

EAST GREENWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2008

Hanaford School Cafeteria

200 Middle Road

East Greenwich, RI 02818

**ANY ITEMS CONSIDERED BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MAY BE
SUBJECT TO A**

VOTE

The School Committee meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. in the Hanaford School Cafeteria. Members present were: Sue Cienki, Chair, Merrill Friedemann, Anne Palumbo, Mary Ellen Winters, JeanAnn Guliano, and Susan Records, as well as Charles Meyers, Maryanne Crawford, Helen O'Hara, and Robert Wilmarth. William Day was absent. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

2. Public Comments

Alicia Leos, Shady Hill Drive, asked the Committee not to cut the choral program. She lives in East Greenwich because of good schools and the Arts. She stated if there are going to be cuts, they should be equitable.

Christine Mattos, Phillips Road, stated that the budget for 2008-2009 is a budget without a conscience. She noted that administrative salaries are slated to increase by 2.16 to 6%. She asked if there are going to be performance evaluations in order to arrive at increases for principals. She also noted that the maintenance budget

decreased but the facilities are falling apart. She suggested that School Committee health insurance benefits and buy back be taken away. Mrs. Friedemann asked if the Town Charter needed to be changed to do that. Mrs. Mattos also stated that the school legal expenses are high, and there is a health insurance increase but West Bay Community Health has a budget surplus of \$700,000. She wondered how the budget could be balanced with a deficit in the school lunch program of \$140,000. Mrs. Mattos also stated that there are \$200,000 in non-competitive bids out of the warrant articles and that is not what the warrant articles are for. She gave the Committee an APRA request for salary steps numbers and those receiving health insurance buy back.

Esta Kalajian, Chestnut Drive noted that many Committee members have supported the choral program and asked them not to take a step backward.

Ellen Shanos. Larkspur Road, stated that the choral program builds character and helps SAT scores. She noted that it feeds all of the higher programs and she would like to see the program continued.

Robin Leshing, Hill Drive, asked the Committee not to cut the program.

Joannie and Zoe Hinman, Hemlock Drive, stated that the choral program pulls kids from all schools together.

Jane Donegan, South Road, thanked the Committee for all they do as she has been in their shoes. She noted that the chorus program is great and a full, rich program. She also stated that the CPT program is an incredible program that people feel passionately about since it

allows kids to grow and gives them confidence.

Jennifer Condon, Hickory Drive, stated that the CPT program and band programs are important to her son.

Paul Liu, Miss Fry Drive, stated that music is one program parents care passionately about.

258

Maura Meiser, Flintstone Court, applauds students who came to the meeting tonight. She noted that cuts are not okay. She also stated that parents are more important than the budget. She feels students will lose their interest in chorus if we don't get them after elementary school. She also noted that test scores will begin to show if we take away chorus and other programs.

Monica Mason, Lenihan Drive, stated that CPT is an academic program that needs to be kept since it keeps kids stimulated. She feels the school department needs to address the needs of academically talented students.

Mary Pine, Downing Street, stated that parents don't want anything cut.

Geraldine Corrigan, Alder Court, stated that singing is important and the choral program is awesome since the child is part of a team.

Betsy Smith, Bow Street, stated that since her son has been in chorus he is much more courageous.

3. Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Mrs. Palumbo and seconded by Mrs. Mrs. Guliano the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of

the December 18, 2007 meeting.

4. New Business

4.1 Appointment

4.1.1 Mrs. Guliano made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Winters, to approve the appointment of Gregory Stewart, Administrative Assistant in the Office of Pupil Services, effective January 15, 2008. Mrs. Friedemann asked why employees are still being hired at central office. She had asked for justification for new hires. She asked if another employee could take over those duties. She also feels we should get rid of our lawyers, and the Town Charter needs to be changed to use the town's lawyers. Mr. Meyers responded that five positions were eliminated at central office over the past years and the dollars were turned over to the kids. Mrs. Guliano is concerned about hiring but feels this is an essential position since someone needs to cover the special needs students. Mr. Meyers stated the special education is highly monitored and we need to be in compliance with State Law. The motion passed with Mrs. Friedemann voting no.

4.1.2 Mrs. Guliano made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Palumbo to approve the appointment of Matthew Records, Intramural boys' basketball advisor at Cole Middle School for the winter season. The motion passed with Mrs. Records recusing herself.

4.2 Resignation

4.2.1 Mrs. Palumbo made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Winters to accept the resignation of Jeanne Ferguson, paraprofessional at Hanaford School, effective January 4, 2008. It was

noted that Mrs. Ferguson was a one on one paraprofessional and needs to be replaced. The cost will be approximately \$15,000 per year.

5. Update on Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program

Mr. Robert Houghtaling, Drug and Substance Abuse Counselor, spoke about the February 5 forum which will held for professionals to speak to parents about drugs and alcohol. He also stated that marijuana and alcohol are major issues causing many opportunities for people to be at risk. He also noted that there is wonderful support from the Town Council and School Committee. He also noted that

259

Senator Raptakis would like to be present at the forum. Mr. Houghtaling stated that East Greenwich has to stay on top of the issues at all times by keeping their programs current. Mr. Meyers stated that Mr. Houghtaling has been the glue here and it takes someone like him to get all groups involved.

6. Second Reading and vote on High School Program of Studies for 2008-2009

Mr. Levine, Principal of East Greenwich High School, was present to answer any questions on the proposed Program of Studies for 2008-2009. He also stated that he seeks Mr. Houghtaling's counsel and appreciates all he does. Mrs. Cienki asked Mr. Levine to continue to work to revamp the computer classes. Mrs. Palumbo made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Guliano to approve the Program of Studies for the 2008-2009 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Joint Meeting with Town Council

1. Consolidation

2. FY 2009 Budget

3. Warrant Article Update

Town Council members were present to discuss the above items. Mr. Isaacs state that school and town consolidation of services needs to be discussed in person. Mr. Tom Mattos, Town Finance Director, gave two power point presentations. He noted that the new budget should include more consolidation to save money. Mr. Mattos stated that previously the school department didn't have double entry accounting and the grant weren't in the system. He also noted that there should be a single source for all financial reports. Mr. Mattos stated that the Human Resources module in the Munis System should be used and a collaborative effort is required. Mr. Boezi stated that two positions were eliminated at central office and a budget manager and clerk were hired, saving \$84,000. Mr. Isaacs stated that he would like to follow up and discuss further responsibilities which may lead to other efficiencies. He asked if there are things that could be done by school principals if they are functional department heads.

Mr. Isaacs stated that the town staff will present an array of ideas for savings. Mr. Sequino and Mr. Meyers will start detailed planning and pick out items to be implemented. Mr. Isaacs stated that staff from the town and school should be involved. He asked for a commitment from the School Committee to see if these things are doable. Mrs. Guliano stated that the priority is cost savings. Mr. Meyers noted that his staff is committed to sitting down and looking at areas of savings.

Mrs. Guliano made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Palumbo to further investigate consolidation. Susan Records will be on the committee. The motion passed unanimously.

It was noted that the warrant articles are winding down and have an \$800,000 balance. They should be wrapped up by spring and we can apply for reimbursement once everything is done. Mr. Isaacs is looking for a summary of what was done by priority.

Mr. Boezi mentioned the inferior workmanship on the work done on the Hanaford School bus pick-up and drop-off areas. He also asked about the school lunch deficit and asked if the vendor is doing an adequate job. Mrs. Cienki stated that the lunch contract was restructured with the same vendor.

8. First Draft of FY 2009 Budget

Mr. Meyers stated that at the January 22 meeting, a budget discussion will be held and principals and department heads will be invited and they will share items which were not included in the budget. Mr. Meyers also noted that if we move to a 6-8

260

middle school in 2010, we may close an elementary school. The challenge is to meet the diverse needs of students. The Superintendent also spoke about the possible reduction of two elementary positions, a half time elementary choral teacher, a middle school special education teacher and a 0.6 School to Career position. He is also looking at increases in health insurance, salaries and step increases, and an increase for utilities, supplies, technology and maintenance. Mrs. Guliano would like a break down of actual

amounts for the January 22 meeting. She also asked that the elementary chorus teacher not be cut, but we should look at somewhere else to cut.

Mr. Paul Thompson, an East Greenwich resident, feels that each time the teacher's union doesn't accept the School Committee's offer, the offer should be lowered. He noted that we are getting less money each year because of the tax cap, and the reality is there is no money.

Mr. Meyers noted that by law we have to present three year budget projections to the Town Council. Mr. Thompson feels this should be given to the community.

9. School Committee Concerns

Mrs. Friedemann asked why Mr. Ackerman wasn't present at this meeting.

The following items may be discussed in Executive Session:

10. On a motion made by Mrs. Palumbo and seconded by Mrs. Guliano, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 10:30p.m. under RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (1) (2) for Teacher Contract Negotiations. Mrs. Friedemann noted that the law is clear and if the Committee intends to discuss a salary increase and continuation of the Superintendent's contract, she will recuse herself because it is a violation of the Open Meeting's Law. The Committee stated that they only intended to discuss teacher contract negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully,

Virginia Giuliani
Secretary