesperson for that. Chairman Pope suggested that the committee prepare a press release reinforcing to the community exactly what the feasibility study is before the newspaper starts writing about it. Mayor Kirk suggested including information on the transition to the building committee, a list of members of the building committee, the time frame, the budget, and a reference to the FAQ's, which will be updated by Chairman Pope and Kathy Clancy.

Mrs. Gilman indicated that Ms. Beckmann and Ms. Creighton met with Ray Lamont almost every month to talk about the details of the project and answer questions. Kathy Clancy suggested meeting with Steven Fletcher instead, and Ms. Teixeira recommended meeting with someone at the Beacon, also.

Mrs. Gilman reported that Sara Creighton is willing to talk to the committee about her experience with the MSBA process. Ms. Creighton suggested putting a summary of the project on the website, together with the minutes of the building committee meetings. She also recommended having open houses at the school so the community can see the condition it is in. Mayor Kirk believes the building committee should be updating the website and hosting the open houses.

Mrs. Gilman suggested establishing an ad hoc committee to develop a communication plan, and Chairman Pope noted that it is also part of the building committee's charge to sell the project to the community. Mayor Kirk suggested establishing a task force of the School Committee and the Mayor's Office and believes that someone needs to lead the charge (i.e. writing the press release). Mrs. Gilman recommended Kathy Clancy as a member of the task force, since she is on the building committee, together with Mayor Kirk and Dr. Safier. Kathy Clancy suggested that Mrs. Gilman and the West Parish principal be part of the task force, as well.

Mr. Gross questioned how the committee will communicate the fact that the new school will benefit 100% of the district's students, and Dr. Safier stated that it is the beginning of a long-term plan for the school buildings. The bottom line is that West Parish is the worst building in the district right now. Mayor Kirk stated that this project will set the bar for the next 20 years for the other school buildings.

Mayor Kirk summarized the scope of the task force's responsibilities as follows:

- Draft press release for publication on Wednesday re: what MSBA vote means, what feasibility study is, and role of building committee
- Put forth plan for updating FAQ's
- Make recommendations on regular monthly updates with media

- Put forth a staff communication plan
- Website partitioning to showcase the project as info is released
- Other community outreach – open houses, letters to the editor, etc.

Mrs. Gilman requested that the full committee be notified once the FAQ's have been updated, and Ms. Teixeira suggested adding an MSBA update to every meeting agenda.

- C. Settlement of Level 3 Grievance** – See executive session minutes.
- D. Posting of Meetings** – Mr. Gross believes the committee should have a check and balance system to ensure that meetings are posted on time. Dr. Safier indicated that as soon as meetings are established, he notifies Stephanie.
- E. Federal Grant for Librarians** – Mrs. Gilman believes this is a great opportunity to obtain grant funding and was hoping someone on Dr. Safier's staff would be able to work on it. Mr. Bach indicated that he will look at it but stated that it may not be able to be done by the deadline of August 10th.
- F. East Gloucester Parking Lot** – Mr. Garberg has received questions about the status of the project to expand the parking lot at East Gloucester School. Mr. Bach stated that the DPW has completed the traffic study. He recommended that it be cut back from 24 to 20 parking spaces. With respect to encroachment into the park that was granted to the city, Mayor Kirk stated that that would not be a problem and that she will talk to Mike Hale about it. Mr. Bach indicated that Mr. Hale will be getting back to him with pricing information and that Mr. Hale suggested the project could be completed before school begins. Mr. Bach recommended informing the public of the plan and inviting feedback.

*Kathy Clancy left the meeting at 7:19 p.m. to attend another meeting.*

- G. Enrollment Figures** – Mrs. Gilman requested regular updates on school enrollment figures, including between meetings. Dr. Safier stated that the enrollment figures are being followed closely and will be reported on as timely as possible. Mr. Gross suggested that reporting on these figures could wait until school begins since they could change considerably between now and then.
- V. ACTION** – None
- VI. OTHER COMMUNICATION** – None
- VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION** – On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mrs. Gilman, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** By Roll Call Vote

Mr. Garberg – yes  
Mrs. Gilman – yes  
Mr. Gross – yes  
Mayor Kirk – yes  
Chairman Pope – yes  
Ms. Teixeira – yes

To enter into Executive Session at 7:24 p.m. to discuss a Level 3 grievance and to enter back into regular session for the purpose of adjournment only.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**VOTED:** 6 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Special School Committee Meeting of July 17, 2012 at 8:13 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*