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School Committee Minutes 04/26/2005

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY APRIL 26, 2005
7:30 P.M.

Present: Jeff Thielman, Chair
Sue Sheffler, Vice Chair
Suzanne Owayda, Secretary

Sean Garballey
Paul Schlichtman
Martin Thrope

Superintendent: Kay Donovan
CFO: Rob Addelson
Asst. Supt. Joanne Gurry
Sp. Ed. Director Marilyn Bisbicos

Absent: Susan Lovelace

Call to Order: Mr. Thielman called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

WORKING MEETING ON ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Thielman stated that the reason for the working meeting was to assess where the high school is at this point, to review Mr. Skidmore's goals and to look at the impact of cuts necessary if the override does not pass.

Presentation by Mr. Skidmore and staff

AHS principal Charles Skidmore presented to the School Committee his goals for the 2004-2005 school year:

- 1) Establish myself as the school's educational leader by visiting classroom and providing feedback to teachers, presenting ideas and strategies at professional development days and departmental workshops, and by teaching a class as evidenced by classroom feedback sheets, handouts from workshops, exemplar lessons and student work from my own classroom teaching.
- 2) Increase faculty sense of community and positive spirit as measured by faculty comments, oral and in writing, and attendance at most faculty get together sponsored by various departments.
- 3) Increase communication with home as measured by monthly parent newsletters and 100% return of phone calls, as measured by newsletters and phone log.
- 4) Hold purpose meetings with administrative and guidance staff as measured by weekly agendas and follow up projects resulting from meetings.
- 5) Improve MCAS scores for both regular and special education students as evidenced by a 5% movement in each level towards the next higher performance level for regular education students and a similar 10% movement for SPED students.

Mr. Skidmore stated that his number 1 concern is scheduling for teachers at the high school. Especially how teachers are programmed without any common planning time, in small groups or by department. Charlie believes that we can do a better job with examining a new schedule. The second concern is the significant number of students "putting in their time" and doing the minimum required.

Mr. Skidmore reviewed the AHS full time comparisons from FY02-03, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005;

Mr. Skidmore explained that a failed override would mean for AHS:

- .. A reduction in classroom staff resulting in higher student numbers at all levels
- .. Reduction in administrative staff leaving fewer leaders to direct teacher teams to focus them onto deeper best instructional practices.
- .. Reduction in athletics deprives students of after school activities; the teen crime rate is at its highest between 2:00 and 6:00 pm.
- .. Reduction in the substitute budget will cause more students to be in Old Hall due to lack of coverage.
- .. Reduction in custodial staff results in less upkeep of the older buildings that need it.

AHS assistant principal Elli Freedman reviewed the summary of cuts and reinstatements 2003-2005 to 2004-2005

In response to Mr. Thrope's question if the staff and administrative team at the high school were aware of or had any input into the proposed reductions by Supt. Donovan, Mr. Skidmore explained that the entire administrative team was involved in the decision making, that they had time to submit their suggestions and recommendations and also had time to react to proposals made by the central administration. Further Mr. Skidmore stated that although any cuts and a failure of the override would exacerbate a bad situation he emphasized that Supt. Donovan did a superb job and if we need to make cuts he supports her decisions.

PRESENTATION BY PUBLIC MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Al Salipante, Chair of the Public Memorial Committee along with members Will St. Martin and Mr. Hurd spoke to the Committee relative to the charge of the public memorial committee. Mr. Salipante gave the history of the committee explaining that it was authorized under Article 20A of Town Bylaws and established by town meeting on March 26, 1984. The memorial committee is the official source for memorialization of persons by the Town of Arlington; it functions as an advisory committee only. In establishing the criteria for memorializing persons by the Town of Arlington the Committee placed its primary emphasis on uniformity.

Both Ms. Owayda and Mr. Thrope noted that the proposed language in policy FF/FFA/FFB Special Dedications of School Facilities states that any dedication request be referred to the Public Memorial Committee for an advisory opinion. Supt. Donovan along with members of the School Committee admitted that they had no previous knowledge of the memorial committee.

Mr. Schlichtman requested that the School Committee have the opportunity to appoint two of the five members on the public memorial committee if the school committee utilizes the committee on a consistent basis. Mr. Salipante stated that he would be agreeable to that, although the decision would be up to the Board of Selectmen.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Board of Selectmen & Warrant Articles Supt. Donovan reported that Town Meeting opened the previous evening, she included the Warrant Articles for Annual Town Meeting along with the Warrant for Special Town Meeting in the school committee packet for their review.

Update on APS Job Positions

Supt. Donovan reported that the position of Assistant Superintendent, Special Education Director and the elementary principal have been posted and search committees are being established to begin screening resumes and recommending candidates. Nate Levenson will sit in on the interviews.

The Superintendent announced that Bob Penta has been appointed permanent principal at Peirce School and that she has extended the contract for Martha Batten to remain at the Brackett School.

Mr. Thrope stated that Mrs. Donovan did not follow school committee policy GCE that states a position needs to be posted; additionally policy GCBB stated that the Superintendent will submit a contract to the school committee for their approval. Supt. Donovan explained that she is very pleased with Ms. Batten's work, extended her contract and will submit a copy of her contract at the next school committee meeting.

Ms. Owayda disagreed with Mr. Thrope's interpretation of the policy pointing out that Ms. Batten was hired as interim principal. It was an open process with a search committee comprised of school and community input; based on her performance Mrs. Donovan had the authority to appoint her permanently and extend her contract.

Supt. Donovan stated that any members of the School Committee interested in serving on any of the search committees for the posted administrative positions should notify her.

The Superintendent announced that the group of area superintendents continue meeting to discuss securing increased Chapter 70 money along with Reverse the Curse. Senator Travaglini has agreed to meet with a group of superintendents relative to the education budget.

Mrs. Donovan told the Committee that Arlington is receiving its first students without documentation. The Superintendent explained that Arlington follows both the Federal and State regulations regarding documented students. If a student is from another country APS charges that student \$6000.00 to attend our schools; they in return receive all proper documentation relative to their education on their passports and at their embassy. The undocumented students are not charged and come without any background paperwork, as a result staff is finding that they require additional services i.e. ELL, special education but without any supporting funds.

Update on Custodial Work

Supt. Donovan acknowledged the hard work of the custodial staff over school vacation. Mrs. Donovan reported that there were a number of staff out, they were short handed but managed to do a wonderful job cleaning the buildings.

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 # 05140 in the amount of \$571,773.24**

***Policy IL – Evaluation of Instructional Programs**

***Policy GDE/GDF – Support Staff Recruiting/Posting of Vacancies/Support Staff**

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

Voted to adopt the consent agenda as presented. 6-0.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy and Procedures – Second reading of FF/FFA/FFB

Mr. Thrope presented policy FF/FFA/FFB for a second reading and approval by the Committee.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Mr. Thrope it was
Voted to approved policy FF/FFA/FFB. 6-0.

Other committee reports – schedule of meetings

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment- Ms. Owayda has scheduled a meeting for Wednesday May 4th at 5:00 PM.

Policy & Procedures- Mr. Thrope will plan a meeting for sometime in the next two weeks.

PTBC – Mr. Thrope reported that the Dallin School is proceeding well and under budget at this point.

Report from Selectmen Liaison

Mr. Schlichtman reported that at its meeting on Saturday, the Finance Committee voted to reinstate funds to Arlington Youth Consultation Center previously cut by the Board of Selectmen.

BUDGET

Mr. Thielman explained that the school committee approved a preliminary budget (with an override) that was sent to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee approved the budget and at this point the School Committee needs to take a final look at the budget and if approved forward it to Town Meeting. Town Meeting has also requested that the School Committee submit to them a no override budget. Mr. Thielman continued that we must now approve a **with override budget** and a **without override budget**. Jeff stated that Supt. Donovan and Rob Addelson would review the budget with the override and then the budget subcommittee will report on their meeting and their recommendations for a **no override budget**.

CFO Rob Addelson reviewed the spreadsheet that used the FY04 budget as a baseline, the FY05 working budget, the recommended FY06 budget, and the changes in budget and staffing if the override fails. The figures reflect the Superintendent's proposal presented previously.

Mr. Thielman requested a motion for the recommended budget for Fiscal year 2006 with a successful override. So Moved by Mr. Garballey seconded by Ms. Owayda.
Approved 6-0.

Mr. Thielman requested a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2006 school budget without an override
Moved by Ms Sheffler seconded by Ms. Owayda.

Ms. Sheffler reported that at their meeting the budget subcommittee broke down categories from the FY05 budget into "core", "essential" and "desirable" categories to facilitate communication about fiscal priorities, and looked to see if the cuts recommended by Supt. Donovan matched the school committees sense of priorities and agreed that they do. There is nothing in the budget that is excessive. Ms. Sheffler reported on the existing service levels and what those levels would look like without the override.

12 teachers cut at secondary level
2 existing administrative positions
no 6th grade foreign language
Ottoson drama
Ottoson reading specialist
3 special education positions
no new teachers at elementary level
eliminate 4 existing staff positions at the elementary
eliminate an existing school nurse
eliminate an existing custodian position
eliminate an existing clerical position
would not fund the alternative education program at the high school
would not fund a electrician

The Subcommittee supported Supt. Donovan's reduction list with the exception of the athletic budget. The subcommittee recommended an additional cut of \$50,000.00 in athletics to fund the science coordinator at the elementary level. Ms. Sheffler explained that the cut in the athletic program has nothing to do with the quality of the program and recognizes its importance pointing out that currently 1100 students participate in a sports program. The School Committee will have a working meeting with the athletic department and other sports groups in Town to determine how to best manage the cuts.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was
Voted to support the recommendation of the budget subcommittee to remove \$50,000.00 from the athletic budget and add it to the science budget to fund the science coordinator at the elementary level. Approved 6-0.

Mr. Thrope stated that he believes that there is \$40,000.00 available in the superintendent compensation fund and questioned if that money had been redeployed. Supt. Donovan explained that the funds would go towards Mr. Levenson's request to attend a national conference, a contract negotiation seminar at MIT and would like to arrange for retreats for the School Committee and the principals. Kay believes that would add up to approximately \$10,000.00; The Superintendent has not made changes in that budget leaving that decision up to the School Committee.

Mr. Thrope moved with a second by Mr. Schlichtman

That the \$30,000.00 reserve in the Superintendent compensation and the \$5,000.00 of the difference in compensation between the present and future superintendent be reallocated.

Amended to transfer from the Supt. salary account into the teaching account. Approved 6-0.

The Committee discussed where the reallocated funds would go; Mr. Thrope suggested the funds be reallocated to fund special education positions.

Supt. Donovan recommended transferring the funds into a teaching account.

Mr. Thrope made a motion to delay the opening of the Dallin School until September 2006; Ms. Owayda seconded the motion for discussion purposes only.

Supt. Donovan explained that students would still need to be bused and believed that it is in the best interest of the students to open the new Dallin as soon as possible. We are asking the SBAB to supply money for 2 more schools and to build the school and leave it vacant does not speak to the need for rebuilding and the good outweighs the small amount money saved.

Vote to delay the opening of the Dallin School. 1-5 motion fails.

Vote on the motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2006 school budget without an override

Moved by Ms. Sheffler seconded by Ms. Owayda. 5-1 (Mr. Garballey noted that his no vote was due to the devastation that would result in the three positions being cut in the special education department).

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted
To move the 11:00 rule for 15 minutes. 6-0.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

· **Correspondence** Reviewed by Ms. Owayda

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

Voted to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 22, 2005 5-1-0 (Mr. Garballey abstain, Ms. Lovelace absent)

· **Summer Schedules**

Mr. Thielman reported that he is working with Nate Levenson to schedule a summer retreat with the school committee. Mr. Thielman requested that vacation updates be sent to the school committee office.

NEW BUSINESS

None

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

Voted to enter executive session for a personnel issue with no further business to be conducted upon return to open session except to adjourn. Roll Call: 6-0

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

Voted to adjourn at 11:10 PM

Submitted by

Karen Tassone

Committee Secretary