

Minutes of School Committee Meeting 05/09/13

A special meeting of the Barrington School Committee was held on Thursday, May 9, 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, Mr. Messore, Mrs. Dillon and Mr. Tarro. Absent was Ms. Moses.

Pledge of Allegiance

Dr. Shea led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Old Business from Superintendent and Staff

Mr. Messore and Mr. Tarro provided an update on the budget. The \$900,000 increase that the Committee on Appropriations would be approving in the budget for the school department is less than the \$1.4 million requested. With the savings of \$500,000 from contract negotiations, there still remains a \$277,000 shortage to fund technology needs and the Administration is seeking guidance from the School Committee. Dr. Shea indicated that there is a fundamental need to move forward with technology. Mr. Guida remains comfortable with the budget as previously submitted. Dr. Dominguez would like to focus on class size and the efficiency of program offerings at the high school. Mrs. Brody stated that there is a need for a rigorous program analysis district wide and noted that the budget was constructed based on the priorities of the Strategic Plan, yet warrants close scrutiny for efficiency. Mr. Fuller, Co Chair of the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee, shared his comments relative to All Day Kindergarten and his opinion relative to discrepancies with information provided to the Committee on Appropriations. A lengthy discussion ensued relative to the budget. Mr. Guida stressed there is a need for All Day Kindergarten now more than ever because of the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Dr. Shea noted that the \$900,000 approved by the Committee on Appropriations is significantly lower than the funding requested by the School Committee and it will not allow for the full support of technology or CCSS curriculum.

Old Business from the School Committee

Mr. Messore, Co Chair, presented the recommendation from the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee. He reported that the charge of the subcommittee was to explore the options for the All Day Kindergarten program and noted that the \$141,000 initial placeholder in the proposed budget was for some concept of a kindergarten program which included the addition of 2.5 teachers. The subcommittee had met four times and reviewed costs, potential enrollment, the Common Core State Standards curriculum, and the social and emotional needs of the students, and have voted to fully support the All Day Kindergarten program in Barrington. Mr. Messore's recommendation to the School Committee is for implementation of an All Day Kindergarten program begin in the 2014-2015 school year. This would allow time to gather more data, educate the community relative to the need for the full day program and prepare for administrative needs. A lengthy discussion ensued with several questions from the Committee and members of the public present at the meeting.

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Dr. Ivy Rollins Milliken, member of the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee, expressed her support for the all day program and reported that as of Monday, there have been 294 signatures on an online petition supporting full day kindergarten in Barrington. Dr. Milliken feels kindergarten students make greater gains in a full day in academic and social development.

Ms. Catherine Nellis, Nayatt School parent and member of the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee, does not believe that the additional funds for teacher assistant aides and transportation is high and asked for the School Committee to be more creative with the budget to find the funds for All Day Kindergarten.

Mrs. Jennifer Gill, a Sowams School parent, presented a petition signed by 60 supporters for an additional second grade teacher at Sowams. Mrs. Gill asked for clarification regarding the placeholder funds for the position. Mr. Messore stated that there is a placeholder that includes a salary for that specific position and historically, decisions relative to classroom FTE are made later in the academic year, yet the Administration is aware of and has been monitoring that class size.

Mr. Joel Hellmann, Committee on Appropriations member, noted that the responsibility of the Committee on Appropriations is to recommend a bottom line operating budget for approval and it cannot direct the School Committee on how to allocate funds within the budget. The Committee on Appropriations had considered a compromise offer of \$1.1 million in additional funding for the FY 2013-2014 operating budget with the stipulation that the School Committee not support any motion to increase funding at the Financial Town Meeting. The stipulation was not accepted by the School Committee. Mr. Hellmann believes the Committee on Appropriations has done their best with the information they were given.

Mr. Jason Knight, Sowams School parent and one of the 60 supporters for an additional teacher at the school, feels if the class size is increased to 25 the effectiveness of the teacher is diluted.

Mrs. Patricia Adams, Nayatt parent and member of the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee, urged the School Committee to support full day kindergarten at the start of the coming school year. She does not want to see All Day Kindergarten fall by the wayside to technology.

Mr. Kevin Igoe expressed his concern regarding the inability to implement the entire kindergarten curriculum in a partial day and does not want his son to be behind. He stated the need to have a vote regarding the school budget at the Town Financial Meeting.

Mrs. Lisa Davis expressed her support for All Day Kindergarten in the district and smaller class sizes, especially at the elementary level. Her child is one of 25 in a Grade 1 class at Sowams School and has struggled with the academic challenges of being in a large class, despite the fact that her child is in a classroom with a veteran teacher.

Dr. Shea suggested that the Committee revisit the recommendation of the All Day Kindergarten Subcommittee at its next meeting on May 16, 2013 for resolution and vote. Discussion ensued on

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response to the online petition and the budget. The School Committee agreed to Mr. Tarro's request to combine the capital reserve fire code account of approximately \$63,000 transferred into the capital school improvement account.

An invitation was extended to the public for the dedication of the Barrington High School Auditorium in memory of Principal John R. Gray at 10am on Saturday, May 11, 2013.

Mrs. Brody moved and Dr. Dominguez seconded to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:05 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.