

Minutes of the East Greenwich School Committee-Budget Workshop

Tuesday, February 8, 2011

East Greenwich High School Library

300 Avenger Drive

East Greenwich, RI 02818

ANY ITEMS ON THE AGENDA MAY BE SUBJECT TO A VOTE

The School Committee meeting and budget workshop was called to order in the library of the East Greenwich High school at 6:15 p.m. by School Committee Chair Dr. Deidre Gifford. Those in attendance were Mr. Bob Durant, Vice Chair (arrived 6:25p.m.); Mrs. Mary Ellen Winters; Mr. David Green, Mrs. Susan Records, and Mr. Paul Martin. Mr. Jack Sommer was absent.

Also present were Superintendent Dr. Victor Mercurio; Director of Administration Mrs. Maryanne Crawford; Director of Student Services Mrs. Paula Dillon; Director of Technology Mr. Jerry Nettik, and Director of Facilities Mr. Robert Wilmarth.

Finance Committee members present were Mr. Steve Miranda, Mrs. June Fischer, Mr. Henry Kates, and Mr. Mohan Mahadevan (arrived 6:45p.m.). Technology Committee member Mr. David Hemendinger was also present.

I. Meeting called to order at 6:15 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

III. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

IV. Approval of minutes:

On a motion by Mr. Green, which was seconded by Mrs. Winters, the regular and executive session minutes for January 18, 2011 were unanimously approved. Mr. Martin noted he would like to see the EGHS library open until 3:00p.m.

V. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Mercurio met with Meadowbrook PTG members on February 3, 2011 to discuss whether February or April vacation days would be used to make up for snow days. Dr. Mercurio noted these vacations will not be used to make up for snow days. All Administrators, except for one, have attended I-PAD training through RIASP. Follow-up training will be held in a month or two. It was questioned whether I-PADS would be worthwhile for School Committee members in the future. Dr. Mercurio would like to use I-PADS for teacher evaluations and possibly pilot a program through RIDE. There was discussion surrounding E-Rate and updating the district web site to make it more robust and user friendly.

VI. Action Items

a. Appointments

On a motion by Mr. Durant, which was seconded by Mrs. Winters, the Committee unanimously approved the following appointments:

Appointment of Lindsey Kelly, Speech/Language Pathologist

(replacement), 1.0 FTE, Meadowbrook

Appointment of Cindy Gavin, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Meadowbrook, One year only

Appointment of Madeline Richer, Paraprofessional (replacement), 1.0 FTE, Frenchtown

b. Senior Project –early release day - revise date to April 27, 2011(previously approved date was April 21, 2011)

On a motion by Mr. Durant, which was seconded by Mrs. Winters, the Committee voted 5-1 to approve the early release day- Senior Project. Dr. Gifford voted against the motion.

c. Approval of Electricity Contract

On a motion by Mr. Durant, which was seconded by Mr. Martin, the Committee unanimously approved the Electricity Contract with Constellation NewEnergy, Inc.

VII. Discussion Items

a. Middle School Transition

Dr. Mercurio noted the Cole faculty will tour the new facility tomorrow. He also commended Cole teacher Kelly Grennan-Smith (Furniture, Fixture, and Equipment Committee), who has done an outstanding job recycling old Cole equipment by contacting surrounding school districts and also the Habitat for Humanity.

b. Field's Use MOU

Dr. Mercurio distributed letters from 1981 from the previous Town Manager Mr. John Simmons to various stakeholders at R.I. Statewide Planning and DEM that discuss fields, boundaries, and scheduled usage. It is still unclear as to who controls the fields- the school or

the town. The Committee discussed the MOU draft and would like historical references deleted. Dr. Gifford would like a list of all fields' maintenance costs for the town and the school. A global list needs to be created delineating which party (town or school) maintains each area. The scheduling of the fields was discussed and Mr. Wilmarth noted the scheduling is not an issue. Mr. Durant and Mrs. Winters noted the funding is the issue. It was noted the school department never paid for any portion of the Parks and Recreation Director's salary. The MOU needs further discussion once the budget process is complete.

c. Meadowbrook Building Committee Recommendations

No items need to be discussed as the SMMA study was authorized.

d. ESCO

Mr. Durant noted the Schneider audit has been received. There was discussion whether the Committee is locked in with Schneider since they provided the audit, or whether the audit can be used by another vendor. Dr. Gifford noted there is a community member in East Greenwich in the energy industry and she will contact him for further details. This item will be discussed in late March after the budget process is complete.

e. Letter to Governor Chafee in support of education reforms

Dr. Gifford drafted a memo to Governor Chafee urging him to support Commissioner Gist in her efforts to make Rhode Island schools the best in the nation. The Town Council sent a similar letter in January. Dr. Gifford asked the Committee for input and noted it is their decision whether or not to sign the letter. Committee members

discussed the letter and gave their feedback. Mr. Martin discussed his support for Commissioner Gist and questioned whether she is accessible to answer School Committee phone calls. Dr. Mercurio stated that she's accessible and is scheduled to meet with the School Committee at the March 1, 2011 meeting. Mrs. Records supports educational reform, but is unclear on Commissioner Gist's position and is not sure what she stands for. Mr. Durant thinks Commissioner Gist is a breath of fresh air and has done more for children's education than anyone he can recall. Dr. Gifford noted the state is at risk of losing Commissioner Gist and sending a letter of support may be beneficial. The Committee discussed sending the letter and all members present except for Mrs. Records agreed to sign the letter.

VIII. Budget Workshop-Special Education and Technology

Mr. Nettik gave an overview of his budget and thanked his Finance Committee partners Mr. Steve Miranda and Mr. Mohan Mahadevan, along with Technology Committee member Mr. Dave Hemendinger for their invaluable assistance. The technology salary line includes a request for a new full time technician. This new position will provide three technicians in the field to assist users. Mr. Green asked Mr. Nettik about the backlogs for user requests. Mr. Nettik said issues in the middle/secondary schools involving the classrooms and attendance are handled as immediate requests. Elementary issues that are not as critical may go days before assistance is provided. The goal is to possibly use remote management for 2400 students and 300 staff members. The committee discussed the possibility of using open source instead of paying licensing fees which could

possible save approximately \$50,000 per year. Mr. Hemendinger discussed open source (Open Office, Google Docs) noting this is the new focus of many companies. It is a proactive approach which can eliminate software, offer remote updates, and allow the user to self-manage. Mr. Green noted the budget should be driven by outcomes, not technology. There was discussion regarding the possibility of initiating a multi-year budget for technology which would include a plan to refresh technology. Mr. Hemendinger asked if the district has plans to move to a virtual desktop plan. Mr. Nettik noted there was not enough money in the budget to consider this plan for the upcoming year. Professional development was discussed and it is important that users get support after the initial training once they get deeper into the program. Mrs. Dillon has super users (teachers, media specialists, and paraprofessionals), but these staff members are scheduled and not always available to assist users. Dr. Mercurio and Mrs. Records noted that NEIT will offer training to teachers who can then teach other teachers. This summer Dr. Mercurio will speak with NEIT about the possibility of NEIT interns assisting users as part of their Feinstein service component.

Mrs. Dillon gave the Committee an in-depth report of Student Services noting programs that are mandated by federal or state law. The report gave a detailed overview of each school noting the number of staff and students involved in each program and the funding information by school. Mrs. Dillon also provided "A Year in Review" for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. These reports detail student service

areas, initiative, purpose, staff, accomplishments, what needs to be accomplished, timelines, resources, and the number of students serviced.

Mrs. Dillon discussed the areas that are under her directorship that are outside of Special Education. These areas include State Assessments, NECAP testing coordinator, State-wide evaluation committee for teachers, Curriculum work, Student Code of Conduct Committee, Interview Committee, and the Superintendent's forum at RIDE. Mrs. Dillon also gave the Committee an overview of her administrative qualifications/certifications which include:

Master's Degree in Special Education Administration

Master's Degree in Secondary and Middle Educational Leadership

Special Education Director Certification

Superintendent's Certification

Middle/Secondary Principal Certification

Mrs. Dillon is also a certified U.S. History Middle/Secondary Teacher and a certified Special Education Teacher for Middle and /Secondary.

Mr. Martin noted that Mrs. Dillon is doing the work of an Assistant Superintendent and goes above and beyond special services and congratulated Mrs. Dillon on her Superintendent certification. Mrs. Records, Mrs. Winters and Mr. Durant also agreed. Mrs. Dillon invited School Committee members to visit any district program. Major budget changes discussed include a decrease in out of district tuition, an increase in transportation, the need to increase OT,

Speech, and Psych at Cole due to the new configuration, and job coaching at the EGHS.

X. School Committee Concerns

Dr. Mercurio will check on the dates for the School Committee tour of Meadowbrook School.

XI. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Durant which was seconded by Mr. Green, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:55p.m.

CHRISTINE DIMEGLIO

SECRETARY