



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## School Committee Minutes 12/13/2005

**ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2005**

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

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

Call to Order: 7:40 PM

Mr. Thielman called for a moment of silence for Nora Tosti, daughter of Alan and Barbara Tosti.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Cindy Starks, member of the Arlington for Nurses, spoke in support of full time nurses in all schools and the concerns with the current situation. Ms. Starks presented a petition with 300 signatures from concerned citizens requesting that full time nurses be a top priority. Ms. Starks stated that the group is aware of the financial restraints and is interested in working with the School Committee to try to solve the situation.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

.. **Snow Day** – Supt. Levenson spoke relative to the snowstorm on Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. The Superintendent acknowledged that the recent snowstorm proved to be a difficult day and holding school that day was not a good decision. Nate discussed the process used to determine a no school day (making a decision on information available at the time) noting that it has been used for the past 20 years. Mr. Levenson emphasized that everyone's number one goal is student safety. The process is still a good one, but the Superintendent would like to have better communication with parents and staff and he will examine that aspect. A letter did go home to all parents and staff explaining the decision making process.

#### **AAA (Administrators) Contract Update**

Supt. Levenson reported on the Arlington Administrators Association contract. Mr. Levenson explained that the AAA contract was made up of multiple documents with a number of amendments and never became a final printed document. Members of the AAA are Department Heads, Assistant Principals, Supervisors, and House Deans. Nate noted that there cannot be any changes in the current document; it is for the committee's review as we move forward towards the start of negotiations sometime in the spring.

Mr. Thielman urged Committee members to read the contract and send any questions/issues to Nate. Jeff along with Suzanne Owayda makes up the school committee negotiating team.

#### **Update on AHS Semi-formal**

Arlington High School principal Charles Skidmore gave a report on the junior-senior semi formal that was held on November 18<sup>th</sup> at the Crowne Plaza in Woburn. Mr. Skidmore reported that he has held a number of small meetings with some involved parties but that he would convene a full meeting with all involved administrators, chaperones, and club advisors on Friday. Mr. Skidmore explained that the incidents are not representative of most of Arlington High School students and that the bad choices by a small percentage of students diminished the number of chaperones available to deal with the large number of remaining students. This is not a problem at either the junior or senior proms due to the fact that there are fewer students attending those events. Mr. Skidmore reported that the idea of the junior-senior semi was originally initiated as a fundraiser but that it no longer serves that function. He will discuss why we still hold this event and the possibility of holding future events somewhere in town.

.. Approval of New Family Resource & Assessment position in ELL Department

.. Supt. Levenson presented the position of New Family Resource & Assessment in the ELL Department. The proposed position was created by Jill McCarthy, ELL Program Director, to help families transition into the school system. The position would allow for coordination in a timely manner for registration of new families and would facilitate paperwork and electronic data for the assessment and intake process. The position is part time, 10-12 hours per week plus 40 hours during the summer, and would report to the ELL Program Director.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope seconded by Ms. Owayda it was Voted to approve the position of New Family Resource & Assessment in the ELL Department as presented by Supt. Levenson. Unanimous vote 7-0.

.. Redistricting cost/time analysis not available at this time.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF STUDENT TRAVEL SAFETY GROUP**

Ms. Sheffler presented a motion to create a student travel safety group. Ms. Sheffler explained that the motion was the result of discussion in the budget subcommittee and the cost of the current situation with the crossing guards. Ms. Sheffler reviewed a spreadsheet reviewing the number of crossing guards (33), their posts and the results of a survey noting the busyness of each post.

On a motion by Sue Sheffler seconded by Susan Lovelace it was **Moved** that a Student Travel Safety Group be established to review how students currently travel to school and to develop a coordinated and monitored plan that allows safe passage for schoolchildren, regardless of weather or traffic conditions, to their schools. The Student Travel Safety Group shall make recommendations to the School Committee by no later than February 28, 2006 on any changes in traffic safety supervisors or other personnel involved in ensuring the safe passage of Arlington students to school. The Student Travel Safety Group shall include one School Committee member named by the Chairman, the Chief of Police, the School Safety Officer, a representative of the Transportation Advisory Committee, a representative of the Department of Public Works, a representative of the town-wide PTO, and one Principal named by the Superintendent. The Co-Chairs of the Student Travel Safety Group shall be the School Committee representative and the Chief of Police. If necessary, the Student Travel Safety Group may continue to meet after February 28<sup>th</sup> in order to monitor the implementation of a revised student travel plan.

Mr. Thrope voiced concern over the size of the committee and stated that there may be reasons for the placement of crossing guards at certain posts; he would like the police chief to investigate the traffic patterns and offered the following substitute motion seconded by Mr. Garballey:

**Moved** to request that the Chief Of Police investigate and analyze travel patterns to and from school using whatever resources he deems appropriate and to report to the school committee by February 28, 2006 regarding the configuration of traffic supervisors and their supervision that will maintain a high level of student safety. Said report should also address drop off and pickup traffic flow at and around each school and should include scenarios with and without a Bishop bus. Mr. Garballey suggested that Safety Office McKenna be inserted into the motion (no second). Motion fails 2-5 Mr. Thrope and Mr. Garballey with yes votes.

On Ms. Sheffler's motion as above. 6-1 Mr. Thrope with a no vote.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was Voted to appoint Sue Sheffler as co-chair of the student travel safety group along with Police Chief Ryan. Motion passes 6-1-0 abstention by Mr. Thrope.

### **BUDGET OVERVIEW**

#### **Budget Cycle**

Mr. Thielman reviewed the schedule of the budget cycle noting that, at this point, it appears that we will need to have both meetings in January dedicated primarily to the budget. Second, the workshop on Tuesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> will focus on the "areas of study" that Superintendent Levenson will ask us to consider at this Tuesday's meeting. Third, the extended day program report and discussion will take place on January 24<sup>th</sup> instead of January 10<sup>th</sup>.

.. December 13<sup>th</sup> School Committee Meeting: Budget Overview. Presentation by Superintendent Levenson on the current budget environment, the need to move forward, and eight areas of study on how to do more with less. Comments/questions by the committee.

.. January 3, 2006 Budget Workshop (5 – 8 p.m.): Review of the "eight areas of study."

.. January 10, 2006 School Committee Meeting: Review and approval of the preliminary budget to be sent to the Finance Committee (Approval of "bottom line" number).

.. January 24, 2006 School Committee Meeting: Additional budget discussions. Members' opportunity to make changes in the budget.

.. March 14, 2006 School Committee Meeting: Public Hearing on the FY '07 budget as mandated by Policy DBG. Vote on final budget to be submitted to Town Meeting.

Mr. Schlichtman requested a time change from 5:00 – 8:00 pm to 6:00 – 9:00 pm on the January 3<sup>rd</sup> Budget Workshop meeting.

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

Voted to reschedule the time of the School Committee Budget Workshop from 5:00 – 8:00 PM to 6:00 – 9:00 PM on Tuesday January 3, 2006. Unanimous vote.

### **2006-2007 Budget Discussion**

Supt. Levenson provided a PowerPoint presentation for discussion on the 2006/2007 budget that explained:

- .. the current budget environment-
- .. where we are now,
- .. what commitments were made in passing the override,
- .. what assumptions were made in reaching the 4% and 7% figures,
- .. Health insurance increase of 13% not 7%; State aid increase at least \$400,00.00 less; Minuteman expense likely to be more than 4% (more research needed), Symmes Project delayed – next year revenue reduced \$100,00.00
- .. Is this definitely our budget environment? No it is a fluid process, target could change month to month; things could improve (i.e. Ottoson reimbursement could come in early, Symmes litigation could resolve, health care task force could identify potential savings, or worse (local receipts estimate may be high)
- .. What does this all add up to? What was \$1,371,236.00 is now \$889,918. How far will \$889,918.00 go in terms of built in increases, potential salary increases (estimates)
- .. Future years will be much tighter.
- .. There is room for optimism; we owe it to the children and taxpayers to do more for less and to look to do things in different ways.
- .. Clear priorities- Nate explained that safety, core academics, competitive pay (for our staff is morally correct, and strategically important for the school system); we must support all learners and educate the whole child.

### **Eight areas to look at the we may be able to do differently**

- .. Leadership and leadership support – current spending \$1,590,952.00
- .. Remediation and intervention - current spending \$3,470,949.00
- .. Special Education out of district, our goal must remain to provide high level of services to children in need; many parents prefer a quality in-district program for their children – current spending \$3,913, 103.
- .. Transportation, currently includes APS personnel, contracted services, traffic supervisors and equipment.
- .. Grants – include money received into the budget
- .. ACE – current budget \$50,000. versus \$900,000. on non-core subjects.
- .. ELA teaching load current class size of 22.75
- .. Nursing –no one questions the desire for full time nursing, but we need to decide how best to provide that coverage.

Supt. Levenson emphasized that there will be no surprises, any staff involved in changes will be involved, and part of the any discussion.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope seconded by Ms. Owayda it was

Voted to move the 11:00 rule for 15 minutes to conclude the budget presentation and to approve the warrants on the Consent Agenda only. Mr. Thielman requested that New Business and the School Committee workshop on Friday also be included. Unanimous vote 7-0.

It is always possible that the school department's funding will increase or decrease during the spring of 2006. This is largely a function of the amount of funding given us by the state. If more or less money becomes available, the committee will have the chance during subsequent meetings this spring to modify the budget.

### **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.

- .. Approval of Warrant # 06068 in the amount of \$453,579.86
- .. Approval of Warrant # 06075 in the amount of \$1, 222,711.27

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was Voted to approve the Consent Agenda as presented

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

- Joint meeting with AEA on December 16<sup>th</sup> will take place from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm in the school committee room.
- Opening on Permanent Town Building Committee

- .. **POLICIES & PROCEDURES REPORT**
- .. **COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT**
- .. **MERIT PAY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**
- .. **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was Voted to adjourn @ 11:15 pm.

*Submitted by  
Karen Tassone  
Committee Secretary*