

UNAPPROVED

CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

A special meeting of the Cumberland School Committee was held on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the Cumberland High School Auditorium, 2600 Mendon Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Agenda Item #1: Chairman Convenes Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Donald Costa.

Members Present: Jeff Mutter, Dan Pedro, Brian Kelly, Earl Wood, Donald Costa, Ryan Pearson, Lisa Beaulieu

Staff Present: Donna A. Morelle, Ed.D., Superintendent, Joseph A. Rotella, Esq., Director of Administration, Alex Prignano, Business Manager, Dr. Susan Carney, Asst. Superintendent, Dr. Lisa Colwell, Director of Special Services

Agenda Item #2: Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item #3: Approval of Agenda

Mr. Kelly made a motion to discuss agenda item #5 before agenda item #4, 2nd by Mr. Pearson, approved 6-1.

Agenda Item #5: Discussion on Elementary School Design Proposal

Dr. Morelle feels that at this time we need to look at the initial proposal and the modified proposal in order for us to maintain most of the programs in the community. She felt that we could look more broadly to the needs of all of the students – all of their talents – and she realizes that this is a major conflict for the School Committee to figure out how to move forward.

Dr. Morelle reviewed all of the schools and what grades would be in each of the schools. She explained that B.F. Norton and Garvin would be “Partner Schools”, Community and Cumberland Hill would also be “Partner Schools”, B.F. Norton and Community would be grades one, two and three and Garvin and Cumberland Hill would be grades four and five. Ashton would have Pre-K and K. She also talked about how the early learning concept would better serve the students.

It was also noted that some efficiencies in this plan could save the district almost \$500,000.

Dr. Morelle reviewed one of the four key elements in the proposals – early learning environment(in both proposals) – in previous years kindergarten would be wherever there was space – in the proposal it would be in Ashton where there is enough space, it is a one story building-which is more suited for the younger children.

Dr. Colwell reviewed the outreach services – they will continue – only change would be to the location. The walk-in service would be centrally located-this service allows the youngest students to get a head start – services can begin at the age of three.

Dr. Colwell mentioned that the early intervention really does make a difference.

Dr. Morelle also noted that by bringing students together in the “Partner Schools’ the students would benefit from the student/teacher ratio-there would be more equity because of the way the classes would be organized. Dr. Carney stated that by having teachers of the same grade in the same building that there is usually more communication, more collaboration, and more advantages educationally.

Dr. Morelle stated that the School Committee will have to make the decision of which neighborhoods (streets) would attend which school – where the cut-offs would be.

Dr. Morelle said in the short term we need to get the early learning center off and running and we need to figure out how to effectively re-organize grades one through five. In the long term we need to sit down and figure out how we can get some of the advantages that we would have received from the initial plan(if it does not get passed).

Dr. Morelle also brought up the fact that Donna Reinalda may have a space issue if she brings back all of the first graders – she may not have enough space.

Dr. Morelle also reviewed capacity data from each school – the School Committee will have to review this data very carefully. Dr. Carney reviewed data that pointed out the low percentage of students that actually live within a half mile of their neighborhood school – she feels this is something that the School Committee would also need to review when determining cut-offs for placing the students in the

neighborhood schools.

The bottom line for everyone is to enhance the students learning – no matter which plan is adopted.

Agenda Item #4: Discussion on FY 11 Budget Recommendations to Support Learning and Teaching

A. Cumberland Diploma System and Proficiency –Based Graduation Requirements (PBGR) – Mrs. Gould-principal of CHS, reported that she will be getting data from the system on what the students needs are academically, data from PSAT's and SAT's (which will let the staff know where to focus on-what is needed most), she stated that one third of the teachers are trained in literacy and by next year all of the teachers will be trained – the support will be across the board. She also stressed that they need to maintain the teachers that they have. The number of teams teaching will grow next year – this enables the teams to review evaluations etc., of each student – thus enabling the teachers to better focus on what is needed. Mr. Pires, Principal of MMS, reported that they now have ILP's (individual learning plans) for all of the sixth graders, by next year they will have one for each 7th and 8th grader. Currently the ILP's are paper and he would like to see them done electronically – he stated that the technology proficiency for the middle schools is 73% - which is good – but if they have more computer lab space he feels it could get even better. The technology is there they just need more space to utilize it and gain the benefits. Mrs. Gould pointed out that the high school talked about distance learning and how some courses that are not currently being offered,

could be offered electronically.

B. PK-12 Arts Education Programs – Dr. Morelle stated that RIDE is currently putting together a study guide so School Committee members and administration could go through this information and determine where the gaps are and go from there. Mrs. Gould stated that the high school teachers are already working on the proficiencies – where we are and where we need to go – they have two years to work on it, that is when the state will be back in to check on them.

C. PK-12 Library – Media Programs – Dr. Morelle stated that the library programs varies among schools because it is based on the number of students – she would like to have full time librarians at each of the schools. Mrs. Gould stated that at the high school the media person also teaches how to do research, they taught teachers E-portfolio last year, it is much more than a media program. Mr. Pires stated that the middle school media person orients the sixth grade students to the library, offers teachers a variety of lesson plans and then prints out the accompanying materials, they are also a part of their advisory programs.

D. PK-12 Physical Education, Health and Athletic Programs – Dr. Morelle wants to make sure that we are offering a high quality program. Mr. Geiselman reviewed the number of teams and divisions in the state of Rhode Island. He noted that the budget that he has put forward for the high school can be sustained because of lots of parent support and involvement and he would like to make sure that this support continues. Mr. Pearson asked what the cost savings was to eliminate the middle school sports programs and replace with

afterschool programs – Mr. Prignano stated that it was about \$30,000 which included salaries, longevity, stipends, and \$3,000 for transportation. He noted that they did put two \$5,000 stipends in the budget for the afterschool program coaches. Dr. Carney noted that in 2012 there will be new regulations put in place for physical and health education. Lisa Beaulieu asked Mr. Geiselman how other districts fund their sports programs and he was not sure, but thought basically the same way we are doing it and thought that all districts are having these budget talks right now because of the cuts in state aide, etc.

E. Summary of Staff Analysis – Dr. Morelle reported that non-certified staffing will be reduced by 9.5 positions. Mr. Wood made a comment about having a certified lifeguard on duty at the pool and Dr. Morelle said she is going to review the pool manager's position; get a job description and find out why the teachers/coaches that are there are not certified lifeguards. Mr. Costa would like to know how much money it took to maintain the pool last year – Dr. Morelle will also follow-up on that issue. Elementary staffing closed 9.5 classrooms based on changes in enrollment. Middle school net change is 5.6 positions. High school reduction is 4.7. Dr. Morelle will be looking at the class sizes for next year – they will be considering class sizes of 29 students. Currently it looks like the high school will have two nurses on staff – Mr. Costa wants to make sure that the nurse is not being taken from another school – Dr. Morelle will review this situation and get back to him.

Agenda Item #6: Public Comment

Speaker #1 – wanted to make sure that we were getting our monies worth with the Early Learning Center. She asked how the Ashton students would be assigned in the modified version – she didn't think the School Committee had the answer to this question.

Speaker #2 – felt that the more grades that a school serves is better academically for the students – she said it had been proven. She also had a concern about the kindergarten students going to school for 2.5 hours and riding the busses all over town-she thought they would be on a bus for a very long time. She suggested adding toilet facilities to Ashton – about 10 of them. She also wondered how the teachers would be assigned to the schools – with the initial proposal.

Speaker #3 – wondered why the teachers found out about the proposal at the last minute. Also wonders if the Ashton school will be big enough for 300 students.

Speaker #4 – thinks the proposal is all monetary based – not in the best interest of the children. They would like the School Committee to ask the parents and the teachers what the best would be for the students.

Speaker #5 – concerned about the amount of money used to put up a new gymnasium in Ashton School and now feels that if Pre-k and K is there, we will not be utilizing the gym.

Speaker #6 – believes that the proposal is a financial decision not an education decision. She would like a time line for the construction work that would be needed at Ashton.

Speaker #7 – believes that full day kindergarten is very important.

Speaker #8 – would like the School Committee to find a way to keep the schools the way they are – she is concerned about the impact on the children, not concerned about the savings of \$500,000 or 1% of the budget – children should come first.

Agenda Item #7: Adjournment

Mr. Pearson made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Mr. Kelly, approved 7-0.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony