

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

Special School Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 26, 2011
City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium
7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Val Gilman, Chairperson
Melissa Teixeira, Vice Chairperson (7:13 p.m. arrival)
Kathleen Clancy, Secretary
Roger Garberg
Michelle Sweet
Tony Gross
Mayor Carolyn Kirk

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Principal Gregg Bach

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gilman called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Chairperson Gilman stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

III. REPORTS/DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

- A. Referendum Question Proposed by Members of City Council and Possible Surveying Alternatives** – Chairperson Gilman stated that at a recent meeting of the City Council, the following referendum question was considered for inclusion on the November ballot:

Question: If the Gloucester School Committee is to declare the Fuller School site surplus, which option should the Administration and the City Council focus its energy on? Please select one.

1. A downtown campus which may include renovation and expansion of City Hall, renovation of Central Fire Station into office space, and potential leasing of additional space downtown.
2. An “under one roof” approach centered at the Fuller School site, and find an alternative public-related use for City Hall.

At that meeting, the City Council postponed taking action on the above motion. Chairperson Gilman was asked to speak at the meeting, and she stated that the referendum question was different from what she understood the conversation to be in the joint City Council/School Committee meeting. She understood at that point that there was more of a consensus to hold off on a referendum question and stated that she was

surprised that this matter was a topic of discussion at the City Council meeting. The purpose of the meeting tonight is for the School Committee to come to a consensus on this matter and report back to City Council.

Mayor Kirk stated that she was also surprised that the City Council was putting the ballot question forward to a vote since the superintendent and every School Committee member present at the joint meeting spoke against it. In addition, she spoke against it on behalf of the Administration, and many city councilors spoke against it. Mayor Kirk reviewed her memorandum to the School Committee with a draft outline to begin the discussion around an alternative to a ballot question, namely a municipal building use survey.

IV. DISCUSSION

Dr. Safier indicated that Mayor Kirk's outline is consistent with what the School Department is considering in terms of working with an agency to create a survey. He believes that the key has to do with the quality of the information provided to respondents about each of the categories and stressed the importance of getting professional assistance. There was a discussion about a previous survey regarding the Magnolia landfill.

Mr. Gross believes that the School Committee should not be taking a position on either the ballot question or the survey because it has nothing to do with the School Committee.

Ms. Teixeira feels it is important that the School Committee have some input on what the city is doing by putting that question on the ballot. She believes the School Committee needs to make a determination on whether or not to keep Fuller School before any survey goes out. Therefore, she does not believe the School Committee should be getting involved in this type of survey.

Mayor Kirk stated that the intent is to put together a task force that would have representation by the School Committee, who would look at what school-related questions could be asked in the survey. She expressed concern about the School Committee disassociating itself from this process and its input not being included. One of the questions that she believes is valuable to put out to the community is the modernization of the elementary schools, namely West Parish, and how that would be paid for.

Kathy Clancy sees value in starting the conversation of funding of these capital items. She is also concerned that a lot of conversations are happening without any representation as to the conditions of the schools and what the School Committee's priorities are. Mayor Kirk indicated that it is up to the School Department to go before the CIAB, and nobody came last year.

V. ACTION

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 opposed (Mr. Gross) that the School Committee does not support the referendum question proposed by members of the City Council for the November ballot.

Ms. Teixeira appreciates the efforts of the City Council to get community feedback on what to do with Fuller School but believes a referendum question is premature at this time.

Mayor Kirk suggested commissioning a study to do some forecasting on enrollment and using facts to make a case to the community, as was done in Manchester/Essex. Chairperson Gilman indicated that K12 Insight will be making a presentation at the School Committee meeting on Wednesday night, and one of their specialties is helping school districts with public relations and surveys. This is something that they might be able to assist us with if and when we are ready to move to the next step. She stressed the importance of identifying survey respondents that are parents and guardians of students because they will have different needs and expectations of the school district.

Mr. Garberg reminded the committee that a survey was done last year and that a lot of data was received that is relevant to the questions that are being addressed here. He stated that there is a lot of support for neighborhood schools.

Mayor Kirk made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Sweet, that the School Committee is open to pursuing a comprehensive survey and is willing to designate a School Committee member to participate on the task force. After discussion, on a motion by Chairperson Gilman, seconded by Mrs. Sweet, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to amend Mayor Kirk's motion, as follows.

Amended Motion:

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

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, that the School Committee supports the idea of seeking input from the public via a comprehensive survey and at the time the administration wishes to proceed would like to participate in the process.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Special School Committee Meeting of September 26, 2011 at 7:53 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*