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School Committee Minutes 10/14/2008

APPROVED BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 12, 2008

**THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2008
6:30 p.m.**

Present: *School Committee Members*

*Denise Burns, Chair, Joe Curran, Vice Chair, Joe Curro, Sue Sheffler, Ronald Spangler, Secretary, and Jeff Thielman.
Kathleen Bodie, Interim Superintendent, Mark Ryder, Director of Special Education.
Student Reps: Alice Xiang, Ellery Rosin*

Absent: *Leba Heigham, Sue Mazzarella Chief Financial Officer.*

EXECUTIVE SESSION

6:35 p.m. - 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Curran motioned to enter into Executive Session at 6:35 p.m. to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, and to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel, seconded by Ms. Sheffler. Roll Call: Mr. Curro, Ms. Sheffler, Mr. Thielman, Mr. Spangler, Mr. Curran, and Ms. Burns all voted Yes.

Vote 6:0 unanimous

Mr. Spangler motioned to exit out of Executive Session at 7:02 p.m. to then recess until 7:30 p.m. seconded by Ms. Sheffler. Roll Call: Mr. Curro, Ms. Sheffler, Mr. Thielman, Mr. Spangler, Mr. Curran, and Ms. Burns all voted Yes.

Vote 6:0 unanimous

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

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 #09044 dated September 23, 2008 in the amount of \$508,634.49.*

**Approval of Warrant #09051 dated October 2, 2008 in the amount of \$328,963.36.*

**Approval for School Committee/Superintendent Retreat Meetings, Wednesday, October 29, 2008 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. at Whittemore Robbins House.*

**Approval of Hiring School Nurses: Dallin School -paid .5 through school and .5 through grant Arlington High School - full time, and hired last May part time .5 at Thompson School.*

Ms. Burns entertained the motion to approve the consent agenda.

Vote 6:0 unanimous

RECOGNITION

Ms. Burns introduced the student representative for tonight's meeting: Alice Xiang and Ellery Rosen.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES REPORT

Alice Xiang and Ellery Rosin reported on the Athletic Department's sports teams and the National Honor Society students.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Ms. Kathleen Bodie, Interim Superintendent presented on the 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) baseline and improvement data from the spring of 2008 MCAS data. Arlington students attending the Thompson Elementary School, low-income subgroup and Special Education Students subgroup at the Ottoson Middle School did not make AYP. Since this is the second year students did not make AYP for a subgroup in ELA, at the Thompson School, they have been designated "Improvement Year 1 - subgroup", which requires the school to develop an improvement plan. Thompson Elementary School is also a Title 1 school; the Arlington Public Schools are obligated to inform parents/guardians that they may choose to enroll their child in another elementary school in Arlington that met AYP. The improvement plan will address the needs of these students and encourages family involvement and support.

DISTRICT GOALS

Ms. Kathleen Bodie presented District Goals 2008 - 2009 draft #5 to the committee. The administrative team has discussed and supports these goals. The goals are the same as last year but shows different objectives to implement these goals.

After Ms. Bodie presented Goals 1 and Goal 2 the committee members reacted to the goals from last year vs. this year with the following feedback, Goals 3 and Goal 4 were read without discussion due to time.

§ *Mr. Thielman would like to see clear metrics for measuring each goal.*

§ *Mr. Spangler inquired about Special Education under Goal 1, as was previously part of this goal. Due to the major initiatives around Special Education he would like to continue to see where Special Education is going and how we will get there.*

§ *Ms. Burns recommend Hybrid model vs. Standard Base Report Cards.*

§ *Mr. Spangler referenced K-2 Reading assessments that started about two years ago and would like to continue to see this sort of specific goal focusing on improving student achievement as measured by our common assessments*

§ *Mr. Spangler inquired about setting a goal for K-10 writing and K-10 math, using the baseline data we gathered last year, to improve student achievement on these new common assessments.*

§ *Mr. Spangler would like a goal on program development or other next steps building on the Gifted and Talented study group efforts from last year. He said the math challenge pilot for students in grades 3-5 is a start, but the district needs a more comprehensive plan in this area.*

§ *Mr. Thielman asked to add in an activity to a goal to increase the percent of students reading at grade level K-2 and increase the percent of students reading at grade level K-3.*

§ *Mr. Spangler wants the school committee to see more assessment data, so we know where we are at grade levels, and where we need improvement. He reiterated that the last two years of K-2 reading improvement show that measurements work.*

§ *Ms. Burns requested to have a report on the Teacher Assistant Team (TAT) due to hearing conflicting information and would like to see an evaluation on how the program worked before we formalize it.*

§ *Mr. Curro noted objectives from last year goals and the metrics used showed based on survey with the principals of more than one year in the system, that 100% found that the TAT procedures were effectively used in each building and the procedures are an improvement on methods.*

Mr. Curro, Chair of District Accountability Subcommittee along with members, Mr. Curran and Ms. Heigham have been working on the Accountability Grid and due to two measurements being unfinished and having an extension on reporting the grid, understands the urgency on its completion and has requested time at the next School Committee meeting for discussion. Mr. Curro has requested feedback on the goals presented and will further discuss them at the next meeting.

SPACE NEEDS

Mr. Thielman addressed the committee on the town asking about space use at the Parmenter and Crosby Schools and the impact on space needs for the school systems. Ms. Bodie had requested space needs from each of the nine schools and presented the report. Ms. Bodie noted that Special Education needs are great and Mr. Ryder reported on types of services and developmental programs needed for Arlington students but stressed the space needs are needed for next school year. Mr. Thielman noted that a written report on Space Needs will be received at our School Committee's October 28, 2008 meeting and then submitted to the Town Manager.

MINORITY HIRING REPORT

Ms. Bodie, Interim Superintendent presented the 2008 Minority Hiring Report and stated that the report has been presented to the Diversity Team and noted the trends remain fairly the same.

CHAIR REPORT

Ms. Burns reported on Chairman's Report dated October 13, 2008 and meeting she attended on Mid-sized Municipalities. Ms. Burns noted the upcoming joint meetings with Selectmen on October 28, 2008 for the book discussion, walking routes to schools, and having the Arlington

Advocate do a follow up report on MCAS results. Mr. Curro has been point person on the 403B activity, Ms. Burns has asked Mr. Thielman to work with Mr. Curro on 403B, and he has agreed. The School Committee and Superintendent Retreat will be held on October 29, 2008 from 4 -7 p.m. with other agenda items but not including the Transitions program until a conflict can be resolved.

Ms. Burns reported that after having a conversation with Attorney Alan Miller, from Stoneman, Chandler & Miller he advised the committee to change contract language do to conflict with 120-day notice.

Motioned by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Thielman

Move to strike from Ms. Bodie's contract, section 2 under Term "provided that the School Committee shall notify the Interim Superintendent in writing by January 15, 2009 if it does not intend to renew the contract through June 30, 2010.

Roll Call: Mr. Curro, Ms. Sheffler, Mr. Thielman, Mr. Spangler, Mr. Curran and Ms. Burns all voted yes

Vote 6:0 unanimous

Motioned by Mr. Spangler to move that the School Committee will notify the Interim Superintendent, Kathleen Bodie in writing by January 15, 2009 if it does not intend to renew the contract through June 30, 2010, seconded by Mr. Curro.

Roll Call: Mr. Curro, Ms. Sheffler, Mr. Thielman, Mr. Spangler, Mr. Curran and Ms. Burns all voted yes

Vote 6:0 unanimous

Mr. Spangler commented on the Chairman Report and questioned the meeting between Ms. Burns, Mr. Curro and Ms. Rice, Town Counsel. He said only the committee can seek legal opinions on behalf of the committee, not individual members. Mr. Spangler would like to get Town Counsel and the committee's attorney on the same page regarding the ongoing arbitration, by having an Executive Session on October 28, 2008. Ms. Burns said that Town Counsel did not make any recommendations with regards to Arbitration. Mr. Spangler disagreed, and said there was an email that still has not been shown to the rest of the committee. Ms. Burns stated she met with Town Counsel only to clarify roles and responsibilities that were unclear to her at the time and was following up on clean up, as the committee moved. Mr. Thielman asked if we needed to vote to end the housekeeping activities. Ms. Burns said she had completed them and did not think we needed a vote.

Mr. Spangler Moved to direct the chair to arrange an Executive Session on October 28, 2008 with Alan Miller and Town Counsel for purpose on discussing on going litigation strategies, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Vote 6:0 unanimous

Ms. Burns read the following Statement on former Superintendent Nate Levenson Contractual Obligation. When asked by Mr. Thielman if this letter concludes the chairs responsibility on clean up of the Resignation of Superintendent Levenson, Ms. Burns replied yes.

For Immediate Release

Date: October 14, 2008

From: Denise Burns, Chairman Arlington School Committee

Re: Statement on Former Superintendent Nate Levenson Contractual Obligation

The Committee would like to clear up some of the rumors and erroneous information which have been circulating concerning monies that Nate Levenson received upon his resignation from the Arlington Public Schools. The facts are that Mr. Levenson received 23.16 days of accrued and unused vacation time, which amounted to \$13,728.09. Accrued and unused vacation time must be paid in accordance with Massachusetts's law. The only other payment made was in the amount of \$479.92, which was a reimbursement for approved expenses while he was still employed.

Mr. Levenson received no severance or other payment and the Town's contribution to his health insurance premium ceased upon his resignation. Under Federal law he is entitled to, and is continuing in the Town's health insurance plan at his own expense.

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SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Ms. Bodie presented the Superintendent Report and Mark Ryder spoke on the Pre-K Early childhood improvement due to pick up at Arlington High School.

Ms. Bodie spoke on the MIA employee Assistance program and the \$75,000 Music grant, and the JFK Library debate series that teachers applied for.

POLICY & PROCEDURES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Curran presented the following for first readings of policy manual Section E to amend or delete the following:

To amend EB- Safety Program, EBAB – Pest Management Policy, EBC- Emergency Plans, EBCB-Fire Drills, ECAC-Vandalism, ECAB Access to Buildings, EC- Building and Grounds Management, EDC-Authorized Use of School-Owned Materials and to delete the following policy ECB-Buildings and Grounds Maintenance.

ROUNDTABLE

Mr. Curro held the task of screening resumes for the appointment of a member to the Arlington Human Rights Commission and after phone interviews with three individuals referred to him by the Town Manager's office Mr. Judson Lee Pierce is whom Mr. Curro is recommending for the appointment.

I, Joseph A. Curro, Jr. do hereby move to appoint Judson Lee Pierce tot a three-year term on the Arlington Human Rights Commission, pursuant to Title II, Article 9, Section 3.B.! of the Bylaws of the Town of Arlington, and I request that the Chair or her designee notify Mr. Pierce, the Chair of the Arlington Human Rights Commission, and the Town Clerk of said appointment.

Vote 6:0 unanimous

The committee drafted, moved and unanimously approved the following letter to the Editor of the Arlington advocate regarding question 1. Vote 6:0

To the Editor.

We the undersigned members of the Arlington School Committee wish to express our concern regarding the potentially devastating effects to our schools and our community if Question 1 is passed on November 4. This question proposes to abolish the income tax in Massachusetts.

The best estimates are that successful passage of this ballot measure would strip about \$12.5 billion or 40% from the state budget. While it is impossible to predict exactly which parts of the budget might feels the effects of "Question 1 most profoundly, reasonable observers and analysts agree that drastic cuts to local aid would be virtually unavoidable. Such cuts would place intense pressure on communities to cut services and/or seek increases in property taxes.

In a year when we – the elected leaders of the Arlington Public Schools – are struggling to fill existing budget shortfalls within a framework of fiscal responsibility, it is difficult to imagine closing a sudden gap of perhaps \$4 million or more. A loss of revenue of that magnitude would require tough decisions concerning class sizes, user fees, academic and extracurricular offerings, and renovation and maintenance projects. It is unlikely that a single child or staff member of the Arlington Public Schools would escape its effects.

On September 23, the Arlington School Committee officially went on record in opposition to Question 1. Consistent with that position and our commitment to providing every Arlington child with excellent educational opportunities, we wish to reiterate our position with this letter.

Sincerely,

Denise M. Burns, Chair
Joseph E. Curran, Vice Chair
Ronald L. Spangler, Secretary
Leba Heigham

Jeff Thielman
Sue Sheffler
Joseph A. Curro, Jr.

Ms. Sheffler moved the 11'oclock rule to 11:10 p.m., seconded by Mr. Spangler. Vote 6:0

Members spoke on liaison duties with each school. Mr. Thielman notified the committee the next Community Relations subcommittee discussion would be biking to school issues and Summary of MASC Advocacy Committee meeting. Mr. Spangler will present information on October 29, 2008 at the Brackett School on what is driving our budget. Members reiterated vote No on question 1.

Mr. Spangler reported on correspondence receive from EDCO on upcoming roundtables, the Stratton Scene, from Janice Bakey thanking the committee for naming Kathy Bodie Interim Superintendent, from Bob Bartholomew on the MSBA Model Schools program, and from the Arlington Redevelopment Board in the form of a notice of public hearing on October 20 on the construction of a CVS at the former Hogdon Noyes site.

Mr. Curran motioned to adjourn at 11:05 p.m., seconded by Mr. Curro. Vote 6:0 unanimous.

*Respectfully submitted by
Karen Fitzgerald
Administrative Assistant
Arlington School Committee
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