



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

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

School Committee Minutes 05-23-2000

Arlington School Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 23, 2000
7:30 PM

Present: Joani LaMachia, Vice-Chair Denis J. Sullivan
 Michael T. Healy, Secretary Martin J. Thrope
 Barbara C. Goodman @ 8:15

Kay Donovan, John Britt, Joanne Gurry, Marilyn Bisbicos

Absent: William A. Carey, Jr. (out of town), David McKenna

Ms. LaMachia chaired the meeting in Mr. Carey's absence. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM. Joani stated that Mr. Carey was out of town on business. Barbara Goodman was attending her daughter's concert and would be arriving late. Joani spoke to Dave McKenna and reported that his recovery is going well, he sends his regards and hopes to be back in June.

The Children's Festival and the Interfaith Celebration this weekend was a huge success and on behalf of the committee Ms. LaMachia thanked everyone involved.

Public Participation

Judie Phelps, Ottoson teacher asked the committee to consider the request before them dedicating the computer lab to recently deceased Charles Cook.

Secretary's Report

Mr. Healy reviewed correspondence received. A response on our MCAS resolution was received from Rep. Lida Harkins. Mr. Healy stated that since enough time has passed he would like to send a follow-up letter to the original recipients asking them to respond to our letter/resolution.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was

Voted to send a follow up letter to our legislators asking that as a courtesy they respond to our letter/resolution. Unanimous (Ms. Goodman not present)

In reference to a letter from DPW Director Richard Bento, Mr. Thrope asked that a letter of thank you be sent to Mr. Bento for his continued efforts regarding the lights at Peirce Field.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded it was Voted to accept for the file the correspondence. Unanimous (Ms. Goodman not present).

Ida Robbins Scholarship

Superintendent Donovan explained that this is a confidential scholarship until the awards night and recommended accepting the candidates as presented.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously

Voted that the Ida Robbins Scholarships be awarded to the candidates whose names have been submitted to us this date. (Ms. Goodman not present)

AHS Schedule Changes

Mr. McCarthy stated that he had been meeting with the schedule committee since last spring. The Committee had surveyed the faculty twice and identified areas of major concerns:

- Disparity between the length of period 2 and other periods.
- Loss of continuity in those classes that meet for only four days out of six
- Length of periods. (currently 72 minutes)

The committee reviewed 6-8 models, presented several options to the faculty, and decided that model R-3 was the most accommodating to their needs. The R-3 has 56 minute periods, meets 6 out of 7 days, has some rotation and maintains the grill and preschool programs.

Mr. McCarthy stated that the length of the day is the same and he does not foresee any conflict with teacher contracts.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded it was

Voted to accept Mr. McCarthy's recommendation for schedule change R-3

At Arlington High School. Unanimous

MASC Resolution

Ms. Goodman stated that at our last meeting the Committee agreed to take action on MCAS and join with other towns to co-sponsor a resolution to be voted on at the MASC annual meeting in November. After reviewing resolutions/statements from Lincoln-Sudbury, Northhampton, Cambridge and Brookline she drafted proposed resolution:

The MASC recognizes the need to set high standards for all students in the commonwealth and to establish a system of accountability that ensures that all school systems are preparing their students for an increasingly complex world.

However, we believe that the current Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System is seriously flawed.

We urge the legislature and the Department of Education to suspend the MCAS until these critical issues are addressed:

1. the need to develop a variety of assessment instruments (as described in the Education Reform Act of 1993) so that all students are evaluated fairly.
2. the need to develop additional criteria, so that no single test will determine the fate of a student or the value of a school system.
3. the length of the test and the time it takes away from teaching and learning.
4. the effect on students on the use of the test as a graduation requirement (including but not limited to special education and bilingual students).

In addition, we urge the legislature and the DOE to reassess the curriculum frameworks and the MCAS and to evaluate their impact – both negative and positive – on the local curriculum and the quality of classroom instruction.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan

Voted that the Arlington School Committee join with other school committees and urge MASC to adopt the MCAS resolution at their annual conference. Unanimous.

Mr. Sullivan attended the rally at the State House protesting MCAS testing. He spoke with Rep. Marzilli who indicated that the only hope of change would be through legislative process and he does not see that as part of this year's agenda. Mr. Thrope indicated that there are things under our control and we should exercise those options; such as not adjusting curriculum for the sake of MCAS unless they are improvements.

Minority Success on MCAS

Mrs. Donovan reviewed Arlington's scoring on the 1999 MCAS results in grades 4, 8, & 10 by race/ethnicity. Results did not show if there were fewer than 10 students of a particular race who were tested. The Superintendent reported that the results were good and are consistent with the Commonwealth across the board.

Update on School Committee/School Council Workshop

Ms. LaMachia stated that the June 19th date for the roles & responsibilities workshop conflicts with Town Meeting.

She spoke with the Center for School Board Leadership and found that the June 22nd alternative date was also unavailable. The Committee discussed options and the fact that if we do not complete the work we consider having another one in July or August.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded it was unanimously

Voted to change the regular school committee meeting of June 27th to June 26th or June 27th depending on members availability, for a workshop on roles and responsibilities to be held at the Whittemore-Robbins House from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Unanimous.

Approval of Classroom Size at Dallin and Peirce Schools

The Superintendent informed the committee that the SBAB has requested an increase in classroom size. When the initial plans were drawn up the size of the classrooms was less than required; increasing the square footage in the classroom size and adjustments made on hallways rectified the plans. The School Committee must approve the increase for the June 1st submission date to SBAB.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was

Voted to accept the classroom size changes for the Dallin and Peirce Schools as required by the School Building Assistance Bureau. Unanimous.

Mrs. Donovan reported that the Bishop School is scheduled to be complete at the beginning of July and suggested a tour of the building before the next school committee meeting. Mr. Thrope stated that the Hardy School will be finished by Bonfatti Co. with an expected completion date of June 2001.

Approval of All Day Kindergarten Program

Superintendent Donovan stated that reducing the program fee for the ADK until we reach a no cost option has been our goal since the implementation of the program. The original fee two years ago was \$1500.00, and the current year is \$1200.00. To that end she recommended to the committee a program fee of \$500.00. The kindergarten enrollment figures for September are 381; our current figure is 344 students. Mrs. Donovan noted that we are in the process of applying for more grant money.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan, and seconded by Mr. Healy it was

Voted to accept the program fee of \$500.00 for the All Day Kindergarten for FY01 as recommended by Superintendent Donovan. RC: Unanimous

Special Education Program

Special Education Director Marilyn Bisbicos presented a summer school proposal for students in the LABBB program. The program will serve children between the ages of 3½ to 6 years of ages whose primary goals will be to provide students, diagnosed with PDD with a summer enrichment experience. The program will run from July 10th to August 25th from 9:00 –2:00 Monday through Friday at a cost of approximately \$2800.00

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded it was:

Voted to approve the special education summer school at the Brackett School as recommended by the Special Education Director Marilyn Bisbicos. Unanimous

On a motion made and seconded it was voted to enter executive session for the purpose of negotiations. RC: Unanimous.

Executive Session 9:35-10:00 PM

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Thrope:

Voted to accept the Memorandum of Agreement for a three-year contract with the Food Service Local 680 as proposed by Mr. Britt. RC: Unanimous

Voted to adjourn at 10:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Tassone
Committee Secretary