

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday September 1, 2010**

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

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Bob Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will,
Business and Finance Director; Dr. Bob Mealey, SEA

Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. MSBA Green Repair Program

At its August 25 Regular Session, the Committee discussed participating in the Massachusetts School Building Association's Green Repair Program (MSBA), which was established in early August. Funds are earmarked for repairs to roofs, windows, and boilers. The Sudbury Permanent Building Committee (PBC) had previously commissioned a survey of Town building roof conditions. The Noyes building requires significant repair; the Nixon roof requires repair as well. A separate, prioritized Statement of Interest (SOI) must be submitted by September 22 for each building of interest.

Following last week's School Committee meeting, Mike Melnick, Co-Chair of the PBC, requested that the original consulting team assess the window needs at the schools, that an assessment be made of the 40-year-old boiler, and that technical details required for the SOI be compiled. In addition to technical details, some of which are outstanding, the SOI must include a vote of approval by the School Committee and the approved minutes at which the vote was taken. Similarly, the vote of approval and approved minutes of the Board of Selectmen is also required. Jeff Beeler will make a presentation to the Selectmen at their September 7 meeting. Because of the meeting schedule and the anticipated schedule for receipt of technical information, it is likely that the Committee will schedule a Special Session in order to meet the September 22 SOI submission deadline. The Committee expects to receive a finalized consultant's report to be in a position to vote on an SOI by September 13, the first meeting date of the Town Financial Summit.

Jeff Beeler expressed concern regarding a preliminary estimate for repair of the Nixon roof. Consultants projected a cost for repair in 2012 of more than \$500K. Mr. Beeler suggested the Committee wait until the finalized consultant's report is obtained before considering whether to prepare a second SOI. In his opinion, the District should take advantage of the opportunity to possibly obtain State funding for 35% of its capital needs at Noyes.

Superintendent Brackett emphasized that the SOI does not commit the District to submitting a request for funding; it is a mechanism for ensuring the option to participate. He also noted that the building conditions are not newly found needs, but were previously identified and require significant preventative maintenance. In fact, over the last six or seven years, the District routinely submitted requests to the Sudbury Capital Finance Committee for just such repairs.

Rich Robison noted that according to the spreadsheet, all buildings will require some kind of repair in 2011. Dr. Brackett indicated that the District will continue to work with the local capital committee to keep all projects known.

2. FY11 Budget

Federal Jobs Funding

Superintendent Brackett outlined the federal jobs bill that brought \$204 Million to Massachusetts for the Governor to distribute at his discretion. The mechanism chosen by Governor Patrick is the Chapter 70 program. Sudbury will net \$253,000, or \$25 per student from this one-time distribution. Last Thursday, Dr. Brackett and Mary Will teleconferenced with DESE to learn how the funds can be used and how to apply to receive them. Although funds can carry over to FY12, the expectation is that they will be utilized to retain staff or restore or hire new staff. A subsequent meeting with school administrators followed by discussions with union leadership resulted in several allocation scenarios, which were presented to the Committee.

Budget cuts in FY11 resulted in increases in classroom sizes in the fourth grade at Nixon, Noyes, and Loring, and in the fifth grade at Haynes. Additionally, one of the three grade-level administrator positions at Curtis was cut. Dr. Brackett recommended a proposal that would add one experienced fourth grade teacher at Nixon and one at Loring, which would reduce class sizes from 28 and 29 students to 21 and 22 students. In addition, the equivalent of one FTE for both Haynes and Noyes, to be deployed at the Principal's discretion, was recommended, as was administrative support for Curtis. This proposal utilizes all funds and includes unemployment expenses in the event that the positions cannot be sustained beyond the current school year. Acknowledging that it will be somewhat disruptive to make classroom changes at this time, Dr. Brackett emphasized his belief that this opportunity to meet the real educational needs of the school community justifies the related disruption.

Dr. Brackett stated that school administrators are confident that the talent pool will allow the District to select among experienced teachers and an administrator for Curtis. If the Committee approves the proposal, announcements will go out to the school community immediately and hiring decisions are expected to occur by next week.

Lisa Gutch asked if parents would be asked about a preference to move. Dr. Brackett stated that administrators will meet with parents and will consider their input. He stated that Nixon students who were redistricted will not be moved and that each existing class would have roughly the same number of students moving.

Rich Robison noted that the recommended proposal is weak in addressing the critical importance of the Curtis grade administrator. Superintendent Brackett replied that the logistics of filling a position at that level played into the decision. In addition, the current administrators have things in place, but could use support in such areas as teacher observations. He stated that the search will focus on someone with administrative qualifications who is not employed, for instance, a recent retiree.

Michele MacDonald asked if increasing the FTE count would make the deficit appear larger for next year. Dr. Brackett responded that these positions would be separately categorized.

Lisa Gutch asked if SPS would be competing with all other districts for the same small pool of candidates. Superintendent Brackett reported that the union waived the requirement to post positions for ten days. Additionally, some prospective candidates have been identified through recent hiring rounds and principals are ready to execute the plan.

5. Open Forum

Jennifer Blakely, Saxony Drive, is the parent of redistricted family. She expressed full support for the proposal because the class sizes are so large.

Anthony Fortunato, Moore Rd asked for an estimate of the SPS portion of the deficit and if the District might be better off saving the funds for a potential shortfall. Dr. Brackett responded that the deficit is projected to be \$680K; utilizing the funds would still leave a \$400K deficit.

Moreover, his view is that there is a real need this year that is most effectively alleviated by utilizing all of the funding. Mr. Fortunato likened the situation of increasing the teaching staff this year, only to decrease it again next year to a “caffeine rush”.

Rich Robison commented that this is one-time money this year and, if carried over, will still be one-time money next year.

Jeff Beeler noted that the suggested teacher and assistant staffing changes would benefit more than 350 students this year. Lisa Gutch asked Superintendent Brackett to comment on the proposal to add teaching assistants at Haynes and Noyes, given that he stated that TA’s create more work for teachers in some ways. Dr. Brackett replied that non classroom assistance is helpful; in fact, Noyes may find someone with strong math skills to help with AYP challenges.

Bob Mealey thanked Superintendent Brackett for including the SEA in planning and stated that we owe it to the students who are with us today to give them the best education possible within fiscal constraints.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the allocation of federal funding to be distributed as outlined in Option A: to support two fourth grade classroom teachers (Nixon and Loring), the equivalent of two FTE teaching assistants (Haynes and Noyes), and an administrative support person (Curtis). The vote was 5–0 in favor.

3. Town Financial Summit and Future Budgets Projections

(a) Town Financial Summit

Susan Iuliano stated that the Board of Selectmen is viewing the summit as a working session. It is not yet clear how the meetings will be conducted or who will make the presentation for the Committee. Ms. Iuliano emphasized that it is *not* the FY12 budget process. She described it as an opportunity to look at three-year projections to give the public the opportunity to understand what the Town is facing and what decisions the District might face.

The Committee expressed concerns with the ill-defined expectations, as well as with the lack of structure that seems to be in place for the forum. Rich Robison noted the importance of establishing ground rules and building of trust before tackling the financial subject matter.

Susan Iuliano suggested that the summit would help identify the issues and provide a better framework for how decisions are made. She acknowledged the need to agree on the basic parameters of prioritizing budget considerations.

Susan Iuliano asked James Rao, Chairman of the Finance Committee, to comment. Mr. Rao emphasized the necessity of starting a dialog and breaking the cycle of taking one year at a time for issues that are not going to go away.

Lisa Gutch suggested that stakeholders might start by reciting their mission statements. Susan Iuliano added that presentations might include what each cost center is required to do.

(b) Future Budgets Projections

Mary Will gave a brief overview of the preliminary expense assumptions for FY12-14.

4. School Committee Report

Communication/Public Relations/Web Site

Michele MacDonald distributed links and a prototype web page for the design of the School Committee’s new web site. Establishing its own web site would allow the Committee to post

items directly without going through District staff. It will be possible to link postings to the District web site. Ms. MacDonald asked the Committee for input on content; Michael O'Brien will assist with the mechanics of web site development.

Lisa Gutch suggested featuring topics beyond those covered at Committee meetings, but of interest to parents.

Rich Robison asked who will ensure that the site is kept up-to-date and who will review and approve what gets posted. Michele MacDonald suggested a group decision-making process for postings and acknowledged the need for a webmaster.

Dr. Brackett stated that Michael O'Brien will be engaged when he is finished getting the District up and running.

6. Superintendent's Report

(a) Recognitions

None.

(b) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

7. Minutes—Regular Session August 25, 2010

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2010 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

8. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

9. Members' Forum

Susan Iuliano praised the August 30 staff meeting presentation.

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley reported that Title I funding shifted from Haynes to Nixon for first time.

Jeff Beeler suggested that Superintendent Brackett circulate an e-blast relative to the changes in classrooms resulting from the federal jobs bill funding, placing an emphasis on the District's ability to provide more education due to this last-minute funding and the fact that the disruption is the result of the federal government's 11th-hour decision-making. Dr Brackett responded that he wants to allow principals to communicate with their school communities and that his communication will follow theirs; in fact, a communication plan has been developed.

Susan Iuliano reminded the Committee that its next meeting on September 22 will be held at the Loring School.

Lisa Gutch reported that she is scheduled to attend New School Committee Member Orientation through the EDCO Collaborative.

Rich Robison noted that new METCO Director Fhynita Brinson mentioned her exhaustive schedule during her August 25 introduction to the School Committee. This was underscored by conflicting staff meeting schedules for LS and SPS that prevented her from attending both. He asked if this might be an omen that Ms. Brinson will get so ensconced in LS that she won't have time for SPS. Superintendent Brackett stated his belief that the challenges relate directly to the startup of the new system. He noted that he and Bob Milley have met with Ms. Brinson and the academic advisors and that he will meet with her and L-S Superintendent/Principal Scott Carpenter next week.

Superintendent Brackett also praised Curtis METCO academic advisor Sonia Fortin, who rode the bus into Boston to meet METCO families in person.

10. Executive Session

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to move to Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to possible litigation, given that having this discussion in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the Committee's litigating position, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:00 p.m.

Yes Susan Iuliano
Yes Jeff Beeler
Yes Rich Robison
Yes Michele MacDonald
Yes Lisa Gutch

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary