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School Committee Minutes 10/19/2007

DRAFT Minutes

Submitted by S. Lovelace

Superintendent/School Committee Retreat

October 19, 2007

12:00 noon – 5:00 pm

Attendees:

Susan Lovelace, Jeff Thielman, Sue Sheffler, Nate Levenson,
Sean Garballey (1:00 pm – 5:00 pm)
Ron Spangler (1:15 pm – 5:00 pm)
Joe Curran (1:15 pm – 3:30 pm)
Administrative Cabinet (2:00 pm – 4:30 pm) Jill McCarthy, Charlie Skidmore, Kerry Dunne,
Elise Frangos, Wallis Raemer, Sheri Donovan, Stephanie Zerchykov, Deb D'Amico, Bob Penta,
Steve Carme, Alan Brown, Kathie Bodie, Cindy Bouvier, Judi Malone-Neville, Jerry
Kupperschmidt, Sue Mazzarella

Discussion of Community Read:

Kathy Fennelley, previous School Committee member and board member of the Robbins Library, led S. Lovelace, J. Thielman, S. Sheffler and N. Levenson in a very interesting discussion relating the issues we face as a School Committee to Arlington's community read: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

Setting the Stage for the Next Six Months:

S. Lovelace facilitated a brainstorming process to identify "WHAT" committee members think are the major issues facing us and "HOW" we might go about starting to address them. Due to time constraints we were not able to complete the "HOW" list and S. Lovelace will be sending it out to members for further ideas. (list attached)

Goals Discussion

S. Lovelace facilitated a discussion between committee members and the Administrative Cabinet looking at the following three questions:

Why these goals?

What are we trying to accomplish?

How will we know if we have been successful?

Key points included:

- * The difference between ELL and Special Education even though they are both under Goal #1.
 - * Pros and cons of measuring successful implementation of the goals by measuring student achievement
 - * Strategies for integrating social studies with english and math.
 - * Ideas for the 21st Century curriculum
 - * How much can be accomplished and how soon
 - * The need for an introduction to the Goals document that includes the "other important areas" so they are at the beginning of the document w/ a list of what we are continuing to work on and then move into what the goals will be for this year. (a suggestion was made to look at wellness policy for model language.)
- * The negative tone at School Committee meetings has a negative impact on teacher and community morale – several suggestions were made for improving school committee

meetings including:

1. carefully chosen words and respectful behavior should be modeled by committee members;
2. focusing on teaching and learning and not “playing politics” in discussing administrative issues;
3. building support for the schools but ensuring that at each meeting accomplishments of teachers, students and administrators are recognized and appreciated;
4. Asking the student representatives to report on the high school activities as part of the regular meeting

Wrap-up with Committee:

A request was made to provide committee members with an “elevator speech” that can be used when engaging with community members day-to-day. S. Lovelace has agreed to provide a draft by the first meeting in November to be discussed by the committee.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FACING THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THEM?

1. WHAT: Clarity on the budget timeline – what needs to happen – how & when will public be engaged?

HOW: Nate wants the budget approved by 3/15/08. We should aim to provide members with the list of issues we need to wrestle with by 11/27/07. The process by which the budget gets developed should be published on the website.

2. WHAT: Goal Approval

HOW: working with the Administrative Cabinet;
(sub-item: how do we share the goals with the public?)

3. WHAT: School Committee meetings

HOW: Need to cover the elements of each goal (monthly dedication to particular goal?) by having discussions with teachers and administrators. Recognize student achievement – share the good that’s happening.

4. WHAT: Need to review impact of cuts and changes from last year.

HOW: already voted to have Nate report back in February 2008.

5. WHAT: Improving relationship w/teachers (and union)

HOW: Nate will be holding meeting on goals in each school building to seek input from teachers without them having to come to him. Based on feedback from Administrative Cabinet it is a small number of teachers and that we need to give it time. It should not be an issue of discussion at school committee meetings, but teachers should be invited to present on their work.

6. WHAT: Improving relationship with community members

HOW:

7. WHAT: Pre-requisite policy

HOW: Nate will review with staff and report back to the committee

8. WHAT: Foreign languages – set up/structure

HOW:

9. WHAT: Library Program

HOW: Need more accurate information about what is currently being done by each school – as C&I Subcommittee to look into.

10. WHAT: Subcommittees and how they are being used – is there a better method such as “input teams?”

HOW:

11. WHAT: Our audit – when do we review it - what kind of communication do we want about it?

HOW:

12. WHAT: Better connection with selectman and town manager

HOW:

13. WHAT: Acceptable use policy

HOW:

14. WHAT: Growing the “top line” of the budget

HOW:

15. WHAT: Increased attention to science and technology

HOW:

16. WHAT: Aggressive pursuit of facilities funds

HOW:

17. WHAT: Vigilance on keeping focus on student health and safety

HOW: Get data from Wellness Committee about what is being done what’s different now in food services, physical activity, etc. Work w/Cindy to set up a reporting structure for committee that we use with the public.

18. WHAT: User fees – clarification of the policies and understanding what parents are paying for.

HOW: