

JOINT MEETING

Concord School Committee
Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Ripley Building
Concord, MA
March 9, 2004
7:00 PM

Minutes

PRESENT:

Ms. Betsy Bilodeau, Chair, CSC
Mr. Michael Fitzgerald, Chair, CCSC
Ms. Nicole Burkel
Ms. Meg Gaudet
Ms. Rebecca Shannon
Mr. Pat Sinnott
Mr. Jerry Wedge

PRESENT FROM ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Brenda Finn, Superintendent
Mr. John Flaherty
Ms. Diana Rigby
Mr. Richard Sederstrom

ABSENT:

Louisa Slocum, Student Representative

I. CALL TO ORDER AND GREETING

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fitzgerald for CCRSD and Ms. Bilodeau for CPS at 7:07 p.m.

Mr. Fitzgerald expressed condolences to the Chaput family. Vivian Chaput was tragically killed in an automobile accident in Florida over the weekend. She will be sorely missed.

II. READING OF THE MINUTES

A. Open Session

A MOTION was made by Ms. Shannon and seconded by Mr. Wedge for CPS to approve the minutes from the meeting held February 10, 2004. Changes were made on pages 2 and 3. The secretary noted the changes and the minutes were voted:

Aye: Bilodeau, Shannon, Sinnott, Wedge

Abstain: Gaudet

III. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Fitzgerald received an invitation to the groundbreaking ceremony for CC Pools on March 16, 2004 at 3:00.

Ms. Gaudet stated the Patriots Ball is being held April 17 at the Armory. You may purchase tickets from her.

Ms. Bilodeau received a letter from Representative Atkins regarding her visit to our last meeting. She sent the report regarding the actual costs of sped funding. She asked Ms. Bilodeau to call her office to have a conversation about them.

Mr. Sinnott received correspondence from citizens who commended the School Committee on their efforts.

IV. RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Finn stated the principals have cited a number of staff who have done great things in their buildings. On behalf of Mr. Unobskey, Dr. Finn recognized David Cluff, Debbie Harmon, Kara Kivi, Dan Murphy, Junie Wong and Inez Rodriguez-Dijon for their work in the 7th grade Bullying and Harassment program.

Mr. Popp, Principal of Thoreau School, recognized Susan Erikson and Nancy Dillon for their Lesson N Lunch program. The teachers stated parents are invited three times a year to come into the classroom and take part in a regular lesson. They then share a potluck lunch. They have experienced 100% attendance. Dr. Finn stated it is terrific to see parents actively engaged in what the students are learning. Ms. Shannon stated this blends well with the “40 developmental assets” program.

Ms. Fernandez, Principal of Willard School, stated there is a sense of community there is around reading. They encourage reading for pleasure and are trying to reach 50,000 hours of reading this year. We are on target to hit the goal by the end of April. She recognized Robin Cicchetti, Matt MacDougall, and Carl Sweeney in helping so much to encourage reading.

Ms. Gaudet stated there is a 5th grade concert at the high school on March 10. Ms. Gaudet recognized Ms. Erikson’s students for participating in a read-a-thon to support Gaining Ground.

Dr. Finn recognized teachers on behalf of Ms. Young, Principal of Alcott School. She recognized Barbara Gordon and Eleanne Rosenberg, art teachers for their work with John Peachy, a tech specialist.

Ms. Bilodeau stated the middle school PTG held a program last week regarding the 40 developmental assets. They are creating relationships between adults and students in our community. It was a breakfast meeting and Ms. Bilodeau had a chance to sit with a group of students and talk with them.

Mr. Fitzgerald recognized the high school drama department and its performance of Fiddler on the Roof. It is a commendable effort on the part of staff, parents and students. He thanked Mr. Dulong, Chuck Brown and CC Pops.

Ms. Shannon recognized the swim team, the diving team and the skiing team on a very good season.

Dr. Finn thanked the principals and teachers for attending this evening.

V. ACTION ITEMS

A. Set recommendations on ballot levels

Mr. Fitzgerald stated there are some changes to the budget. Mr. Flaherty stated at CPS there is an adjustment to Level 1 regarding field trips. Also the Finance Committee has increased the levy limit so three tech specialists have been removed from the reduction list. At CCHS, the Finance Committee raised the levy limit, there were adjustments related to reductions in unemployment and health insurance rates. The reduction in state aid was changed from 10% to 7.5%.

Ms. Bilodeau asked what no longer appears on the reduction list. Mr. Flaherty stated 3 tech. Specialists, career counselor, radio station, MCAS remediation and senior project.

Mr. Wedge asked if there was an issue of a cost associated with schools collecting fees for field trips. Mr. Flaherty stated the schools figured a way to do it less expensively. Dr. Finn stated the principals would do that in order to save something else on the list.

Mr. Sinnott asked the assessment of Concord/Carlisle. It is Concord 71.46%, Carlisle is 28.54 %.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated we have been presented with budgets for CCHS and CPS, which have four levels. What appropriate levels do we convey to the Board of Selectmen? So far we have Level 2 and 3. We also have a citizen petition asking us to put forward a Level 1 budget. He distributed a draft letter to the committee for input.

A discussion ensued regarding wording a ballot question and a recommended budget level. It was decided to concentrate on the numbers first.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated Carlisle has worked it so that its levy limit is the Concord override level. He would like to craft a letter to them as well.

Ms. Bilodeau stated it is likely the Board of Selectmen could put a lower number between Level 3 and 4. If we go with a higher number and have it placed on the ballot, they would hold off on having a vote until after Town Meeting which would put us into June. That leaves a lot of people waiting to see if they have a position, it's also not a lot of time to get a match with Carlisle.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated let's set the ballot questions now. If we need to, we will set another special town meeting to get funding. Ms. Bilodeau asked do we want to put a line in the letter that says we want this voted in May. Ms. Shannon agreed.

Ms. Bilodeau stated the petition drive is from strong school supporters. This is complicated to voters. We need to work to educate the public.

Mr. Wedge stated if we don't recommend the higher number, someone might at Town Meeting. Then the ballot is moved to June and we have the higher number. Ms. Bilodeau stated there is a lot we don't have control over, we need to use our best judgment on what we recommend and explain why we recommended it.

Ms. Burkel stated there is no petition effort in Carlisle. We would have to get a match if Level 1 were voted. Ms. Shannon stated the School Committee could handle that job. If we worry about a perfect match, the high school won't get anywhere.

Mr. Sinnott stated the letter must send these messages, we strongly request the election be held shortly after Town Meeting, we make fairly focused statements about Level 2 and 3, and a paragraph leaving flexibility to the Board of Selectmen to choose to add Level 1 or not.

Mr. Sinnott quoted the over-ride numbers for CCHS and CPS. Mr. Lauer stated the Finance Committee will look once more at the levy limit, they might be able to move it up a little more. He suggested looking at assessment levels rather than amounts of over-rides.

Ms. Bilodeau asked if the CPS board members agreed on the same letter for the CPS budget. It was determined by consensus to use the same letter.

Mr. Sinnott stated the first Friday in April is the anticipated leadership meeting in Carlisle. This will be the coordination efforts between Carlisle and Concord.

VI. REPORTS AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION
A. Long Range Planning Committee Report

Ms. Bilodeau stated there was a discussion of the school portion of the long-range planning report. The group has met weekly for a long time and knew little about what is done on the school side. They felt schools have been mismanaged for the past 20 years. This is not an accurate sense of how the School Committee feels. The schools have been well run, but we should have been more aggressive in preserving the facilities.

They have concerns about a demographic shift; it was looked at the elderly who would not be able to afford to stay with more increasing property taxes.

Dr. Finn stated a meeting will be held later this month, Ms. Bilodeau will attend. Mr. Sinnott suggested a formal objection to the Long-Range Planning Committee should be written promptly and Board of Selectmen should be copied. Ms. Bilodeau will write a letter.

B. Letter on Ammendolia Land

Ms. Bilodeau stated a special Town Meeting is being held March 22. The town has identified a parcel to sell in order to purchase this land. They will use Ripley as parking and that will increase parking spaces at this site.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Sinnott and seconded by Mr. Wedge for CSC to fully support Article 2 for the acquisition of the Ammendolia Land on Old Bedford Road. The MOTION was unanimously approved.

Mr. Wedge stated he would stand up on March 22 to support this if Ms. Bilodeau is not available.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Fitzgerald stated the meeting scheduled for March 23 is in conflict with a special Town Meeting in Carlisle. The meeting was rescheduled for March 24.

Ms. Shannon will distribute a list of coffees via e-mail for people to sign up for.

Mr. Wedge stated it would be beneficial to have an outline honing in on our message. He and Ms. Bilodeau will work on that.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Tour of Alcott, March 10 at 5 p.m.

We will see the most recent progress. We will meet at the old Alcott in front of the auditorium.

C. Concord-Carlisle Support Staff Association/MTA Secretaries' Unit Contract

Dr. Finn stated this is the secretaries' contract that Mr. Sederstrom worked very closely on settling.

Dr. Finn also attached information prepared by Normal Dinnall regarding closing the achievement gap, to be discussed at the professional development day to be held Friday March 12.

IX. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Patrick Padden, of the audience, stated the petition numbers as of that afternoon were up to 591.

Tom Hart, of the audience, stated he finds it hard to believe the town can find \$1M to fund the Ammendolia land purchase when that is more than enough to eliminate the gap between the recommended level and level services. Mr. Wedge stated this is being done without increasing property taxes. Ms. Bilodeau stated we couldn't sell off land to fix an operating budget, even in fiscally tight times. This purchase is a good strategic move for the town. Mr. Fitzgerald stated the high school itself is an example of a physical plant ignored to fund operations.

AJ Loprete, of the audience, stated he is shocked to see how quickly 600 signatures were dismissed and the decision was passed on to someone else. Ms. Bilodeau stated we are decision-making advocates for the school and we work with other committees in town. We need to look at the big picture and to determine what is the best recommendation to do next year. We have made our decision very carefully.

Nick Michael, of the audience, stated we don't really know what number Level 1 is. There should be some agreement so we can quantify it.

X. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Mr. Sinnott and seconded by Mr. Wedge for CCRSD and a MOTION was made by Ms. Gaudet and seconded by Mr. Wedge for CPS to adjourn the regional meeting and enter into Executive Session at 8:57 p.m. The MOTION was unanimously approved by roll call.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura O'Sullivan

APPROVED: 3/24/04