

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, October 15, 2008**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson;
Rich Robison, Jeff Beeler, Michele MacDonald

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance (until 10:10 p.m.)

1. Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

6. Superintendent's Report

a) Middle School Principal Search Process

Superintendent John Brackett provided a draft process, timeline, and job announcement. The proposed process is similar to that used in previous principal searches, but also includes a phone screening prior to scheduling initial face-to-face interviews. Dr. Brackett requested the Committee's input on defining the work year. The Committee requested more information on pay scales associated with the work-year options under consideration.

b) Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

c) Personnel Actions

None presented.

d) Donation

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley outlined the proposed donation of \$16,000 by the Haynes Organization of Parents (HOP), earmarked to cover the costs to purchase and install two ActivBoards and peripheral equipment. The purchases would complete Grades 3-5 at Haynes. HOP Co-chair Lisa Gutch, Silver Hill Road, specified that funds would be raised at the school's auction, scheduled for November 1.

Mr. Milley remarked on the success of in-house ActivBoard professional development and that soon, two-hour, after-school training sessions will be scheduled. Participants will receive in-service credits. He also noted that he and Donna Criswell, Technology Curriculum Specialist, will attend a conference on October 21 where they will highlight ActivBoard technology processes and collaborations. Jane Santinelli suggested highlighting this in a *Town Crier* article.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to accept a donation of \$16,000 from the Haynes Organization of Parents to cover the costs of purchasing and installing two ActivBoards and peripheral equipment. The vote was 5-0.

2. FY08 MCAS Results

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley provided several data summaries of Spring 2008 MCAS results, as well as historical data and data comparisons with other districts. He noted that the curriculum specialists, as well as a professor and graduate students at Boston College, are analyzing the test data to determine the types of questions or curriculum areas that might require classroom reinforcement. Summaries of the data analyses will be provided to teachers in sessions led by the specialists. While the District goal of improving on excellence remains a priority, Mr. Milley noted that there are areas of concern. He also noted that while the Grade 8 technology performance dropped this year, the trend over time suggests it is a test issue vs. a performance issue.

The Committee recommended posting some of this material to the FAQ portion of the District website. It also noted that the data overall show that the District is high performing, with a population of struggling students that is distributed throughout the District. The Committee asked how best practices are communicated to the individual schools. Bob Milley described cross-district, grade-level communication that addresses timing and intensity of teaching. John Brackett noted that rather than focusing on Grade 3 and Grade 4 results, the District is also looking at what's happening in kindergarten, first and second grades. Particular attention will go to monitoring changes that might occur as a result of this year's loss of assistants at these grades. The Committee also thought it would be useful

to analyze student performance trends at the middle school level as a function of the elementary school attended.

4. School Committee Report

a) Communications with the Finance Committee (FinCom)

Susan Iuliano shared that although none of the recent state-level cuts to this year's budget are anticipated to affect the District, FinCom member Bob Jacobson recently proposed that the Budget Working Group consider accessing the stabilization fund to restore programs. The Committee considered it premature to consider mid-year cuts, but agreed in principle to examine this option if it proves necessary. Superintendent Brackett commented that it does make sense to think about utilizing the stabilization fund; however, he's concerned that if this is done, the FY10 budget will be reduced in order to re-build this fund.

b) Communications with the Community

The FinCom planned to write a guest column for the *Town Crier*, explaining their rationale for recommending a budget spending cap. In light of the recent economic turmoil, the FinCom will hold off on a guest column.

L-S School Committee members Mark Collins and Radha Gargeya plan to draft a position piece on the spending cap; Michele MacDonald and Jane Santinelli will review it for the SPS committee. This will be adapted as necessary and published if, and when, appropriate.

The Committee reiterated that its participation in the process of creating the budget presentation for the public is essential.

3. FY10 Budget

Superintendent Brackett stated that more information on benefits is needed before substantial discussion can occur.

Susan Iuliano reported that she and John Brackett attended a roundtable discussion organized by State Representative Tom Conroy and attended by House Ways and Means Committee Chair Robert DeLeo. Their message to the State was to keep the suburbs in mind. Additionally, they emphasized the impact of Sudbury's unique standing as having the highest percentage of households with children in the Commonwealth. They were encouraged by Representative DeLeo's receptivity.

4. School Committee Report

c) Meeting Schedule

The Committee agreed to a tentative date of November 12 for its next meeting. This meeting will take place at the Loring School and will replace the November 5 meeting.

The Committee scheduled an executive session for October 30 to discuss bargaining.

Susan Iuliano reported that the Board of Selectmen and the FinCom will hold a joint meeting on October 23 to discuss pension liability matters. Rich Robison may attend, although the Committee holds no responsibility for such matters.

b) Communications with the Community

Jeff Beeler has responded in his own name to on-line blogs addressing a number of school-related issues. The Committee concurred that some level of response has value. Its official positions will be established as a result of duly recorded votes and, where appropriate, will appear on the District website.

Susan Iuliano noted that she has received inquiries from both the Board of Selectmen and the FinCom about whether recent published commentary represents the School Committee's position or the position of the individual. A discussion was held in which it was reaffirmed that the Committee was in agreement that official Committee positions would be communicated to the press by Susan Iuliano as Chair, although every member remained free to speak about all matters that are public in nature, and take such positions as each member deemed appropriate.

Superintendent Brackett thanked Michele MacDonald for the significant effort involved in consolidating databases and setting up a District-wide email communication program through Constant Contact. The primary purpose of distributions will be to provide emergency or urgent alerts. Secondly, it will be used to convey important information from the schools as well as the Superintendent's newsletter and School Committee communications. The principals are also training to utilize the system for communications within their school communities.

Jeff Beeler noted that his September newsletter submission requires redrafting. The updated draft will be circulated for the Committee's review and comment.

5. Open Forum

Lisa Gutch, Silver Hill Road, commented on the value that a public relations professional would bring to the District. She noted that she will be doing her part within the Haynes community to convey budget information. She gave high praise to Jeff Beeler for his guest column that appeared in the September 11 issue of the *Town Crier*.

7. Minutes – Regular Session October 1, 2008

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2008 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0.

8. Communications

As described in the Communications Packet. The Committee briefly discussed its disinclination to joining the Suburban Coalition. Jeff Beeler asked to review the information received as part of his work with the Budget Review Task Force.

9. Members’ Forum

Jeff Beeler reported that Maintenance Supervisor Joe Kupczewski received an updated proposal from Borrego Solar that is more advantageous than the original proposal received last Spring. He suggested the District obtain competitive bids and utilize a consultant to assess feasibility.

Michele MacDonald expressed approval for the District’s switch to Constant Contact.

Bob Milley noted that the October 10 professional development day was well received by staff. The approximately thirty offerings can be viewed on the District website.

Rich Robison reported that House Bill 391 was passed into law this week. This law essentially restates federal law granting the right of parents to make in-class observations. Implementation mechanisms remain to be defined. Superintendent Brackett commented that he recommended this bill be vetoed because of its vague language and lack of guidelines for visits. He also noted that SPS already allows for such in-class observations.

10. Executive Session

None.

11. Adjourn

On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to adjourn the Regular Session. The time was 10:50 p.m. The vote was 5–0.

Yes Susan Iuliano
Yes Jane Santinelli
Yes Rich Robison
Yes Jeff Beeler
Yes Michele MacDonald

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary