



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

School Committee Minutes 11-04-2003

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2003
7:30 PM

Present: Suzanne Owayda, Chair Sue Sheffler
Paul Schlichtman, Vice Chair Jeff Thielman
Joani LaMachia, Secretary Martin Thrope
Barbara Goodman

Superintendent: Kay Donovan
Chief Financial Officer: Rob Addelson
Asst. Supt. Joanne Gurry
Budget Analyst: Janet Collins
Special Education Director: Marilyn Bisbicos

Call to Order: 7:35

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

.. **Update on AHS** –Supt. Donovan reported that Friday, October 31st AHS was evacuated due to an airborne chemical released in the school. Although the chemical has yet to be identified it is believed to be pepper spray. Police, Fire, Paramedics and HazMat were on the scene. HazMat closed the school to investigate the substance and would not allow anyone in the school for several hours, staff, and students were dismissed. 11 students were sent to Winchester Hospital as a precaution and were later released.

DISCUSSION OF RESERVE FUNDS

Alan Tosti, Chair of the Finance Committee along with members Dick Fanning and Mary Ronan explained the Town's cash reserves to the Committee. Mr. Tosti reviewed the handout on the Utilization of Reserve Funds explaining that it is important to be aware that reserves are not a revenue source, once used they are gone. Of the available 2.8 million dollars in free cash, 1.7 has been appropriated for FY 2004 and 1.4 is to be appropriated in FY2005.

Ms. Sheffler urged Mr. Tosti to consider the "human capital fund", pointing out that 13% of the teaching staff that was lost is not trivial and questioned whether or not the Town can use the stabilization fund this year for short term use (i.e. contracts).

The Committee suggested that the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, and the School Committee work together on short and long term budget strategies. Alan acknowledged that the finance committee is always willing to look at proposals but pointed out the importance of maintaining the financial integrity of the town.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Ms. LaMachia Reviewed correspondence. Mr. Thrope requested that the Committee respond to Cindy Sheridan, chair of the Thompson Safety Committee relative to the loss of two crossing guard positions. It was suggested to request Chief Ryan, Safety Officer Dave McKenna, and Ed Starr of the Traffic Advisory Committee address how and what criteria were used to cut positions.

Minutes to be approved:

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular Meeting minutes of September 23, 2003.

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular Meeting minutes of October 14, 2003

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Discussion on Fees

Ms. Owayda reported that the School Committee held a public discussion on activity fees at the Ottoson Middle School on October 29th. Suzanne was hoping for more than the 30-35 attendees at the discussion but noted that the School Committee will plan to hold another discussion possibly in January. Consensus among attendees was that if and when we charge fees we need to have scholarship money built into the fees. Also suggested was to survey current participants to see what an acceptable cut off would be. The overall question for all town officials was "what kind of school system are we willing to accept"?

Policy & Procedures

Mr. Thielman reported on its meeting of November 3rd. A group of parents addressed the committee relative to their concern about the schools' lack of a policy on life threatening allergies. Jeff stated that APS employees currently address this issue very well, however a task group made up of employees and parents will work on drafting a policy for review.

The subcommittee also approved a memo of understanding for ACE fundraising. There was some discussion about the meaning of Policy KCC, "Private Donations to the Arlington Public Schools." Jeff Thielman said that he felt the policy called for a group to come to the School Committee to raise funds for any program that was not included in the 2003-04 adopted budget. Supt. Donovan explained that she did not read the policy that way. Mr. Thrope made some suggestions on how to reword the policy to reflect this. The subcommittee decided to table this discussion, support the ACE Memorandum, and address the issue at a later meeting. Mr. Thielman agreed to do some more research and to bring his findings back to the subcommittee at a later meeting

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was Moved that Chair and Superintendent be directed to sign the Memorandum of Understanding regarding private fundraising between the Arlington School Committee and the ACE Families Coalition during the 2003-2004 academic year.

Ms. Goodman noted that she had not read the proposal prior to tonight's meeting and questioned the procedure on subcommittee charges. Supt. Donovan believed that there is some confusion on how an issue is brought before a subcommittee; her understanding is that a concern/item/issue is brought to the full committee initially and then charged to a subcommittee for further review and discussion if it is an issue that needs to be examined in more depth. The Committee discussed if there is a need to have a policy that clearly outlines the procedure and suggested that the policy & procedure subcommittee may want to review it further. For the present time postings and agendas for all subcommittee meetings will be disseminated to all members.

The motion was withdrawn in order to give members time to review it and will be voted on at the next meeting.

Mr. Schlichtman requested that school logos and trademarks be referred to the policy subcommittee for review.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously Voted to refer school logos and trademarks to the policy and procedures subcommittee for review.

Budget

FY04 working budget

Supt. Donovan and CFO Rob Addelson reviewed, discussed, and answered questions on the FY04 working budget. Mr. Thrope requested that the budget reflect individuals integrated into one place on the same page highlighting the offset from grant money or other source of revenue (i.e. staff funded half time by funds appropriated at Town Meeting and half time funded with grant money). Supt. Donovan pointed out that it is unknown who will be funded and hired with grant money at the time the budget is put together; grant money is not all approved and received at the same time.

Mr. Thrope maintained that the School Committee should vote the authorization of the expenditure of the grant money before it appears on the payroll warrant emphasizing that the school committee be part of the decision making process and set priorities on how the money is spent. Mr. Thielman concurred that the School Committee should have an opportunity before November to approve changes, that decisions made over the summer have school committee approval and suggested meeting during the summer if necessary.

Mr. Thrope requested job descriptions for the Guidance Supervisor and the guidance intervention counselor position.

Ms. Sheffler inquired if the budget book could be placed on line.

Mr. Addelson requested approval from the Committee for the budget transfer. Mr. Thrope questioned whether the level of detail in the transfer request met the requirement voted on by the committee for reporting budget transfers.

Mr. Schlichtman spoke with Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of MASC, who confirmed that the votes taken by the committee relative to the line items and budget transfers are fully within the law; additionally it is up to the School Committee to define what constitutes a line item.

Mr. Schlichtman also noted that the charge of Mr. Addelson will be to integrate grant money and other external funds into the FY2004-05 budget book along with the money appropriated at Town Meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was

Voted to approve the recommended General Fund School Budget transfers for the FY2003-2004 as recommended by CFO Rob Addelson. Roll Call: Unanimous

The next budget subcommittee meeting is scheduled for December 3rd; Alan Tosti, chair of the Finance Committee will attend to discuss the O'Neill formula and its implication.

Mr. Schlichtman noted for the record that the FY2004 budget detail discussion at tonight's meeting fulfills the requirement of the motion made at the School Committee meeting on October 14, 2003.

Approval of Warrant

Mr. Addelson requested approval on warrant # 04055 in the amount of \$539,636.01

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was unanimously

Voted to approve warrant #04055 in the amount of \$539,636.01.

District Goals

.. School Committee District Goals

Suzanne Owayda explained that district goals would be the agenda for the December 9th meeting. School councils, principals and administrators will attend to discuss the status of current goals and to set new goals for the future. The School Committee has discussed the need for the School Committee to also have a goal; Suzanne suggested that the School Committee's goal be the budget process. Suzanne is looking to form a working group to help with developing a budget process that would be more open and more inclusive with the community. Suzanne will work on a proposal for the budget subcommittee meeting on December 3rd.

Ms. Owayda stated that there will be no meeting on December 23rd, members may want to use the time for subcommittee work.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was unanimously

Voted to adjourn @ 10:30 PM.

Submitted by

Karen Tassone

Committee Secretary