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School Committee Minutes 02/08/2000

Arlington School Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, February 8, 2000
8:00 PM

Present: Denis J. Sullivan, Chair Joani LaMachia
 Wm. A. Carey, Jr., Vice-Chair David W. McKenna
 Barbara C. Goodman, Secretary Martin J. Thrope
 Michael T. Healy

Kay Donovan, John Britt, Joanne Gurry, Marilyn Bisbicos

Call to Order: 8:05 PM

Superintendent's Awards of Excellence

Barbara Gorman, Assistant to the Principal, presented Zi Dong Han and Rebecca Kalaukas as recipients of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award of Academic Excellence. Both young woman have made wonderful contributions to our school. Chairperson Sullivan presented the awards to each student.

Superintendent Donovan announced that the International Technology Educational Association has chosen Charles Cook, teacher at the Ottoson Middle School, for the Middle School Teacher Excellence Award recipient for Massachusetts. Mr. Cook will be honored in April.

Public Participation

Bob Sprague, Communications Specialist for the schools, wanted committee members to be aware of the Town's website which is called "Arlington Online" www.town.arlington.ma.us. Mr. Sprague continued that it is his dream to put all of Arlington's official events in one place on the internet. The website has school events, schools closings, school committee agendas and approved minutes. If the K-5 Curriculum Parent Overview Guide is approved at tonight's meeting he will post that on the website. Superintendent Donovan stated how pleased she was with the site and thanked Mr. Sprague for all he does for the schools.

Secretary's Report

On a motion made by Ms. Goodman and seconded, it was unanimously voted to accept the regular meeting minutes of November 30, 1999.

On a motion made by Ms. Goodman and seconded, it was unanimously voted to accept the regular meeting minutes of December 14, 1999.

Mr. Thrope asked the committee if we would participate in placing an ad the AHS yearbook. Ms. LaMachia volunteered to collaborate the effort.

Mr. Thrope also commented on a letter received from St. Agnes parish inviting members to speak to their religious education classes on

leadership. Mr. Thrope stated that he did this last year and it was a very enjoyable experience, he urged his colleagues to take advantage of the unique opportunity to communicate their thoughts on what constitutes leadership.

Mr. Healy thanked Mr. Sullivan for the letter sent to outgoing recreation director Debbie Hayes. Mrs. Donovan stated that she would like to invite the new recreation director to one of our upcoming meeting to welcome him.

Budget FY2001

Superintendent Donovan informed the committee that she had spoken with the chair of the finance committee, Alan Tosti, relative to the additional funding that came to the Town from Chapter 70. Since our budget had already been settled and we have made plans according to the allocation in the budget Mrs. Donovan requested that the additional \$106,900.00 be added to the bottom line of our budget for next year. We received an additional \$100,000.00 over the estimated revenue for this year and because we had already settled on our budget and we have made plans according to the allocation in the budget she requested that the increase that came on behalf of education be added to the bottom line of our budget for next year. We have asked for an increase of 6.19% in addition to that Mrs. Donovan is asking that the increased funding that came to the Town of Arlington on behalf of our schools be added to the bottom line of our budget that total being \$106,900.00. The chairman agreed that the increase that came to Arlington on behalf of the schools would be added onto the bottom line.

Mrs. Donovan referred to the FY2001 budget handout sheet and highlighted her priorities:

- .. Maintain legitimate class size. (because of grant money received primary class size was kept at 17-20 students).
- .. Two additional teachers at both the Middle and High School.
- .. Reduce the cost of all day kindergarten. If our budget remains the same the program fee will be reduced to between \$400.00 and \$500.00. We are in the process of writing a grant to fund the program, which if awarded will fund the program for three years.
- .. Realignment of the Central Office
- .. Increase funding for Sped and MCAS support
- .. Establish funds for AHS accreditation
- .. Negotiations with all personnel AAA, AEA, Unit C, Principals, Paraprofessionals. To also work towards a legitimate salary scale for teachers.
- .. Increase World Language to include grade 3.
- .. Provide Information booklets for parents/residents, currently working on an emergency protocol booklet and a parents' curriculum guide.
- .. Maintenance and Operations: Paint Interior of high school/purchase new lockers/Upgrade sanitary facilities
- .. Continue grant writing process
- .. Increase professional development
- .. Support Literacy and mentoring programs for new staff

Mrs. Donovan responded to questions from Mr. Healy on special education, athletics, and positions in library media and science.

Mr. Thrope wanted to clarify that whatever the intent of Finance Committee will decide for budget this year that they will add \$106,900.00 on top of that amount. In respect to the all day kindergarten fee Mr. Thrope emphasized that no one on the committee wanted there to be fee at all and it is wonderful that we may be within goal of no program fee. Referring to the salary ranges for the two central office positions Mr. Thrope as a general rule we are able to reallocate within our budget when conditions warrant.

Referring to MCAS funding in the budget Mr. Thrope voiced concern to what extent will this have spin off effects that will be able to be incorporated into the regular school day so that everyone will get the benefit. Even though we are not 'teaching to the test' he wonders if we would be doing this if the test was not required. Mrs. Donovan noted that the increased professional development is wonderful – it is not teaching to a test but teaching to a standard, its getting students to like what they're learning which makes them more successful because they believe in themselves.

A point of order from Ms. Goodman that we are discussing the budget and would be happy to discuss MCAS but not at the moment. Mr. Thrope requested that MCAS be put on the next agenda for further discussion.

Mrs. Donovan will be going before the Finance Committee on March 8th with the budget.

Motion By Mr. Healy, second by Mr. McKenna,
Voted to accept the Superintendent's recommendation for the school year budget 2001
at a cost of \$29,628,766.00 (6.19%) Unanimous.

Motion By Mr. Healy, second by Mr. McKenna
Voted the Superintendent's recommendation that we ask the Finance Committee for Chapter 70 funding to be released
from fiscal year 2000 funds for \$106,900.00 that will be added to our budget request. Unanimous

Mr. Carey stated that we have both an outstanding academic and athletic program at the high school, he would like to see the athletic fees reduced or be eliminated all together. A few years ago the athletic director implemented a wrestling team and a girls hockey team, both are having a fantastic season and he hopes they will be to continue those programs without any increase. Mrs. Donovan responded that it is in the budget. In response to Mr. Carey's questions on painting the high school and accreditation funds Mrs. Donovan stated that she hopes to have a large part of the school painted, and that the accreditation funds are part of the high school budget.

Public Vote

Chairman Sullivan announced that the committee needed to take a public vote on a vote that had been taken at our last meeting in executive session. Noting that many times the committee returns to open session late after an executive session and takes public votes when there is no audience or cable coverage it was believed that the public would be better served to wait until the next meeting to vote during public session.

Motion by Mr. McKenna, second by Mr. Carey
Voted to recommend the Superintendent Donovan's salary increase
Of four percent (4%) for a current salary of \$108,160.00 and an increase of
\$2200.00 in her current annuity bringing the total annuity to \$9585.00 retroactive to July 1, 1999. In addition that

Mrs. Donovan may buy back unused vacation time equal to five (5) vacation days per year effective July 1, 2000. Unanimous.

Mr. Sullivan noted that at looking at other towns we are still not paying Superintendent Donovan what she deserves, as we said about our teachers Mrs. Donovan sets a great example of energy and hard work and is worth more than what we can pay. Mr. Carey noted that he is happy and please that we have someone of Mrs. Donovan's caliber working for us. Mrs. Donovan thanked the committee for their support.

Report of Subcommittees

Ad Hoc on the Superintendent Evaluation

Ms. Goodman reported out on the superintendent evaluation committee noting that it is not Kay Donovan's evaluation, but an evaluation process and evaluation form. The committee compiled information from several towns and also from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and looked at the principle from the State's 'Effective Administrator Leadership'. The form before the committee is a draft and Ms. Goodman is seeking input from committee members on how they would like it changed and to review the flow chart on how the process would be accomplished. She would like feedback before the next meeting so that the form can be finalized. Ms. Goodman noted that it was difficult for the committee to find a balance of how the evaluation was specific enough to be measurable but not so specific that we would be micromanaging.

Mr. Healy discussed looking at the Superintendent's contract because it mentions a specific time within it. Mr. Thrope suggested that we use this, we can make changes as we go along and that this evaluation is so much better than what we were working with before. Mr. McKenna noted that we will never have a perfect document, it can be improved if necessary and we are moving in the right direction. Mr. Healy suggested we either amend or throw out the old policy once this new policy is approved.

Mr. Sullivan observed that with all of the different subcommittees and the number of meetings that have been held recently that all of the members deserve thanks for all of the hard work.

Curriculum & Instruction

Ms. Goodman reported on the presentation of the K-5 Parent Curriculum Guide presentation at the Brackett School. The department heads along with Joanne Gurry made presentations, the parents were very pleased with the booklets. Mrs. Donovan noted that the booklet represents a tremendous amount of work. She thanked the school committee for pushing to have the guide done and is especially thankful to Joanne and the department heads who spent countless hours putting it together. Dr. Gurry stated that it was a good project for everyone to work together, it took more time than originally anticipated because the frameworks are "wide, deep and complex" and this is a general overview. After final editing the final version will be perfect and be ready for dissemination at the end of the month. Bob Sprague did a wonderful job on the presentation of the document. Dr. Gurry also thanked Kathy Fineman and the parent group that supported this. This was an event in a string in about 10 parent evenings over the course of the year.

Motion by Ms. Goodman, seconded by Mr. Healy
To approve the Curriculum Guide for parents for
Dissemination as a booklet and also for dissemination to
Our web page pending additional editorial changes; and to also
authorize bidding for the cost of the booklet. Unanimous.

Ms. LaMachia stated that the document was fabulous and wanted to publicly acknowledge and thank Joanne for her leadership and effort in completely the project. Mr. Healy echoed Ms. LaMachia's statements, Mr. Thrope comprehensive consistent and looks forward to the expansion of this document for the use of teachers. Mr. Sullivan noted that we hear good things about our schools but this is an amazing document and anyone involved in any way deserves our thanks.

Ms. Goodman indicated that our next step would be to develop a document for the middle school curriculum hopefully within the next year.

Policies & Procedures

Mr. Healy noted that in the course of discussion the policies & procedures subcommittee has recommended that an operations and maintenance subcommittee be established, the Superintendent drew up an overview of what this subcommittee would and the importance of the subcommittee.

Mr. Healy moved that we form an operations and maintenance subcommittee along as outlined in the mission statement from the Superintendent. Mr. McKenna seconded the motion for discussion purposes. After discussion the motion was unanimously voted in favor of the motion.

Mrs. Donovan reviewed the mission statement which reads in part that **'the magnitude of facility maintenance and repair concerns, safety and security issues for over four thousand (4,000) students, and six hundred (600) staff, requires time and attention by the administrators of such a complex. Because the Arlington School Committee is ultimately responsible for the oversight of these funds and activities, I recommend that an Operations and Maintenance Subcommittee be added to the scope of responsibilities.** Mrs. Donovan sees a need for such a subcommittee. Mr. Sullivan felt that this would be more of a facilities management and maintenance subcommittee than an operational one. Mr. Thrope commented that there are other operating activities that are not physical plant issues that do not fall anywhere else such as food service, transportation he would argue that it should be an operations and maintenance subcommittee, and that perhaps the first charge of the subcommittee should be to put together a proposal of how wide the charter should be and bring it back to the full committee. Ms. Goodman agreed that with 7 new elementary schools and middle school we need to show our seriousness about maintenance and we have an obligation to take care of our schools. Mr. Carey believes that if we are going to spend millions of dollars on new buildings that without infringing on somebody else's responsibilities we must oversee the maintenance of the buildings but thinks the committee needs more direction.

Mr. McKenna stated that he is not against the concept or the idea but reminded the members that we had a subcommittee like this one in the past, a number of years ago because of the time being spent on subcommittees there was not enough time to devote on all of them. This year in addition to our four standard subcommittees we had the ad hoc committee on the superintendent evaluation and the safety task force

and negotiations with all the bargaining units. In addition one of the problems with operations and maintenance or facilities management we do not have total control we only have limited control and although part of the mission statements indicates that we can meet with the supervisors of maintenance they are under contractual issue to keep in mind, such as it may cost money to have a subcommittee meeting.

Under the present structure we are limited in what we could do as a subcommittee. We would have to have the Town Manager or his designee as part of any meeting.

Mr. Healy noted that Mr. McKenna's point is well taken but pointed out that this would provide a forum or agreement to identify problems that arise. He would like to agree to the subcommittee and the mission statement in principle and then place it on the agenda as a specific item to be addressed.

Mr. Healy noted that the Superintendent has been in touch with NESDEC and MASC relative to the redoing of our policy book. There are two proposals before the committee and MASC is clearer in what they can do for us. We are looking for someone to come in and work with the subcommittee and to separate the policies by what we need legally what is outdated and make recommendations to the subcommittee and to then come before the full committee. The timeline to be done before the end of the school year. Mrs. Donovan reviewed the proposals, she recommended working with MASC and she would like to negotiate the time frame so that we could have a completed book that is update to date with all State and Federal and the local rules and regulations of the School Committee plus any legal requirements that we should have for a policy by the end of June.

Motion by Mr. Healy, second by Ms. LaMachia
Voted to accept a proposal from MASC to revise our Policy & Procedure
Policy book and that the Superintendent negotiate with MASC to reduce the timeframe so that the process would be complete
by the end of the school year.
Unanimous.

Safety Task Force

Ms. LaMachia reported that at their last meeting the task force reviewed safety handbook that are being put together one for staff and one for parents. Cindy Bouvier spoke on Project Alliance, which provides safety information and training for staff. Ms. LaMachia requested feedback on the Emergency Protocol handbook. The purpose of the task force is to work as a group to address safety issue with APS after reviewing safety policies and protocols we decided we would document them in a written format (safety policies & protocols). The parent handbook is still in progress with Fay Lee working on the draft form and will present to the full committee when complete. At the last task force meeting the members agreed that all of the important issues had been within the APS for staff. The document will be a good and useful tool for staff members. At this point we have received feedback from staff and from committee members and welcomes any additional feedback.

Motion by Ms. LaMachia, second by Mr. Healy
To accept the Emergency Protocol document
for print and dissemination pending further feedback. Unanimous.

Mr. Sullivan stated that this is a very responsible document and is comprehensive and covers all the necessary information needed. Ms LaMachia thanked Judie Phelps for all her hard work in developing the document.

Specialized Student Services

Mr. Carey reported that the subcommittee met earlier this evening to discuss special education issues. A larger number of students requiring services are entering the school system at the preschool level. The numbers of medically involved students who require nursing or other health related services continue to grow. At the present time we are serving 902 sped students, a year ago we were servicing 884. 100 of these students are under 4 years of age, 75 are in private schools, 65 of these are out of district placements 600 are male 300 female. Sped costs continue to grow at twice the rate of regular education costs. We all want to provide these services, but the real concern is the funding, we have to have more help from the state, we cannot do it at the local level anymore. Referring to a recent survey Mr. Carey stated that the percentage of sped costs paid by the local level is 75.69% in Massachusetts, the national level is 40%. In Massachusetts the Federal reimbursement is 6.2% and 7% at the national level, In Massachusetts the State picks up 17.04% and the national average the State picks up 53% of the cost. It is clear that we cannot afford to pick up 76% of funding special education when it is in fact a state mandated program. We want to provide the services but we also want to be paid for providing those services. The special education budget will have a shortfall of approximately \$200,000 this year, primarily because after the budget is fixed and the school year starts in September we have a number of out of district placements that we must absorb into the budget. We will absorb \$100,000.00 from our own budget and there is \$90,000.00 in the LABBB program that is to be reimbursed to Arlington. There are several recommendations being made to the legislature this year including reduction of independent evaluation rights, a change in State funding of sped, extended timelines for IEP development, eligibility restrictions and reductions in transportation rights and protections.

Mr. McKenna stressed that the figures include all the students in Arlington; whether they go to public, private or parochial schools, and it may also include transportation for those students as well the state must do more to help local communities fund sped.

Ms. LaMachia spoke to Representative Paulsen who attended the meeting on legislative funding, the focus of discussion was special education, the costs, the formula and how the state could help local communities. Rep. Paulsen is interested in having a meeting with a few school committee members, Kay and Bonnie to discuss how to advocate changes, both Ms. LaMachia and Ms. Goodman expressed interest in attending such a meeting. Mr. Sullivan will ask Rep. Paulsen to join us at a regular school committee meeting for discussion.

Recess (10:10-10:25)

Mr. Sullivan requested a five-minute recess and upon returning that we combine number 6 and 9 on the agenda and postpone number 7 (Massachusetts School & District Accountability System) to another meeting.

Discussion of Job Descriptions

Chairman Sullivan pointed out that he envisions that this agenda item will need to be addressed in two different nights. He hopes to discuss the job descriptions tonight in a generic way, receive feedback, and to further discuss and approve them at the next meeting.

Superintendent Donovan announced that as the committee is aware the Assistant Superintendent of Business is retiring. Recognizing the time and energy demands on the Assistant Superintendent she proposes to reorganize the Central Office and change the position to Director of

Finance and Planning. Mrs. Donovan reviewed the job specifications. Mr. Carey asked whether the requirement for data processing should be more in-depth than is spelled out in the description. Mr. Healy had a number of questions, he stated that currently Mr. Britt maintains the Civil Service List, he hires school nurses, secretaries, traffic supervisors to name a few, will those duties shift. Mrs. Donovan said that she hopes that civil service, substitutes and paraprofessional would be under the direction of the Human Resource person. The supervision of the secretaries would come from the business office but the personnel part of it, (following through on lists, interviewing, keeping track of personnel records would all be part of human resources) Mr. Healy noted that there is still a policy that states the hiring of school nurses is approved by the School Committee and by the Superintendent. Mr. Healy also had questions on minimum qualifications concerned that the masters degree should be focused more on business (accounting, business administration, school finance). Mrs. Donovan stated that it is important that the ability of the person to perform the job is the most important. Mrs. Donovan emphasized that the degree you have coming out of school is as important as the capability to do the job. Mr. Healy stated that since this is a budgetary issue he would like to see a salary range

Mr. Sullivan stated that he believed that discussion was too focused, he is looking for a more general sense from other committee members to hear what their concerns are. If we have specific comments

Mr. Thrope stated that he had trouble fully understanding the job description because he does not understand the context. What would be helpful is to see a list of what Mr. Britt does now and where those things are going to wind up-which of those things will be done by the Director position and which responsibilities will be done by the Human Resource position or somewhere else. Mr. Britt will not be here after June and the things that he does will have to be done by someone he would like to know that everything is covered and how things will fit together. We have an opportunity to look at the whole structure because it is a significant change. Ms. LaMachia said that it would be helpful to her also just to get an understanding, she has the same questions = what do those changes look like and how will the tasks and responsibilities be redistributed. Ms. Goodman stated that it would be helpful to her to be able to look at this conceptuality and not a list of activities, and suggested because of the lateness of the hour that we submit our comments to Kay, she will redraft it and to communicate in some way either in writing or in a presentation the overall conceptualization. Superintendent Donovan stated that she would like to advertise for the elementary principal, the job description is essentially the same, she needs to set up a focus group at the Hardy and meet with the teachers meet with the school council.

- Motion by Mr. Thrope, second by Mr. Healy
Voted to approve the elementary principal
job description for the Hardy and Stratton Schools
as recommended by the Superintendent. Unanimous
- Motion by Mr. McKenna, second by Mr. Healy
Voted to accept the Superintendent's job description
For House Dean (House B). Unanimous.

Mr. Thrope questioned why the scheduling is associated with this job description and do we run the risk of screening otherwise qualified applicants who are not willing to do this. Mr. McCarthy can do the scheduling and has done it the past but he feels the need to have a House Dean who is capable of doing it.

- Motion by Mr. McKenna, second Mr. Healy
Voted to table the job description on the
Director of Finance and Planning until such a time that all members can give their input to the Superintendent on what they are individually
looking for. The Superintendent will then report back to the school committee on those recommendations. Unanimous.

Report on Permanent Town Building Committee

Mr. Thrope reported that expected completion for the Bishop School is late spring. The Hardy contract has been turned over to Harding and Smith for completion. The punch list is being worked on at the Brackett. The Peirce and Dallin designs are progressing and the schematic designs are scheduled to be done by the end of February. Mr. Carey stated that he does feel strongly that the buildings that we are building we should seriously consider putting air conditioning or making them a/c adaptable because in the foreseeable future we will see year round school years. (if we are building schools for 50 years we should seriously consider the additional expenditure and do it right). Mr. Thrope responded that the schools thus far (Ottoson & Brackett, Bishop and Hardy) are air conditionable however, with the Peirce & Dallin we are looking at the possibility of incorporating an HVAC system.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded it was voted to move the 11:00 rule for 15 minutes. Unanimous.

Report on Debt Exclusion

We held the information night it was a great success on January 26th, 34.5 million cost for construction but the cost to the town will be \$12.8 million, that would add about \$70.00 on the average homeowners bill over a twenty-year period of time. Many individuals signed up for various volunteer duties. Mr. Foskett, Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Hurd are the three Chairs that head committee.

Warrant Articles

Superintendent Donovan reported that all the regular articles are in the warrant, budget, sped, grants, early retirement and revolving acct for kindergarten. The only other warrant being filed was by the Selectmen and the PTBC that stated in the event that the home located next to the Peirce School if it ever goes up for sale that the Town of Arlington could negotiate on it. Mrs. Donovan did speak to the owners to let them know that the article was being put in; there may be no action on it but in the future if it is for sale that the Town would like to have the option to buy that property. In response to Mr. Healy's question on the Town Manager Act Mrs. Donovan explained that since it is on warrant, anyone who is a Town Meeting Member can speak on the issue. Mr. Cary believed that any resident could speak during Town Meeting.

Other Business

Mr. Sullivan informed the committee that the next regularly scheduled meeting is during February vacation week and proposes that we meet the following week February 29th. Mrs. Donovan stated that she will be away that week and Dr. Gurry or Mr. Britt will be able to run the

meeting.

On a motion made and seconded it was voted unanimously to schedule the next school committee meeting for Tuesday, February 29th.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously voted to adjourn at 11:15 PM.