

Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson, Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson  
Bill Braun, Jeff Beeler

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent, Robert Milley, Assistant  
Superintendent, Mary Will, Director of Business & Finance, Mary Mahoney, SEA

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. She acknowledged Bill Braun for his contributions during his 12-year tenure on the School Committee. Bill Braun acknowledged the Committee, in particular for the atmosphere of respect with which it carries out its functions.

. Open Forum I

Hayley Barnes, Mary Catherine Lane, who has two children in the (large) third-grade class, stated that it's difficult to envision a fourth-grade class of 27 students. She asked about cost-saving efforts/increasing systems efficiencies at the level of the central office administration. The Committee described the relatively "flat" administrative model at the District level, as well as the increasing responsibilities surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act. They emphasized that eliminating people effectively eliminates a central office function. Superintendent Brackett noted that central office administrative cuts will equal one FTE (probably eliminating one half-time position and relocating another).

Charlene Laferrera, Windmill Drive, inquired about reallocating funds earmarked for the high school to the elementary and middle schools and asked for details about the middle school cuts. She furthermore suggested that the large incoming fourth-grade class should not continue to be the class bearing the burden of budget cuts. John Brackett outlined the cuts affecting the middle school: two sixth-grade teachers, 3 FTE's from Unified Arts, discontinued late buses. Jeff Beeler made special note of the School Committee's continuous attention to enrollment challenges, but also its inability to predict the voters' response to overrides. Mary Mahoney, SEA, noted the burden to teachers of class sizes of thirty-plus students. Lauri Wishner, Fox Run Road, Vice Chair of the LS School Committee, noted that LS will make cuts to clerical staff, activities, and athletics and that this year, Lincoln is providing full funding, despite the override failures in Sudbury. She further noted that cutting activities and athletics and increasing parking and athletic fees are one-time fixes. Jane Santinelli reiterated the historic distribution of funds to the three cost centers: 49% to SPS, 26% to the Town, and 25% to LS.

Jeri Tarini, Ruddock Road, asked about the possibility of parent organizations funding teaching positions. The Committee reiterated its consensus that donations should not be accepted for elements considered part of the core mission of public education. Challenges such as inequities across the District and sustainability were noted. Jeff Beeler noted the interest of some on the Budget Review Task Force to impose or increase user fees, which he views as a "slippery slope" for its potential to undermine appropriate public funding of

public education. Given that the SPS operates public schools, it is the obligation of the Town as a whole to appropriately fund the program.

Kristine Mitchell, Willard Grant Road, asked for an explanation of how the increases in SPED costs relate to cuts in other areas and Todd Faber, Ford Road, asked about the relative changes in funding for in-district and out-of-district funding. John Brackett explained that SPED is federally and state mandated and that not all costs are controlled by the District, that more extensive programming is being developed to maintain children in-district because of the high costs of outside placements. The pattern has led to almost an annual reorganization in SPED; Debbie Dixson and staff were lauded for their flexibility in accommodating changing student needs. Jeff Beeler noted that individuals should inquire of their legislators why mandates are created without adequate mechanisms for funding them.

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

### 2. Bill Schedule

None presented.

### 3. Donations

None.

### 4. Preparation for Town Meeting and Results of March 31 Election

Mary Will presented a table of existing and proposed increases in fees for middle school athletics, activities, and select (music) groups. Increases proposed for athletic fees would cover the costs of the programs. The music groups were considered comparable to athletics in that they involve auditions and travel. The fee for activities was set lower than a break-even value in order to sustain broad participation. The proposal reduces, but does not eliminate, the funding gap for activities. The Committee was not in favor of charging one group (select music) more than its costs in order to subsidize another. The actual costs incurred by the music groups will be presented at a later time in order to determine an appropriate fee.

Transportation fees were also reviewed as were scenarios involving cutting routes and transportation for students living within 2 miles of school. There is a concern that increased supervision will be necessary to accommodate earlier arrival times if buses are cut. Increasing fees to \$350 for a first child with a \$635 family cap will allow the District to break even for the non-mandated portion of the transportation program. At this time, increasing fees was considered preferable to reducing busing.

VOTED: On a motion by Bill Braun, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to increase bus transportation fees to \$350 for an individual and \$635 for a family. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

Mary Will presented the transportation bid. Of five pre-bid inquiries, two final bids were received.

VOTED: On a motion by Bill Braun, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to approve the per bus costs and contract as recommended. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

The Budget Working Group will meet on April 3. Bill Braun will reiterate the School Committee's position that there is a need to allocate additional Chapter 70 funds to supplement the SPS budget.

Susan Iuliano initiated a discussion about a Committee response at Town Meeting to either a move for an override or proposals for line item shifts. The consensus of the Committee is that they will not support either move.

Bill Braun briefly outlined his Town Meeting presentation, which will be updated with information forthcoming from John Brackett and Mary Will.

The Committee confirmed that it will meet at 6:30 p.m. on April 7. A special meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible in April to discuss budget-balancing plans.

5. Proposed revision to Gifts and Donations Policy 2.4

Susan Iuliano refined the wording of the policy for this second reading. She will continue to rework the draft in consultation with Jeff Beeler. She will also seek additional input from the PTO's in order to determine an appropriate donation level to trigger approval by the superintendent.

6. Revision of Physical Exam Policy 4.4.1

Susan Iuliano presented a reworked revision of the physical exam policy.

VOTED: On a motion by Bill Braun, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to approve the revisions to Physical Exam Policy 4.4.1. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

10. Minutes – Regular Session, March 12, 2008

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2008 regular session as amended. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

8. Open Forum II

Hayley Barnes, Mary Catherine Lane, commented on the proposed Curtis "select" group fees. She noted that, unlike sports, students participating in the select music programs must be enrolled in private lessons and, therefore, already incur a significant financial burden.

Beth Winograd, Phillips Road, asked if fees could be increased for the integrated preschool or for the school lunch program. She furthermore asked how the Gifts and Donations policy applied to SERF grants, particularly in terms of costs to sustain the programs beyond the SERF-funded pilot phase, as well as if the PTO's could pick up

SERF-initiated programs if necessary. Regarding the integrated preschool and lunch fees, it was noted that the fees are restricted and sustain the programs; any additional funds collected cannot be used for other purposes. Regarding SERF awards, Susan Iuliano noted that grants fall outside the Gifts and Donations policy. Bob Milley also commented that SERF should be assured that requests they receive have been reviewed by District administration for appropriateness. The Committee reiterated its concern with PTO involvement in areas that touch on core curriculum.

Regarding fees, Hayley Barnes, Mary Catherine Lane, also suggested that the select music groups be handled in a manner similar to the theater group, as an activity. She also suggested the Committee confer with PTO treasurers rather than co-chairs for information on setting a dollar value trigger for District involvement in donations. Furthermore, she suggested that the PTO's build in scholarship money on their budgets for those who will be affected adversely by the fee increases.

9. Communications

As outlined in the communications packet.

11. Personnel Actions

As described in the packet.

12. Members Forum

Mary Mahoney commented on her disappointment at the cuts to Genesis assistants and teachers. Sheila Cusolito commented that some middle school athletic teams have "no-cut" policies, making it somewhat difficult to compare all athletic programs and select music groups when setting fees. Jane Santinelli commented that participation in the theater group was more inclusive this year for both cast and crew, making a fee assessment less than straightforward.

On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Bill Braun, the Committee voted to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 4-0 in favor. The time was 11:10 p.m.

Yes Bill Braun

Yes Susan Iuliano

Yes Jane Santinelli

Yes Jeff Beeler

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary