

APPROVED- 4-14-11

The Cumberland School Committee members were in attendance at a meeting announced by Mayor McKee on Monday, March 21, 2011 at the Cumberland Public Library's Edward J. Hayden Center, 1464 Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Members Present: John Gibbons, Erika Sanzi, Jeff Mutter, Linda Teel, Lisa Beaulieu, Earl Wood, Dan Pedro was absent.

Staff Present: Donna A. Morelle, Ed.D., Superintendent

Mr. Higgins called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item #1: Discussion of the Town of Cumberland's Legislative Agenda including Acceleration of the School Funding Formula Phase-in, Vehicle Excise Tax and State Housing Aid and any other Legislative Issues Pertaining to the Town Of Cumberland – Mayor McKee began the meeting by explaining that Cumberland will be receiving less money due to the phase in of the School Funding. He passed out a spreadsheet that basically showed how much Cumberland was underfunded for FY 2011 - \$4.7m, and the numbers got progressively worse over the next few years. He is asking the Town Council and members of the School Committee to come up with some ideas to accelerate the phase in over a short period of time so

that we are not losing as much money and so that we can get the money quicker. Mr. Gibbons stated that it seems like Cumberland is taking it on the chin every year, and Mayor McKee agreed and said that a lot of the dollars are going to Davies Vocational, Central Falls Schools and he noted that the state gives a substantial amount (it seems like every year) to Bristol and Warren. Mayor went on to say that we are either going to underfund our schools or keep increasing taxes. Karen MacBeth noted that a year ago when she voted for the formula, she asked if everyone was good with it and so they voted for it, but now a year later they are complaining about it – she thinks they could put in legislation that says we want to support a priority to accelerate the funding for education, it is a priority. Mayor McKee noted that the state has taken away about \$33m from our school department and stated that Cumberland will take about a \$542,000 hit from sub-planting – it is not friendly to the school department. Dr. Morelle noted that Cumberland has not spent the \$542,000 yet, they reserved the money for the FY 2012 budget. Mayor McKee said that there is a coalition being formed of Senators and Reps from certain towns and this coalition will be lobbying at the State House – it should be a budget priority. Rene Menard said that he thinks it is unfair that the Mayor puts the blame on the house and he said they voted for the formula but no talk about the acceleration. Karen MacBeth said the Mayor has their votes and they support it. Rep. McLaughlin said there is legislation being submitted to accelerate the funding formula. Lisa Beaulieu stated that although money has been taken out of our budget, Cumberland has been very efficient and has

implemented some good programs. There was brief conversation about mandates and waivers, however Dr. Morelle noted that although it is possible to request waivers, traditionally they do not get approved and she said that it was almost impossible to put together any dollar figure for mandates. Mrs. Sanzi asked if there was something that the School Committee members could do to accelerate the phase in and Mayor McKee said to just keep talking about it to parents, constituents, etc., support the reps and senators, reinforce the comments at meetings. Karen MacBeth asked the Mayor if they could put their stand on the town's website and he said absolutely, it would be fine to do that so that the town knows what their thoughts are on the situation. Mr. Gibbons asked the Mayor where the town stood on pension obligation and Mayor McKee said they currently have \$12m in unfunded liability due to the stock market, etc., but that they are working on plans to address it. Mrs. Beaulieu asked the Mayor if they could plan another similar meeting and start meeting more frequently to see what can be done and to keep things moving. Mayor McKee is very enthusiastic about this and wants to keep the ball rolling so he thought that would be a great idea. Mayor McKee also spoke briefly about the school housing aid – he said Cumberland is getting 30 cents on the dollar, again on the short side of the formula. Mayor McKee is hoping that the coalition of Reps and Senators from each town and the School Committee members and the Town Council can get the word out there and fight for acceleration for Cumberland.

After comments/questions from the audience, the meeting was

adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony