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Minutes 02/06/2006

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2006
7:30 P.M.

Present: *Jeff Thielman, Chair* *Susan Lovelace*
 Sue Sheffler, Vice Chair *Paul Schlichtman*
 Suzanne Owayda, Secretary *Martin Thrope*
 Sean Garballey

Superintendent: *Nate Levenson*
Asst. Supt. *Kevin Hutchinson*
Sp. Ed. Director *Barbara Cataldo*
Student Rep: *EJ Harris*

Call to order: 7:35 PM

Mr. Thielman requested a moment of silence for the recent death of Arlington High School senior Cameron O'Connor.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- .. Diane Mahon – safety concerns for APS cheerleaders*
- .. Nora Mann – offered support as an official for the Middlesex District Attorney's office*
- .. Amy Cohen- APS parent and Town-wide PTO president, thanked AHS principal Charlie Skidmore and all staff for an outstanding job and for great ongoing communication with parents. Ms. Cohen also expressed hope that the International travel web site would include all school trips taking place district wide.*
- .. Cindy Starks – urged the School Committee to place a full time nurse in every Arlington school.*
- .. Dour Rosner – Bishop School parent – urged the Committee to support the compromise plan reached between Supt. Levenson and the Bishop School parents on the continuation of the School bus for a fee.*
- .. Annie LaCourt – offered support to the School Committee on the recent suicide of an AHS student, emphasizing that the situation is the responsibility of the entire community; the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager will continue to work towards solutions.*
- .. Susan Stewart – APS parent – thanked the School Committee for the potential to expand an after school program at the Ottoson Middle School.*
- .. Netta Davis- Bishop School parent- spoke in support of a full time nurse in every school; noting that the school nurse is an integral part of her son's school day.*
- .. Mike Gallagher – Brackett School parent voiced concern over drop off and pick up safety at the school, more Crossing Guard supervision is needed and requested a hold off on any change on Fayette Street.*

APS RESPONSE TO RECENT TRAGEDY

- Review of APS draft plan. Superintendent Levenson stated Principal Skidmore and his leadership team and staff were a source of compassion and supported students throughout the day. The Arlington Public Schools have and will maintain a significant effort in addressing health, mental health, stress, drug and alcohol issues. The Superintendent explained that a debate has emerged over what problems we need to address. Is drug use the problem? Is it alcohol? Was stress or depression the root cause of the tragedy? Is this a school problem or a community problem? The answer is yes to all; they are often interrelated.*

Schools have a moral responsibility for the health and welfare of our students, but so do parents, the police and the community at large.

Mr. Levenson explained that a team would be assembled to formulate an action plan to increase our already significant efforts in helping address the issues of stress, mental health, drugs and alcohol. The leadership team will include the Superintendent, high school principal, health director, policy chief, AYCC director and others as needed. We will also work closely with community groups such as the Coalition for

Youth Health and Safety.

The response will have many elements and may include:

- .. More education for parents, students, and staff*
- .. Methods of improving parent cooperation and support*
- .. Mentors for at risk students as well a focus on helping students at risk rather than punishing them*
- .. Increased communication and cooperation with the police department and local social services*
- .. Examining where technology fits for detecting and identifying drugs and drugs use.*
- .. Revisions to the student hand book*

The Superintendent stated that we are at the beginning of a long process and that no decisions have been made yet.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace seconded by Ms. Owayda and amended it was

*.. Voted that the Superintendent assemble a Leadership Team to formulate an action plan for addressing the issues of stress, mental health, drug and alcohol use among Arlington students. The Leadership Team will include the Superintendent, High School Principal, Middle School Principal, Health director, Chief of Police, AYCC Director and others as needed. The Leadership Team will work closely with community members and groups such as the Coalition for Youth Health and Safety, **and shall also involve several stakeholders including, faculty, teachers, and students.** An outside facilitator will provide expert guidance on selecting and implementing science-based mental health and substance abuse services and interventions that take into account the specific risk and protective factors present for Arlington students.*

The Leadership Team shall report its action plan recommendations to the School Committee by April 11, 2006.

BUDGET

· State aid update- Supt. Levenson reported that State Aid is not up as high as projected and below the 4% anticipated in the override budget. Reasons for this include increases in health insurance, utilities, and Minuteman contributions.

Approval of FY '06 Working Budget

Supt. Levenson requested approval of the FY2006 working budget noting that it reflects not policy changes, staffing, philosophical changes and reflects the actual budget voted by the School Committee on April 5, 2005.

On a motion by Ms. Schlichtman seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was

Voted to adopt the Fiscal Year 2006 working budget as presented by Superintendent Levenson. 7-0

English Language Arts Teachers

Elise Frangos, Chair of the English Department gave a power point presentation on the outcomes of increasing English teachers course load from four to five classes. Ms. Frangos focused on:

- Emotional Safety- is promoted when teachers have time and opportunity to conference with students*
- Student Achievement – is fostered by manageable caseloads, time for follow through*
- Talent retention- occurs in districts that value teacher work*
- Best Practices – are fostered in settings where teachers have time to share, innovate and improve*

Ms. Frangos stated that the secondary ELA teachers currently facilitate the National Honor Society, the Literary Magazine, the school newspaper, the developing Literacy Lab and that adding another class would result in a 25% increase in workload. Ms. Frangos urged the School Committee not to support the teaching of a fifth English class.

The general consensus of the School Committee was that the district is in dire financial straights, that the proposal is consistent with the contract, and addresses equity issues with the remaining staff.

Superintendent Levenson pointed out that the addition of a fifth class does not mean adding more students or that the student caseload will automatically increase, Nate also pointed out that he had addressed the stated issues with Ms. Frangos and he does support the Literacy Lab; his plan is to use teachers for remediation and intervention to help students. Mr. Levenson believes the proposal is very reasoned, and balances the real needs of students and teachers.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was

*.. Voted that the Superintendent is instructed to build the FY '07 budget by assigning middle and high school English Language Arts (ELA) teachers **five (5)** teaching periods per day as negotiated in the most recent contract between the Arlington Education Association (AEA) and the Arlington School Committee. The Superintendent is directed to make every reasonable effort to ensure that the fifth period taught by ELA teachers supports the District's remediation and intervention efforts and/or supports the expansion of electives. The School Committee shall review the Superintendent's implementation of this directive in March 2006 when it reviews and approves the final budget sent to Town Meeting. 6-1 (Mr. Garballey with a no vote)*

ESTIMATED NET SAVINGS: \$243,425

Bishop Bus

Moved that the Superintendent be directed to build the FY '07 budget by charging a fee of \$180 per child with a cap of \$270 for a family. (Proposed by the Superintendent after consultation with representatives of the Bishop Bus parents).

ESTIMATED NET SAVINGS: \$15,300 (80 riders x \$180, plus 10 additional family members at \$90 each).

Ms. Lovelace amended the motion to read :That the Superintendent is directed to develop the fee structure with the understanding that the fee policy be consistent with language included in the Kindergarten Fee Policy JFABA which reads as follows:

The fee will be waived for a family if the family qualifies for reduced lunch under the federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program.

The Fee may be waived if the family is experiencing exigent circumstances such as an unforeseen medical problem, change in family status, change in employment status for one or both parents, or other emergencies. This type of waiver would require a discussion with the building Principal and/or the Superintendent of Schools.

Approved Motion

Voted that the Superintendent is directed to build the FY '07 budget by charging a fee of \$180 per child with a cap of \$270 for a family. (80 riders x \$180, plus 10 additional family members at \$90 each).

The fee will be waived for a family if the family qualifies for reduced lunch under the federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program.

The Fee may be waived if the family is experiencing exigent circumstances such as an unforeseen medical problem, change in family status, change in employment status for one or both parents, or other emergencies. This type of waiver would require a discussion with the building Principal and/or the Superintendent of Schools. 6-1 (Mr. Garballey with a no vote).

AFTER SCHOOL REPORT

Members of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization and APS parents spoke to the need for an after school program at the Ottoson Middle School. Aspects of the program should include working on challenging projects, increased physical activity in non-competitive sports, and stronger homework. The expanded programs could help supplement what students learn in school and help build skills that they will need to enter a 21st century workforce.

The group encouraged the community relations subcommittee to pursue the idea of a written parent survey for all 4th, 5th 6th grade parents should be invited to answer questions on how their child spends after school time and how would the parent like the time to be spent.

In 6th or 7th grades parents could be asked why do you want after school, what days and times and how much would you be willing to pay for a high quality program. They suggested that a coordinator be designated to work in partnership with Ms. Bouris and other Ottoson Staff to design a plan based on the real interest and needs of parents.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace

Moved that the School Committee direct the Superintendent to undertake a parent survey that would include student input on how we can expand and improve the Ottoson after school out of school options such that would be in place by September 2006.

Supt. Levenson agreed that it is a good idea but offered a different approach. – Mr. Levenson stated that if we are going to have this running by September we need to have a business plan. Nate recommended to set aside a small stipend (a few thousand dollars) to hire a part time coordinator with skill and experience to conduct the survey, analyze the survey results and work with the Ottoson principal, staff, and others to develop the business plan for expansion/reconfiguring the after-school program at Ottoson.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace seconded by Mr. Garballey it was

Moved to direct the superintendent to develop a parent survey on how to expand the OMS after school offerings by September 2006.

The motion was amended to read

Approved Motion

On a motion by Susan Lovelace seconded by Mr. Thrope

Voted that the Superintendent assign/hire a coordinator to undertake a written parent survey (that would include student input) to determine an interest and the needs for an out of school time program at the Ottoson Middle School; the coordinator would analyze data from the survey and present a potential proposal for a viable program for September 2006.

Unanimous Vote.

APPROVAL OF AHS PROGRAM OF STUDIES

Arlington High School Principal Charles Skidmore reviewed the proposed changes in the 2006-2007 Program of Studies.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was

Voted to approve the AHS 2006-2007 amended program of studies as presented by Charles Skidmore.

Unanimous Vote 7-0

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- *Job description for coordinator to increase in-district SPED capacity*
- *Job description for a Special Education Family Outreach Coordinator*

On a motion by Mr. Thrope seconded by Mr. Garballey

Moved that the job descriptions be sent back to the Superintendent for clarification and establishment on terms of employment, salary and work year.

Supt. Levenson stated that he would like to see these two positions in the district but explained that it is unclear if the positions can be filled and funded this year; he further added that if the school committee is not on board with the concept he does not want to waste time investigating the option.

Both Mr. Schlichtman and Thielman urged defeat of the motion and urged approval of the job descriptions.
Mr. Thrope withdrew the motion.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was:
Voted that the School Committee endorses the concept of the Special Education Program Developer and Coordinator and requests that the Superintendent return with a formal job description. Unanimous Vote

On a motion by Mr. Thrope seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was:
Voted that the School Committee endorses the concept of a Special Education Family Outreach Coordinator and requests that the Superintendent return to the School Committee with a formal job description. Unanimous Vote

- Minority Hiring Action Plan- the Superintendent will report out on this at later date.
 - Approval of trip to Japan
- Supt. Levenson explained that the trip is an effort to push the research and the concept of international student exchange, the destination is Arlington's sister city and is sponsored by the Town of Arlington, it allows APS students the opportunity to travel internationally and is at no cost to APS and is a family vacation.

On a motion by Ms. Sheffler and seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was
Voted to approve the trip to Japan on April 12, 2006 for 12 days and 10 nights. Unanimous vote.

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 requests, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence.

- Amendment to JF (adding "proof of residency" for kindergarten registration)
- Amendment to JFAB (adding cross reference to policy on admission of non-resident students)
- Amendment to JFBB (adding cross reference to policy on school choice)
- Approval of Warrant # 06102 in the amount of \$434,931.02
- Approval of Field Trip
- Approval of the regular meeting minutes of December 13, 2005

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was
Voted to approve the consent agenda as present. Unanimous Vote 7-0

Approval of Warrant # 06095 in the amount of \$647,815.86

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Mr. Thrope it was
Voted to approve warrant #06095 in the amount of \$647,815.86. 6-0-1 abstention by Mr. Garballey

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Garballey requested that the Committee discuss at a later date the welfare and health currently in Arlington High School.

Mr. Schlichtman requested that the Superintendent check to see what place holders are needed for warrant articles.

The Chair stated that unfinished items would be considered at the next meeting.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES REPORT – next meeting

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES – next meeting

SECRETARY'S REPORT next meeting

On a motion by Mr. Thrope seconded by Ms. Owayda it was
Voted to enter executive session for the purpose of negotiations with no further business to be conducted upon return to open session except to adjourn. Roll Call: Unanimous

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Negotiations

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Mr. Thrope it was
Voted to adjourn @ 11:35 pm

Submitted by
Karen Tassone
Committee Secretary