

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday October 17, 2012
Haynes Elementary School**

Present: Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim, Lucie St. George

Also Present: Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Todd Curtis, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Angela Spirito, SEA

Open Session

Rich Robison called the Open Session to order at 7:41 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Haynes Organization of Parents Welcome: Natalie Massarotti and Jill Marsh

Co-chair Jill Marsh welcomed the Committee and outlined some of the educational programs and fundraisers sponsored by HOP that provided support for the school, including teacher stipends, professional development opportunities, and the purchase of playground equipment, electronics, and supplies. Ms. Marsh described HOP's role as "bridging the gap between an excellent and a superb institution." Natalie Massarotti added that Haynes has a strong base of parent volunteers, with over 50 chairing committees or serving in other leadership roles. She noted that this represents 20% of Haynes families and does not include other volunteerism in non-HOP roles such as playground, lunch, or library duty. Ms. Massarotti noted the change from last year, when volunteerism was down. The organization implemented an on-line volunteer system that reaches a broader cross-section of people. Other forms of communication include monthly Board meetings and weekly newsletters. The Co-chairs noted the challenge in highlighting the good work of the school community during times when the focus is on negativity.

The Committee expressed appreciation for HOP's efforts and leadership.

Ms. Marsh concluded by reporting that 35 parents attended a HOP Board meeting last night, at which Anne Wilson and Todd Curtis were present to talk with the parents. She noted that opinions varied, but that people were respectful and productive. She praised administrators and teachers for creating a welcoming environment that is not just a place to learn, but a place to grow.

2. Haynes State of the School Presentation: Kim Swain, Principal; Laura Dayal, Assistant Principal; Michelle Marino, Speech and Language and Lead Teacher

Principal Kim Swain provided examples of how Haynes is addressing district level and school level initiatives around efficiencies utilizing a team-based approach. School initiatives include institutionalizing how data is utilized, with a focus on regarding it as a growth tool. The growth mindset allows students to focus on positive self-talk, which will bring greater success. Michelle Marino discussed collaborations with Stan Davis using the work of Carol Dweck. All staff members received a copy of her book, *Mindset*, which promotes the idea that intellect can be developed.

The District goal of utilizing data to inform instruction has moved from a focus on "why" data to "how" data. With regard to alignment with the Common Core, Ms. Swain reported that most staff believe the school is well aligned. She noted that teachers look forward to differentiating more in math, as well as in ELA/literacy. Additionally, teachers continue to look for ways to incorporate connected learning. Building-based curriculum leadership teams were brought back this year.

Principal Swain noted that the inflexible element is time. In addition to curriculum leadership and data teams, efficient transitions, block scheduling, and common planning times have been implemented.

Assistant Principal Laura Dayal has been instrumental in expanding block scheduling and building the capacity of teachers as collaborators. Ms. Dayal highlighted the use of Community Meeting time for each grade level, which provides the students an opportunity to focus on school norms, while providing teachers common time for collaboration.

A second school-based goal is executive function skills development, which ties in with using time more efficiently. The program was piloted on a small scale last year. This year, HOP provided the book *Promoting Executive Function in the Classroom*, by Lynn Meltzer. Teachers have identified “time robbers”, such as routine paperwork, interfering duties, and the number and length of meetings; they are already seeing positive results within this short time frame.

Rich Robison commented that he hoped these practices will be shared across the District. Lisa Gutch asked how teachers reconcile being on data teams with being out of the classroom. Principal Swain highlighted that the Community Meeting time allows for this practice. Ms. Gutch also asked if there were more issues with executive function now than in the past. Ms. Swain responded that various factors have contributed to the increased instance, including the fact the kids are more “plugged in” and do more at an earlier age.

Parents are also benefiting from the focus on executive function: Ms. Swain noted that the HOP Co-chairs were participating in professional development activities so that they can write about the techniques.

Rich Robison asked what keeps Ms. Swain awake at night. She responded that Haynes has more work to do to ensure the instructional core remains sacred. Ms. Swain also commented that Haynes is still adjusting to redistricting “growing pains” and ensuring that all needs are being met.

3. Board of Selectman Meeting Update/SPS Administrative Offices Roof

Lisa Gutch reported on the discussion of the Fairbank roof and building at last night’s Selectmen’s meeting. Both she and Ellen Joachim attended. At the Special Town Meeting, a proposal to repair and replace sections of the roof did not receive the 2/3 majority vote required to pass. At the STM, Selectman Haarde initiated a discussion about raising private funds to build a new community center. At the Selectmen’s meeting, he explained that he does not dispute the need for a roof, but wants to ensure that a new roof is not placed on a sub-par building. After considerable discussion, Town Manager Maureen Valente recommended formation of a task force to assess needs and options. Facilities Director Jim Kelly and Permanent Building Committee Chair Mike Melnick are concerned about the potential for structural damage to the building and believe it is necessary to put the roof repair on the Spring ATM Warrant. Ms. Gutch reported that one citizen asked why the Board is not heeding the recommendations of the Facilities Director, the PBC, and the Capital Improvement Plan. Ms. Gutch reiterated the concerns of SPS of risks to personnel and technology, as well to the building’s structural integrity over time.

Rich Robison cited reports that SPS will be relocating to the Flynn Building when its current occupants move to Town Hall. He noted that there is no specific plan in place and that the Town Hall renovation is several years away. Moreover, Dr. Robison stated the need for the Fairbank roof repair, regardless of who occupies the space. Dr. Robison recommended communicating to the Selectmen the willingness of SPS to relocate, as long as staff and accessibility accommodations are made. He also suggested that the Committee continue to be involved with the Town’s deliberations.

Ellen Joachim noted that Mike Melnick of the PBC agreed to look into less costly repairs. Lisa Gutch responded that an initial exploration of this has not resulted in a viable solution.

4. Senior Tax Exemption: Jack Ryan and David Levington

Over the last nine years, several proposals have been made in an effort to allow seniors to remain in the homes in which they raised their children. High property taxes often preclude this desired outcome. Council on Aging Members Jack Ryan, Dave Levington, and Bob May outlined the senior tax exemption that the School Committee supported last year. The basis of the current exemption is a means-tested benefit, where the property taxes of eligible seniors are reduced by slight increases for all other property owners, with overall revenues remaining neutral. In addition to the significant benefit to seniors, the COA believes the schools benefit by an ability to maintain the school population.

The exemption will expire in three years after implementation unless it is acted upon. It will appear on the December ballot, and move on to the legislature if it passes. Mr. Levington invited the School Committee to co-host a discussion that will include this ballot measure and the Nixon Roof debt ballot question, scheduled for November 27.

5. Report on the Collective Bargaining Agreement with ESPA/SEA

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Lucie St. George, to adopt the collective bargaining agreement with the ESPA/SEA as described, including changes as outlined. The vote was 4–0 in favor.

6. School Committee Report

Rich Robison reported that he and Ellen Joachim attended a second joint meeting of the Citizens Advisory and Sewer Committees. He described the group as very committed. Since the Town first approached the Committee with a proposal to study the Curtis playing field as a possible leaching site, other options have come into play. These include hooking into the Framingham or newly renovated Marlborough system. Neither of these options would require a leaching field.

The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to be presented an update sometime in the Spring.

Dr. Robison also read from a letter received from Paul Lamoureaux to Maintenance Director Joe Kupczewski, praising him for the timely installation of safety lighting at Curtis that Mr. Lamoureaux donated.

7. Open Forum

Kirsten Van Dijk, Barnet Road, recommended that the Committee send a formal statement to the Board of Selectmen, outlining its position regarding the Fairbank roof.

Bob Stein, Thompson Drive, noted he is speaking as a taxpayer, not as a member of the Finance Committee. He asked that the record of the September 5 Regular Session be corrected to include his comments regarding the approved teacher contract. Mr. Stein had opined that the contract included the largest pay raise in the Town's history and articulated his hope that the Committee had properly planned for this without needing to propose an override at the Spring ATM.

Mr. Stein also asked if teachers are required by contract to provide a 60-day notice when resigning. When Superintendent Wilson confirmed this, Mr. Stein expressed concern that Curtis special education teachers, one of whom was recently reported to have resigned, have too many students to appropriately administer educational plans. He also stated that he'd heard that some SPED teachers are forced by these conditions to work through their lunch breaks.

8. Superintendent's Report

(a) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Lucie St. George, to accept with thanks, a gift to the Noyes Foundations program of two iPads and applications totaling \$1,784.30 from the Murphy family. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

(b) Recognitions

Superintendent Wilson praised all building administrators and teachers for their efforts on Back to School Nights. She witnessed enthusiastic presentations, and a sense of connection between parents and the schools.

(b) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(c) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

9. Minutes

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2012 and October 3, 2012 Regular Sessions. The votes were 4-0 in favor.

10. Members' Forum

Angela Spirito invited Members to the December 6 holiday party at Lavender, which will be held from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Staff who have reached 25 years of service will be recognized.

Todd Curtis remarked on the first professional development day, held on October 5. Activities centered on implementation of Common Core and alignment. District personnel facilitated all activities. Dr. Curtis praises the Curriculum Coordinators for building modules "from the ground up" for the facilitators. He thanked Lucie St. George for participating.

Lisa Gutch emailed the Committee, Dr. Wilson, and Mary Will about an upcoming joint Financial Strategic Planning Committee meeting, where the priorities of each cost center will be discussed. The meeting will be scheduled for mid-November.

Ms. Gutch will follow up with the local papers to determine when the professional development article submitted by Todd Curtis will appear.

Ms. Gutch also noted that the Finance Committee will be circulating its letter in preparation for budget season.

Rich Robison reported meeting with DESE regarding the circuit breaker, which might increase from 70% to 72%. Last year, it was funded at 74%. Dr. Robison also noted that LS received emergency utilization funds in addition to the circuit breaker. Information appears on the LS website.

Lisa Gutch reported that the Town received the final Noyes School Green Repair Program payment from MSBA.

Rich Robison is on the State task force dealing with restructuring of Collaboratives. He commented that it might be of interest to define why SPS belongs to three Collaboratives and what each does for the District. In his view, the School Committee is responsible for defining the associated benefits and responsibilities.

Lucie St. George announced that she completed the last of three orientation sessions, commenting that she met good people, including legislators. Ms. St. George also noted how impressed she was with the professional development day and the materials created by Curriculum Coordinators Maggie McGinty and Jen Soalt.

Anne Wilson commended Todd Curtis, Maggie McGinty, Jen Soalt, and Stephanie Rousseau for their amazing work on the professional development day and for utilizing expertise within the District. The PD day received rave reviews from participants.

11. Executive Session

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to move to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to negotiations with Union and non-Union personnel, as discussion in Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. The time was 10:14 p.m.

Yes Rich Robison
Yes Lisa Gutch
Yes Ellen Winer Joachim
Yes Lucie St. George

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito