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School Committee Minutes, 08/11/2005

*The Arlington School Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, August 11, 2005
7:30 pm*

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

Superintendent: Nate Levenson
Chief Financial Officer: Rob Addelson
Assistant Superintendent: Kevin Hutchinson
Special Education Director: BJ Cataldo

Mr. Thielman called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Minutes taken by Suzanne Owayda – Secretary of the Arlington School Committee

Public Participation

Doug Rosner

Jim Schoonmaker

Netta Davis

All speakers spoke about the Bishop Bus and the need to continue it as a free service.

PRESENTATION BY SELECTWOMAN MAHON AND CAPTAIN SERSON

Presentation by Selectwoman Mahon and Captain Serson about keeping the basketball courts behind AHS open during the week and on weekends until 11:00 pm. They cited the positive police interaction with young people during that time. They also said there would be some adult supervision from the AYA. Ms. Mahon also mentioned the possibility of fundraising by AYA to offset any additional costs that may arise. Superintendent Levenson stated that this could be done as long as there was minimal adult supervision and no problems arose.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope second by Mr. Garballey it was voted to extend the basketball court hours to 11:00 pm throughout the summer and fall. Unanimous vote (7 – 0)

Diane Mahon next spoke about the Special Education program and her personal experiences. She met with Ms. Cataldo and John Redmond about her desire to see more children back into Arlington. Ms. Mahon left information for us about the model used in City of Newton. Ms. Mahon offered her help in this matter.

REPORT ON SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP

Supt. Levenson thanked the committee for their time and participation. The Committee agreed to significant changes in how meetings will be conducted. Every other meeting will focus on academic issues. Regular school committee meetings will be used to educate the school committee about classroom practices. The school committee will also look at data and results.

The School Committee will focus on five multi-year goals that will be set by October 31st. The academic meetings will focus on one or two of these goals.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was
Voted to accept the method outlined by Superintendent Levenson. Unanimous vote (7 – 0).

PRESENTATION: A STANDARDS – BASED CURRICULUM, Kevin Hutchinson

Chairman Thielman introduced Assistant Superintendent Kevin Hutchinson.

Mr. Hutchinson gave a theoretical presentation about Standards Based Education – how do we know the children are learning?
Assistant Superintendent Hutchinson passed out handouts (attached).

Committee members had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Ms. Lovelace asked what shape are we currently in? Superintendent Levenson responded that we are ahead in desire by teachers and principals and there are some pockets where Standards Based Education is being done very well but a structure is not in place yet.

Assistant Superintendent Hutchinson is very excited by the desire and he spoke to all new hires about Standards Based Education and asked them to describe their classrooms.

He also stated that the very good work done on differentiated instruction can be combined with the clarity of the standards and it will bring differentiated instruction to a new level. Work on pacing guides is currently in place and is very important in standards based learning. Common assessments are also in place but need more work so that everyone is a part of and committed to common assessments.

Mr. Garballey asked about student motivation, how could we motivate all students? Mr. Hutchinson explained that everything cannot be controlled but we can control the amount of clarity that we use to explain the standard and the expectations.

Superintendent Levenson said that it is important to explain why the homework is important; students should be able to tell you what they are working towards today and in the near future.

Mr. Thrope asked whether or not the staff is primed to run with this? He was also concerned with MCAS testing and if we could turn the volume down on that test?

Superintendent Levenson stated that to jump start this he needed to pre-empt some of the schedules and plan for common planning time for this year, he moved \$60,000 in the budget and

allocated it so that there could be some planning time this year. There will be more common planning time in future years. The MCAS is an autopsy, assessments should be happening everyday, if standards based teaching and learning become the norm the MCAS will fall into place.

BREAK

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 #06003 in the amount of \$411,610.19

*Approval of Warrant # 06014 in the amount of \$56,536.78 removed

*Approval of Warrant #06018 in the amount of \$80,660.59

*Motion regarding AHS Handbook (from Policies & Procedures Subcommittee) removed.

Mr. Schlichtman requested that the warrant be #06014 removed from the consent agenda because of a committee member conflict.

Ms. Owayda requested that the wording change in the student handbook be taken out of the consent agenda.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was voted to remove the above two items from the consent agenda. Unanimous vote (7 – 0)

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was
Voted to approve the remaining items on the Consent Agenda. Unanimous (7-0)

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Levenson reported that he has been in contact with the DOE in regard to the Coordinated Review and they are pleased with the progress so far.

He also sent them a draft of the new ELL program and we may not know for a couple of months whether or not this is satisfactory since it is new territory for Arlington, the DOE, and all other districts.

Dallin Principal search – held meetings with parents and staff – received 43 resumes, 8 finalists, will interview next week, will have a principal on board before school opens.

Negotiations seminar – creative way to work together with teachers and union – attended with David Blakely, Jack Duranceau, Suzanne Owayda, Jeff Thielman, and Rob Addelson. Superintendent Levenson has follow up with Mr. Blakely, and they both believe it is a good foundation for productive negotiations.

Superintendent Levenson reported out on potential liabilities for vacation, compensatory time, and sick leave buy-back. Will do it every year on August 31st. He also stated that the 6th floor is working on how to track vacation time, sick time and compensatory time.

Mr. Addelson reported out that the FY 05 budget was \$183,000 in the black, that money will go back to the general fund.

Mr. Addelson also reported out on Peirce Fields. The football field will open by September 8, 2005. The work being performed by Conti Construction will be substantially completed and the artificial field turf is ready for use. The light poles need to be installed, scheduled for the end of Sept and the bleachers and concession stands scheduled for the end of December.

The other fields are being seeded and will not be ready for play until the fall 2006.

The industrial parties decided to go out to bid again for the lights and bleachers and concessions because they believed that money could be saved by seeking competitive quotes on those items. .

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman, seconded by Ms. Owayda it was voted, to approve the warrant number 06014 in the amount of \$56,536.78. Warrant approved 6 – 0 – 1, Mr. Garballey abstained.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT –

Ms. Lovelace gave the Community Relations subcommittee report. Through conversation the subcommittee had with parents, there was a compelling argument to find alternatives other than a fee for the Bishop bus.

On the motion made by Susan Lovelace seconded by Sue Sheffler it was:
Voted that the School Committee revoke the decision with regard to the Bishop bus for this academic year. Further move that the bus continue until June 2006 and then stop with the understanding that the Bishop community will work together to develop viable options for transporting students safely to and from school at no cost to the district beginning September 2006. Motion approved 6 – 1, Mr. Garballey opposed.

Mr. Garballey amended motion with a second by Mr. Thrope – Voted that the School Committee revoke the decision with regard to the Bishop bus for this academic year. Further that throughout the school year the Superintendent and the School Committee work with Bishop Parents and Principal Carme concerning the Bishop bus and then address the issue again when all the questions from Bishop parents have been answered before September 2006.

Mr. Thrope stated that if the process was a concern he would support Mr. Garballey's amendment if he added "with the intent of a no cost plan be in place by September 2006". The amendment was not acceptable to Mr. Garballey as he did not want any timeline tied to the motion. Motion fails 1-6 Mr. Garballey with the yes vote

On the original motion by Ms. Lovelace: motion passes 6-1 Mr. Garballey with a no vote.

Ms. Lovelace moved and seconded by Ms. Sheffler that the School Committee direct the Administrative Assistant to the School Committee to provide the following to the director of technology for the school system to be posted on the website, and notification of the posting to be distributed through parent lists:

School Committee Agendas

School Committee minutes, motions, and appropriate back-up materials

Subcommittee Agendas

Subcommittee minutes, motions and appropriate back-up material

With a disclaimer that the agendas may change at the date of the actual meetings.

Motion approved by a unanimous vote (7 – 0).

Ms. Lovelace explained that a survey of the after school programming had been done and the next step is to look at the options available to make improvements on what the system can offer to parents.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace and seconded by Mr. Garballey it was voted to direct the administration to report out on the options that the school system has to improve the after school programming and to come back with recommendations by January 15, 2006. Motion approved in a unanimous vote (7 – 0).

VACATION BUY BACK SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT -

Mr. Thielman introduced this agenda item by stating that during the past two months the School Committee has spent a lot of time and has done a great deal of due diligence on the matter of former Superintendent Donovan's vacation days. He thanked Mr. Thrope and Ms. Lovelace, who were on the Subcommittee for their time and efforts. The subcommittee examined the vacation records, studied the contract, and met with school department officials.

Mr. Thielman stated that the subcommittee found several instances in which the school department did not interpret the former Superintendent's contract correctly. Most notably, the department's records showed that Mrs. Donovan took 15 "comp time" days this past year, when her contract does not grant her that privilege. The Subcommittee recommends that the committee credit these 15 days as vacation days.

The subcommittee was also concerned that Mrs. Donovan's vacation records allowed her to accrue more than 50 vacation days in some years. This in effect allowed her to accumulate more vacation days than what she was entitled to. We have a motion to correct this mistake as well.

The bottom line is that the subcommittee recommended, through the following motions, that Mrs. Donovan be paid for 33.5 vacation days, in addition to the 17 days for which she has already been paid.

It should be noted that Mrs. Donovan's original request, including the vacation buy back, was that she be compensated for 67 days. The subcommittee recommends that the correct number is 50.5 days.

The actions of the subcommittee save the school department approximately \$9,000. It is recognized that this does not restore a teaching position or free up a large amount of money for a worthwhile program. However, it does demonstrate that this Committee is unanimous and serious about its intent to monitor carefully every dollar given to us by the taxpayers.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted:

That the Arlington School Committee finds that Mrs. Donovan's contract did not allow for "comp time" days. The school department recorded 15 of Mrs. Donovan's days away from the office during the 2004-05 school year as "comp time". Accordingly, Mrs. Donovan's 15 days away from the office (seven days between November 15-23, 2004 and eight days between February 15-25, 2005) shall be counted as vacation days, not "comp time". Motion passes, unanimous vote (7 – 0).

On a motion by Mr. Thrope, seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was voted:

That the Arlington School Committee interprets Mrs. Donovan's contract, specifically Section VII, Clause C, to mean that not more than fifty vacation days may accrue annually. Motion passes, unanimous vote (7 – 0).

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace, seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted:

*That the first five days on Mrs. Donovan's absence record shall not be accounted as vacation days. The handwritten record shows the first five days on the handwritten record were not debited from the 25 vacation days allowed in the first year.
Motion passes, unanimous vote (7 – 0).*

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace, seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted:

That vacation days in Mrs. Donovan's vacation records are credited at the end of each fiscal year, consistent with the practice employed by the Payroll Department over the past 11 years.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted to move the eleven o'clock rule.

Motion passes 5 – 2, Mr. Schlichtman and Ms. Sheffler vote no.

Mr. Thrope moved to amend the above motion, seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was voted that the vacation records for purposes of calculating the 50-day limit of available days are credited at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Motion fails (2 – 5) on a roll call vote – Mr. Garballey – no, Ms. Lovelace – no, Mr. Schlichtman – yes, Mr. Thrope – yes, Ms. Owayda – no, Ms. Sheffler – no, Mr. Thielman – no

The main motion passes 5 – 2, Mr. Thrope and Mr. Schlichtman voted no.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace, seconded by Mr. Thrope it was voted:

That calculations of maximum annual accumulated vacation days for current contracts with School Department personnel be expressed in terms of days carried forward from one year to the next. Furthermore, the School Department is directed to calculate maximum accumulated vacation days for current contracts with School Department personnel (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Special Education) based on monthly accruals during the fiscal year as opposed to crediting vacation at the end or beginning of the fiscal year.

Motion passes 6 – 1, Mr. Schlichtman voted no.

On a motion by Ms. Lovelace, seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was voted:

That the net accumulated vacation time due Mrs. Donovan is 33.5 days. The School Committee determines that Mrs. Donovan accumulated 50.5 unused vacation days as of June 30, 2005, her final day as an employee of the Arlington Public Schools. The School Committee notes that 17 of these days were already paid on June 10, 2005. Therefore, the School Committee directs the School Department to pay Mrs. Donovan for 33.5 days on the next scheduled payroll warrant.

Motion passes 5 – 2, Mr. Thrope and Mr. Schlichtman voted no.

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

That the Policies and Procedures Subcommittee is directed to develop a policy or recommend an amendment to a current policy such that vacation records for an outgoing Superintendent are reviewed by the School Committee annually and at the end of each contract period. Motion passes on a unanimous vote (7 – 0).

Policy & Procedures Subcommittee *Mr. Thrope suggested that because of the late hour that we postpone until the next meeting. The chair agreed.*

Reports of Other Subcommittees – *no other subcommittees had reports just noted that they were scheduling meetings.*

New Business *Mr. Thrope reminded the committee that the October 25th meeting is also a religious holiday and requested that we reschedule.*

Mr. Garballey brought to the committee's attention a letter in the Arlington Advocate by ~John Lennon , former employee of the STEP Program at AHS– thanking Ottoson teachers, Janet McGuire and Peggy Reagan and their students who helped to collect clothing and other items for troops overseas.

~On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman, seconded by Ms. Owayda it was voted to adjourn at 11:15 pm.

Motion passes on a unanimous vote (7 – 0).