

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM
Monday, March 24, 2008
6:30 P.M.**

Members attending: Virginia Justicz, Stu Sklar, Brian Stevens, Will Verbits, Willie Wickman, and Thomas W. Jefferson

Call to Order – Willie Wickman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Training

Thomas Nuttall, Esquire, provided training to the School Committee as well as members of the FinCom and Board of Selectmen regarding state student record's law as mandated by the Department of Education's Required Corrective Action resulting from the district's noncompliance of student confidentiality. Attorney Nuttall outlined the FERPA, IDEA and state laws. There was a brief question and answer session. Virginia Justicz questioned how confidentiality would affect the pending Special Education Audit. Attorney Nuttall recommended that the audit could proceed with limited authority, but it would be ideal to wait for a response from the Department of Education. Stu Sklar asked what was the best way to process payments on the warrants given the response the Committee received from the state and the DOE. Attorney Nuttall said it would depend on which entity you were going against as that entity's ruling would stand. He also said that he understood the Finance Director, Lorraine Leonard, was now processing the warrants in a different manner to comply with the confidentiality laws. Attorney Nuttall also clarified that if a breach of confidentiality was done by the Committee, it could not comment on the breach as that would constitute an additional breach.

Minutes

VOTED Stu Sklar made the motion and Brian Stevens seconded to accept the minutes from the March 10, 2008 meeting.
(5/0) to accept the motion. (Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes), Will Verbits (Yes), Willie Wickman (Yes).

Willie Wickman informed the secretary that a roll call was not necessary unless the Committee was in executive session.

Student Report

Taylor Cardosi reported that Economics Lifesmarts took second place and that the Drama play “Wiley & the Hairy Man” will attend the state festival on Thursday. The play will also be performed at the Harvard Schools Trust Gala.

Jack Basile reported that the freshman and sophomore trip to Washington DC was a success and that spring sports had begun.

Policy Committee

Virginia Justicz stated that a parent attended the last meeting and the subcommittee discussed the Allergin Policy. Sample policies were reviewed, but no decision was made.

Special Education Audit

Will Verbits informed the Committee that they had received notification from the consultant who was awarded the bid that he is not available to start the audit until the next school year. The subcommittee will reconvene to plan accordingly.

Superintendent Report

Tom Jefferson thanked MaryEllen McGarty and Kathleen Doherty for their efforts with the Washington DC trip. He stated that he had received positive feedback, attendance was high, and that it was good to see that The Bromfield School students represent themselves well showing appropriate citizenship.

He informed that Committee that a citizen group for energy management, Harvard Local, was interested in helping the schools. They will be analyzing the schools’ utility bills and submitting recommendations. Mark Force, the Director of Maintenance, is also on board with the project.

He also told the Committee that he had been visiting the classrooms of pre-professional status teachers. He felt it was rewarding and was encouraged to see the quality of the staff. He stated that the new teachers receive good mentorship and informal support. Brian Stevens questioned if there was a conflict regarding HTA teachers performing evaluations. It was decided that this topic should be discussed during the next contract negotiations.

Budget Book

The Committee reviewed the FY2009 Budget Book. Willie Wickman advised that the graph section at the end of the booklet was not part of the Special Education Task Force Report. It was suggested that the graphs be re-evaluated for next year's Budget Book as the Department of Education does not track the data anymore. Willie also requested that copies of the Special Education Task Force Report be available at Town Meeting for the public.

Budget Hearing (7:30 P.M.)

Tom Jefferson gave brief overview of the budget stating that it was level service with no new items being requested. He stated that without the override, we would be walking a thin line. He pointed out that the booklet included a section showing "How Much Does It Cost to Run Our Schools and What are the Sources of Funding?" Discussed User Fees. Stu Sklar stated that the Department of Education reports that average user fees are 1% and Harvard is 4%. The Committee felt user fees should be a budget priority down the road. A resident suggested that the pie chart include percentages, and the Committee agreed that it will in next year's book. A newspaper reporter questioned what would happen if the override did not pass. Willie said that the Committee would ask the Superintendent to meet with administrators to determine appropriate recommendations. If the budget fails, another Town Meeting would be required. Virginia Justicz questioned the impact that the DEAC RFP would have on School Choice numbers for FY09. Tom stated that he would present enrollment figures along with a School Choice recommendation for the next meeting.

Gifts

The Harvard PTO submitted the following two) 2 donations:

1. The Bromfield School Curriculum Enrichment for Science - \$1,000.00
2. ConnectEd - \$2,000.00

There was also in-kind donation of \$460.00 from Mr. and Mrs. Keith Turner for the use of the Friendly Crossroads hostel for the Strategic Planning Committee.

Will Verbits made the motion and Virginia Justicz seconded to accept all donations.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Willie Wickman(Yes), Will Verbits(Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes).

The Committee asked that a thank you letters be sent.

Other

Willie Wickman informed the Committee that a meeting with DEAC regarding the RFP was scheduled for Thursday at 9:00 a.m. She asked that the meeting be posted.

Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Tom Jefferson expressed appreciation to all the committee members for their work on the Strategic Planning Committee. He stated it was a very comprehensive process which developed a plan that will guide the district through the next five year planning process to include school improvement, budgeting, facilities, etc. There were five goals developed from the process, and a representative from each goal subcommittee explained its findings. It was suggested that a Public Forum be conducted to inform the public of the plan and that it be put on the district website. The Committee asked that the progress of the plan become a monthly agenda item.

Will Verbits made the motion and Stu Sklar seconded to accept the Strategic Planning Report as written..
VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes), Will Verbits (Yes), Willie Wickman (Yes).

Adjournment

Will Verbits made the motion and Stu Sklar seconded to adjourn the meeting.
VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes), Will Verbits (Yes), Willie Wickman (Yes).

Meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Minutes submitted,

Jackie Smith
Recording Secretary