

School Committee Minutes
Town Hall Meeting Room
Monday, September 13, 2010
7:00 pm.

Members attending: Keith Cheveralls, Virginia Justicz, Piali De, Patty Wenger, Kirsten Wright, Maureen Babcock, Lorraine Leonard, Molly O'Rourke-Friel and Thomas Jefferson

Keith Cheveralls called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

Patty Wenger made a motion and Piali De seconded to approve the minutes from the August 23rd meeting.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Patty Wenger (Yes), Keith Cheveralls (Yes), Piali De (Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Kirsten Wright (Yes))

Patty Wenger made a motion and Piali De seconded to approve the minutes from the September 3rd meeting as amended.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Patty Wenger (Yes), Keith Cheveralls (Yes), Piali De (Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Kirsten Wright (Yes))

Student Report

Ryan Holmes asked the committee to explain the change in the graduation date. Dr. Jefferson explained that there was a policy change which allows graduation to be held up to seven days prior to the regular scheduled closing date of school. Nick George asked the status of the guidance counselor search. Dr. Jefferson explained that interviews have been held and a decision should be made next week to hire Mr. Favulli's replacement. Molly O'Rourke Friel invited the committee to join the Student Council at a meeting either October 15th or October 22nd.

Liaison and subcommittee reports

Maureen Babcock reported that DEAC will be holding their first meeting of the year on September 21st.

Kirsten Wright reported that the Instructional Leadership team had met with Gretchen Henry and Suzanne Mahoney to learn and understand the current curriculum leadership model and discuss ideas for modifications and enhancements. The Instructional Leadership team will present ideas to the committee late in October or early in November.

Patty Wenger reported that the Calendar Subcommittee will meet either September 23rd or September 30th. The long range planning committee will meet September 21st. The committee's goals for their first meeting will be to organize the scope of work, and develop time frames and milestones.

Keith Cheveralls reported that he and Patty will be meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Boxborough School Committee on Thursday and will have more to share with regard to the job share possibilities after that meeting. Keith Cheveralls is the

School Committee representative to the Capital Planning and Investment Committee. The new playground at HES will be the biggest capital project for the school this year, expecting to request approximately 65K. The Budget Subcommittee is off to a good start. The committee would like budgets returned by October 29th, cost center totals only with line item budgets to be turned in at a later date. The Budget Subcommittee is meeting again on September 22nd.

Virginia Justicz reported that the SEPAC Steering Committee will be meeting regarding Bromfield issues.

Superintendent Report

Thomas Jefferson reported the resignation of Guidance Counselor, Steven Favulli. TBS is hoping to have a replacement for Steve very soon. Tom reminded folks to sign up for Edline in order to receive school communication and the goal is to have first quarter report cards distributed through Edline. Dr. Jefferson suggested having a reception for new staff to meet the School Committee. It was suggested that the School Council's be invited as well. A date will be decided in the near future. Superintendent Jefferson gave an overview of the 2010 MCAS results with the committee.

Harvard Energy Advisory Committee - Update

Brian Smith and Eric Broadbent from the Energy Advisory Committee updated the committee on the solar panels at Bromfield being set for completion by October. They also presented an overview of the Green Communities Action Plan and asked the committee for their support. The committee wishes to gather more information on the financial impact of the program before making a formal vote. Will put on as future agenda item.

Budget 2010-2011

Thomas Jefferson presented a proposal to the committee for additional reading intervention services at Hildreth Elementary School. The source of funding for the additional hours would be the omnibus budget.

Virginia Justicz made a motion and Piali De seconded to support the proposal for expanded tier 2 reading intervention services at Hildreth Elementary and allocate \$8,765 from the omnibus budget.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Patty Wenger (Yes), Keith Cheveralls (Yes), Piali De (Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Kirsten Wright (Yes))

Lorraine Leonard updated the committee on the final accounting of the oil removal costs at HES. The current estimate for the project is \$70,213.65.

Patty Wenger made a motion and Piali De seconded to appropriate \$70,213.65 for removal of the oil tank at Hildreth Elementary with funds coming from the maintenance portion of the omnibus budget.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Patty Wenger (Yes), Keith Cheveralls (Yes), Piali De (Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Kirsten Wright (Yes))

Lorraine Leonard asked the committee to amend the MSBA statement of interest vote taken on September 3, 2010 as follows:

Strike the word “A” and add the word “boiler and replacement of” as noted on selectman vote.

Piali De made the motion and Patty seconded to amend the MSBA statement of interest as requested.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Patty Wenger (Yes), Keith Cheveralls (Yes), Piali De (Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Kirsten Wright (Yes))

Strategic Plan - Update

Dr. Jefferson presented the Harvard Public Schools’ 2008-2013 Strategic Plan Score Card. The committee will continue reviewing and discussing the Strategic Plan at their meeting. The committee would like to invite Jim O’Shea, Scott Hoffman, Gretchen Henry and Suzanne Mahoney to a meeting to give their opinion of progress on each goal.

Superintendent Evaluation Process

The committee discussed superintendent evaluation procedures and models. Piali De recommended using a standard template rubric with agreed upon criteria for each member to complete individually. Piali De will put together said document and bring it to the next meeting.

Review of Grants

Dr. Jefferson presented a list of the federal, state and local grants received by the district.

New England Association of School & Colleges – Self Study

Dr. Jefferson shared with the committee the correspondence from NEASC regarding the upcoming self study process and notification of the accreditation visit in the spring of 2012. Keith Cheveralls restated the school committee’s commitment to the process and offered to assist the co-chairs with the process.

School Committee Public Statement

Keith Cheveralls and Dr. Jefferson each read a prepared statement regarding the School Committee’s findings pertaining to the ethics matter. The matter is now considered closed.

Future Agenda Items

Update on HTA negotiations

Adjournment

Patty Wenger made a motion and Piali De seconded to adjourn at 10 p.m.

VOTED (5/0) to accept the motion. (Patty Wenger (Yes), Keith Cheveralls (Yes), Piali De (Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Kirsten Wright (Yes))

Mary Zadroga
Recording Secretary

STATEMENT OF THE HARVARD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 13, 2010

On April 28, 2010, the State Ethics Commission issued a Decision and Order in the matter of former Chair of the Harvard School Committee Paul Wormser and Superintendent Thomas Jefferson. Mr Wormser and Dr Jefferson were ordered to each pay civil penalties of \$4,000 as a result of a finding that they violated Conflict of Interest Laws. Dr Jefferson has filed an appeal of this decision which is pending in the Superior Court.

On May 10th, at the suggestion of School Counsel Naomi Stonberg, the Committee convened in executive session to review and assess what course of action or response to the matters raised by the Ethics Commission investigation, if any, the Committee might consider. At the further suggestion of School Counsel, the committee voted unanimously to engage outside Counsel. The law firm of Brody, Hardoon, Perkins and Kesten, LLP were selected to review these matters.

The School Committee met with outside counsel on May 28th, June 29th, July 19th, and August 30th to discuss these difficult issues. Dr. Jefferson and his counsel were afforded the opportunity to attend these meetings and in fact were present at all but one. At the August 30th meeting, the Committee voted to take appropriate action in order to conclude this painful chapter in the Town's history. The laws of the Commonwealth prevent the Committee from making public the action taken.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE STATEMENT

After its independent review of the issues, lengthy deliberations, and subsequent implementation of appropriate corrective measures, the Committee acknowledges and accepts ownership for the actions of the past. The heretofore-unresolved nature of questionable process and the consequential real appearances of conflicts of interest between the superintendent and prior Chair of this Committee have been a longstanding source of distraction and at times bitter conflict within the community. It has undoubtedly undermined the public trust and has

equally placed many under the microscope of public scrutiny who least deserve such scrutiny – members of our community whose children receive Special Education services.

The Committee also recognizes that complex legal arguments potentially having far reaching implications have yet to be resolved. They are being addressed as part of Dr Jefferson's appeal of the State Ethics Decision and Order. We wish him luck with those proceedings whilst remaining firm in our own conclusions regarding this matter based on information that we have received and on counsels advice. We have concluded that both Dr. Jefferson and Mr. Wormser did not act appropriately. In an attempt at balanced perspective afforded more by hindsight, we acknowledge that the Superintendent's actions were not motivated by personal gain and that the former Chair, Mr Wormser, is at least equally, if not more, accountable for these improprieties.

CONCLUSION

Our schools are at the heart of our Town and have a long and enduring history of excellence. They represent a precious asset and are at the same time fragile. Public trust as well as the trust of all those touched by the schools is paramount to ensure their vibrancy for future generations.

As stewards of Harvard Public Schools, the Committee recognizes that one pathway to securing trust is through establishing standards of action that are fair and open and demanding ethical conduct and judgment that is beyond reproach. Moving forward this Committee affirms its commitment to that goal. We are mindful that in leadership we can only expect of others what we are prepared to live by ourselves.

We hope that our attention to this matter, along with our own reaffirmation to the highest standards and expectations, will go a long way toward restoring public trust. It is time for us all to learn from the past and move on with the business of building our schools for the future.

With this statement, the Committee considers this matter closed.