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School Committee Minutes 11/9/2010

Approved by the Arlington School Committee January 11, 2011

The Arlington School Committee
Regular School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 9, 2010
7:30 p.m.

Meeting to be held in the School Committee Room – Sixth Floor
Arlington High School
869 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476

Present: Mr. Joseph Curro, Chair, Ms. Leba Heigham, Vice Chair, Ms. Cindy Starks, Secretary, Mr. Thielman, Mr. Joseph Curran, Dr. Kirsi Allison-Ampe and Mr. Judson Pierce.

Dr. Wallis Raemer, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Mark Ryder Director of Special Education, Ms. Diane Johnson, Chief Financial Officer, Student Representatives: Adam Zakaria, Jack Powers and Rob Shea and Ms. Karen Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant.

Absent Dr. Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent
Steve Pereira, AAA Representative

Ms. Johnson entered the meeting at 7:42p.m.
Student Representative: Rob Shea exited meeting at 9:00 p.m.
Student Reps Adam Zakaria and Jack Powers exited meeting at 10:00 p.m.
Mr. Curro exited the meeting at 10:36 p.m. and returned at 10:39 p.m.

Mr. Curro opened the meeting at 7:40 and thanked Ms. Heigham for running the last meeting and acknowledged Dr. Bodie's absence and acknowledge the birth of Dr Bodie's grandchild. Mr. Curro noted that Ms. Johnson would be arriving late.

Reflection, Remembrance and Recognition

Mr. Curro would like tonight's reflection to be in honor all the Veterans. Mr. Curro read a letter Mr. Skidmore received from Historical Researcher, Mark Sheppard. The letter was on the recovery of WWI aircraft from Lake Michigan that was ditched in the lake from pilot Mr. Carl Howard Johnson, a 1936 Arlington High School graduate. A brief moment of silence was observed for former secretary Marie F. McCulloch who recently passed away and had worked in the Payroll Department for 46 years, Helen Kreisler, the Robbins Children's Librarian who suddenly passed away, and to all the Veterans.

Mr. Curro recognized the Arlington High School Varsity Cheerleaders who won the Dual County League Cheerleading competition and will move forward to the MSSAA North Regional Competition Sunday, November 14, 2010. Mr. Curro did say that Dr. Bodie received a Life Time Achievement Award from MASC and MASS Joint Conference for serving many years on the Winchester School Committee. Mr. Curro acknowledge the three senior student council representatives who are also student athletes, Student Council President Adam Zakaria, Rob Shea, and Jack Powers.

Public Participation

Mr. Curro reminded each public participator to keep their remarks to three minutes due to the high volume of speakers. Mr. Curro did say that after speaking with Mr. Fagan, he is committed to adding the discussion of Athletic User Fees to the agenda at our next Regular Meeting.

Mr. Dan Keefe, parent of Senior Football Captain, Joe Keefe was irritated that the School Committee members allowed the Arlington Athletic User Fees to be so expensive without a family cap and not knowing the cost to play football. Mr. Keefe said many of the surrounding towns have no or very low Athletic User Fees and said all coaches stipends were paid through town / school budgets, not by collecting user fees as Arlington Public Schools are now doing.

Mr. Joe Tarantino, life long Arlington resident, two daughters who play Arlington High School sports spoke on how he encouraged his children to play sports last year and this year he is not doing that. The current fees for his children to play sports this year will be \$2,400.00. He said he is already paying over \$5000 in his real estate and over \$900 in excise taxes. Mr. Tarantino feels the Athletic User fees are unreasonable and unacceptable and requested a family cap.

Ms. Karen Lefkowitz, has two children who attend Arlington High School and is requesting the Arlington School Committee to reinstate the family cap on user fees and keep all children involved in participation in sports not just for the children whose parents can pay.

Ms. Karen Pieroni, expressed her disappointment with not receiving any information on the breakdown of line item expenses within the Athletic Department. Ms. Pieroni has not received information she requested and went to the town for tax abatement. She feels no family cap is unacceptable and cannot afford the athletic user fees for her children to play winter sports. Ms. Pieroni is requesting a spreadsheet line item of all revenue and all line item of expenses paid out from the Athletic User fees from last year and this fall.

Mr. Kevin Hickey, Arlington resident for over 21 years and has three children, two in high school and one in the middle school and expressed his concern for his daughter who struggles in school but excels as an athlete and the difficulty he will have paying such high Athletic User Fees.

Ms. Karen DeAlmeida, life long resident, spoke on her concerns that the Arlington School Committee members should oversee all programs, such as drama, arts and athletics and to make them equitable to all families to afford. Ms. DeAlmeida inquired to the Business Office if installments could be made to cover the high increase over the fall season and was denied this option. Ms. DeAlmeida is requesting the School Committee to consider implementing the following: to accurately examine the fee structure that is in place and make adjustments as necessary, base all fees on real costs, provide public access to detail income and expenses for programs, install a non credit card payment plan option, and return to a family cap.

Matt Zona, longtime Arlington resident, is speaking on behalf of all children and is asking the School Committee Members to add to the next Regular School Committee meeting a discussion on the following issues with Athletic User Fees: explain why the parents are paying such abrupt athletic user fees, itemized breakdown on the actual budget and disbursement of revenue for parents to review, suggested tracking all fall athletic revenue and requested a forecast of all winter and spring reports. Mr. Zona recommended that an Athletic Advisory Committee be established to overview the disbursements of all funds that the Business Offices are paying for from funds those parents are sending the Business Office to cover the Athletic User Fees.

Mr. Todd Newell, graduate of Arlington High School 1986, returned to Arlington eleven years ago to raise his family where he grew up. Mr. Newell is requesting transparency and the individual cost of each sport. Mr. Newell would like to analyze each sport and open up the dialogue and compare the data with surrounding towns.

Mr. Stephen Harrington, born in Arlington, two elementary aged children and currently not paying Athletic User fees but after reviewing the budget and audit reports he is very concerned with the Arlington Public Schools Athletic Budget with excess amounts of revenue. Mr. Harrington is requesting: to reduce Athletic User Fees by \$100,000 or more, the immediately setting of a family cap, user fees generated by athletics and only user fees should support athletics programs, pay all of the teachers stipends from the general fund and create a parent advisory counsel to work with the Arlington Public Schools Business Office to provide oversight, accountability and transparency in the Athletic program.

Mr. Jim Pieroni, parent of two athletic students at the high school expressed concern with the high cost of Athletic User Fees parents are paying for their child to play on a team which can create animosity with the coaches. Mr. Pieroni had

requested a tax abatement from the Town because he is now paying a school tax. Mr. Pieroni explained he has already paid \$1,200.00 to the Athletic User Fees in the fall and stated the additional hardships he will have to endure this year and is requesting a family cap and a reduction in user fees.

Ms. Joan Jantz, life long resident Arlington Resident, with two athletic sons, and a brother who teachers at Arlington High School pointed out the importance of all activities for all students. The numbers show how many students are involved in athletics and this should not be driven to what their parents can afford. Ms. Jantz is asking the School Committee to clarify and detail the portioned share of user fees.

Mr. Bob Bartholomew, AHS 67, parent, coach, teacher, saluted all the Veterans and those serving. Mr. Bartholomew expressed his concern with play fair and fair play at Arlington High School with the extra-curricular activities. Mr. Bartholomew recognized the 30 plus extra curricular programs, which are run by teachers and involve many athletic students. He asked if Arlington Public Schools plan on subsidizing the clubs and stipends and require an activity fee from all participants to cover the cost, as Arlington has done to the Athletic Program.

Mr. Steve Taylor, parent of four children who all participate in sports and stated the benefits of team sports, team spirit and respect and wants all children to play and not just for those who can pay.

Ms. Nancy Kiernan, parent of a Freshman Cheerleader and an Army Veteran spoke on the benefits of athletics as well as middle school theater and wants to be assured that all the money she has paid is going towards cheerleading.

Mr. Josh Lobel, Arlington Resident, parent of a current 10th grader and a graduate values sports and encouraged people to turn to each other not turn on each other. Mr. Lobel said we have to charge fees but asked if others could contribute to a fund to offset athletic fees and said this is one reason why we must pass an override.

Mr. Jack Crowley, Arlington Resident and graduate of Arlington High School said he was embarrassed by what he read in the Boston Globe regarding the short fall and that parents have to pay for this in athletic fees and that the School Committee should never have allowed this to happen.

Mr. Fagan, parent, thanked everyone for stepping up tonight and asked Mr. Curro to place a freeze on the Athletic Fees until this matter is taken up for further discussion.

Recess: 9:00 – 9:05

Budget and Finance Discussion

Mr. Curro had Ms. Diane Johnson explain the three Budget Reports the School Committee received in the packets. Ms. Johnson presented the November, FY 11 monthly budget tracking report, the Position Control report and the Revolving Revenues for Kindergarten and Athletics show payments to date.

The committee members discussed the end of year report and questioned if athletics had a surplus of \$51,000 from athletics and inquired to where the money went. Ms. Johnson assured the committee that there was no surplus. That in fact athletics brought in \$51,000 more than budgeted in fees last year, but that still did not come close to covering the cost of athletics for FY'10 and that all of that money went into covering the costs of athletics for that year. The athletic parents tonight presented various questions and asked for answers to these questions by the next meeting.

Mr. Thielman moved to direct the Superintendent to form an internal commitment with the Athletic Director and Chief Financial Officer to respond to the parents athletic questions parents and for the full School Committee to receive them on November 23, 2010, seconded by Ms. Heigham.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Curro suggested establishing an Athletic Advisory Committee.

Mr. Thielman moved that: An Athletic Advisory Committee to the School Committee is hereby established, as provided by File BDF and subject to the following:

There shall be 13 voting members drawn from the community and including one or more individuals, each of whom shall meet one or more of the following criteria:

Parent, guardian, or grandparent of high school athlete(s)

Parent, guardian, or grandparent of eighth-grade aspiring high school athlete(s)

Individual with professional experience in physical education or as a coach or

trainer

Individual with professional experience and training in finance
Representative of the Arlington business community
Representative of the Arlington High School Student Advisory Council
Representative of the Arlington High School - School Council
Representative of the Arlington High School Parent Advisory Council
Member of the community at large

Proposed members shall be drawn from candidates presented for approval to the School Committee following a process to be directed by the Community Relations Subcommittee.

Additionally, the following staff members shall serve in a non-voting, consulting role to the Athletic Advisory Committee:

Superintendent
Chief Financial Officer
Arlington High School Principal
Athletic Director

The charge of the Athletic Advisory Committee shall be to examine the following questions:

Recommended athletic fee structure (e.g., tiered vs. flat, family cap, etc.)
Recommended athletic offerings and fees under at least three fiscal scenarios: pessimistic, optimistic, and status quo
Potential for alternate revenue sources (e.g., advertising, sponsorship, grants, private fundraising and foundation support)
Sufficiency of payment plans
Suggestions for cost efficiencies in the athletic program
Recommendations regarding alternative means of providing athletic opportunities (e.g., cooperation with other school districts, intramural sports, etc.)

The Athletic Advisory Committee shall provide the School Committee with written recommendations relating to the above questions by March 1, 2011.

The liaison of the School Committee -- to be appointed by its membership -- shall convene the first meeting of the Athletic Advisory Committee, at which time the Athletic Advisory Committee shall elect officers, as provided by File BDF of the policies of the Arlington School Committee, seconded by Mr. Curran

Voted: 6-0-1, Ms. Heigham abstained

Mr. Skidmore commented that over 70% of students participate in athletics and some athletes also participate in drama and extra curricular activities.

**Mr. Curran moved to end debate and vote the motion, seconded by Mr. Thielman.
Voted 7:0**

After Mr. Curran said he would serve on the Athletic Advisory Committee when asked by Mr. Curro, the following motion was made.

**Ms. Starks moved to appoint Mr. Curran to be the School Committee Liaison to the Athletic Advisory Committee, seconded by Mr. Pierce.
Voted: 6-0-1, Mr. Curran abstained.**

Ms. Heigham reported on the Financial Operations Review Findings and next steps report. The Budget Subcommittee would like to develop an implementation timeline for all agreed upon recommendations and to research and make recommendations on those items requiring further study.

Mr. Curran thanked Ms. Heigham but said he was disappointed that Mr. Crafton from MASBO was not here tonight to explain the report. Ms. Heigham said because it was not in the "Scope of Work" and Mr. Crafton felt the Chair or someone else could direct any questions to him.

Mr. Curro and Ms. Heigham suggested that all questions be sent in writing to Ms. Heigham by Friday and once answered would be posted to the website and that all question would be answered before Town Meeting, Monday,

November 15, 2010.

Further discussion was on the Powers and Sullivan Report and it was suggested from the committee that Arlington Public Schools implement a more conservative budget process.

Mr. Thielman agreed with Mr. Curran and wished Mr. Crafton was present tonight and had done a better job answering the questions and said the report lacked a lot of specifics. Mr. Curro said that Power and Sullivan report filled in some of those gaps.

Dr. Ampe explained that Further Study on the recommendations report means that the School Committee would study how the recommendations could and should be implemented.

Ms. Heigham moved that the Arlington School Committee direct the Budget Subcommittee to develop implementation timelines for all agreed upon recommendations and to research and make recommendation on those items requiring further study, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Voted: 6-1, Mr. Curran voted No

Mr. Curran cannot support the motion because he has too many questions that need to be answered.

Mr. Curro said the Finance Committee recommends that the Arlington School Committee have a reserve and to create this reserve the School Committee would need to reduce their budget by \$177,589.

Ms. Johnson presented the following 3 options:

Potential Budget Reductions		
to Accommodate Finance Committee's Recommendation to Town Meeting		
Option 1		
	Reduce SpEd Conflict resolution line	
	original budget	200,000
	reduce by	177,589
	new budget amount	22,411
	risk factors:	
	These funds were destined to provide legal support for resolving disputed placements. Plans are in place to recommend some changed placements that will be postponed if these funds are reduced.	
Option 2		
	Reduce Out of District Tuition line	
	original budget	6,000,000
	reduce by	177,589
	new budget amount	5,822,411
	risk factors:	
	While at present out of district placements are tracking below budget for FY11, a handful of students are in the process of being moved to out of district placements for the remainder of this year, and it is likely that we will acquire more out of district placements through the spring.	

Option 3		
	Reduce Staff and Expenses	
	original budget	37,066,430
	<i>Traffic Supervisors 3 FT 5 PT</i>	21,535
	<i>Special Education 1 FT</i>	25,000
	<i>English Language Learner reduce .4</i>	10,000
	<i>BSP Teacher assistant reduce .4</i>	4,600
	<i>System Wide Reading Teacher 1 FT</i>	30,000
	<i>2 Teaching Assistants</i>	31,172
	<i>High School Supplies</i>	15,000
	<i>SpEd Conflict Resolution Line reduction</i>	40,282
	total reductions	177,589
	Considered but not included in these reductions was the elimination of the fourth Brackett kindergarten added in late summer. The current kindergarten enrollment at the Brackett is 85, which would create an average class size of over 28 students with only three kindergartens.	
	new budget amount	36,888,841

Mr. Curran suggested to add Option 4: Reduce Special Education Conflict Resolution and Reduce other Legal Funds by \$88,794.50 each line item to total \$177,589.

Option 4		
	Reduce SpEd Conflict resolution & Arbitration Award reserves	
	original budget	400,000
	reduce by	177,589
	new budget amount	222,411
	risk factors:	
	This option divides the risk between two reserve lines, both of which may be needed during FY11.	

Mr. Thielman would like the School Committee to take no vote and no action on the Four Options of Potential Budget Reductions to Accommodate Finance Committee's Recommendation to Town Meeting. The School Committee can at our next Regular Meeting take action on the option after Town Meeting votes.

The committee members continued the discussion on reserves and said that the budget should be conservative and clear.

**Mr. Thielman directs the Chair of the Arlington School Committee to work with the Superintendent and the Chief Financial Officer with all the information to prepare a response, seconded by Ms. Heigham.
Voted: 7-0**

MCAS Data District Achievement and Growth, W. Raemer

**Ms. Heigham moved to table the MCAS Data District Achievement and Growth data to the next School Committee Meeting, seconded by Ms. Starks.
Voted: 7-0**

Thompson Building Committee Update

After Mr. Thielman informed the School Committee that a substitute motion on Article 3 should be presented to Town Meeting on November 15, 2010 the following motion was made:

Mr. Thielman moved that Arlington Town Meeting endorses the rebuilding or renovation of the Thompson Elementary School in a manner that:

- **Receives approval and funding from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA);**
- **Meets the educational needs of the Thompson Elementary School student body and the Arlington**
- **Public Schools;**
- **Is of a scope, size and cost that is supported by the Thompson School Building Committee and other town bodies and committees, including the Permanent Town Building Committee, School Committee, Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee and Board of Selectmen;**
- **Preserves – to the greatest practicable extent – the integrity and identity of the Thompson community; and**
- **Incorporates public input, seconded by Mr. Pierce.**

Voted: 6-0, Mr. Curro had exited the room

Dr. Ampe asked if the land swap had been taken off the table and Mr. Thielman replied no and said the three preferred options are still on the table. Mr. Thielman said the MASBA hoped a good faith effort is being made to have unanimous support for the rebuild or renovations of the Thompson Elementary School and therefore the motion assures them of that. Mr. Thielman would be looking for a vote at the next School Committee meeting on one of the three preferred options.

Consent Agenda - All items listed with an asterisk (*) are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the committee so request, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence.

*** Approval of Warrant # 11058 Total Warrant Amount \$558,571.73 dated October 26, 2010**

***Approval of Trip Change April 2011: Russia to Germany, Switzerland and Austria**

Mr. Curran moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Dr. Ampe.

Voted:6-0 Mr. Curro had exited the room

Secretary's Report

Ms. Starks reported on the following documents received:

- notice of an art exhibit of AHS student work at a gallery in Lexington, Mass
- copy of the Powers & Sullivan review of SC finances
- copy of the process audit by MASBO
- copy of the November FY11 monthly budget tracking reports
- copies of the district's MCAS achievement and growth by grade as well as % of students at each performance level for Arlington
- copy of the Thompson Building Committee Report dated November 15, 2010
- copy of the approved warrant dated 10/20/2010 with adjustments
- copy of the changes to the April 2011 trip that was initially to Russia, but is now a trip to Germany, Switzerland & Austria
- copy of the approved (on 10/26/2010) goals for the APS for the 2010/2011 school year
- copy of a letter from Chairman Curro to Ms. Kowalski informing her of our vote on 10/26/2010 allowing approval of the land abutting the AHS
- copy of policy JICFB - Bullying Prevention
- copy of the approved minutes of 9/28/2010
- copy of the draft minutes of 10/14/2010 SC mtg
- copy of the draft minutes of the Community Relations SC mtg on 10/28/2010
- invitation to the Stratton Elementary School National Blue Ribbon Recognition to be held on Friday, 11/19/2010 at

1pm

- thank you letter from Bridge the Gap to the School Committee for our creation of the bedtime story that was auctioned off
- copy of a flyer announcing the Peirce School celebrating inclusive schools week December 6-10, 2010
- copy of a letter from concerned parents about a street crossing incident on October 20, 2010
- copy of an email sent to Ottoson parents regarding issues with the alarm system on 10/29/2010 and potentially 11/1/2010
- letter from Janice Bakey, chair of the MLK Jr. Birthday Observance Committee about the annual MLK dinner and gathering to take place on Monday, January 17, 2011 at Town Hall, asking for donations to help defray the cost of the event as well as soliciting nominations for recognition that evening
- copy of the report from the Arlington Public Schools to the Special Town Meeting, scheduled for November 15, 2010
- 3 reports detailing information about the athletics program at AHS
- draft copy of a letter to parents about athletic fees and their ability to choose to pay in 3 installments
- summary of the recommendations of the audit by MASBO from the budget subcommittee
- copy of the WBUR report on athletic fees at AHS
- copy of the tiered athletic fee schedule as for the 2010/2011 school year
- copy of the Memorandum of Understanding between the APS and the Today's Teachers, Tomorrow's Students program
- copy of the ACMI 2010 annual report

Superintendent's Report

None

Roundtable

Mr. Pierce moved to reinstate policy GBEA Staff ethics/Conflict of interest that was temporary suspended for the purpose of hiring a Teaching Assistant, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Pierce announced that the Policy and Procedures subcommittee would meet on Tuesday.

Mr. Curran moved to direct the Chair to receive written legal action from Legal Counsel on Posting the Superintendent's Evaluation, seconded by Mr. Curran.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Curran moved to suspend all collection of Athletic User fees until we can come to a resolution regarding collection of fees and amount we are to charge, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Ms. Johnson reminded the committee that the School Committee voted the budget and we would now be in a deficit if the motion went through.

Mr. Curran withdrew his motion and submitted the following:

Mr. Curran moved to suspend collection of Arlington High School Athletic Fees until we commit to resolution regarding collection of fees and amount we are to charge, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Voted: 1 –6, Mr. Curran voting Yes, Motion fails

Ms. Heigham moved the 11 o'clock rule to 11:15 p.m., seconded by Ms. Starks.

Voted: 7-0

Ms. Starks moved that the School Committee reduce the fee charged to the Sudanese Education Fund by 25% for the 6 weeks of use of the Hardy school for their pilot weekend education program, seconded by Mr. Curran.

Voted: 4-1-2, Ms. Heigham voted No, Mr. Thielman and Mr. Curro Abstained

Ms. Heigham moved to have Mr. Curro sponsor the School Committee to attend the Martin Luther King, Jr. dinner in January, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Voted: 7-0

Ms. Heigham moved to appoint Mr. Pierce as the School Committee Liaison to the SEPAC, seconded by Ms.

Starks.

Voted: 6-0-1, Mr. Pierce Abstained.

After Mr. Curro announced the dates and times of the following meetings: the Special Town Meeting on November 15, 2010 at 8:00 p.m. and the Special School Committee meeting on Monday, November 15, 2010 at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 17, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. the following motion was made:

Ms. Starks moved to approve all Special School Committee meetings, location TBD, seconded by Mr. Curran.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Curro expressed support of the Food Drive at the Special Town Meeting and the Proclamation of the Pierce School celebrating inclusive schools week December 6-10, 2010.

Executive Session

Ms. Heigham moved to enter Executive Session at 11:06 p.m. for the following purposes: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation when an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the committee. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion or union personnel, or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with union or non-union personnel and return to open session, seconded by Mr. Curran.

Roll Call: Mr. Pierce Yes, Dr. Ampe Yes, Mr. Curran Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Ms. Starks Yes, Ms. Heigham Yes, and Mr. Curro Yes.

Voted: 7-0

Ms. Heigham moved that the Arlington School Committee approve Deutsch Williams as labor counsel offering an hourly rate of \$210 per hour, with this rate frozen through June 30, 2012, thereby protecting us against rate increases for the current and next fiscal years. Billing is on-tenth hour increments, and reasonable and necessary out-of-pocket expenses will be charged in addition to any fees for service, the Arlington Public Schools will be provided that at least 90 days notice of any rate increase, seconded by Mr. Curran.

Voted: 7-0

Adjournment

Ms. Heigham moved to adjourn at 11:29 p.m. seconded by Ms. Heigham

Voted: 7-0

Respectfully submitted by
Karen M. Fitzgerald
Administrative Assistant
Arlington School Committee/cs