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School Committee Minutes 09/09/2008

*Approved October 28, 2008
with Emergency and Special Meeting Minutes included*

**THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2008
7:30 PM**

Meeting started at 7:40 pm

Present: *School Committee Members:*

Chair, Denise Burns, Vice Chair, Joe Curran, Joe Curro, Leba Heigham, Secretary Ronald Spangler, Sue Sheffler and Jeff Thielman.

Interim Superintendent: Kathleen Bodie, Director of Special Education, Mark Ryder Chief Financial Officer, Sue Mazzarella,

Ms. Sheffler exited the meeting around 7:50 pm and returned at 8:26pm

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Susan Elberger, Co-Chair on campaign to Vote No on question 1 on the ballot, urged members for support.

Eric Beck and Veronica Martyahl spoke on the end time of the preschool special education program new at Arlington High School and the safety issue with students from the high school exiting at the same time as preschool students with special needs.

Jack Duranceau, Science Teacher at AHS spoke well of Mr. Don Bockler, retired inspirational Science teacher of 32 years at Arlington High School who suddenly passed away.

RECOGNITION

A moment of Silence was made for the following educators who had touched many lives of Arlington students and the community.

The School Committee was saddened to learn of the passing of the following Arlington educators:

Don "Doc" Bockler – former AHS Science teacher

Mary Nolan – Brackett School

Joan Warren – former Principal

Ms. Bodie commented that Mr. Duranceau said it best about Mr. Bockler Ms. Bodie recognized the loss of Mary Nolan, a teacher at the Brackett School and how this would be a tremendous loss to the school system and to her family and deeply appreciates Mary as a person and the work she has done.

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 Regular Meeting Minutes July 24, 2008*
- *Approval of Emergency Meeting Minutes August 7, 2008*
- *Approval of Special Meeting September 4, 2008*
- *Approval of Warrant # 09011 dated July 22, 2008 in the amount of \$203,307.53*
- *Approval of Warrant # 09019 dated August 5, 2008 in the amount of \$161,564.71*
- *Approval of Warrant # 09026 dated August 19, 2008 in the amount of \$220,993.92*

Ms. Burns entertained the motion to approve the consent agenda as presented with Mr. Curro amending the motion to pull out the minutes of July 24, 2008, Mr. Spangler requested to pull out the minutes of the Emergency Meeting August 7, 2008 and the Special Meeting September 4, 2008.

Vote: 6 – 0 Ms. Sheffler had exited the meeting

Mr. Curro would like the July 24, 2008 minutes to reflect a change on the last page under New Business to read Mr. Curro and Mr. Thielman attended a recent organized meeting to defeat question 1 on ballot, seconded by Ms. Burns to approve the July 24, 2008 minutes as amended

Vote 6:0 Ms. Sheffler had exited the meeting.

Mr. Spangler said he could not vote on the minutes of the September 4th Special Meeting, as he had only just received them at the start of tonight's meeting and had not had time to review them.

Mr. Spangler also stated that he was uncertain as to whether it was appropriate for the committee to have re-taken in open session in the Emergency Meeting on August 7, 2008, a vote originally taken on May 13th Executive Session. Mr. Spangler said the School Committee's attorney, Alan Miller, had questioned this action of August 7th, and asked the Chair to seek a written opinion.

Ms. Burns said that the School Committee's attorney had advised her that a vote was needed by the entire committee to receive arbitration transcripts that Mr. Curran had requested. Therefore, the above motion was taken up during Executive Session on May 13, 2008 and that should have been the only discussion. Ms. Burns stated other matters did come up regarding legal issues, as a result the executive session was invalid. Ms. Burns was new to the position and noted she should have ended the executive session discussion and after the meeting asked Town Counsel for advice and was advised to do what she thought best.

Mr. Spangler motioned to table the minutes of the Special Meeting on September 4, 2008 and the Emergency meeting on August 7, 2008, and to request that Town Counsel and Stoneman, Chandler and Miller give a precise, written opinion on the appropriateness of repeating the May 13th executive session vote in open session on August 7th, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Vote: 5 – 1 – 0 Mr. Curran opposes, Ms. Sheffler had exited the meeting.

Mr. Spangler will wait for legal opinion before approval of the minutes and indicated if improper vote were taken Mr. Spangler would have the vote stricken from the records.

Mr. Curro asked about the motion to table September 4, 2008 minutes and Ms. Burns had noted the committee addressed this motion. Mr. Thielman requested we table each motion separately.

Mr. Spangler motioned to table the minutes on the Emergency Meeting on August 7, 2008, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Vote 5 -1 0 Mr. Curran opposing, Ms. Sheffler had exited the meeting

Mr. Pat Tassone would like to acknowledge the recent passing of another educator in Arlington this past July, Gerry Thebodo.

ALAN HOVHANESS MEMORIAL

Mr. Tassone came tonight to request the approval of the School Committee for the Alan Hovhaness Memorial to be placed at Arlington High School. Mr. Bob Mirak reviewed to the board that the Alan Hovhaness Memorial began back in 2001 with John Bilafer proposing to the Finance Committee and receiving approval, filing a Warrant Article that was approved, but found funds were not available at the time therefore, the memorial became silent. The advice given to Mr. Mirak was to get permission from the Public Memorial Committee, which unanimously was approved back in 2002 and the School Committee members.

On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Curran it was agreed that School Committee supports in principal establishing a memorial to Alan Hovhaness on the grounds of Arlington High School and looks forward for specifics of the proposal be brought back for approval.

Vote 6 -0 -0 Ms. Sheffler had exited the meeting

OPENING OF SCHOOL

Ms. Bodie stated the opening of school went as well as expected and we welcomed 60 new students to Arlington, and she pointed out the greatest increase of students at the Ottoson Middle School. Ms. Bodie would like the committee to be aware of the increase of students and the space issue should be reviewed at some point. Mr. Skidemore addressed the committee and agreed that the first few days went well and thanked staff.

Ms. Burns requested from Ms. Bodie and Ms. Mazzarella an analysis on the amount of new teaching positions versus non-teaching positions in every building and wants to make sure there is a balance.

INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT REPS

Ms. Burns introduced two out of the six student's reps that will rotate attending School Committee meetings Ms. Burns and committee members welcomed seniors Lauren Alderman and Michelle Rosie.

CHAIR REPORT

Ms. Burns presented her Chair Report and noted parts of Mr. Levenson's contract will be brought forward in executive session.

Human Rights Commission Appointment

Mr. Curro has been asked to appoint a new member of the Human Rights Commission and will review resumes and hopes to have a recommendation at our next meeting.

School Committee Meeting Format

Ms. Burns offered literature on PeopleMap, and Lodestar Mediation and also stated MASS and MASC has offered us the service of their "Transitions" program where they work with the Superintendent, the chair and members of the committee and community individually to increase the productivity and cohesiveness of the committee.

Mr. Spangler remarked that there is a School Committee self evaluation policy, but that it does not require any specific actions with specific frequency. He would support any such self-reflection, and it was recommended by the chair for further discussion.

Mr. Thielman motioned to refer three groups, PeopleMap, Lodestar Mediation and Transitions program to the Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee for review, seconded by Ms. Heigham.

Vote: 7:0 unanimous

Ms. Burns is trying to improve and track communication, and allow each member to make requests and report out on school liaison and subcommittee activity, Ms. Burns added a roundtable into the agenda rather than specific subcommittee reports. Roundtable can be used for each member to hold the floor to:

- a. Report out on subcommittee business*
- b. Report out on school liaison items of interest*
- c. Make requests for information or follow-up by the Superintendent/Admin team*

It will help in providing equal access to information, data for measuring response, and help keep from answering the same request several times for different people.

Ms. Burns spoke about the challenge from the Selectmen's office to hold a joint meeting on the Community Read "Digging to America" sometime in October.

Student Rep Lauren Alderman asked if senior students could recommend the summer reading and Ms. Bodie would like her to direct this to Deb Perry, Interim ELA

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Ms. Kathleen Bodie, Interim Superintendent presented her report and spoke on new programs within Arlington and improvements within Stratton and Thompson Elementary Schools.

Ms. Burns would like to continue the meeting and enter into Executive Session after agenda item ROUNDTABLE.

ROUNDTABLE

Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee

Ms. Burns would like the subcommittee to present the motions made during the recent Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee meeting that was held tonight at 6:00 and finished up just minutes prior to this School Committee meeting.

Ms. Leba Heigham motioned for the Interim Superintendent, Kathleen Bodie, to compile a presentation outlining her transition / interim plan for short, medium, and long term, including:

- 1. Current Issues**
- 2. Interim staffing**
- 3. Long term staffing**

4. Her personal support and professional development plan, to be provided to the School Committee for the September 23, 2008 meeting and received in the School Committee packet prior to said meeting, Mr. Thielman seconded the motion

Vote 7:0 unanimous

Members of the subcommittee were charged with the responsibility to make the most detailed and thoughtful decision to find the best fit for Arlington Schools, and supports Ms. Kathleen Bodie as Interim Superintendent and but wants the process to be fair and recommends that the community hear formally what Ms. Bodie's plans are.

Ms. Burns acknowledge a very strong support to Ms. Bodie.

Mr. Spangler would like to hear the second motion before voting on this first motion presented.

Ms. Heighman read second motion: **"Motion for the Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee to enter negotiations with Kathleen Bodie for completed and future work in the Interim Superintendent position.**

The committee feels that, Ms. Bodie has stepped to the plate and has done a great job with no additional compensations, and motioned to enter negotiations with her and to have the committee and community acknowledge her efforts.

Mr. Spangler would like to amend the motion and motioned to hold a Special Meeting on Sept 16, 2008 to get the presentation from Ms. Bodie and Mr. Thielman seconded the motion for discussion.

Mr. Thielman asked Ms. Bodie her thoughts and asked about presenting the plans by September 23rd to the School Committee. Ms. Bodie expressed to the committee much is needed to prepare such a plan, she needs to meet with appropriate personnel to check on their availability and two weeks would be desired to complete preparation.

Mr. Spangler noted that Ms. Bodie has his full support and expressed disappointed that a vote would not be taken tonight to hire Ms. Bodie as Interim Superintendent and asked if we escaped the plan would **next week** be possible to present to the committee and Ms. Bodie responded that she appreciates the sentiments from Mr. Spangler but plans would not be ready.

Mr. Spangler withdrew the motion.

Mr. Curran seconded to accept the motion.

Vote 7:0 unanimous

Motion by Mr. Curran to vote on combined motions, seconded by Mr. Spangler.

Vote 7:0

Vote on approval of Job Descriptions

- Title I Math & ELA Tutor
- Math/ELA Tutor

Mr. Spangler motioned to approve the Job Descriptions of Title I Math and ELA Tutor and Math / ELA Tutor, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Vote 7:0 unanimous

Roundtable Continue with Subcommittees

Mr. Curro motioned to suspend the policy on reporting the Goals and Objectives by the October 1 date in the policy and to report back at our regular meeting on October 14, Mr. Curran seconded the motion.

Vote 7:0

Mr. Thielman requested the draft goals should be reviewed with administrative team then and then to committee members.

Mr. Spangler reported that the family of Mary Nolan send thank you for flowers sent.

Mr. Curran will be setting up a Policy and Procedures meeting as soon as possible.

EXECUTIVE SESSION and ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Curran motioned to enter into Executive session at 9:30 p.m. to conduct strategy sessions in preparations for negotiations with non-union personnel, and to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel and to exit out of Executive Session only to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Heigham.

Roll Call: Ms. Heigham, Yes, Mr. Curro Yes, Ms. Sheffler Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Mr. Spangler Yes, Mr. Curran Yes, Ms. Burns, Yes

Vote 7:0 unanimous

Adjournment 10:20 p.m.

TS

In accordance with School Committee Policy BE: School Committee Meetings, the following votes which were taken in the Emergency Meeting of August 7th, 2008, are hereby entered into the minutes of this, the next Regular Meeting of the Arlington School Committee.

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE EMERGENCY MEETING THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2008 7:30 PM

Present

School Committee Members:

Chair, Denise Burns, Vice Chair, Joe Curran, Joe Curro, Leba Heigham, Secretary Ronald Spangler, Sue Sheffler and Jeff Thielman.

Absent

Superintendent, Nate Levenson, Assistant Superintendent: Kathleen Bodie, Director of Special Education, Mark Ryder and Chief Financial Officer, Sue Mazzarella

Call to order

Chairwoman Ms. Burns addressed the committee and pointed out that the School Committee Attorney; Mr. Alan Miller had information pertaining to the litigation strategy therefore the Emergency School Committee had to be called.

Ms Burns added that the advice given to her by town counsel was that a vote taken in Executive Session on May 13, 2008, should be re-taken in open session and be reflected in regular School Committee minutes.

Ms. Heigham motioned that the chair read the motion made by Mr. Curran during Executive Session as indicated in the executive session notes and Ms. Sheffler seconded this motion

Vote 7:0

Ms. Burns read the following motion from May 13, 2008 Executive Session notes.

“Mr. Joe Curran motioned to request that transcripts of the arbitration hearings held to date be provided to the School Committee by June 2, date certain, to read through in order that the school Committee can review for potential violations to policy and potential budget impact, Ms. Burns seconded the motion.

**Roll Call: Ms. Heigham No, Mr. Curro No, Ms. Sheffler No, Mr. Thielman No, Mr. Spangler No, Mr. Curran Yes, Ms. Burns Yes
Vote 2 – 5 Motion fails”**

Executive Session

On a motion by Ms. Ms. Sheffler and seconded by Mr. Spangler it was voted to enter into Executive Session at 7:35 pm for the purpose to hear Litigation Strategy.

**Roll Call: Ms. Heigham Yes, Mr. Curro Yes, Ms. Sheffler Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Mr. Spangler Yes, Mr. Curran Yes, Ms. Burns Yes
Vote 7:0 unanimous**

On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Curran it was voted and approved to exit out of Executive Session and return to the Regular School Committee meeting at 9:12 pm.

**Roll Call: Ms. Heigham Yes, Mr. Curro Yes, Ms. Sheffler Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Mr. Spangler Yes, Mr. Curran Yes, Ms. Burns Yes
Vote 7:0 unanimous**

All members returned to regular meeting

Ms. Burns offered the committee to take a five-minute break

At 9:20 p.m. Chairwoman Ms. Burns read the Letter of Resignation from the Superintendent of Schools.

“To: The Arlington School Committee

From: Nate Levenson

Date: August 7, 2008

It is with great sadness that I share with you my decision to resign as Superintendent of the Arlington Public Schools, effective immediately. I have enjoyed working with a talented staff and a community that is dedicated to education and I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish over the last three years. The reading intervention program, support for the social and emotional needs of students, improvements in special education, enhanced English language learning programs, and a true culture of collaboration and teamwork are important achievements that have helped the children of Arlington. It was our thoughtful, out of the box, financial management that made these improvements possible during – and despite -- three years of deep budget cuts.

Despite the many successes, however, these have been very hard years for me personally. The community is divided, and differences of opinion often turned to very public and personal attacks. The intense political climate of last year has been especially difficult.

I'm glad that the community recognizes all of my decisions and actions as Superintendent have always put the needs of children, teaching and learning first. At times these decisions have been unpopular with some, especially my decision to dismiss a principal and teacher for inappropriate conduct. I am confident that the decisions I made were the right ones, supported by solid evidence. But even as I know this to be true, recent developments in the appeals process are showing signs of fueling an already heated divide in the community and complicating and already complicated arbitration. I hope my resignation will help the district begin to heal.

I believe I have been the agent of change I was hired to be. More importantly, these changes have received strong support from parents, teachers and administrators. In the process, however, I have become a lightning rod for many of the growing pains in the community. I appreciate the School Committee's support and by their recent three-year extension of my contract, but for my own personal well-being and for the healing of the town, I think it is time for someone else to continue the important work of leading the Arlington Public Schools from good to great.

I will miss Arlington, but it is time for me to move on.”

Ms. Burns cited that she hopes the public understands that a statement will be prepared in the next few days and that all litigation strategy planning discussed during executive session is confidential but noted that a few things have to happen 1. We need a strong experienced leader to lead Arlington, 2. We need to let the superintendent know the procedures of not entering the building and 3. The superintendent's computer must be seized.

On a motion by Ms. Heigham and seconded by Mr. Curran it was voted and approved to accept the Resignation of Superintendent Levenson.

**Roll Call: Ms. Heigham Yes, Mr. Curro Yes, Ms. Sheffler Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Mr. Spangler Yes, Mr. Curran Yes, Ms. Burns Yes
Vote: 7:0 unanimous**

Mr. Thielman motioned that the School Committee appoints Ms. Kathleen Bodie as interim Superintendent until such time that the School Committee take further action.

**Roll Call: Ms. Heigham Yes, Mr. Curro Yes, Ms. Sheffler Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Mr. Spangler Yes, Mr. Curran No, Ms. Burns No
Vote 5:2 (Curran and Burns voted No)**

Mr. Thielman declined the friendly amendment from Ms. Heigham to add acting superintendent.

The committee members suggested possible candidates and search discussions process.

Ms. Burns indicated she had contacted MASS and MASC as well as former superintendents for guidance and had a candidate with experience to step in for the next few weeks. Mr. Thielman said he and others did not have the benefit of that information but stated he spoke with Ms. Bodie earlier in the day and she articulated to him, when asked, that she would take on the appointment, if so assigned.

Mr. Curro, Ms. Heigham and Ms. Sheffler concur that Ms. Bodie would be the best person to fill this interim assignment. Mr. Curran and Ms. Burns would have preferred to recommend former Superintendent Ms. Kathleen Donovan over Ms. Bodie due to Ms. Donovan's previous public relations experience and critical proven savvy.

Mr. Spangler appreciates all the research and effort Ms. Burns has done for the committee but will support to have Ms. Bodie be interim Superintendent.

Mr. Thielman moved that the chair be directed to attend to any and all housekeeping matters related to the resignation of the Superintendent of Schools with Mr. Spangler seconded and amending the motion to inform all School Committee members on all actions. Vote 7:0 unanimous

Mr. Spangler motioned to direct chair to set up another meeting (not date certain) to bring in such professional advisors Ms. Burns seems appropriate to help find a new superintendent and Mr. Thielman seconded this motion Vote 7:0 unanimous

Adjourn

Mr. Spangler motioned to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. and Mr. Thielman seconded the motion. Vote 7:0 unanimous

***Submitted by
Karen Fitzgerald
Arlington School Committee
Administrative Assistant***

**THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING Minutes
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2008
7:30 PM**

Present: School Committee Members:
Chair, Denise Burns, Vice Chair, Joe Curran, Joe Curro, Leba Heigham, Secretary Ronald Spangler, and Jeff Thielman.

Superintendent: Interim Superintendent: Kathleen Bodie, Director of Special Education, Mark Ryder Chief Financial Officer, Sue Mazzarella,

Absent: Sue Sheffler

Public Participation

(only related to Superintendent Search and process)

Mr. Josh Lobel appreciates Kathleen Bodie stepping up and encouraged the School Committee members to fill the position within and work for stability.

Outline of Objectives

Ms. Denise Burns outlined the objectives of tonight's meeting and why the committee asked her to bring in experts from MASC and MASS to receive information to help with the process to look for a superintendent or interim superintendent. Ms. Burns also acknowledged all the work Ms. Bodie has been doing over the few weeks and appreciates keeping the schools run smoothly. .

Experts Opinion

Mr. Glen Koocher, Executive Director of Massachusetts Associations for School Committee spoke on how a transition begins and noted that Arlington is a very attractive community and what has happened over that past few months is now history and we need to move forward. Mr. Koocher noted we have plenty of time to deal with the long-term administrative issues and has candidates available but is confident we will do well with our choice. Mr. Koocher noted that the MASC has the resources to help support the search for a superintendent or an interim superintendent with no financial interest and is committed to support our School Committee today, next week or next year.

Mr. Tom Scott, Executive Director of Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents stressed to the committee that a candidate would look at how the Arlington School Committee is as a group and how they work with the community and work towards consensus and an attractive community to bring in great candidates. We will have competition with other communities and we need to get out front with the process.

Q&A School Committee members

The committee members asked about the difference on the length of contract for an interim superintendent 1 year vs. 2 year and if the interim superintendent can be part of the pool of candidates. Mr. Koocher said it's all about what the School Committee wants. Some districts have selected an interim to serve a two-year period for specific reasons. Mr. Koocher said interim candidates can be a candidate also noted with media, faculty and the community doing reference checking on their own some candidates will not compete with an internal candidate due to the making the search process public and do not want to fail.

The cost of the search process was raised and if committee members do own search it is rather small cost but if recruiters were involved it would range from \$15,000 - \$80,000. The committee itself would be looked at by candidates and it was recommended that the MASC offer transitions team building for School Committee members and at no cost to Arlington and this could be very productive and would take three to four months to complete. Tom noted looking forward a school committee needs to hire a candidate that is a school plan leader and needs to deal with many issues and meet the needs of each School Committee. Experienced superintendents are no guarantee to fit the schools needs and each candidate's needs common sense and can bring various experiences.

Subcommittee Appointment

Ms. Burns the chair of the School Committee would like to appoint Ms. Leba Heigham, Mr. Jeff Thielman and herself to the Subcommittee of the Superintendent Search Process to investigate hiring a superintendent or interim superintendent.

Interim Search decision

Mr. Ron Spangler motioned move that we create a subcommittee and the chair be in charge with review for search process and report back to full committee, by date certain, September 9, 2008 with a recommendation on an interim Superintendent by September 23rd with a selection of permanent superintendent.

Vote 6:0

The committee stressed the importance on the options and will consult the MASC and MASS and work together on the search process.

Ms. Leba Heigham point of privilege acknowledged Ms. Bodie on the Interim Superintendent and the duties she has already done.

Mr. Curro also exercised a point of personal privilege to praise Ms. Bodie and in particular the work she did to ensure a smooth opening day.

Interim Superintendent Bodie wanted Arlington to know how great the teachers and the leaders are and thanked the team.

Other (superintendency-related) business

Adjourn

Mr. Curran motioned to adjourn at 8:55 pm with Ms. Leba Heigham seconding the motion.

Vote 6:0

Unanimous

Submitted by

Karen M. Fitzgerald

Administrative Assistant

Arlington School Committee