

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

**Regular Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 1, 2005**

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Walser, Mayor Sullivan

Mayor Sullivan in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order.

## **Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings**

On a motion by Mr. Lummis, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted that the Minutes of the following meeting be accepted as presented:

- Regular Meeting - January 18, 2005

## **Public Comment on School Committee Agenda**

The following individuals were heard:

- Paul Toner, CTA, re budget

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Mr. Grassi, suspension of the Rules to allow Mr. Toner additional time to speak.

- Clare MacDonald, Cambridge Street, re budget cuts
- Mary Hampton, Clerk, re budget cuts

It was voted to close public comment.

## **Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members**

**Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting:** None

## **Unfinished Business**

Members passed over Unfinished Business.

## **New Business**

Mr. Grassi moved, seconded by Ms. Walser, for adoption of items #05-027 through #05-031. Mayor Sullivan removed #05-027. McGovern removed # 05-031. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

**#05-028, Special Needs Contract for Day Program Services** not available from the Cambridge School Department, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following institution in an amount not to exceed the shown rate, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funds to be provided from the general fund budget:

3 students      Schools for Children (High School), 20 Academy Street      \$106,690.29  
Arlington, MA

**#05-029, Approval of Home School Applications** for School Year 2004-2005: that the School Committee approve the home school applications for the 2004-2005 school year as detailed in the document.

**#05-030, Consultant Agreement:** that the School Committee approve the consultant agreement with the following company, in the amount set forth, funds to be provided as shown:

Frene McGrath Ventures, Waltham, MA, in the amount of \$27,450.00, account 53101, fund 25000, org. 859651, prog. 651, proj./grant SC04604.

Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding ~~ABSENT~~ YEA, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

### Non-Consent Business

**#05-027, Graduation Dates, 2005**, that the Members of the School Committee receive, review and approve either Option A or B for graduation dates that are being proposed for June, 2005. The Superintendent was heard and said that both Options ask the Committee to depart from the policy of three days and allow five days during which 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduations will be held. The Superintendent said that he, the School Committee, and the Principals support 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation for every school. Option A would schedule graduations at the Principal's discretion. Option B would schedule graduations through a lottery to insure that no graduation was held at the same time as another. The Superintendent introduced Principals Patricia Beggy/Morse, Paulette Jones/Tobin, Carole Learned-Miller/King, and Margarita Otero-Alvarez, Kennedy/Longfellow. Speaking on behalf of the Principals, Ms. Beggy was heard in support of 8<sup>th</sup> graders attending school 180 days and in support of Option A. The Members were heard relative to the recommendation and asked the Principals not to lose sight of traditions such as setting dates to allow elected officials to attend and picture-taking with the Mayor. The Superintendent and Ms. Beggy were heard. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Lummis, it was voted to adopt **#05-027, Graduation Dates, 2005, Option A**, to allow school graduations to occur on any day and time of the Principal's choice.

Mr. Harding requested, and received, unanimous consent to be recorded in the affirmative on the prior roll call vote.

Mr. McGovern asked the Superintendent for clarification on the policy on military recruitment at the high school. The Superintendent was heard. On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adopt **#05-031, Motion by Mr. McGovern** requesting that the Superintendent report back to the School Committee regarding the current status of military recruitment efforts at Cambridge Rindge and Latin, including current school policy and current legal obligation to allow such recruitment.

Budget Co-Chair Grassi announced that there will be a public hearing on the budget March 15 and budget adoption on April 5.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who walked Members through the 2005-2006 Proposed Budget:

- Education at the Heart
- FY2005-06 Budget Overview
- Summary of Proposed Budget
- Major Cost Increases & Decreases
- Multi-Year Budget Comparisons/Percentage Increases

- Elementary Staffing Charts
- Other District Comparisons
- Professional Development
- Enrollment Summary
- 5-Year Revenue & Expenditure Estimates
- Staffing Data
- Adjusting Priorities Within the Base Budget
- Restructuring/Reductions
- Program Initiatives & Improvements

The Chair entertained public comment on the presentation.

The following individuals were heard:

- Leslie Brunetta, Roberts Rd.
- David Quigley
- Patty Nolan
- Craig Kelley, Gerard Terrace

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to close public comment.

The Members raised the following questions, comments and concerns:

- The process has significantly changed
- Concerned that the Superintendent cannot support some of the cuts
- We are seeing the fruits of bringing on the Superintendent over the last two years
- Need to get public's confidence that we are spending wisely
- Professional Development money is key
- This Committee has taken fiscal responsibility seriously
- 60% of students not passing MCAS are Limited English Proficient (LEP)
- Thanks to the Superintendent for developing the Leadership Team
- Educational initiatives look great
- There is a need for further transparency in the budget
- Provide back-up data of how positions get accounted for to get an accurate number of how many people have been cut

Mr. Harding in the Chair.

- There seems to be fewer Managers than Clerks who have been cut
- Need rationale why cuts were not made further up the ladder
- Need a better understanding of the numbers behind the numbers
- Glad that the budget reflects grade configuration at the Amigos School
- Glad security staffing levels remained the same - we need a police officer detail at the library construction site
- Where are teachers who are not in the classroom
- Find out who is being paid as a teacher who is not in the classroom
- What is the RSTA media arts program
- How will Clerks' responsibility be transferred
- Thanks to the Superintendent for educational rationale and creating stability in the classroom
- Need to focus on improving MCAS scores and insuring that students graduate from high school
- Is there a plan to deal with increases in health care, special education tuition and transportation
- Are we looking at two starting times instead of three

- Does the school improvement plan work against the more effective approach to achievement
- How much is debt stability, how will it be used, and will it be built into the budget every year
- Is there a plan for filling the Challenge Prep teaching position and restructuring the program
- Insure that Challenge Prep, University School and HSEP are successful
- There are a number of high level positions in this system that are not in other systems
- Be careful of how we value staff - measure of a school system is how it treats its employees
- Put plan together to look at staffing
- How are we recruiting families
- Concerned with the reduction in the clerical force
- Downsizing came as a big surprise
- Delay new and expanded items as a possibility to keep people
- Cuts at the high school may not be a good idea in light of going to block scheduling
- Ask the Superintendent to bring in a recommendation to inform public of new initiatives
- What will impact of cuts have on students
- Need more information on the science initiative and extended day program
- What is the correct number of teachers we have in the system
- What seven positions are being cut and why
- What is the student/teacher ratio at the high school
- Is there such a thing as a middle level administrator or manager
- Provide a summary on Civil Service status and claims on jobs
- What practices do we need to engage in over time to create more efficiency and effectiveness
- Look at the Intensive Studies Program (ISP) to see how or if it is doing things differently and whether those students could be disbursed to other schools
- Thankful to be part of a Committee that has a transparent budget
- Will the budget have budget-to-actual numbers
- Is there an updated five-year budget plan based on this budget

The Superintendent and his staff responded to some of the above questions, comments and concerns raised by Members.

The Members thanked the Superintendent and staff for the presentation.

#### **Late Orders**

Ms. Walser asked that the new address of the School Committee Office be publicized.

Mr. Lummis announced that the State of the Schools forums will be on March 9 and March 16 to inform members of the community on the progress of our schools.

On a motion by Mr. Walser, seconded by Mr. Lummis, it was voted to adjourn (9:45 p.m.).

Adjourned  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

