

UNOFFICIAL

CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 11, 2007

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Cumberland School Committee held on Thursday, October 11, 2007 at the Cumberland Administrative Office/Cafetorium, 2602 Mendon Road, was called to order at 7:35 PM, by Chairman Frederic C. Crowley, with the following present:

Frederic C. Crowley, Chairman, Robert Thibodeau, Vice Chair, Karen MacBeth, Clerk, Lisa Beaulieu, Donald J. Costa, W. David Wagner, Earl T. Wood

Also Present: Donna A. Morelle, Ed.D., Superintendent; Susan C. Carney, Ph.D, Assistant Superintendent; Joseph A. Rotella, Esq., Director of Administration

I. Pledge of Allegiance - The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Costa.

II. Approval of Agenda - Mr. Thibodeau made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Wagner provided a second. On a motion by Mr. Wagner, and a second by Ms. MacBeth, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE amending the agenda by removing Payment of Bills under

Reports of Standing Committees since no bills were reviewed during the Finance Subcommittee.

It was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the amended agenda.

III. Chairperson's Report - The Chair asked people to sign up to speak and noting there is a five minute limit with no personal attacks. He stated there was a second public comment session. Mr. Crowley reported he received a letter from William Bagley about changing bus routes, letters from Kelly Connerton and Chad Randall about kindergarten aides, and an anonymous letter with an e-mail address requesting that kindergarten aides be made an agenda item. He asked the Superintendent to respond.

IV. Comments from the Public

A. Public Comments - Kelly Connerton requested that kindergarten aides be put on the agenda. She asked those in attendance for this issue to stand. She stated these students are not getting the attention they deserve and noted she will be volunteering. Mr. Crowley responded he spoke to Elizabeth LaChance about a petition. Ms. Connerton didn't have a copy for the committee to keep yet. Lynn Kelly commented on the fact that faces the committee hasn't see before is very telling. She felt they are approaching a hostile work place and referenced the pay check issue and the pay scale. She felt there was a conflict of interest having Mr. Rotella function as the school department lawyer and the director of human resources.

Anne Prossert stated it is essential that students with special needs have kindergarten aides.

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Jim McLaughlin stated there seem to be a lot of problems with the kindergarten aides and athletic teams and requested an outside forum.

B. Student Government Report - Lorna Emerson reported on upcoming Spirit Week activities and Will Murphy reported there will be a blood drive and the Junior Ring Ceremony.

V. Reports of Standing Committees

A. Award of Bid for Special Education Program Audit - Mr. Wagner reported the Finance Subcommittee met earlier. Mr. Thibodeau made a motion to approve awarding the bid for the special education program audit. Mr. Wood provided a second. The Superintendent reported there were four components to the matrix in scoring the bid, noting the matrix is more relative if there are multiple companies. Only one company actually submitted a bid. Fifty points were based on ability on the scope of the proposal; 20 points for experience of audit personnel; 20 points for the cost of the proposal; and 10 for the ability to conduct business from the beginning to the end date. This agency was given 90-95 out of 100 points. Mr. Costa asked for clarification of the cost and the Superintendent explained they are

only asking the committee to approve the outcome analysis which is the \$10,000 scope of work. On a motion by Mr. Costa, and a second by Mr. Thibodeau, it was VOTED 6-1 TO APPROVE amending the motion with a not to exceed \$10,000, with Ms. MacBeth voting against.

Mr. Wood asked when the second part would be put out to bid. The Superintendent explained there was a bid response, but she is trying to be responsive to concerns that have been expressed on expenditures. She stated they could start with this scope of work and then could discuss whether or not the second part would be needed. At that time the Business Manager might be able to negotiate that part of the work. Ms. MacBeth expressed concern for scoring because the matrix was designed for the whole bid and that the cost is higher than what was proposed. She noted there was a vote taken at the Special Education Advisory and 100% of the parents were against this audit. She agreed with them. She reported on the NECAP test, noting there is an area on the tests that teachers and principals can code the test to look for specific information and it is free. She noted the Department of Education would have a team to look at this data with the school department. She also noted she didn't see alternative assessment in the audit. Mr. Thibodeau stated it is always good to take a look at what people do, noting the custodial analysis, and asked Mr. Prignano about the cost. Mr. Prignano explained initially the total was \$30,000 and the bid came in at \$10,000 for the first phase and \$25,000 for the second phase. He

stated he thought he could negotiate the second phase. Mr. Thibodeau asked if there would be a need for the second phase. The Superintendent stated they have been discussing this for nine months and she thought this would have been done in the summer.

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The focus is on student learning in the district and the correct information is needed with the depth and breadth in a short time frame. She would like to see this go forward, but the committee may not want to go forward with it. She isn't recommending going forward with the second phase now because of the concerns raised. It was noted this would come from a one-time expense from the '06-'07 budget. The Superintendent stated the Special Education Department has been involved. Ms. MacBeth read what would be provided: a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes achieved by the district's special education population in areas related to attendance and performance on the NECAP reading and math assessments. She asked if this is being done to save money or improve student performance and learning. Mr. Thibodeau responded both. The Superintendent felt they need to learn where the pockets of students are whose learning needs are being met and under what conditions. This would then have an implication for resources. The intention is not to eliminate nor reduce services. Mr. Wagner noted the value to

him was for the second part. On a roll call vote, it was VOTED 4-3 TO APPROVE the motion, with the following voting AYE: Ms. Beaulieu, Mr. Wood, Mr. Wagner, Mr. Thibodeau; NAY: Mr. Costa, Mr. MacBeth, Mr. Crowley.

B. Personnel Committee - Ms. MacBeth reported that meeting was canceled due to the Finance Committee and will meet prior to the next School Committee meeting.

VI. Consent Agenda - On a motion by Mr. Wood, and a second by Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the Consent Agenda.

A. Police Report

B. Truancy Report

C. Approval of Minutes

1. Open Session: 9/20/07, 9/27/07

2. Special Meeting: 9/4/07

D. Facilities Report

E. Enrollment Report

On a motion by Mr. Wood, and a second by Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE a recess to give members an opportunity to review the minutes. A recess was declared at 8:20 p.m. Open Session was reconvened by the Vice Chair at 8:42 p.m., with Mr. Costa and Mr. Crowley recused.

VII. Approval of Minutes

A. Report Out Vote on Executive Session: 7/30/07 - Mr. Thibodeau reported there was a 3-1 vote to hire Jeffrey Cassle in the amount of \$200/hour.

B. Special Meeting/Executive Session: 8/8/07 - No action taken.

C. Executive Session: 8/28/07 - No action taken.

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D. Executive Session 8/30/07 - On a motion by Mr. Wagner, and a second by Mr. Wood, it was VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE the minutes, with Mr. Costa and Mr. Crowley recused.

E. Executive Session 9/20/07 - On a motion by Mr. Wagner, and a second by Mr. Wood, it was VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE the minutes, with Mr. Costa and Mr. Crowley recused.

F. Executive Session: 9/27/07 - On a motion by Mr. Wagner, and a second by Mr. Wood, it was VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE the minutes, with Mr. Costa and Mr. Crowley recused.

The Chair returned to the dias. On a motion b Mr. Wood, and a second by Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE sealing the Executive Session minutes of October 11, 2007.

VIII. Personnel Recommendations

A. Ms. Beaulieu made a motion to approve the appointment of Robert

Kurkjian, Chemistry Teacher at Cumberland High School, effective 9/4/2007 (FTE: 1.0; Salary: \$66,734/\$68,068; Advanced Lane: Masters; Co-pay: 10%; budgeted). A second was provided by Mr. Wagner. The Superintendent noted this was top step. On a roll call vote, the motion FAILED 5-2, with the following voting AYE: Ms. Beaulieu, Mr. Thibodeau; NAY: Mr. Wood, Mr. Costa, Ms. MacBeth, Mr. Wagner, Mr. Crowley.

B. On a motion by Mr. Costa, and a second by Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the resignation of Joyce Bonner, Girls' Outdoor Track Coach at Cumberland High School, effective 10/1/2007.

C. Mr. Wagner made a motion to approve the resignation of Scott Hunt, Special Educator at Cumberland High School, effective 9/4/2007. A second was provided by Ms. Beaulieu. The Chair noted the letter of resignation has the date of 8/30/07. The Superintendent explained they typically put the 9/4 date as the start of school.

On a motion by Mr. Wagner, and a second by Ms. MacBeth and Mr. Thibodeau, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO AMEND the date to 8/30/07. It was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the amended motion.

D. On a motion by Mr. Costa and Mr. Wagner, and a second by Mr. Wood, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the resignation of Edward Marsland, Mail Courier System-wide, effective 9/25/2007. Mr. Costa noted he would be missed.

E. On a motion by Ms. Beaulieu, and a second by Mr. Wood, it was

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the retirement of Dorothy Plant, Accounts Payable Clerk at Central Administration Office, effective 01/02/2008. Mr. Costa noted she would be missed.

F. Mr. Costa made a motion to approve the appointment of Leah Hogan, Physical Education/Adaptive Physical Education/Health Teacher, System-wide, effective 10/12/2007 (FTE: 0.4; Step 1; Advanced Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 10%; budgeted). Ms. Beaulieu provided a second.

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Mr. Wagner made a motion to table. Ms. MacBeth provided a second. On a roll call vote, it was **VOTED 4-3- TO APPROVE** the motion, with the following voting **AYE: Mr. Wagner, Mr. Thibodeau, Ms. MacBeth, Mr. Crowley; NAY: Mr. Wood, Mr. Costa, Ms. Beaulieu.** Ms. MacBeth explained they had just received the information.

IX. Old Business

A. Building Committee Update - Mr. Wood reported the 3.5 Building Committee met last night and the foundation was poured at Ashton

and the metal building is due in October 29th. The front entrance is on, the roof up and the brick is up. At Cumberland Hill the foundation should be poured next week and the sewers are connected. CHS2010 will be meeting Monday and with the committee talking about landscaping. The server should be on line at the end of October or beginning of November.

B. Graduation Policy - 2nd Reading - Mr. Costa reported Dr. Carney did the first reading and since there are no changes he would like to dispense with the second reading. On a motion by Mr. Costa, and a second by Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE dispensing with the second reading.

On a motion by Mr. Costa, and a second by Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE adopting the High School graduation requirements as presented. Copies will be distributed to students, available on the web site and sent to the Commissioner.

X. New Business

A. Home School Instruction Requests 2007-08 School Year - Dr. Carney reported there are several requests, most of them being renewals. On a motion by Mr. Thibodeau, and a second by Ms. MacBeth and Mr. Wagner, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE the requests.

B. Space Utilization Task Force - The Superintendent reported there are students in the elementary schools and middle schools enrolled where there is not space and there is space where there are not

students. This needs to be addressed to insure schools have the right number of students without busing students from one district to another. There needs to be a feeder system to support space. Dr. Morelle noted that she started looking at this but that was stalled with the Ashton and Cumberland Hill building project. Her recommendation is to craft a press release to be sent to as many media outlets as possible so the community understands exactly what is taking place and can participate on a task force with the school committee and administration. She suggested a two week time frame to set a manageable number for the task force and then convene with a schedule with weekly meetings, with recommendations to be brought to the School Committee for public hearings for a decision to be made by mid-January. This way any decisions can be made on adjusting boundaries would be done prior to the budget process.

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Mr. Thibodeau made a motion to convene a Space Utilization Task Force. Mr. Wagner provided a second. Discussion ensued regarding this being redistricting. Mr. Rotella recommended keeping the title as it is on the agenda, but a clear explanation be included in the press release. The Superintendent explained she would like to be able to talk about the response at the next meeting. She will also

communicate with the Town Council. Ms. Beaulieu asked about a capacity issue with the new developments that have been in the newspaper. The Superintendent said there is a planning formula when building a new building and they could engage someone from the planning board who is aware of developments being planned. They will look at enrollment and family data. This will assist in placement for the neighborhood school for K through 5. Ms. Beaulieu would like to know that schools are at what capacity, without any changes. On a roll call vote, it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE** the motion.

C. School Committee Leadership and Goals - Mr. Thibodeau felt the committee should make the teacher assistants in the kindergarten their number one goal, to find the money. He also stated they should get behind stamping out illiteracy in the district. In reference to meetings, he noted there is a sign up sheet for public comment and they need to keep to the five minute rule and there should not be any personal attacks, especially towards the administration. Mr. Wagner stated their most important goal is educating the children, and in doing so they need to improve upon communication. They need to have respect and leave the ego at the door. He stated they have to take something like this redistricting, put it on the table and allow people to have their say and decisions that are made that way with the group will be good. Mr. Wood stated he looked up the definition of leadership and Webster defines it as the capacity to lead and it led him to the word leader, which is defined as a person who leads and directs others and a person who exhibits points of interest. He

looked at the committee, not central administration, staff or teachers. He has asked what the vision is of this committee and the objectives on how they are to serve the citizens of Cumberland. He felt they need strong leadership on the board to work with central administration and other board members. They need someone who can direct others. They have been unable to achieve small things, such as Keyworks and it wasn't going anywhere. Mr. Wood felt they need someone that will support the vision of the community and they need to set goals for themselves. They need a leader that will work within the community to reach their goals and help central administration to achieve the high standards that the Town of Cumberland expects and students of Cumberland deserve.

Ms. MacBeth brought a book, *Becoming A Better Board Member*, and it talks about the responsibilities of a board member that's in policy making, designating the chief executive, planning goal setting and appraisal, financial, instruction, facility and students and communication with various constituents. She recommended getting this book for all members to be on the same page.

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Ms. MacBeth requested they formally put on the next agenda

leadership and the offices up here, open for discussion and voting. She thought they were at the point where they ask each other for directions to work collaborative to make sure the direction they are going is in the best interest of the students. Ms. Beaulieu stated they all ran for a School Committee seat for a variety of reasons, including student learning and she thought this was the best way to have an influence on student learning. It has become a challenge predominantly because of the struggles the committee had internally. Some tried to focus their energy. She noted Keyworks is sponsored by the National Association of School Boards and gives them an understanding of how they can improve student learning in the district. She stated they didn't do the best job and hopes they can embrace some of the initiatives. Some have tried to make the committee a cohesive group and they start to gain momentum and it stops. There is no longer time for that; there are too many expectations, with graduation by proficiency. They have invested in the schools and it their job to fulfill that obligation. Mr. Costa referred to a fortune cookie, "keep negative comments to yourself and avoid any disputes." He said as an elder statesman this has been a dreadful year. We don't talk to each other. There is no communication with the chairman, the administration and it's unfortunate. He thought it was a travesty to table some of the personnel recommendations and he thought they should have been called about them. Mr. Crowley stated they have to keep in mind the code of basic management principals and ethical standards as set forth in RI State General Laws. And their first concern is the welfare

of students attending the public schools. Next thing we have to do is live within our budget. We are not a funding source; we have to go to the Town Council and the State of RI and have a budget to live within.

And if we want extra money, we have to go to those spending sources, which is why there are no kindergarten aides, but we're going to keep that in. The Strategic Plan is coming up for review. The other thing they have to do is hire a Superintendent and act on those Superintendent's recommendations. The Chair noted another thing Ms. MacBeth brought up, A Better Board Member, and stated committee members have professional development. He asked members to attend RIASC meetings, noting it offers monthly professional development on roles and responsibilities, lobbying and advocacy, realizing school efficiencies and economies of scale and collective bargaining and the Keyworks of school boards. He thought it would improve their communication and made them a better board. He agreed there is no place for egos and their greatest concern is the welfare of the students.

Mr. Costa took offence that Mr. Crowley voted to cut the kindergarten aides and re-instituted the membership to RIASC at \$7,000. Once again it's communication. Ms.

MacBeth made a motion to vote for reorganization on the next agenda. A second was provided by Ms. Beaulieu.

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On a roll call vote, it was VOTED 4-3 TO APPROVE the motion, with the following voting AYE: Ms. Beaulieu, Mr. Wood, Mr. Costa, Ms. MacBeth: Nay: Mr. Wagner, Mr. Thibodeau, Mr. Crowley.

XI. Superintendent's Report - None.

XII. Comments from the Public - Sara Brady encouraged the committee to listen to what Lynn Kelly had to say; there is a morale problem and it's good the committee is discussing that and starting to change that. Pauline Slatter spoke on behalf of two parents who couldn't attend, in support of kindergarten aides. Kelly Connerton commented again in support of the kindergarten aides. Kathie Richardson encouraged the committee to reinstate the kindergarten aides, noting four teacher assistants is equal to one tenth step teacher. Kathy Lambert spoke about the student to teacher ratio, saying last year it was 11-1 and this year 22-1. As a taxpayer she said not to be afraid of re-districting. She asked the committee to make a decision that is right and good for the community. Lynn Kelly was disappointed that the meeting wasn't being videotaped. She requested they be taped for access to the public. David Carusso commented that the tax payers are not heard and all these bodies of people have their own agendas separate from everybody else. Every

piece of this town government and taxpayer participation to figure out how to do this going forward.

Jim McLaughlin noted there have been a lot of challenges and he asked for a commitment from the Superintendent and the School Committee on what course of action there is to reinstate some of the teacher assistants. The Superintendent explained she had a plan and there is a commitment on behalf of the committee that if the town restores the dollars that are needed, approximately \$100,000, that they would move on her recommendation to restore those positions. She has been working on this since July. Mr. McLaughlin asked the Superintendent to request this be on the next Town Council agenda.

XIII. School Committee Comments (School Liaison Reports) - Mr. Wood reported the Cumberland Hill PTO met last night. There is an upcoming Halloween dance on the 26th and they have a full agenda of items for this year. Ms. MacBeth stated that at the Special Education Advisory meeting, the topic of conversation was the audit. The next meeting will be November 7th at the Public Library. The topic will be special needs trust for guardianship and on December 5th there will be a general meeting, with no meeting in January. The committee serves to advocate for students with special needs as a liaison between the school, administration, school committee and families, to provide support and respond to concerns. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. Another point she made on kindergarten TAs it was mentioned the reading teachers aren't going into the class this year and is something the committee

should look at. She reiterated she would like the taping the of the school committee meeting back. She would like to see the Superintendent's contract and the language and when it is up or up for renegotiation.

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At a finance subcommittee meeting she brought up a concern about the expense of a field trip, that parents were being asked to spend money. She has had feedback there was a stop to field trips. The Superintendent explained an inquiry has been made as to field trips in the past that would have any costs associated that students incurred and if any trips were planned this year and she has asked principals to put a moratorium on them until they find if the trip is in line with any district policies. Mr. Thibodeau commented on the litter around the campus and said the town has a special truck that picks up trash. The Superintendent will contact the town.

XIV. Vote to go into Executive Session for Discussion and/or Action Items Referred to in

GLRI 42-46-5

A. Personnel Matters - Exception (1)

1. CTA/ICSE

2. Superintendent's Annual Evaluation/Objectives

B. Negotiations/Litigation - Exception (2)

1. CTA/ICSE

2. Central Administrators' Contracts

3. Non-Contractual Salaries

4. Potential Litigation

No Executive Session was necessary.

XV. Adjournment - On a motion by Mr. Wagner, and a second by Mr. Thibodeau, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE adjourning Open Session at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Harris

Recording Secretary

Subject to approval by the School Committee