

NEW SHOREHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Block Island School

September 29, 2007

7:00 P.M.

The New Shoreham School Committee met in open session on Tuesday, September 29, 2009, in the media center of the Block Island School. Chair William Padien called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Shea Butcher, Annie Hall, Sean McGarry William Padien, and Richard Tretheway. Robert Hicks was also in attendance.

Discussion of Administrative Structure

Mr. Hicks began the discussion of the administrative organization of the Block Island School with a PowerPoint presentation. He has not been on Block Island long enough to make any recommendation to the School Committee and community, but because Dr. Irving resigned to take a superintendent/principal position in Foster, he thought it would be good to start a conversation. There is a desire for consistency and stability as there have been several administrative structures over the years.

The current structure without benefits costs \$184,077. This includes a full-time principal (currently filled with two part-time interims), a part-time superintendent (90 days per year), and a part-time special education director (80 days per year). There are also increased

responsibilities including proficiency based graduation, response to intervention, progress monitoring, teacher evaluations, and federal and state reporting.

In answering the question, “Who is the key educational leader and how do we support and maintain that person as a full time community member?” Mr. Hicks stated that this would not cut the superintendent’s salary, but support the key leader. It would create a structure where the leader would have appropriate authority and accountability, and the lines of responsibility would be as clear and unambiguous as possible. Mr. Hicks stated that in considering a combined superintendent/principal the district could reallocate resources from leadership to support and operations, there would be a clearer organizational structure that would be more attractive, and there would be opportunities for internal growth.

Mr. Hicks reported that Block Island School spends 70 percent of its budget on instruction (teachers, aides, substitutes, materials, technology) and 11 percent on leadership (principals, superintendent, school committee, office), compared with an average in Rhode Island of 52 percent and six percent respectively. In addition, seven percent of the budget is spent on support (guidance, library, health, curriculum, therapies, professional development), 12 percent on operations (transportation, food, data, business), and one percent on other (tuition, debt service, capital). This is in comparison to Rhode Island’s average of 16 percent for support, 15 percent for operations,

and 11 percent for other.

The following questions were supplied by Mr. Hicks to jumpstart the discussion: Is it too much for one person, even with added support? Do multiple administrators provide a better perspective? Is it better to be flexible in organization in response to who's available? What is best for Block Island School?

William Padien stated that initially he found the idea of having two part-time principals intriguing, but would like to see how it works out. One of his concerns was that a superintendent/principal would have to report directly to the School Committee and he was not sure about that aspect. Other committee members agreed with him. He wondered if there could be other consolidations, such as using a special education director from another district or consolidating the financial position with the town. He feels the district needs to be more flexible and wondered if we would get less with one person in the dual role.

Richard Tretheway asked what the salary range would be for a combined administrative position. Mr. Hicks reported that it would cost approximately \$120,000 to \$125,000 plus benefits. Mr. Tretheway liked the different tiers of accountability and did not feel that the School Committee should be part of the administrative mix.

Sean McGarry preferred not to look at the combination of the two

positions to save money, but what would give the students the best learning environment. He was taken aback with the possibility of two part-time principals, but after having the opportunity to work with them, likes what is in place and would like to see what can be done to develop this model.

Annie Hall asked who would be in charge when the single administrator had to attend meetings on the mainland. Mr. Hicks stated that a member of faculty would be designated to be in charge. Mrs. Hall stated that from the beginning she thought having two principals sharing the position was brilliant, allowing an expert in both elementary and secondary. She has not heard one complaint about this arrangement.

Shea Butcher did a Google search on the combination of superintendent/principal and found that two of the most frequent hits were New Shoreham. He stated that his brother-in-law is an administrator in Alaska and in his experience the way to proceed would be with a part-time superintendent and full-time principal.

Barbara Michel stated that past administrators often felt isolated out here and would need to attend meetings on the mainland. This would leave a designated faculty member in charge, which is not an ideal situation. In addition, with an increased work load and responsibilities it was difficult to get in to see Dr. Irving last year because she was so busy. An organization needs to be established

that would allow us to grow because there is no growth without continuity.

John Warfel stated that the combined position is not anything we haven't talked about before. Mr. Augeri implemented site based management to try to provide continuity because of the principal turnover. Unless the housing situation is addressed for a full-time administrator, no one will stay very long. Committee members agreed that housing is an issue, but the current administrative model does not require anyone to move here.

Amy Doran suggested the possibility of renting a house for the current administrators to share, which could be less expensive than putting everyone up each night at the 1661 Inn and better than sitting alone in a hotel room. Others in the audience agreed, adding that right now restaurants are still open, but will be closing soon for the winter. Renting a house would provide a kitchen to prepare meals.

Socha Cohn added that the present system has an advantage; if one person resigns the other is able to provide continuity.

Mr. Hicks stated that he will continue this discussion with the faculty and the part-time administrators before coming back to the School Committee on December 7. At that time a decision should be made to begin a search for a full-time principal or ask the interim principals to continue for the rest of the year.

Adjournment

A motion (Padien, Hall) at 8:28 p.m. to adjourn carried with a vote of 5-0.

Marsha L. Gutierrez, Clerk

Date approvedL 10/19/2009