

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Informal Meeting

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

Called for 6:00 p.m. by Her Honor Mayor E. Denise Simmons, in accordance with Chapter I, Section 3, of the Rules of the School Committee, for the purpose of a retreat with the Superintendent of Schools to discuss communication and goals.

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster (joined by telephone)
Ms. Tauber, Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

Also Present: Superintendent Jeffery Young, Deputy Superintendent Carolyn Turk, Chief Operating Officer James Maloney, Education Liaison Bridget Rodriguez, Glenn Koocher, Facilitator

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. and turned it over to Mr. Koocher. Mr. Koocher outlined the Agenda for the evening. Members responded to the following:

EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS RETREAT

- How School Committee and Administration can work together and reduce tension on both sides
- Agenda items
- Identify goals
- Understanding and supporting each others needs
- To be a more effective School Committee
- Understand the power of team work and what it means to the institution (School Committee)
- Ways to work together to keep eyes on the prize (outcomes for students) – focus on school and quality of education
- To be thoughtful about change - how much change are we seeking – what changes are we looking for
- Collegiality
- Power of the School Committee around policy
- Concrete actions or behaviors that we can commit to to have a strong district
- Continuum of policy to administration and administration to policy
- Agreement on communication system with Superintendent
- How we work it out when lines get blurred
- Understand the lines of command between the School Committee's office and the Superintendent's office
- Operating Principles
- Relationship between SC Chair and Superintendent
- Appropriate roles and responsibilities

Discussion took place around the following PowerPoint presentation by Mr. Koocher, "Cambridge School Committee Planning Retreat":

- Cambridge: Unique and Common
- Advantage of Transitions
- Key Questions to Ask: How Much Change Do We Want?

- Key Problems in Transitions
 - I. Roles and Responsibilities (Plenty of Ambiguity)
 - School Committee
 - Faculty Responses
 - II. Fiscal Issues (Bad Money Ruins Absolutely Everything)
 - III. School Committee/Superintendent Teamwork & Unity
 - IV. Communications
 - Communications Problems
- What Effective School Committees Look Like
- Cambridge and Successful Transition
- Whom to Emulate?

Further discussion took place around:

CONCRETE ACTION STEPS/BEHAVIORS

- Insure that all presentations are crisp, clear, concise and geared to School Committee interests
- Insure that the SC references policy to any motion it makes
- Establish protocol for giving feedback to Superintendent (model exemplary behavior)
- Insure that Members will solicit discussion with the Superintendent before motions are filed and will allow the Administration to address the issue before a motion needs to be made
- Create ways to have more off line conversations with Superintendent
- Respect colleagues' good intentions
- Refer issues to the Superintendent and do not involve Principals in constituent issues

OTHER

- Need pushback from Superintendent
- Have a retreat with entire leadership team
- Controlled choice is not the issue – under-chosen schools is – address under-chosen schools
- Create a mechanism (algorithm) to respond to choices
- Is controlled choice working and is it necessary 25 years later
- Look at more educational goals rather than assignment goals

GOALS

- Achievement gap, accelerated learning, higher learning in math and science
- Middle grades
- Challenging students who are ready for challenge
- Data report
- Inclusion and differentiated instruction
- Review of intervention programs – program evaluation
- 21st Century Skills
- Careful review of policies
- Strategic facilities plan
- Special education strategic plan
- District strategic plan
- Second language acquisition

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to suspend the Rules to continue the meeting until 10:15.

GOALS (Cont'd)

- Technology
- School climate (elimination of race, class, gender bias)
- Coherent strategies for partnerships
- Long-term financial planning

NEXT STEPS

- Prioritize above goals
- Schedule follow-up retreat

The Chair thanked Mr. Koocher and the Co-Chairs for planning the Retreat.

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted to adjourn (10:02 p.m.)

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee