

EAST GREENWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2008

Hanaford School Gymnasium

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 Gymnasium. Members present were: Sue Cienki, Chair, Merrill Friedemann, Anne Palumbo, Mary Ellen Winters, JeanAnn Guliano, and Susan Records as well as Superintendent Charles Meyers, Assistant Superintendent Helen O'Hara, and Facilities Director, Robert Wilmarth. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. Public Comments

Jennifer Condon, Hickory Drive, stated that the children are the only ones hurt by work to rule. She asked all parties to please settle the contract, be fully prepared, and show dignity and respect to each other. She asked if programs should be cut or should teachers pay more toward their health care. She asked if parents could have more facts. She also asked to have contract compliance taken off the table forever. She feels there should be consequences for work to rule.

Ellen Shanos, Larkspur Drive, asked both sides to stay at negotiations until the contract is settled. Mrs. Cienki stated that there

is a mediator involved and that person decides if the Committee should stay at the table.

Mr. Yu asked if Latin was going to be cancelled. Mrs. Cienki stated that it is not going to be cancelled.

Heather Tibbetts, Hickory Drive, urged the Committee to stay at mediation until they are done.

Maura Meiser, Flintstone Court, asked both side to step up and solve the problems with the contract. She stated that children's education is being compromised and valuable things are being missed. She asked that kids be taken off the negotiating table. She applauded Meadowbrook teachers for all they do.

Joanne Leach, Graham Way, stated that as well as being a teacher, she also is a parent and a taxpayer and the decision on work to rule was a long, hard one. She noted that teachers have and continue to be there for kids. She stated that teachers have been without a contract for five and a half months. She noted that January 28 was the straw that broke the camels back and assures parents that teachers will do all they can to help kids.

3. Recognitions

3.1 Jovian Yu, a senior at EGHS, was recognized for receiving the Siemens Award for Advanced Placement for his outstanding achievement on AP tests in Math & Science. Mrs. Cienki stated that he was accepted into the Brown Medical Program. She also noted that he received a 5 on the AP tests in Math and Science which is unprecedented in East Greenwich.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 On a motion made by Mrs. Palumbo and seconded by Mrs. Winters, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the Executive Session for January 8 and January 28 and regular sessions for January 8 and January 22

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5. New Business

5.1 Appointment

5.1.1 Mrs. Palumbo made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Winters to approve the appointment of Snezana Novakovic, paraprofessional at Hanaford School, for six hours per day, effective January 4, 2008 to replace a paraprofessional who resigned. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Approval of Fields Design – Presentation by Caito, Inc. and The Gifford Group

Kevin Alverson from the Gifford Group presented the latest design concept for new fields. He stated that the concept was presented to the fields and building committees. He also noted that the main center of the concept will be Carcieri Field. Mr. Meyers stated that RIDE may only reimburse on upgrading existing fields and if they don't reimburse us on the entire project, we may have to scale down the costs from six million to four million. RIDE will not reimburse on synthetic fields. This will be discussed at an upcoming meeting with the Town Council. There was additional discussion about the cost of synthetic versus a comparable field.

7. Teacher lay-offs and non-renewals

Mr. Meyers stated that the school department is sending out

approximately thirty letters to teachers in three categories: one year only hires, teachers covering for those on leave, and additional positions in case we can't budget to the cap. The notification needs to be done by March 1 but we won't know until the Financial Town Meeting in June when the budget is finalized. Mr. Meyers noted that contract suspension is a term for tenured teachers when they are the least senior at their grade level.

8. Renewal of contract for School Committee Legal Counsel

Mrs. Friedemann asked to have this item put off until the first meeting in March since she just received the proposal. She also feels that some items pertaining to this proposal need to be discussed in executive session. Mrs. Guliano seconded the motion and she suggested a special meeting for this item. Mrs. Friedemann, Mrs. Records, and Mrs. Guliano voted yes, and Mrs. Cienki, Mrs. Palumbo and Mrs. Winters voted no. The motion failed. Mrs. Palumbo then made a motion which was seconded by Mrs. Winters to retain the firm of Oliverio & Marcaccio at a fee of \$6500 per month for the next eighteen months on the same terms as 2007 for all legal services with the exception of the teachers' contract. Mrs. Friedemann has concerns about our lawyers. Mrs. Records stated that the school department contracts should be re-negotiated every year and should go out to bid for the best services and best prices. She would like to see their legal fee cut. Mrs. Guliano stated that we are not required to send the legal counsel's contract out to bid. She feels we have a unique relationship with our legal counsel and it is not in the best interest of the school district to put it out to bid. Matthew Oliverio

stated that he is completing his third year of successive one year contracts and he feels that an hourly rate of \$150 to \$175 is pretty standard. Mr. Oliverio stated that his firm is very sensitive to budget issues and is charging the same flat fee as last year. He added that this year the firm will be negotiating two contracts, maintenance/custodians and secretaries/paraprofessionals and it will consume a lot of time. Mrs. Friedemann stated that she is not prepared for this vote tonight. Mrs. Palumbo feels that Mrs. Friedemann did not properly prepare for the meeting. Mr. Meyers stated that he had an opportunity to work with both Mr. Oliverio and Mr. Marcaccio for the past two years and has saved the school district large sums of money by avoiding litigation.

Donna Hayes, teachers' union co-president, asked why the school department has two attorneys and why we have Richard Ackerman at \$150 per hour.

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On the vote to renew the contract for the School Committee legal counsel, Oliverio and Marcaccio, Mrs. Cienki, Mrs. Palumbo, and Mrs. Winters voted yes, and Mrs. Friedemann, Mrs. Guliano and Mrs. Records voted no. The motion failed.

9. In\$ite Report-This item was tabled.

10. FY 09 Budget Report

Mr. Meyers stated that further budget reductions may be necessary if we have to cut deeper. It was noted that middle school athletics and a portion of the athletic director's salary could be cut before programs are cut. Mrs. Records asked the Superintendent to look at

sports cuts at the high school, not just the middle school. She suggested we run more intramural programs at the middle school instead of varsity programs which would accommodate more students. Mrs. Friedemann stated that at the next school committee meeting she would give the Superintendent her suggested cuts. She noted that the cuts are all kid centered and would like to see more cuts in other areas. Mrs. Cienki noted that the maximum allowable budget increase is 1.4 million dollars. She noted that further reductions would only take place if the Town Council cuts our budget further.

11. School Committee Concerns

High school students took 4th place at the Berklee College of Music and high school Drama students had an outstanding performance.

Mrs. Records stated that she has asked to be present at meetings concerning consolidation with the Town.

Mrs. Guliano stated that a Teen Alcohol Forum was held at the Swift Gym and was attended by 180 people. She commended Nancy Merrill, Suzy Baird, and Bob Houghtaling for all their hard work in making this a success.

12. On a motion made by Mrs. Palumbo and seconded by Mrs. Guliano, the Committee, being polled individually, voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 8:45p.m. under RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2) Teacher Contract Negotiations, Secretaries/Paraprofessional and Maintenance/Custodian contract negotiations.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Giuliani

Secretary