

Minutes of School Committee Meeting 02/14/13

A regular meeting of the Barrington School Committee was held on Thursday, February 14, 2013 at the Administration Building. Dr. Shea called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller, Mr. Guida, Ms. Moses, Mr. Messore, Mrs. Dillon, Mrs. Miller and Mr. Tarro.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Miller led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Achievement Recognition

Mr. Messore thanked and recognized the hard work of the public works department employees and school facilities staff in clearing paths and parking lots at the schools and readying the buildings for the return of students and teachers after the recent storm.

Mr. Messore congratulated Barrington High School junior, Emma Margulies, who has been appointed to Congressman Cicilline's Congressional Youth Cabinet representing Barrington. Emma was chosen from 11 applicants who wrote letters applying for the appointment.

BPS Spotlight on Teaching and Learning

Mrs. Miller presented an overview of the new district website which features several new avenues of communication and interactive pages including a feedback/inquiries page and a Twitter feed. The site also now includes learning resources on the student and parent webpages featuring research tools appropriate for each grade level. Mrs. Miller thanked those involved with developing the new website including Mr. Dave Burrows. The Committee positively responded to the new website and asked several questions following the presentation. Dr. Scott Douglas thanked the administration for their work and allowing for feedback and town wide ownership of the new website.

Information and Proposals

Dr. Shea stated that under Rhode Island law the Committee must identify personnel who will in effect be notified that their services could be terminated. He then read the following statement:

“It is our unhappy task to act tonight on the recommendation of the Superintendent regarding the non-renewal of the contracts of a substantial number of non-tenured and tenured teachers. A few words are in order prior to undertaking this matter.

Under Rhode Island law, non-tenured and tenured teachers whose services will not be required for the following school year must be notified of that fact on or before March 1. In the absence of notice before March 1, a teacher's contract is automatically renewed. Obviously, as a Committee, we do not know with any certainty in February the extent to which lack of funding will necessitate curtailment of programs and staff during the next fiscal year. This is a problem in the best of times.

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In these times of extreme financial uncertainty, the problem is correspondingly more difficult.

Certainly, we owe a duty to the taxpayers to act in such a manner as will insure maximum flexibility to respond to cuts in state and local funding, should they occur. For this reason, we will have to give notice to all teachers whose services may conceivably not be required next year. We are hopeful, as we have advised the teachers involved, that a substantial number of them will end up teaching for us, but we must err on the side of caution.

Under the ‘Teachers’ Tenure’ statute, a teacher who is notified that his or her contract will not be renewed may request a statement of cause for non-renewal. This Committee will respond to such requests, of course, at the appropriate time. Thereafter, the teacher may, if he or she desires, request a hearing before the full Committee in accordance with Section 16-13-4 of the statute.

We will now proceed. The Superintendent has recommended that the contracts of forty (40) teachers not be renewed for the 2013-2014 school year and that they be so notified.”

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to adopt the recommendation of the Superintendent and that the Superintendent be directed to notify the forty (40) teachers listed that their contracts will not be renewed for the 2013-2014 school year. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

Mr. Messoro provided an update on the Strategic Plan and introduced the Strategic Plan-on-a-page which can be found on the district website and will soon be posted in all school buildings. The one-page document outlines the mission, vision, value and goals to provide a world-class education. Ms. Moses requested clarification relative to achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan with specific relevance to students. Mr. Messoro noted that monthly updates will be available as the SmartSheet is updated and suggested a possible retreat for the School Committee and administrators to be held twice a year.

Mr. Messoro presented a brief overview on the feasibility of an all day kindergarten program. Once given their charge, the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee will look at other districts including Cumberland and Chariho who recently made the transition to full day in the last year. Mr. Messoro provided statistics in a PowerPoint presentation that will be made available on the district website.

General Public Discussion and Information

Dr. Megan Douglas, of 25 Rumstick Road, provided an update on a recent two-hour PTO meeting at the Nayatt School and the feedback from parents with regard to confusion on student progress reports. Ms. Whitehead, Nayatt principal, and two first grade teachers were present to help explain, but parents are still looking for additional information.

Dr. Scott Douglas, of 25 Rumstick Road, suggested that the Strategic Communication Subcommittee might include parent members and provide input on how best to communicate the

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structure of the progress reports.

Old Business from Superintendent and Staff

Mr. Tarro reviewed the proposed operating budget for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. The PowerPoint presentation, available on the district website, outlined operating expenses, revenue, operating history and the proposed increase. The total net impact to taxpayers is expected to be 2.37%. Mr. Tarro noted that 97% of the operating budget is committed by contractual, operational and mandated services. Discussion ensued on several aspects of the presentation including class sizes and technology needs. Mr. Fuller requested that the administration be as transparent as possible with regard to the budget, realizing it may be difficult during contract negotiations.

Old Business from School Committee

Mr. Messore presented the proposed charges and timelines for each of the district subcommittees for Strategic Communication, All Day Kindergarten, Technology and Policy which were developed collaboratively between the School Committee and central office administrators. Dr. Shea read aloud each of the charges. The composition of the Strategic Communication, All Day Kindergarten and Technology subcommittees may include administrators, faculty members, up to three community members and students in addition to the current co-chairs of one School Committee member and one central office administrator. For the Policy Subcommittee, the Committee endorsed Mr. Guida to work directly with Mrs. Dillon, as that subcommittee will not include community members. Mr. Messore noted the next steps to be the distribution of the press release to media outlets and the public on February 25 as well as posting of the application on the district website. March 13 will be the deadline for submission of the online application and applicants will be notified of their respective subcommittee status by Thursday, March 21, 2013.

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to adopt the charges for the Strategic Communication, All Day Kindergarten and Technology subcommittees as proposed by the Superintendent. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

The Committee agreed to amend the charge for the Policy Subcommittee to include review and support implementation of all district policies in conformity with priorities as determined by reference to the district Strategic Plan.

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to adopt the charge as amended for the Policy Subcommittee. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

The Committee continued the discussion on the current vacancy on the Senior Project Advisory Committee. After a brief discussion, Mrs. Brody volunteered to serve.

Mr. Fuller moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to appoint Mrs. Brody to serve as the

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School Committee representative on the Senior Project Advisory Committee. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

The Committee continued their discussion on the Use of School Facilities policy from the previous meeting. Dr. Dominguez reiterated her concern for the consistency, fairness and reasonableness of the fee schedule adopted by the Committee on November 1, 2012. Mr. Guida, co-chair of the Policy Subcommittee, noted that this is an example of the type of policy review that might involve input through a series of recommendations beginning with the Policy Subcommittee.

New Business from Superintendent and Staff

No issues were raised at this time.

New Business from School Committee

Mr. Tarro presented the proposed changes to the Building Committee membership. Mr. Jeffrey Brenner, former Town Council member, will remain on the Building Committee as a parent representative. Former Middle School principal Mr. Richard Wheeler will be replaced by the current principal, Dr. Andrew Anderson. After a brief discussion, the second seat for a School Committee member on the Building Committee will remain vacant, but may be filled in the future.

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to accept the changes as noted by Mr. Tarro with regard to the membership of the Building Committee. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

At the recent Tri-Council meeting held on January 28th, the topic of the Ad Hoc Budget Forecasting Committee was discussed. Mr. Fuller is currently serving on that committee and noted there is a vacancy left by former School Committee member Mr. Chris Ramsden. Mrs. Brody volunteered to serve alongside Mr. Fuller on the Ad Hoc Budget Forecasting Committee.

Mr. Guida moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to appoint Mrs. Brody and Mr. Fuller as School Committee representatives on the Ad Hoc Budget Forecasting Committee. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

School Committee policies on Teacher Course-Student, Adoption of The Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards and Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility were presented and read aloud for a first reading by the Committee. During the reading of the policies, Committee members noted sections for revision. The three policies, based on RIDE initiatives, will be presented for a second reading and formal approval at the next School Committee meeting.

Consent Agenda

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Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 3-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody and Dr. Dominguez, only those present at the February 7, 2013 meeting, voting in the affirmative for the motion.

Approval of Minutes – Tri Council

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2013 Tri-Council meeting minutes as presented.

Mrs. Brody noted for the record that the Tri-Council meeting minutes were recorded by the Town Clerk and to the extent the minutes could be revised relative to the School Committee, revisions were made as documented in the minutes presented for approval. Mr. Fuller led a brief discussion on the possibility of having a moderator/facilitator present for future Tri-Council meetings.

The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

Discussion Future Agenda Items

In response to a constituent question, Mr. Fuller asked that the scheduling of professional development days on the school calendar be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

Mrs. Brody requested the opportunity to discuss the recent NECAP scores. Mr. Messore reported that he will present a brief overview on NECAP at the February 21st School Committee meeting.

General Discussion to Guide Future Recommendations

Mrs. Brody noted that the Rhode Island Association of School Committees (RIASC) will be offering a professional development day on Saturday, February 16th.

Dr. Shea reported that the next regular meeting of the School Committee on Thursday, February 21st will feature continued budget discussion.

General Public Discussion and Information

Dr. Megan Douglas, of 25 Rumstick Road, expressed her concern for the small number of community members (up to three) proposed for the three subcommittees that will include community members. She encouraged the Committee to think more broadly in terms of larger community representation in the early stages and possibly shrink the subcommittee sizes in the future.

Dr. Megan Douglas also asked if the administration and Committee would be moving forward with an all day kindergarten program as it was not clear from the discussions heard at this meeting. Mr.

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Tarro noted that a placeholder was added into the budget to help guide the decision process with regard to financial means and personnel, and confirmed that a decision has not yet been made.

Dr. Scott Douglas, of 25 Rumstick Road, suggested that each subcommittee establish a fast track and slow track plan as part of each subcommittee charge as the budget develops and priorities may change. He also noted the importance of communication with the community with regard to the Strategic Plan priorities.

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to adjourn the regular meeting at 10:18 p.m. and go into Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(1) for Personnel; Section 42-46-5(a)(2) for Collective Bargaining and Litigation with NEAB, United Steelworkers and BEST; and Section 42-46-5(a)(3) for discussion regarding school buildings security issues. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

Mr. Guida moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to adjourn the Executive Session at 10:54 p.m. and to seal the minutes and report that no votes were taken. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.

Mrs. Brody moved and Mr. Fuller seconded to adjourn the regular meeting at 10:55 p.m. The motion passed 5-0 with Dr. Shea, Mrs. Brody, Dr. Dominguez, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Guida voting in the affirmative for the motion.