

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, January 27, 2010**

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

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Bob Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Business and Finance Director, Mary Taylor, (SEA, until 10:40 p.m.)

Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Presentation and Discussion for Redistricting Plan 2010-11

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding redistricting were posted on the District website after the Special Session on January 12. Susan Iuliano noted that some questions focused on the timing of the decision, rather than with the details of the plan. There was also interest in understanding how redistricting relates to next year's budget.

Ms. Iuliano reiterated the history of School Committee discussions surrounding redistricting and emphasized that discussions date back to 2004. The Special Session was preceded by discussions at Regular Sessions last Fall. She explained the rationale for considering redistricting at this time: to ensure an equal educational experience for each student and to enhance operational and resource utilization efficiencies. With respect to the budget, Ms. Iuliano stated that redistricting would not add cost to the District's budget. She noted that the scenarios presented for next year, with and without redistricting, were hypothetical and involve the same level of staffing as this year. The costs would be the same; however, in either scenario, an override would be required to maintain the staffing level due to anticipated decreases in state aid and local revenue. The Board of Selectmen have not made a decision regarding presenting an override budget at Town Meeting.

Superintendent Brackett provided an overview of the specific considerations that went into developing the redistricting plan. Housing trends and anticipated enrollments, based on birth rate, were primary factors. Dr. Brackett clarified his use of the term "neighborhood", specifying that it referred to a cluster of properties in physical proximity. He also provided specific information on the effects of disparities in school sizes, noting, for example, the following:

- Smaller student numbers provide for less flexible placement and numbers of class sections.
- Teacher planning time and idea sharing are more limited at smaller schools.
- The greater proportion of part-time staff at the smaller schools puts the school at risk of having a need when staff are not available.
- Placement options for District-wide programs is more limited with disparate school sizes.
- At the larger schools, the ratio of students to specialists is larger; specialists are unable to provide services at the same level as at smaller schools.

With regard to the last point, Dr. Brackett noted that each school has one FTE literacy specialist. Loring has a literacy performance gap and a larger student population that must be served by the specialist.

Dr. Brackett also addressed other parent concerns:

- Individual attention will be provided for each transitioning student in addition to opportunities for group activities.
- Dated capacity data were recently updated.
- Full-day kindergarten will not suffer as a result of redistricting, despite an increase in the number of prospective students.

Superintendent Brackett reiterated his recommendation that the School Committee adopt the redistricting plan.

Susan Iuliano invited comments from the public.

Mark Krasnow, Churchill Street, noted that with regard to full- and part-time employees, the corporate world is moving toward shared services. He encouraged the District to consider this option. He also stated that he does not view the numbers of students per grade who will move as providing a "material" advantage. Finally, he characterized Dr. Brackett's stated redistricting benefits—productivity, efficiency, and flexibility—as "soft" benefits. Mr. Krasnow wants the District to quantify the benefit and tie it to a performance improvement goal. Dr. Brackett responded that

the literacy performance goals fit that criteria, but noted that the relationship may not be linear.

Bob Haarde, Belcher Drive, inquired about the role of the sending-school teacher in the placement process. Loring Principal Jeff Dees outlined the process, which not only involves the current classroom teacher, but also the principals. Haynes Principal Kim Swain noted that a transition model exists for students moving from fifth to sixth grade, involving teachers, counselors, and parents.

JoAnn Forrester, Hop Brook Lane, expressed frustration that her Noyes fourth-grader will remain in a class of 26 students for the third consecutive year. She noted that Noyes will not get better with regard to enrollment and capacity. Dr. Brackett responded that the plan cannot address every issue at each school and that Noyes will benefit from the overall improvements at the District level.

Josh Fox, Brimstone Lane, commented that he has a better understanding of the plan and the need to redistrict, but is left with the question, "So what?" He reported that he has spoken to Haynes families who expressed appreciation for the small class sizes, suggesting that redistricting would destroy something that is cherished. He wonders if the benefits outweigh the burdens and if reallocating resources is a better approach. Mr. Fox furthermore suggested that the children of non-resident employees be moved first. Superintendent Brackett responded that from a systems perspective, redistricting will not change the Haynes culture, but will make its staff more effective. He also noted that employees' children are placed on a space available basis, which varies from year to year.

Sophia Kambanis, Wadsworth Lane, commented that 70 students will neither make Haynes a "big" school nor destroy what is cherished there. She stated that the people are what make Haynes special.

Tammie Dufault, Silver Hill Road, assured parents that they will like Haynes. She also praised the work on the redistricting plan. She noted that Haynes is projected to have a higher student capacity *and* a higher percentage of students requiring special services. Ms. Dufault asked why the plan is being rushed to a vote and expressed concern about projections through 2013. Superintendent Brackett stated that District-wide programs, as well as associated resources, may be relocated, which will change the mix at Haynes. He noted that the location of special education programs is assessed every year. Furthermore, Dr. Brackett assured that the District has reliable data on which to base enrollment projections, which have historically been accurate within a 1% variance.

Susan Iuliano closed the public comment period. She noted that capacity has been discussed not only in redistricting presentations, but also in the context of MCAS performance and budget discussions. She stated the need for flexibility, given budget uncertainties.

Rich Robison recalled his initial reservations about redistricting now when the budget situation over the next few years is so uncertain. At this time, he believes the redistricting goals have been clarified. Dr. Robison also observed that there was no public gallery until the specific redistricting plan was unveiled, similar to what he observes with budget proposals. He encouraged public vigilance. Dr. Robison also emphasized that class size is not a function of redistricting and encouraged the public to remain for the budget discussion. Furthermore, he noted a particular sensitivity to characterizations of students as non-taxpayer's children, stating that in some cases, parents may be renting in town.

Michele MacDonald concurred that now is the time to close the capacity gap and increase efficiencies in both staff and resources. She recalled attending Committee meetings in 2004 when she served on a space planning and utilization committee, assuring the public that the redistricting decision was not rushed.

Jeff Beeler thanked Dr. Brackett and the staff for their efforts, as well as residents for their comments. He also expressed appreciation for the work of the re-districting advisory committee, the members of which volunteered a significant amount of time while providing insight into the Sudbury housing market.

Mr. Beeler commented on the various communications received from parents and others in the community that ran the gamut from those that described scheduling hardships redistricting would pose, to those that were concerned about the loss of friendships and communities that all recognize form around the schools, to those who were concerned about resource allocation who suggested that the District should have redistricted years ago. Mr. Beeler indicated that the most troubling information shared about the potential impact of the plan related to its impact on those children with special needs, or social/emotional issues. He noted that the comments highlighted the need to proceed with due consideration of those concerns, and to ensure appropriate administrative and staff supports to ensure the smoothest possible transition for those impacted. He expressed his confidence in the ability and willingness of the administration and staff to take such steps.

Mr. Beeler discussed two reasons that support redistricting. The first relates to the equitable utilization of educational resources while ensuring the efficient use of scarce educational dollars. Mr. Beeler expressed his opinion that allowing Haynes to serve approximately 400 students with a facility and staff at 80% capacity, while allowing Loring

to serve about 600 students with a facility and staff at 99% capacity, would not be either equitable or efficient. Second, Mr. Beeler noted that redistricting would allow the District to address another long-standing problem: that being a performance gap at Loring in relation to other schools in Town. While all of the schools are good, Loring has historically performed lower as measured by the MCAS—particularly in the area of 3rd grade literacy. Mr. Beeler noted that the Committee has discussed this issue for some time and that some steps had been taken to address it. Mr. Beeler noted that while Loring’s new administration is doing an excellent job, work remains to be done. He noted that redistricting could assist in this regard by moving students to where there are more relative resources available. This is the case because certain critical resources, such as reading tutors and literacy specialists, are deployed on a per building basis. He noted that as currently configured and projected, the one reading tutor serving 400 students at Haynes would meet the needs of more students in need of such services than the one tutor at Loring serving 600 students. While Mr. Beeler noted that deploying more resources to the larger schools was a possible solution to the disparity, money did not exist for such positions. Accordingly, moving students to locations with more relative resources would result in more fundamental fairness in the distribution of resources.

Mr. Beeler noted that the combination of these two factors, along with the additional benefits described by Dr. Brackett, led him to support the Superintendent’s recommendation. He noted that at the end of the process, all of the students in the District would be in a good school, while the District more efficiently and effectively used the resources provided by the taxpayers. Mr. Beeler expressed his opinion that such an effective and efficient use of resources was something owed by the District to the more than 16,000 residents in Town.

Jane Santinelli stated that her concerns surrounded the budget and budget uncertainties. In her view, it’s critical that the District do whatever it can to provide consistent, equitable educational opportunities across the District.

Susan Iuliano thanked the public for its input and for respecting the process, even if individuals question the need to redistrict. She commented that the administration would not make the recommendation unless it was deemed necessary.

Jeff Beeler echoed Mr. Krasnow’s desire to tie redistricting to a deliverable, noting that he would not accept a plan otherwise. He stated that he will be disappointed if the Loring performance gap is unchanged after redistricting.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to approve the Superintendent’s redistricting plan as presented. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

5. Open Forum

Joellen Samojla, Atkinson Lane, commented that the Antibullying Policy does not contain disciplinary procedures for “mean girl” behaviors. She is interested in knowing how many kids have been disciplined for bullying and what the consequences are, noting that kids don’t think there are any consequences for bullying. Superintendent Brackett responded that a group was commissioned to review policies and procedures following the October 2009 report to the School Committee. The District engaged Stan Davis as a consultant to try to define both the specific behaviors and the specific responses. Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley noted that the District wants to get at the root causes of bullying behavior, rather than specific punishments. The Committee acknowledged that bullying behavior persists, both in and around school. Jane Santinelli noted that a SERF grant to Curtis guidance counselor Chris Hardiman is funding a series of parent workshops on cyber bullying.

2. 2010-2011 School Year Calendar

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Rich Robison, to accept the 2010-2011 school year calendar as presented. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

3. FY11 Budget

Susan Iuliano reported that Jane Santinelli, Mary Will, Dr. Brackett, and she met recently with the Budget Working Group. The Finance Committee (FinCom) is working on establishing the number for a non-override budget, which represents 0% growth. The roll-up budget, which is based only on expenses, represents a 3.07% increase. Predictions put state and local aid decreasing by 10%, with Chapter 70 and unrestricted funds flat. With a property tax increase of 2.5%, a resulting \$1 million gap will require significant cuts. The three cost centers will make presentations to the FinCom on February 2.

Superintendent Brackett outlined possible cuts, noting that the list would be the same regardless of redistricting. He commented that considering cuts is that much more challenging in light of recent contract negotiations and associated cost savings and asked the Committee for guidance in presenting to the FinCom.

Susan Iuliano noted that Town Meeting may be suspended to return for a budget vote at a later date. Jane Santinelli suggested including a slide outlining the \$1.3 million in savings from collective bargaining.

4. School Committee Report
Superintendent Evaluation Process
Tabled.

6. Superintendent's Report

(a) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to accept a donation of \$500 from Harvard Pilgrim Health and to establish a gift account on behalf of Nixon School. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

(b) Recognitions

Curtis Social Studies teacher Sudeshna Saha is initiating a primary-source study of women, gender, and microfinance.

(c) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(d) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

7. Minutes—Special Session, January 12, 2010

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2010 Special Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

8. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

9. Members' Forum

No comments.

10. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:49 p.m.

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

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary