

EAST GREENWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 1, 2005 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

1. Call to Order

The first March meeting of the East Greenwich School Committee was held on

Tuesday, March 1, 2005 in the gymnasium of the Hanaford School. Chair Vincent Bradley called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Other members present were: Paul Martin, Vice-Chair, Dr. Al Ross, Steven Gregson, Merrill Friedemann, Sue Cienki and William Day as well as Helen O'Hara, Assistant Superintendent, Carol Brown, Director of Student Services, and Maryanne Crawford, Director of Administration. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Public Comments

Christine Mattos questioned calling an elementary school after school is dismissed and not getting an answer. She also questioned the tone that the bus supervisor takes with the students. Mrs. Mattos asked about a dress code for teachers and school personnel, and cell phone usage by teachers during instructional time. She also asked the school department to look into cost savings from with United Health, since the State of Rhode Island just finalized a contract and did save money.

Christine Rivers, Meadowbrook Farms physical education teacher, gave several examples of how to save money for the schools. Among

the examples were using bulbs versus led signs, the watt program in the schools for students, the hiring of grant writers, and digital copying machines. She also suggested making contacts with residents and former residents such as Governor Carcieri, Allen Gammons, and Roger Dowdell; and contacting actress Debra Messing for help raising money for the stage curtains. Mrs. Rivers stated that the School Committee should take positive measures and recognized the teachers for their work.

6. Advisory of Subcommittee Minutes

There were no Subcommittee Minutes

7. Communications to the School Committee

There were no School Committee communications.

8. Attendance Reports

There were no Attendance Reports.

9. Financial Reports

Financial Reports were accepted for file.

10. New Business

Mr. Gregson made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Day to approve the following appointments:

10.1.1a Peter Fitzpatrick, boys' varsity tennis coach for East Greenwich High School

10.1.1b Mike Florio, assistant boys' baseball coach for East Greenwich High School

10.1.1c Michelle Meenagh, girls' hockey cheerleader advisor for the remainder of the 2005 hockey season

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10.1.1d Bob Corr, boys' varsity lacrosse coach at East Greenwich High School

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Martin stated that he believes that any coach or advisor should have a job description if their job entails a stipend. He noted that there still are no job descriptions for coaching positions as well as hockey cheerleader advisor. He would like to formulate a written job description for each position because they are stipend positions, and would like the School Committee to vote at their next meeting.

12. Reports to the School Committee

12.3 Update of NEASC Five Year Report

Mr. McCarthy stated that this five year update was reviewed by faculty, PTG, and parents, and that 2/3 of the recommendations are complete. He stated that the facilities area needs work.

12.2 Music Department Reorganization

Since there are still matters to discuss in Executive Session, there was no discussion on the music department reorganization.

12.3 Formulation of School Building/Committee/Revise expectations of Architect and Project

Manager.

Mr. Gregson made a motion to have the new Facilities Committee be responsible for handling

future projects. It will consist of seven members, one from the Town Council and one from the School Committee, a contractor, and Oversight Committee members. Mr. Bradley stated that he will contact Mr. LaRoche for an opinion and charge. Mrs. Friedemann stated that the word needs to get out that we are looking for members of this committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Day.

Mrs. Pam Testoni asked if the School Committee thought about adding a teacher to the committee. The School Committee responded that a teacher will not be added to the committee.

Mrs. Friedemann asked for criteria in the advertising. The motion passed unanimously.

A discussion on the expectations of the Architect and Project Manager will be done when the Superintendent returns.

10.1.1e Sabbatical

Mr. Martin spoke about the concept of a sabbatical. He noted that the school department does not have a policy on sabbaticals. It was noted that there would be an additional expense in granting the sabbatical because a new teacher would need to be hired. Mr. Greg DeCubellis, English Department Chair, stated that there should be a policy in place but he would like to see the sabbatical approved, since Mr. Brocato should not be reasonably denied. He added that the School Committee could approve it, then put a policy in place. Dr. Ross stated that because of the budget cap it may not be financially

possible at this time. He asked for the financial impact. Both Mrs. Cienki and Mrs. Friedemann stated that they would like to see a school department policy in place. Mr. Martin stated that he would be happy to write a policy and bring it back to the School Committee and the Superintendent. Mr. Martin made a motion to grant Mr. Brocato a sabbatical for the 2005-2006 school year. There was no second. Mr. Martin then asked that this item be put back on the agenda for March 15th. Mrs. Cienki made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Gregson to approve a sabbatical pending Dr. Jolin providing a policy for implementation of a sabbatical in advance of the meeting, and have it approved by School Committee. Mr. Bradley, Mr. Martin, Mr. Gregson, Mr. Day, Mrs. Cienki and Mrs. Friedemann voted yes, and Dr. Ross voted no. The motion passed. Mr. McCarthy stated that he would be happy to be the administrator on the committee. Mr. Robert Vespia stated that this should not be taken out on the teacher, but on the person who is not doing their job.

Mrs. Crawford noted that the Blue Cross increase is down from 18% to 10%. She noted that the budget increase is now 5.4%, the second lowest budget increase in the state.

Mrs. Christine Mattos thanked the school administration for acting on her request on the access to public records. She had many budget questions which were answered by Mrs. Crawford. Mr. Isaacs asked to have the budget summary information, to show the income such as medical reimbursement. He noted that the budget should reflect all expenditures and all income such as grants. Mrs. Crawford stated that she has already rolled up the numbers and will summarize them.

Mr. Gregson mentioned the boiler at Cole, adding that the lowest cost to fix it would be \$25,000, or it could be a separate warrant item at the Financial Town meeting. Mr. Isaacs noted that the school department's budget needs to be given to the Town Council by March 15, but that does not preclude the budget from being changed after that date. Mrs. Friedemann stated that maintenance should be a priority. Mrs. Crawford stated that the maintenance budget was proposed by Richard Hilton, and she will ask him questions about it.

Dr. Ross made a motion to submit this budget to the Town Council now, but there was no second to the motion. The majority of School Committee members asked to have another budget meeting on March 8 to look at warrant items with regard to window replacement, boiler replacement, and other maintenance issues at Cole.

12.5 Rhode Island Department of Health Student Risk Survey

Mr. Day made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Gregson to approve the administration of the student risk survey. Dr. Ross asked for past results of this survey. Mr. Day then made a motion to table the approval until the April meeting. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Friedemann, and passed unanimously.

12.6 Consolidation of School and Town Finance Departments

Mrs. Crawford stated that she is not opposed to the idea of combining school and town finance departments because the school needs to be operating at optimum efficiency. She noted that the school finance department is now operating better than it was last July. Mrs. Crawford stated that the finance department first needs to be operating at maximum efficiency and then consolidation can be looked at. She feels that the subject should be carefully studied before a decision is made. Dr. Ross wants to see what the Town Council audit finds. Mr. Gregson feels that the finance functions cannot be passed on to the town until the school side is straightened out. Mr. Isaacs stated that a management audit is being done to look at the structure, staffing, and policy manuals and procedures of the town's finance department. He noted that the auditors have complained of the same problems on the school side for the last six years. Mrs. Friedemann stated that this is an opportunity for change and we must act now. Mrs. Friedemann stated that it is non-political to do this, and there is an ability to combine resources and make the school system more efficient. She noted that this will save the town money and the schools can start creating programs to enrich the

children.

Dr. Ross made a motion to direct the Superintendent and School Committee Chair to meet with the Town Council President and the Town Manager to act to combine the finance offices. There was no second to this motion.

Mr. Isaacs stated that the Town Council has not voted on a plan, but it is in discussion now. He noted that the combining of finance departments is a small step in acting more efficiently. He also noted that the Town Finance Department performs a number of functions for the schools now. Mr. Sequino stated that he is in favor of consolidation but the performance audit will not address consolidation. He also noted that the school department is not operating at maximum efficiency, and all the problems with the audit will occur again. He noted that there is no impediment that prevents the school department from

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combining. He added that the Town of East Greenwich is the employer and the Town Treasurer signs the checks. Mr. Sequino stated that the economic savings based on total staffs would save 2.2 positions. He

also noted that taking the financial operations out of the school finance department would lower the per pupil cost. He added that the East Greenwich Free Library has their accounting done by the town.

Mr. Isaacs stated that he would be an advocate of doing this even if there were no accounting problems. He would like this addressed

before the school department starts hiring staff. Mr. Martin stated that he favors consolidating to save dollars and have the school department become more efficient. He added that no other school department in the state has consolidated their finance departments, but he added that being the first shows a progressive degree of thinking.

Mr. Bradley stated that the school finance department is not a smoothly run operation, and there is a perception in the community that the schools cannot handle money. He does not have confidence that the consolidation can be done properly with this organization.

Dr. Ross directed the Superintendent and the School Committee Chair to investigate, with the Town Council, consolidating the functions of the finance department. This motion was seconded by Mr. Gregson. Dr. Ross then amended his motion to state that the findings should be brought back to the School Committee by the second School Committee meeting in April which will be held on April 26, 2005. The motion to amend was seconded by Mr. Gregson. The motion as amended passed unanimously.

12.7 Recreation Fields Portable Sanitary Facilities

Dan Ratigan, from the East Greenwich Little League, asked to have small storage sheds and portajohns put on some school and recreation fields. Mr. Sequino noted that the portajohns would cost \$100 dollars a month, per unit, from April to November. Mr. Day then made a motion to table the approval until the next School Committee meeting. This was seconded by Mrs. Friedemann, and was

unanimous.

13. School Committee Concerns to be addressed to the Superintendent

Mr. Martin's concerns are: 1. Sabbatical Policy; 2. Job Descriptions for coaches and cheerleading advisors, and 3. Library Security System at the high school. (Cost \$6000). This was approved by the School Committee 2 years ago.

Dr. Ross and Mr. Gregson stated that certain areas were not cleared of snow in all the schools

14. School Committee Procedural Business

No procedural business

15. School Committee Reminder List

No discussion

16. Visits to Schools

No discussion

17. Public Comments (15 minutes)

Gary Neaves stated that he has been to several School Committee meetings and thanked the members for their hard work. He noted that the balance of power is all with the union as far as tenure and sabbaticals are concerned. It is a very lopsided process.

Mike LaRoche congratulated the school committee for approving

the facilities committee. He added that there is a need to accelerate the process.

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18. Executive Session, R.I.G.L. 42-46-5 (a) (2) Contract Negotiations

On a motion made by Mr. Gregson and seconded by Mr. Day, the Committee, being polled individually, voted unanimously to go into Executive Session under R.I.G.L. 42-46-5 (a) (2) for teacher contract negotiations at 10:05p.m.

19. Vote to seal minutes of Executive Session

20. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Giuliani