



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

[webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us)

## **School Committee Minutes 09-26-2000**

Arlington School Committee  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, September 26, 2000  
7:30 PM

**Present:**     **Joani LaMachia, Vice Chair**           **Martin J. Thrope**  
                  **Michael T. Healy, Secretary (@8:40)**   **Denis J. Sullivan**  
                  **David W. McKenna**                       **Barbara C. Goodman**

**Kay Donovan, Joanne Gurry, Marilyn Bisbicos**

**Absent:**     **William A. Carey, Jr., Chair**

**Call To Order: 7:45 PM**

Ms. LaMachia chaired the meeting in Mr. Carey's absence. She informed School Committee members and the audience that Mr. Carey was unable to attend tonight's meeting due to his wife's continued illness; she asked that Mrs. Carey remain in everyone's thoughts and prayers.

Ms. LaMachia announced that the school councils were meeting tonight at the Bishop School with educational consultant Paul McGowan. The workshop focused on the roles and responsibilities of school councils within the school system. There will be a follow up workshop with the School Committee, School Councils and Paul McGowan on October 16th.

Ms. LaMachia noted that since Mr. Healy would be late for the meeting, we would start the meeting with the Special Education Report and the Report on New Safety Mandate.

### **Special Education Report**

Dr. Bisbicos gave a report on updated changes and reforms in Special Education. Some of the focus points include:

- .. Including special education students to the highest degree possible
- .. Holding special education students to high standards
- .. Redefining guidelines to ten reasonably defined categories of special needs
- .. Giving students a 'free and appropriate education' (which is the Federal Standard)
- .. Implementing a management risk bureau to help towns seek money when faced with extraordinary costs

There will be a phased in approach over several years, however Bonnie emphasized that Arlington is committed to providing unwavering support for students who will no longer be eligible under the new guidelines.

### **Public Participation**

None

### **Report On New Safety Mandate**

Mrs. Donovan reported that a new State mandate is requiring the Superintendent of Schools, the Chief of Police, and the Fire Chief to hold meetings to design a response model and emergency

plan for each school in their district. The Superintendent would like to form one master team from the various crisis/safety

committees and subcommittees that would be required to report the Department of Education.

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

Voted to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to reconfigure our Safety Task Force and various safety/crisis committees to form one Oversight Committee as required to meet the new State Mandate. Unanimous (Mr. Healy not present)

Mr. Thrope requested that the safety task force look at the broader issue of safety for all students crossing major streets to and from school. Mr. McKenna explained that a traffic supervisor is being trained for the intersection of Gray Street & Fountain Road and would be in place on a temporary basis. He also emphasized that students in the 6th, 7th, & 8th grades do not want to cross with a traffic supervisor. Joani reported that the task force is in the process of addressing those issues.

### **New Rules And Regulations Of SBAB**

Supt. Donovan stated that the School Building Assistance Bureau released its new proposed amendments on school construction regulations. Referring to the handout from the DOE she reported that Arlington's new reimbursement figure is listed as 55.21%. (Mrs. Donovan emphasized that this new figure has no bearing on the Peirce and Dallin Schools; they have been approved at the 63% reimbursement rate). That figure is based on community income, property wealth of the town and on the poverty level of the town. We could be grandfathered at the 63% under certain criteria but Kay recommends holding off on the Stratton and Thompson. Although it is lower than the current 63% reimbursement rate, the Supt. believes that by meeting certain criteria we could increase Arlington's percentage reimbursement to be as high as 70%. Some of the negative aspects of the new regulations would mean that we (Arlington) would not necessarily be placed on the list the same year that the school is submitted, and we would not be entitled to desegregation money. On the plus side Kay believes that we are in a good position, and this would allow PTBC some time to regroup. This would also allow the timeline for finishing the schools to remain the same; only the submission process would be different.

The Superintendent stated that the next step would be to go to the State for clarification on how they will judge certain criteria/guidelines.

### **Updated Enrollment Projections**

Superintendent Donovan reviewed the enrollments for students in grades K-5. She supplied figures projected from NESDEC (New England School Development Council) and MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) through 2004. Currently there are 2080 students enrolled k-5; she is projecting approximately 2280 k-5 students by 2004. Figures are based on the number of women of child bearing years, the number of women over 30, new construction (minimal) and the fact that there is a tremendous turnover in Arlington with young families buying from an older population. Mrs. Donovan explained that in order to maintain equity in all schools we are looking for 160 regulation rooms. Kay recommends leaving the size of the Dallin alone at 380, Thompson at 350 and Stratton at 320.

### **Redistricting Issues And Considerations**

Superintendent Donovan reported to the Committee factors to be considered for redistricting:

- .. Neighborhood Schools
  - .. Walking Distances
  - .. Main Street Crossings
  - .. Demographics
  - .. Never Static
  - .. Public Hearings
  - .. Questions
1. Does the Committee want partial redistricting before construction is completed?
  2. Do we move Special Education classes more than once?
  3. Are we willing to place students into more than two schools during construction
  4. Are we willing to look at the impact of the Mirak apartments before we complete redistricting?
  5. Will we continue Open Enrollment after redistricting?

Mr. Healy referred to the new construction at Mill and Summer streets and wondered how many students from there would be attending Bishop. He has concerns over the fact that Bishop was built for 325 students and is presently housing 375. The Superintendent has taken that into consideration and asked the committee if they would like to do anything with partial redistricting before construction is completed?

Mr. Sullivan stated that he is concerned with the pressure on the Bishop School but needs to think about partial versus total redistricting. Both Mr. Thrope and Ms. Goodman favor total redistricting. In addition Ms. Goodman stated that she wants to avoid families being redistricted more than once and she would like to keep elementary students at elementary schools during renovation/rebuilding. Ms. Goodman asked Supt. Donovan if she could provide a visual timeline on redistricting at a future meeting. Mr. McKenna pointed out that safety and cost factors relative to busing students need to be discussed. He suggested that we not bus any students once districting is implemented. Supt Donovan stated that redistricting would not be a problem when the

Piece was rebuilt, but when the Dallin is under construction it would mean having students placed in more than two schools. Mrs. Donovan stated that she would be happy to have a meeting with Bishop parents if it would help them come to a decision as to whether or not they want to start redistricting. She suggested letting the program run for one-half year, and have a meeting with Bishop parents/community to see if it is working for them. The Superintendent emphasized that the goal is to make sure teachers and students are moved in the least disruptive way possible.

Ms. LaMachia acknowledged that this discussion was to receive basic information on what the implications for schools and families would be and that projected plans outlining all aspects would be discussed at future meetings.

### **Reconstruction/Construction Of Schools**

Mr. Shea from PTBC wanted to emphasize to the Committee that the preliminary numbers for the Peirce and Dallin came in higher than anticipated and cautioned that the Committee not be too generous in the sizing of the remaining two schools. Superintendent Donovan noted that it might be to our benefit to renovate Stratton School instead of rebuilding. Mrs. Donovan continued saying that if rebuilt, it would be smaller than the existing school because the State will not allow two gymnasiums. The class sizes are very good, the school has wide corridors, and an elevator already in place to accommodate for special needs students.

### **New Business**

Mr. Sullivan requested that 'New Business' be placed on every agenda. He asked that the issue of MCAS and the implications of receiving a diploma or a certificate of achievement be discussed at a future meeting.

Ms. Goodman would like to set up a Communications Subcommittee meeting. Items to be discussed would be communication issues with Bob Sprague, communication specialist; and a review on Ottoson Middle School with feedback from parents, and teachers regarding the completion of a 3 year cycle of 6th, 7th & 8th grades.

### **Secretary's Report**

Mr. Healy reviewed correspondence. He briefed the Committee on a memo from MASC stating that it is ready to meet with the policy & procedure subcommittee to review the first draft section on the policy manual. The Bishop School will have its open house on Sunday, October 22, 2000.

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

**Voted** to enter executive session for the purpose of discussion of negotiations and Peirce Field with no further business to be conducted upon return to open session. Roll Call: Unanimous

### **Executive Session 10:00-10:25 PM**

**On a motion** made by Mr. Sullivan and seconded it was unanimously **Voted** to adjourn at 10:25 PM.

(Mr. Healy not present)

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Tassone  
Administrative Secretary to the School Committee