

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

**Special School Committee Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium

7:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Val Gilman, Chairperson  
Melissa Teixeira, Vice Chairperson  
Kathleen Clancy, Secretary  
Michelle Sweet  
Roger Garberg  
Tony Gross  
Mayor Carolyn Kirk

**Administration Present**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent  
Assistant Superintendent Brian Tarr  
CFO Tom Markham  
City Councilor Paul McGeary  
City Auditor Kenny Costa (8:13 arrival)

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Recorded by Cape Ann TV

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Gilman called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

Chairperson Gilman stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools and recognized Paul McGeary and Jonathan Pope.

**III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None**

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Minutes**

School Committee Meeting of November 16, 2011

**B. Schedule of Future Meetings**

School Committee – Wednesday, December 14, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Location: City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium

Building & Finance Subcommittee – Wednesday, December 21, 2011 at 4:45 p.m.

Location: Superintendent’s Conference Room

**C. Acceptance of Grant**

To accept a grant in the amount of \$2,600.00 from GEF for “Explorations in Art” program at Beeman, Plum Cove, East Gloucester and Veterans’

Mr. Gross removed the Approval of Minutes from the Consent Agenda.

It was unanimously

**VOTED:** 7 in favor zero opposed, to approve the Consent Agenda as noted above.

**V. DISCUSSION/ACTION**

**Prioritization for School Budget One-Time Expenses** – Dr. Safier reviewed the summary of possible requests for access to funding from city free cash, which is not in any kind of prioritized order, including the second and third payments for elementary curriculum materials, unanticipated required expenses, food service/kitchen equipment, contract settlements, replenishment of the special ed contingency, and the West Parish feasibility study.

Mr. Markham reviewed the list of needs for food service equipment, which totals \$126,066. He pointed out the need for steamers at O'Maley (\$17,562) and indicated that the menu there had to be adjusted due to faulty equipment. He also reminded the committee that meals for Pathways are also prepared at O'Maley. Mr. Gross expressed concern that the list is not prioritized and that he would like to have the food service manager explain it. Mr. Markham indicated that the top priorities are items 3, 10 and 11.

Dr. Safier reviewed an email he received from DPW Director Mike Hale regarding the condition of West Parish. Dr. Safier recommended extending the original MSBA statement of interest for West Parish and proceeding with a feasibility study at a cost of approximately \$450,000, of which approximately 47% would be reimbursed after construction.

Dr. Safier expressed concern with the lack of custodial coverage for afternoon and evening events at the schools. He also indicated that there is an increasing “energy” about the state of technology in the district and bringing technology into the classrooms.

Mayor Kirk reviewed her memorandum of November 14<sup>th</sup> to all department heads requesting a list of needs that are not currently covered by the FY12 budget. She also reviewed the source of the city's free cash, as outlined in her memorandum of November 29<sup>th</sup> to the City Council, and indicated that Mr. Costa would be able to give a more detailed explanation.

Mayor Kirk reviewed the list of revenues of around \$1 million that contributed to free cash, which live in very specific line items. For example, motor vehicle excise tax came in at \$156,000 over the estimate. Mayor Kirk explained that it used to be budgeted at \$3.2 million, and it was ratcheted down over a couple of years to \$2.7 million because people were not buying new cars. Therefore, that revenue was being overestimated. This year, there has been an increase in that revenue, possibly because the economy is getting better and people are buying cars again. That revenue will be looked at going into FY13. She explained that if there is a trend the revenues will be tweaked upwards, but if it is volatile, they will be conservative on it.

Mayor Kirk explained that free cash is a good indicator because it shows you are doing many things well (i.e. collecting taxes, being responsible with revenue estimates, and handling expenses). She stated that the Department of Revenue and Moody's look at it that way, also. The city's improvement in free cash and fund balance has led to the improved bond rating, which makes us feel more comfortable to start talking about a new West Parish School. Mayor Kirk indicated that if you tie everything up in the operating budget and you produce deficits, you never have the chance to talk about free cash and, in all likelihood, you are cutting later anyway. Therefore, free cash is a sign of fiscal health and wellbeing.

Mayor Kirk also commented on the city's process to date with respect to the allocation of free cash. With regard to the custodial issue, she clarified that a lot of custodians are refusing to take the after-school shifts. She stated that this issue will be addressed through a DPW request of at least \$100,000. She also stated that the city has received a lot of technology requests and that many of them are being rejected.

Chairperson Gilman asked Mayor Kirk to explain the urgency of this process to approve the free cash allocation. The mayor stated that the administration referred the matter of free cash to the City Council and that the City Council Budget and Finance Subcommittee will review the complete free cash package that comes from the Mayor's Office on December 8th. This will allow the issue to be taken up at the last scheduled City Council meeting on December 13, 2011.

Mayor Kirk stated that the request for the School Department will be a single number with a single request for additional appropriation to the school budget, which will be determined by her after taking into consideration the requests from all of the other departments. She explained that the detail of the allocation is determined by the School Committee and not by the City Council. Mr. Gross expressed the need to prioritize the School Department's list of requests for free cash.

With respect to the West Parish project, Mayor Kirk indicated that in light of Mike Hale's memorandum about the condition of the school and the fact that there is another opportunity to request funding for this project from MSBA, the city will have the capacity to fund a major capital project for a new school in the next year. Dr. Safier stated that this project will also give us an opportunity to deal with space issues in the other schools and to consolidate special needs interests by bringing resources together.

Kathy Clancy stated that she would like to add \$172,000 to the request for free cash to lift the spending freeze. She then made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Sweet, to support the list of funding to request free cash from the administration in the amount of \$1,315,000.00. Ms. Teixeira expressed concern that the list is not prioritized and stated that she would like to be more realistic about what we request. Mr. Gross agreed and stated that we need to be able to defend our request to City Council. He believes that the second payment for the curriculum materials and the contract settlements should be the top priorities. He does not believe the \$172,000 to lift the spending freeze should be included in our request for free cash.

Mr. Gross questioned whether the West Parish feasibility study should be on the School Department's request for free cash. Mayor Kirk stated that it could be funded from free cash or through other means, but she believes it is important to make the request and send the signal to the City Council that this is a very important project and we need to find a way to fund it.

Mr. Garberg stated that he has not heard anything that strikes him as anything short of high priority, with the possible exception of some of the kitchen equipment. He also does not believe that the funds needed to lift the spending freeze are not a priority. Finally, he noted that Gloucester is in the top 10% of free cash holders in the state and that the schools are in significant need of the items discussed tonight.

Ms. Teixeira expressed concern that the West Parish project is included in the request for free cash because she believes that project is a separate issue that needs to be discussed further with the city. Mayor Kirk indicated that the West Parish project will be funded either way and will not impact the other items on the free cash list.

Kathy Clancy withdrew her original motion. After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Mrs. Sweet, it was

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Kirk) to recommend to the administration to support the West Parish School feasibility study in the amount of \$450,000, whose funding source could be from free cash.

A discussion was held on prioritizing the list of requests for free cash. Mr. Gross stated that the second payment of the elementary curriculum materials and the contract settlements need to be at the top of the list since the committee anticipated that free cash would be used to fund those expenses during budget planning last spring. Ms. Teixeira expressed some concern with the contract settlement figure, indicating that she would like to have a little bit more flexibility if possible. Kathy Clancy pointed out that the contract settlement figure of \$249,667 is for 515 employees.

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

**VOTED:** 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Kirk) to request from administration the use of free cash in the amount of \$865,767 in the following order of priority:

Elementary curriculum materials, second payment	\$ 60,000
FY12 contract settlements (all groups at 1%)	249,667
Unanticipated required expenses in FY12	127,772
Replenish School Committee special education contingency	75,000
Food service/kitchen equipment	126,066
Elementary curriculum materials, third payment	55,262
Lift School Department spending freeze	172,000

**VI. OTHER COMMUNICATION**

- A. Kathy Clancy noted that GEF is having a fundraiser this weekend hosted by Latitude 43.
- B. Dr. Safier indicated that Beeman and East Gloucester schools are having craft fairs on Saturday.
- C. Chairperson Gilman noted that the Cape Ann Business Roundtable sponsored by Healthy Gloucester Collaborative will be meeting on December 13, 2011 at Cruiseport.
- D. Mr. Gross made a correction to page 6 of the November 16, 2011 minutes. The phrase “government by poll” should be “governing by poll.”

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

**VOTED:** 7 in favor zero opposed, to approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting of November 16, 2011 with the correction noted above.

- E. Chairperson Gilman thanked Cape Ann TV for televising the meeting tonight.

**VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None**

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**VOTED:** 7 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Special School Committee Meeting of November 30, 2011 at 8:37 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*