

MAY 28, 2008

The North Providence School Committee met on May 28, 2008 at 5:35 p.m. in the Library at the High School. Members present were Chairman Martinelli, Mrs. Reall, Mr. DaSilva, Mr. Marciano, Mr. Iannetta, and Mr. Palmieri. Also present was Superintendent Ottaviano and Mr. Scungio. Mr. Cataldi arrived at approximately 6:00 p.m. Ms. Celona, Dr. Gerardi, Mr. Lynch and Mr. Milazzo were present for the regular session only.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Palmieri and carried to recess the regular session and go into Executive Session at 5:35 p.m. for the purpose of discussing Budget Cut Recommendations, Personnel, and Non-Certified Employee Grievance Hearing Pursuant to 42-46-5 (a)(9).

The meeting reconvened at 6:35 p.m. It began by saluting the flag. Next, Chairman Martinelli asked for a moment of silence.

Next was the Chair to Report Out Any Votes Taken In Executive Session. Chairman Martinelli reported that there were no votes taken in Executive Session.

Next was Correspondence. Before addressing Correspondence, Chairman asked the members of the Committee if there was any objection to moving the Teacher of the Year to the beginning of the

Agenda. There being none, the next item on the Agenda was Teacher of the Year. Superintendent Ottaviano read the list of teachers from each of the schools and each was presented with a certificate. She next spoke about the process for selecting a teacher of the year to represent the District. She read the name of the Teacher of the Year, Judith L. Daly. She read a quote from Ms. Daly's application and offered congratulations. Ms. Daly was presented with a plaque and a traveling plaque that is placed at Greystone for the year. Members of the Committee and Administration offered congratulations to all the recipients.

The next item on the Agenda was Correspondence. Chairman Martinelli explained that the Committee received five letters from teachers at Greystone School regarding class size. He asked if there was anyone from the group of teachers who would like to speak on behalf of the five teachers. Denise Turcotte addressed the Committee regarding the letters. She identified herself as one of the three fifth grade teachers at Greystone School and spoke about the letter she received on May 19, 2008 stating that her classroom would be closed for the 2008/2009 school year due to enrollment projections. She felt that although she understands that cuts must be made to the budget, she felt that it would be a great loss to the students. She explained the unique and difficult dynamics of the students enrolled in the classes and felt that the three classes were necessary because of the academic and behavioral challenges of these students. Mr. Palmeiri stated that he agrees with everything that Ms. Turcotte said. Mrs.

Reall felt that if we leave the classroom, we would have to do this for all the future grades for these students. She asked Superintendent Ottaviano what the rationale is. Superintendent Ottaviano spoke about the process that is followed each year to project the enrollment. The budget was cut by 5% and then the Town cut an additional 1.6 million dollars. We had to go back and look at the budget to determine where the cuts could be made. In reviewing the enrollment numbers, consideration was given to opening an additional first grade, but the numbers for the fifth grade were low. There will be two classrooms with 23 and 24 students. There are a number of things that we would like to keep, but it would be fiscally irresponsible. Mr. DaSilva asked if grade 5 was inclusive. Superintendent Ottaviano explained that it is not self-contained. Cynthia Braca of 35 Blackstone Boulevard introduced herself as a resource teacher. She explained that they are pulling the children out for resource because it is the only way that they can service the students. Mr. DaSilva spoke as a fifth grade teacher and felt that by the time students get to the fifth grade, some of the behavioral issues are mitigated. He added that it is hard for the School Committee without knowing the day to day issues. Mr. Iannetta asked if there were any fourth grade teachers here to speak on the issue. Ms. Turcotte spoke about the day to day behavioral issues and the daily struggles with this unique group of students. She felt that it would make sense to close it next year after this group is gone, but felt that it would not be educationally sound to do it for this year. Mr. Palmieri felt that this is a money issue and the audience is going to hear about

money all night. He added that he is behind them and that education has to come first. Members of the audience applauded his comments. Mr. Iannetta asked Superintendent Ottaviano at what grade level the three classes were started? Superintendent Ottaviano explained that the classes were changed because of the makeup of the students moving in. Each year there is a change in the mixture of students. Mr. Marciano felt that Ms. Turcotte made a compelling argument on behalf of the students.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Palmieri and carried by unanimous vote to keep the three fifth grade classes at Greystone School.

Mr. DaSilva asked Mr. Lynch if he is involved in the resource issue of this class. Mr. Lynch spoke about the unique issues at Greystone, and stated that there are one one-half Resource teachers at Greystone who service the students.

Next was correspondence regarding the 1st grade at Greystone. Chairman Martinelli explained that he just received correspondence today regarding the 1st grade at Greystone and asked if there was anyone here to speak on this issue.

Shayna Waterman introduced herself and spoke regarding her letter in support of adding an additional first grade at Greystone School. She read portions of her letter and urged the Committee to vote to

add an additional first grade class. Mr. Palmieri felt that 24/25 students is not beneficial and voted for a 3rd first grade. Mr. Marciano suggested that the Committee defer action on this until all the information is available. Mr. Iannetta concurred with Mr. Palmieri's comments. He felt that looking at the enrollment numbers, we should have an additional first grade. Chairman Martinelli reiterated Mr. Palmieri's comments and added that he advocates for smaller classroom size and wholeheartedly agrees with this. He also spoke about the fact that the School Committee gave back 2.2 million dollars to the Town eliminating the deficit. He felt that it is very important to continue to provide the best education possible. Members of the Committee spoke about the fact that Superintendent Ottaviano is a great educational advocate but is in a tough position because it is her responsibility to balance the budget. Several members of the Committee spoke about her dedication to the children and the School District and felt that her recommendations must be based on fiscal responsibility as well. Mr. DaSilva asked if there is space available for the additional first grade. Superintendent Ottaviano spoke about the fact that this was already in the works before the cuts were made. Mr. DaSilva agreed with Mr. Palmieri and felt that he does not have a problem doing this. Mr. Marciano felt that since the Committee seems to be in agreement with adding a 3rd first grade, he would make a motion. Mrs. Reall spoke needing the wisdom of Solomon to make these kinds of decisions. She felt that it is educationally sound, but expressed concern with whether it is financially sound. She added that it is a very, very, difficult decision.

Mr. Iannetta stated that the Committee as a whole sincerely appreciates the efforts of the teachers and thanked them for their support. Chairman Martinelli also spoke about going to Greystone on a daily basis and spoke about the dedication of the teachers and all the extra things they do, like buying their own supplies for the classes and giving the extra efforts.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried by unanimous vote to add a 3rd first grade class at Greystone School. Chairman Martinelli offered congratulations on behalf of the Committee and Administration.

Chairman Martinelli asked the members of the Committee if there was any objection to addressing the School Committee Report on Full Day Kindergarten Item next. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Mr. Palmieri. Mr. Palmieri began by stating that this would be a harder sell. He felt that no one is against full day kindergarten. Over the years, there have been deficits. He felt that it is never going to happen. Everyone knows it is important. Thirteen districts have full day kindergarten and six districts are working on it. He added that he is not an advocate for the lottery system. For four years, the Committee has been through all kinds of negotiations and always finds the money for other programs. He felt that we can find the money for the full day kindergarten class. He continued that the Superintendent has a tough job to do. We are not adding a classroom, we would be adding six classrooms. He felt that everyone

needs to come together and unite in support of this issue. He asked anyone that had anything to say on this issue to speak. Mr. Floriani thanked Mr. Palmieri for advocating for this. He felt that there are enough people here tonight to advocate for this. He spoke about one neighbor that is spending a lot of money to send their child to parochial school because he has to work and we need full day kindergarten. He spoke about coming to the meetings since 1994 when there were bond issues. He also spoke about the surplus that the Committee gave back to the Town and felt that it could have been used for full day kindergarten. He felt that we need to bite the bullet. He added that his neighbor has to put his kid in full day kindergarten and his daughter needs to put her kids in full day kindergarten and they need it because they have to work. We need full day kindergarten. We were supposed to do it when we added the middle schools and if we have to, we should use the Carullo Act to get it done. He felt that we need to show some backbone and give the kids what they need. Chairman Martinelli spoke about the fact that he has been advocating for full day kindergarten and he would be voting for it. Mr. DaSilva spoke about being proud of the North Providence School System. He spoke about his son graduating from the North Providence School System. He also spoke about the amount of money it takes for full day kindergarten and all the studies that have been done regarding the long-term benefits and the diminution of the benefits over two to three years. He talked about the fact that it disturbs him to hear that it is needed because someone has to work. He felt that the focus needs to be on the educational benefits, and not

the fact that people have to work. Chairman Martinelli interjected to state that he does not agree with Mr. DaSilva's comments and the fact that he doesn't feel that people are looking for babysitters. Mr. Marciano spoke about the Superintendent's job by statute to balance the budget. She has been an educator for over twenty years and is pro education. He spoke about the delicate balance and asked about the space needed for adding full day kindergarten. He felt that he is not against full day kindergarten. He felt that the discussion needs to be focused on the educational benefits. Mrs. Reall felt that this is a very hard decision. We will have to pay the piper once there is a deficit situation. She expressed concerns with the fact that we have already been cut by over a million dollars and to add another million dollars for full day kindergarten may not be prudent. Next, Gina Picard spoke about being saddened by two votes that were taken on two brand new issues and the full day kindergarten issue has been put on the back burner year after year. She spoke about the need for full day kindergarten and the fact that there is only so much that can be covered in a half day. It is not about parents having to work, it is about building on a firm foundation. Mr. DaSilva spoke about the fiscal impact. He understands that he is getting beat up for his comment about babysitting, but his focus is on the educational benefits. Mr. Floriani argued with Mr. DaSilva's comments and told him to wake up and smell the roses. Mr. Palmieri asked any member of the audience that has a child in the pm kindergarten to speak about this issue. Anna Santos, 18 Nelson Street in North Providence spoke about having a daughter in afternoon kindergarten and the fact that

she and her husband spend all day going back and forth and that their daughter is only there for two hours. She felt that it would be a better transition to go to first grade if she had full day kindergarten. She spoke about the fact that she is not getting any of the arts in the two hours. She felt that it would make North Providence a better place to be if the School Department had full day kindergarten. Next, Julie Jordan spoke about the differences between full day and half day kindergarten. She felt that it is a great inconvenience for two hours and they only get 1/2 year of some of the arts. Next, Donna Alcazar of 38 West River Parkway spoke about the 1/2 day kindergarten. She spoke about the information that students need in the first grade and the fact that it is hard to prepare them for first grade with 1/2 day kindergarten. Next was Donna Rizzo of 38 High Service Avenue. She has two children that have gone through kindergarten and two that are about to go through the kindergarten, it is important to have the itinerants. The general expectations for first grade have increased. She also spoke about the social aspects of kindergarten because there is no recess or playtime. The need is not based on what the parents are doing, but on what the children need to be doing. Mr. Iannetta reminded people about the need to be mindful of the fiscal responsibility and the fact that if we do approve full day kindergarten, we will probably run a deficit at some point during the year. He feels that no one is arguing the benefits of full day kindergarten. Next, Mr. DiGuilio spoke about his children being grown and the difference between one that had full day kindergarten and one that did not. He offered his support for full day kindergarten.

Next, Brian Fontaine spoke about the fact that the Committee's job is to be educationally responsible for the children. Mr. Palmieri spoke about it being sad that we have to look at this based on finances and urged everyone to vote with their heart.

Discussion took place with respect to the deficits and the cuts. Mr. DaSilva addressed the surplus and deficits over the years.

Motion by Mr. Palmieri, seconded by Mr. Marciano to implement full day kindergarten. Mrs. Reall asked for a roll call vote. Mr. Cataldi, nay; Mrs. Reall, nay; Mr. DaSilva, aye; Mr. Marciano, aye; Chairman Martinelli, aye; Mr. Iannetta, aye; and Mr. Palmieri, aye. The motion carried by a vote of 5 to 2. Chairman Martinelli announced that he is excited to see full day kindergarten go through for the Fall 2008.

Next was the Superintendent's Report. First was the Budget Cut Recommendations. Superintendent Ottaviano informed the Committee that she would have to go back and rework the numbers in order for the Committee to vote to reconcile the budget with the Town ordinance once it is received..

Next was the Strategic Plan. Superintendent Ottaviano spoke about the Strategic Plan provided to the Committee in their packets and recommended approval.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. DaSilva, Mrs. Reall and Mr. Iannetta to approve the Strategic Plan as submitted.

Next was the Computer & Internet Acceptable Use Policy. Superintendent Ottaviano announced that the Policy draft contained in the packets was the first reading and it will be placed on the June Agenda for approval.

Next was the Tenure Policy. Superintendent Ottaviano announced that the Policy draft contained in the packets was the first reading and it will be placed on the June Agenda for approval.

Next was Field Trip Requests. Superintendent Ottaviano turned the meeting over to Dr. Gerardi. Dr. Gerardi read the requests and recommended approval of the Field Trip Requests as submitted and in accordance with School Committee Policy.

Motion by Mrs. Reall, seconded by Mr. DaSilva and carried to approve the Field Trip Requests as submitted and in accordance with School Committee Policy.

Next was Home Schooling Requests. There being none, next was the Monthly Financial Report. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Monthly Financial Report as presented.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Palmieri and carried to approve the Monthly Financial Report as presented.

Next was School Committee Reports. The first item on the Agenda was Smart Bus. Chairman Martinelli announced that there is no change in the status and he would like to defer this until next month and place it on the agenda next month if there is something new to report.

Next was McGuire Fire Escape. Mr. Palmieri asked Mr. Milazzo if there is a fire escape at McGuire School. Mr. Palmieri made a motion for an emergency expenditure to install a fire escape at McGuire School within a month. Mr. DaSilva stated that the Committee has to go out to bid for the fire escapes.

Chairman Martinelli asked Mr. Milazzo to speak about the status. Mr. Milazzo spoke about the bid for fire escapes going out as a package. He added that if the Committee wants the bidders to bid on McGuire separately, then the bid package will have to be changed. Once the bids are received, the information is given to the fire marshal and the structural engineer. Mr. Palmieri asked if the job will be done before school opens in the fall. Mr. Milazzo felt that it should be done by the end of the summer. Mr. Palmieri withdrew his motion. Mrs. Reall cautioned everyone on this very important issue to make sure that we proceed cautiously to assure that we comply with all mandates. Chairman Martinelli suggested that since the bid process is underway, this matter should be deferred until next month. He added that Mr. Milazzo does a great job and the Committee appreciates his efforts.

Next was Special Permission. Mr. Palmieri withdrew this item from the Agenda.

Next was Public Comments on Agenda Items 3-5. There being none, the next item on the agenda was Requests to Address the Committee.

Kenneth Cicerone identified himself and addressed the Committee regarding School Security. He stated that he has a petition and is asking for metal detectors and baggage scanners to be installed at the schools. Chairman Martinelli accepted the petition and commented that there was only one signature on the petition. Mr. Cicerone stated that it was a valid petition and there is no requirement to have a certain amount of names on a petition. Chairman Martinelli deferred the matter to legal counsel. Mr. Cicerone added that he would like an answer as soon as possible. Chairman Martinelli stated the he was deferring to legal counsel but is personally opposed to metal detectors and searches. He also spoke about the fact that the vestibule is a buffer – a layer of protection. Mr. Cicerone stated that since Mr. DaSilva spoke about the post Columbine era, he feels that the only way to stop it is a metal detector.

Next, Mr. Cicerone asked about the former Special Education Director, Cheryl Ursillo. He asked questions regarding the settlement

amount and why it was settled. Chairman Martinelli deferred to legal counsel. Chairman Martinelli stated the settlement is public and was in the amount of \$35,000.00. He added that most of the Committee members were not here for the issue. With respect to legal fees, they fluctuate from month to month. The Committee is within the approximate allegation amount for the year. Chairman Martinelli informed Mr. Cicerone that he has the right to petition the Committee to release information within ten days. You need to make the request in writing through the Superintendent. Mr. Scungio spoke about the Ursillo matter. He explained that an action was filed in Superior Court. The Trust came in to defend the District and the Court referred the matter to mediation. The mediator suggested an amount and the Trust was concerned about spending more in legal fees. A settlement agreement was executed. A copy of the agreement could be provided upon written request. Chairman Martinelli added that in fairness to the process, Mr. Cicerone would have to go through the proper procedure and request the information in writing through the Superintendent.

The next item on the Agenda was New Business. First was Approval of Bids. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the bid for bathroom upgrades be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Polisena Construction.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to award the bid for bathroom upgrades to the lowest responsive and

responsible bidder, Polisen Construction. Mr. Martinelli and Mr. Palmeiri recused themselves from voting on this bid.

Next was the bid for Bleachers. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the bid be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Robert H. Lord.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to award the bid for Bleachers to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Robert H. Lord.

Next was the bid for Masonary/Brick Restoration. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the bid for masonry/brick restoration be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Cornerstone Restoration.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to award the bid for Masonary/Brick Restoration to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Cornerstone Restoration.

Next was the bid for Heating Oil. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the North Providence School Department “piggyback” with the State of Rhode Island MPA and award the bid for heating oil to the lowest responsive bidder to the State, Brennan Oil.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. DaSilva and carried to approve the Superintendent's recommendation that the Providence School Department "piggyback" with the State of Rhode Island MPA and award the bid for heating oil to the lowest responsive bidder to the State, Brennan Oil. Mr. Iannetta abstained from voting on the motion.

Next was Resignations. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the Committee grant advice and consent to the resignations as submitted.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to grant advice and consent to the resignations as submitted in the packet.

Next was Retirements. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the retirement of Candice DiSarro – English Teacher – Birchwood Middle School effective at the end of the 2007/08 School Year; and Ellen Goldenberg, Speech/Language Pathologist Birchwood/PreSchool effective at the end of the 2008/09 School Year.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to approve the retirement of Candice DiSarro – English Teacher – Birchwood Middle School effective at the end of the 2007/08 School Year; and Ellen Goldenberg, Speech/Language Pathologist

Birchwood/PreSchool effective at the end of the 2008/09 School Year with regret.

Next was Appointment Changes. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Appointment changes, which were voted on as follows:

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to grant advice and consent to the appointment change for Ellen Goldenberg – Speech Pathologist from .8 appointment to a .6 appointment effective for the 2008/2009 School Year; and Judie Berlinsky – Speech Pathologist from .5 appointment to .7 appointment effective for the 2008-2009 School Year.

Next was a Sabbatical. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the Committee grant advice and consent to the Sabbatical for Stacy Coleman – Marieville Elementary Teacher effective for the 2008/2009 School Year.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to grant advice and consent to the Sabbatical for Stacy Coleman – Marieville Elementary Teacher effective for the 2008/2009 School Year.

Next was Old Business. Chairman Martinelli requested a contract for the nurses (Maxim). The contract has clinical evaluations as part of

the contract and the Minutes of the last meeting state that the contract was only for the nurses. He deferred this to legal counsel.

Next was Use of Property. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Use of Property Requests as submitted.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to approve the Use of Property Requests as submitted.

Next was Approval of Bills. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the List of Bills as presented.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to approve the May 28, 2008 List of Bills as presented.

Next was Approval of Minutes.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mr. Marciano and carried to approve the Minutes of the April 23, 2008 Executive Session Meeting as presented and keep closed in accordance with R.I.G.L. 42-4-4 and 42-4-5.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to approve the Minutes of the Regular North Providence School Committee Meeting of April 23, 2008 as presented.

Next was Public Comments on Agenda Items 7-12. Mr. Cicerone asked who determines who is the responsible bidder? Chairman Martinelli deferred to legal counsel.

Mr. Scungio explained that the bid specs determine who the responsible bidder is. The specs outline the requirements for bidding on the job. Mr. Marciano added that the bidder has to be bonded and insured. The Committee has the opportunity to look at any of the backup documentation.

The next item on the Agenda was Pending Business. Mr. Doiron introduced himself as a teacher and advisor at the High School. He spoke about the classes of 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 pooling their money to present a gift to the school. It is a commercial grade black iron fence that will be approximately 70' long, 6' high and have two 24" x 24" columns engraved with NPHS as well as a wood guardrail to protect the fence from vehicles hitting it, such as plows. The opening would be a little wider than the present opening to Smithfield Road. Mr. Doiran stated that they need permission to begin construction. All the proper permits will be taken out. Discussion took place with respect to liability issues. It was the general consensus of the Committee to have the contractors work with Mr. Milazzo to make sure that all the proper paperwork is in place and all the necessary requirements are met.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mr. Marciano and Mrs. Reall and carried to gratefully accept the gift and to go forward with the project.

Mrs. Reall thanked the classes on behalf of the Committee. She added that it was a wonderful idea to pool the money. Mr. Iannetta asked if it would be OK for Mr. Doiran to let the Committee know the price of the project? Mr. Doiran stated that it is \$10,100.00 for the columns and \$8,000.00 for the fence.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald Iannetta