

**APPROVED-3/22/12**

**There was a special meeting of the Cumberland School Committee held on Thursday, March 1, 2012 at the Cumberland High School Auditorium, 2600 Mendon Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.**

**Members Present: Jeff Mutter, John Gibbons, Daniel Pedro, Erika Sanzi, Earl Wood.**

**Lisa Beaulieu and Linda Teel were absent.**

**Administration Present: Dr. Philip Thornton, Superintendent**

**Agenda Item #1: Chairman Convenes Meeting**

**Chairman Mutter convened the meeting at 7:08 pm.**

**Agenda Item #2: Pledge of Allegiance**

**Agenda Item #3: Approval of Agenda**

**Mr. Pedro made a motion to approve the agenda, 2nd Mr. Wood, approved 5-0.**

**Agenda Item #4: Public Hearing**

**A. Discussion of Full-Day Kindergarten and Redistricting – Dr. Thornton gave everyone an overview of the entire proposal. He started by noting that on March 8th the SC would be voting on this proposal – he said that everyone should be aware of the latest**

information currently available – updated maps, average class sizes, updated estimates of costs (incl. pensions, medical, life insurance, bus runs, dental coverage, furniture, etc.). He said that earlier in the day he had met with Durham and he said that if this is approved Durham would start modeling bus runs very shortly after the vote was taken. It actually takes about two weeks to do models of the bus runs. Map #4 could be 2% different after Durham does the model – High School may be changing their schedule – students are currently dismissed at 1:35, but teachers are paid until 2:10. Durham would be looking at the full day kindergarten program and the potentially longer day at the high school. Dr. Thornton mentioned that some parents had asked about keeping 4th grade students in the same school they are currently in, because it would just be one year in the fifth grade and then they would be changing schools anyway. He said that he didn't know right now, but would try to see if they could do this. Mr. Gibbons asked if the current models reflect full day K and Dr. Thornton said they are trying to optimize the schools – started from south to north, spent several weeks working on the maps, grabbing and pulling students, trying to predict the numbers. They reconciled the data with Durham because their computer was 300 students off at first, then ESL and SPED and School Choice students had to be added in manually – there has been constant work on these models – trying to get the best results. Dr. Thornton noted that B.F. Norton has had student enrollment in excess of 450 back in the 90's and Community School has had as many as 718 students and to keep Community School smaller, he said he would have to add

portable classrooms to some of the other schools. He thinks that 26 students in a classroom would be the greatest number, and he said right now that looking at the models right now, there is one classroom this size at B.F. Norton and it would be a fifth grade. He went on to say that 40% of the folks in the north end of town do not utilize public Kindergarten right now and he wonders that if we do offer full day K, would they come back? He has done lots of public outreach; he has been all over town and tries to go wherever he gets invited, he has also sent out several email blasts – he is trying very hard to get the information out there - trying to cover everything! Mr. Wood asked if the numbers are inflated in the fifth grade at Community or are they actuals and Dr. Thornton said they are not inflated, but it depends on enrollment and if grade four goes down, those numbers could go down a little. Dr. Thornton went on to say that this is not to reduce the class size, this is to provide full day K in the district, and it is benefitting the district not necessarily the individual student.

B. Public Testimony – at this time Mr. Mutter opened the meeting for questions (no time noted). Rosemary C. – parent, supports the efforts for full day K. She shared some information with the SC (handout) various statistics that show that students that attend full day K do better in Reading and Math. She noted that there are currently 17 districts in Rhode Island that offer full day K and she suggested that we don't wait, don't do a pilot program – just do it. Bob S. is on the Cumberland Hill PTO and wanted everyone to know that the PTO's have decided to work together regardless of the

outcome. They are getting north and south together and are watching out for the children – they will be prepared. He then talked about his own son who may have benefitted from full day K had it been available two years ago – now he and his wife have to think about holding their child back a year – so he wanted parents to think about this because he believes the full day K would better prepare the child for the first grade and thereafter. Paul A. has two children in Cumberland Hill. He said that the parents that keep saying that the kids will be fine are the parents whose kids are not affected by a move. He said that he has read studies that addressed kids changing schools and noted that they could have behavioral issues and could be impacted negatively in Reading and in Math. He believes that this plan is moving too fast – there are too many maps. He thinks the priority should be Math – making our students proficient in Math. Maggie D. thinks that Community will be the only school at capacity – the other elementary schools will have extra space. She wants the SC to think about this and possibly bring some of the students back to Cumberland Hill – where they came from. Joe R. believes this plan is moving too quickly. He believes that full day K is good, but wonders what the negative impact would be for the other five grades. He also asked Dr. Thornton to reiterate the fact that he has said in the past that there will be no Middle School redistricting. Dr. Thornton said there is no plan to redistrict the middle schools – no plan to redistrict middles – he has no problem stating this on camera. Lisa L. sees a lot of benefits in full day K, however, she does have an issue with children travelling three miles to their elementary school. She

wants to know if there are other alternatives being looked at, like possibly using B.F. Norton as a K Center. Jennifer S. is in favor of the redistricting and hopes that the taxpayers of Cumberland will help our Superintendent accomplish this – it will benefit the students – they will be in less crowded schools. Lindsay S. is a senior at URI and a student teacher. She would like to see everyone focus on the student – she feels they will definitely benefit from all day K. She said that as a young child she attended four different elementary schools and she was fine. She encourages parents to look at the big picture and support full day K. Kathy L. believes we need full day K but hopes that this does not impact the rest of our students – she wants to make sure that we have enough money for the students already in the system. Alison D. would like to make sure that if this proposal gets approved on March 8th, that we are sure that the funding will be available, because she does not think it would be a good thing to tell the kids they are changing schools, but then change the story because the funding was cut. At this point Mr. Mutter spoke a little bit about the funding comment. He said there is uncertainty, but before he would ask the SC to vote, there is a reasonable assurance that it would move forward. He would not ask them to vote if it was uncertain. We are looking at the budget in its entirety and we are certainly looking at keeping resources for current students and Math help for our students. We are looking at the budget closely and we know some resources will be cut. He went on to say that he is confident, but this does not mean that this is a certainty. He noted that everyone is working very hard on these issues. Dr. Thornton

stated that Math is on the radar from K-12. Next week Mr. Scott will show graphed progress on the mandatory program that he has set up at the high school. Dr. Thornton went on to say that they are attacking all levels. Middle School Math books will be changing – they are looking at a 2013 publication – this is the front-runner. Dr. Thornton said that it depends on what the Governor gives to each town – so we will probably have some reductions, but he is looking at the priorities. At this point Chairman Mutter closed the public hearing at 8:10 p.m. Mr. Gibbons asked Dr. Thornton if studies show that as kids that attended full day K pass thru the grades, do they level off? Dr. Thornton said that some level off by the third grade and others say that kids that attended the full day K make more money when they are adults and are better off in life. Then Mr. Gibbons asked why some districts were scoring well but not offering full day K. Dr. Thornton said it was because we are not getting the per pupil dollars like other districts are getting. We are the lowest and those other districts have more dollars even though they do not have full day K. Mr. Gibbons went on to say that he thinks this proposal has happened fast but thinks the plan is very well planned out. He thinks the schools need to be balanced – he does think that Community School needs to be re-visited. Dr. Thornton said that the bus run level numbers are the best numbers that we currently have and if we go to street level we may have more balance, but more walkers. Mrs. Sanzi said that she rejects the notion that things are going too fast; it has been 18 years since the last one – so now we have a big problem.

Mrs. Sanzi believes that we need full day K and she supports

redistricting because she does not support running some of our schools half empty. Mr. Wood asked if we would still go ahead with the redistricting if we do not get the funding for full day K. Dr. Thornton said if the SC rejects the vote next week he would go back and ask the SC if the lines should be re-drawn. Between Math and full day K he would not be able to support full day K because he believes that the Math scores need to be improved and that this is the first priority – he said we need to prioritize.

Mr. Mutter stated that he would not support a budget that would take Math intervention out of it – he said he would not put the district in a position to fail. The budget is being discussed with the Mayor and these discussions will include all of the items that we have talked about and those discussions are going along optimistically.

#### **Agenda Item # 5: Adjournment**

**Mrs. Sanzi made a motion to adjourn, 2nd Mr. Pedro, approved 5-0.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.**

**Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony**