

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES

Date of School Committee Meeting: January 28, 2008

Location: Library, Norton Middle School

Attending: Committee Members: Chairman Kevin O'Neil, Vice-Chairman Thomas Golota, Mrs. Beth McManus, Mrs. Margaret Werner and Student Representative Emily Carmichael. Mr. Andrew Mackie was absent.

Call to Order: Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting:

Mrs. Werner pointed out that her comments made at the January 14th meeting were meant to be positive and constructive. She explained that she believes 12 month school department employees should have a chance to have time off during the holidays, especially on a snow day. She apologized if her comments may have appeared negative in tone. She did not wish to officially amend the Minutes however.

A motion was made by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. McManus, to approve the Minutes of the prior meeting on January 14th, with mention of Mrs. Werner's comment. The Minutes were unanimously approved on a 4-0 vote.

Grade 8 Social Studies Textbook Adoption:

Social Studies Academic Coordinator Mr. Paul Duff was present to discuss a proposal for a Grade 8 Social Studies textbook adoption. Mrs. Amy Berdos and Mrs. Sharon Roberts, Co-Directors of Curriculum and Instruction, K-12, were also present to support this proposal. Mr. Duff emphasized the need for updated textbooks by pointing out that so many new findings have helped to change our interpretations of early civilizations. He explained that for the past year he's been working with the Grade 8 teachers on re-designing the Social Studies curriculum. According to Mr. Duff, the Grade 8 Social Studies curriculum used to consist of a U.S. History/Civics approach. He said they are now suggesting a hybrid approach which advocates combining U.S. History and World History in Grade 8. Mr. Duff pointed out the importance of studying ancient Greece and Rome prior to studying early America. He expressed how important it is to keep the study of Colonial America and the Constitution in the Grade 8 curriculum, but emphasized that World History was equally important at this grade level. Mr. Duff discussed the cost of the new textbooks which would need to be purchased for the new curriculum.

Mr. O'Neil asked Dr. Ansay if the textbooks could be purchased with funds from this year's budget or next year's budget. Dr. Ansay replied that hopefully the books could be purchased with funds from this year's budget if the proposal is approved tonight. Mr. Duff summarized his presentation by commending the Grade 8 teachers. He said they have done a terrific job trying to supplement with other materials because the 8th Grade Social Studies textbooks are in such embarrassing shape. He said the teachers are very excited about the new textbook proposal. He added that the Grade 6 teachers have been very excited with the recent Grade 6 Social Studies textbook adoption.

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, on a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously approved the Grade 8 Social Studies textbook adoption proposal.

Town Joint Budget Committee Meeting Report:

Mrs. Werner and Mrs. McManus reported on the January 22nd meeting which they attended. Police Chief Brian Clark was present at that meeting to explain the police department needs for FY '09. Mrs. Werner commented that she does not know how the people in Norton have done all that they have done since Proposition 2 1/2. She said everyone is giving so much. Mrs. Werner further commented that we could easily have more crime in Norton than we do, because of the way budget constraints have affected the police department in town. She expressed her hope that the town does not experience a crisis, and said we have been very lucky.

Mrs. Werner pointed out that very few town citizens have come to the Town Joint Budget Committee meetings. Mr. Golota asked if the various town departments are talking about a five year plan. Mrs. Werner concurred about the need for such a plan. She said we really need to emphasize working together as a community to solve the problems of Norton. She said there does not seem to be a solution to the problem unless the state gives the town of Norton more money. Mrs. McManus described a common theme among the town departments. She said everyone seems to be in the same boat, and pointed out that all town departments have mentioned they are stretched to the limit. Mr. O'Neil asked Mrs. Werner and Mrs. McManus to remind the Town Joint Budget Committee to televise their meetings.

FY '09 Budget, Chapter 70 Discussion:

Dr. Ansay explained that budget discussions at the state level have just begun. She announced that the Governor's budget was distributed on Wednesday, January 23rd. Norton's Chapter 70 aid for FY '09 is estimated at \$13,094,617 which is a \$533,471 increase over FY '08. She said we'll have to see how the remainder of the local aid numbers hold up through the Senate and House deliberations. Dr. Ansay pointed out that there is unrest at the legislative level with these numbers, as Gov. Patrick had included funds from casino revenues and other areas that he doesn't have in hand yet. In addition, she said Norton's Town Manager has been out this week, and therefore she does not have in hand Norton's "Estimated Revenue and Expenditure" sheet. She said the \$533,471 will "soften the blow" but will not eliminate cuts in staffing and operating costs that we are required to make to reach a level-funded budget.

Superintendent's Goals:

Dr. Ansay discussed a list of goals that School Committee members had proposed. She explained that per the Superintendent's contract, these goals are to be collaboratively developed. She said she is in agreement with the goals listed, and feels that no further negotiation regarding these goals is needed. She said she accepts the list and is already working towards its satisfactory completion.

Mr. O'Neil read the proposed goals. He asked to amend the goal regarding the hiring of a Business Manager. He pointed out that this goal would only be planned if the school department has the funds to pursue it. Mr. O'Neil also suggested rewording the goal regarding the school budget. He suggested that the wording should be "*lead the charge for an appropriate budget*".

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, on a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to accept the Superintendent's goals for the 2007-2008 school year, as amended by the discussion tonight.

Matt Light Football Camp - Use Request:

Dr. Ansay explained that this is the third year Wheaton College has requested use of our field facilities for their Matt Light Football Camp. The first year, they contributed \$7,000 to the *Field of Dreams* Norton Athletic Complex account. The second year, which was last year, they offered \$10,000, which was deposited into that account. This year, they are proposing a 2.5% consumer price index increase, which would bring the total to \$10,250. Dr. Ansay said she believes leasing the area behind the Yelle School to the college for this purpose is the right thing to do. She explained that Wheaton has been a good friend to the Norton Public Schools. She also explained that the additional revenue comes in handy to support work on our athletic fields. She said the contract Wheaton has submitted is very thorough. Mr. Golota concurred that Wheaton has been a very good neighbor to the school department.

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. McManus, on a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Matt Light Football Camp request submitted by Wheaton College.

Vote to Approve Town Meeting Articles:

The first article is the Early Childhood Program Revolving Fund Reauthorization. On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. McManus, on a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve this article.

The second article is the Full-Day Kindergarten Program Revolving Fund Reauthorization. Mr. Golota made a motion to approve this article subject to changing the current cap if necessary. Mrs. Werner seconded the motion. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously approved this article.

The third article is the Proposition 2 1/2 Override. Mrs. Werner made a motion to approve this Article as a "place holder". Mr. O'Neil said he does not agree with approving this article. He said, politically speaking, he does not support it because he believes the town won't support this proposal if it comes once again from the School Committee. Mrs. Werner said she disagrees with Mr. O'Neil. She said she believes the School Committee has an ethical responsibility to the education of the children in this town. She said the committee should ask for an override every single year if it is needed. Mr. O'Neil said he agrees with Mrs. Werner about the responsibility to the education of the children, but he believes the override question needs to be proposed by the sub-committees. He recommended that the ad hoc budget committee propose the Proposition 2 1/2 override. Mr. O'Neil explained that the bottom line is very clear. He said this Article must be sponsored by the Board of Selectmen. He said the override must be passed.

Mrs. Werner emphasized that the Proposition 2 1/2 Override can pass with the support of parents. She said the parents will fight for it. Mr. Golota agreed with Mr. O'Neil, stating that the town side supporters will need to rally for the override in order for it to pass. He said that unless this is a town effort, it will be wasted effort. Mrs. McManus agreed stating that if the School Committee asks for another override, they will only be hurting themselves. She said the override must be a town wide effort. Mrs. Werner suggested writing a letter to the Board of Selectmen, strongly suggesting that something needs to be done. She said we must do something. Mr. O'Neil agreed to put together a letter to the Board of Selectmen, telling them about the discussion tonight, and that the School Committee all agrees an override will not pass unless it is a town supported override.

At the conclusion of the discussion, there was no second to Mrs. Werner's original motion to approve the Proposition 2 1/2 Override Article. Therefore, the motion failed.

The fourth article is the Bills of Prior Year Article. Dr. Ansay explained that two issues came up after the end of FY '07. A middle school teacher received her salary figures in August of 2006, and notified us after June 30, 2007 nearly one year later, that the figure was incorrect. This person had received an increment increase late in the school year which was inadvertently overlooked when calculating salaries. The \$1,554 is the difference between step/track for the year. The second person, a high school teacher, submitted course reimbursement paperwork, but was missing one form needed to complete the packet, which she said she could not find. After the new fiscal year started she found the form she needed and asked to be reimbursed the \$275, which was from funds of the prior fiscal year. Dr. Ansay said that bringing this Article forth to Town Meeting is the only way we are legally permitted to handle these requests.

A discussion ensued about both bills. The committee agreed that the school department is not responsible to repay the staff member who did not submit course reimbursement paperwork on time. Mr. Golota made a motion to approve this article, subject to changing it so that only the first Bill of Prior Year is submitted for repayment. Mrs. Werner seconded the motion. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously approved this article, with the change so that only the first Bill of Prior Year for \$1,554 is submitted for repayment.

Discussion/Vote on Superintendent's Evaluation:

The School Committee then discussed the Superintendent's evaluation. Mrs. McManus made a motion to accept and place on file Dr. Ansay's annual goals and accomplishments. Mr. Golota seconded the motion. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to accept and place on file Dr. Ansay's annual goals and accomplishments.

Mrs. Werner then made a motion to accept and place on file feedback on Dr. Ansay's goals. Mr. Golota seconded the motion. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to accept and place on file feedback on Dr. Ansay's goals.

Mrs. McManus commented that she was very impressed with Dr. Ansay before she came on board the School Committee. However, she said, since she has come on board, she is beyond impressed. She said Dr. Ansay should be commended, and that the children and people of Norton are lucky to have her. Mrs. Werner concurred. Dr. Ansay said that she hopes she is making a difference. She said it is a lot of work to do, but it is important for the children. Mr. O'Neil stated that he believes the school department is so much better since Dr. Ansay has arrived.

Personnel:

Retirements:

- a. Mrs. Mae Myers, LGN Reading Teacher, effective June, 2008. Mrs. Myers is the most senior member of the professional staff, with 39 years of service.
- b. Mrs. Diane Barrette, JCS Grade 2 Teacher, effective June, 2008.

Appointments:

- a. Mrs. Michelle Brogan, JCS Kdg. Educational Assistant, effective January 2, 2008.
- b. LGN MCAS Tutors: Mrs. Mae Myers, Mrs. Danielle McNeill-O'Brien
- c. HAY MCAS Tutors: Ms. Sarah Orszak, Ms. Megan Mierzwinski, Mrs. Kristie Dietz
- d. HAY Homework Heroes Club: Mrs. Linda Thomasian, Mr. Alfred Ortelt (Grant)

Adjournment:

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mrs. McManus, on a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session at 8:37 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, February 11, 2008, 6:30 P.M., Norton Middle School Library.