

Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Special Meeting
Saturday, April 12, 2008

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

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

The meeting was held in the Superintendent's conference room at the District Office.

1. Open Forum I

Todd Faber, Ford Road, questioned the redundancy of separate LS and SPS administrations. Susan Iuliano shared that this is a town issue not just a school committee issue. There is an existing agreement between the towns of Lincoln and Sudbury that governs the arrangement. There is always on-going coordination between LS and SPS, i.e., transportation. Jane Santinelli indicated that this issue has been examined in the past and SPS and LS recently looked at the efficiencies of a shared director of business. It was determined that organizational issues prevented this from being a cost saver or an effective use of resources. Rich Robison indicated that John Ritchie holds two positions, superintendent and high school principal. John Brackett shared that this concept is on the Budget Review Task Force brainstorm list.

Taj Gazdack, Concord Road, asked if the School Committee would take a position on this. The Committee commented that the School Committee would be involved in any process to change the regional agreement that would affect SPS.

Lauren Mahoney, Harvard Drive, raised the issue of equity of funding between SPS and LSRHS.

Susan Iuliano stated that the regional agreement was created at a time when it was advantageous and efficient to do so.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

2. Discussion of the FY09 Budget Balancing Plan

An update was provided on how the additional \$225,000, appropriated at Town Meeting, would be used. The pre-Town Meeting plan that had been considered included the following: 1. Curtis 0.5-time secretary (from 1.0), 2. 1.5 UA teachers at ECMS (from 3.0), 3. Add back 1 CIT (from 2.0), and 4. Add 2 elementary teachers.

SALT since met, with new enrollment information from the creation of District-wide SPED programs. Students will be moving to Haynes and Nixon, movement that was not

in the original projections: 7 students will move from Loring, with 4 going to Nixon and 3 to Haynes (possibly 4). This movement exacerbates the class size problem at the 4th grade at Nixon, Haynes and Noyes, while easing the problem at Loring.

In order to add a “3rd” elementary teacher, the administration suggests adding only 1.5 teaching assistants per elementary school, rather than 2.0. This would create funding to allow for an additional 4th-grade section at Haynes, Nixon and Noyes. Each of these schools would then be within class-size guidelines.

John Brackett brought this revised plan to the Committee for consensus, along with a reminder that there are always enrollment changes from now to September. It remains to be seen if historical trends hold true for the current economy.

Rich Robison questioned if, given the number of vacant homes, there is some risk that our flat enrollment might spike. John Brackett reported that some local realtors think the 3rd quarter of 2008 will be the start of a possible recovery. The administration continually looks at kindergarten enrollment; 1st-grade enrollment is very difficult to predict.

Susan Iuliano asked about the impact of cuts to teaching assistants, given the previous decision to remove K-1 assistant support. John Brackett indicated that general education teaching assistants are often utilized as substitutes when teachers are out; the administration has discussed researching the substitute issue and making substitute positions more effective, thus mitigating the impact of this loss.

The District’s literacy team will discuss deployment of specialists and tutors, as well as change of services, given the loss of Genesis Assistants.

Rich Robison questioned how the staffing changes will affect the rollout of new Federal RTI (Response To Intervention) requirements in August 2008. John Brackett noted that RTI is an intensive mandate and the District is currently studying how to address it and incorporate it within the system. He further noted that RTI is a general education initiative, not a SPED initiative.

3. Open Forum II

Mary Mahoney stated that she has been asked ‘Why can’t teachers give to save other jobs’. Ms Mahoney indicated that the teachers gave in the past and LS did not. 70% of the teachers have under 5 years in the system and many have college debt. “You need to know there is a critical mass of staff that does not feel that they are being supported by the administration and the School Committee.” “I hear from teachers, a great frustration, they feel the LS School Committee supports their teachers better.” “SPS is an unhappy place to be.” “There are feelings of abandonment.”

Rich Robison shared that the Committee has the same commitment and tries to do as much as it can within the constraints. The School Committee has not asked teachers to make any concessions.

Susan Iuliano stated that the School Committee has spent enormous time defending and promoting salary and structure to the public. One result was the additional allocation of State aid to SPS away from LS and the Town, in recognition of the inequity of the impact.

Rich Robison reminded everyone that without question there will be strong emotions and feelings of loss; it is a difficult situation.

Lisa Gutch, Silver Hill Road, suggested separate overrides for SPS and LS.

Abby Ward, Old Lancaster Road, asked if there are teachers who might be in a position to opt out of the benefits package to free some funds as a short-term solution.

Brendan Mahoney, Harvard Drive, questioned the need for Curtis House Administrators and guidance counselors, i.e., the middle management. John Brackett explained the middle school concept and the need for, and the different responsibilities of House Administrators and guidance counselors.

Brendan Mahoney asked about the cost and impact of staff children and METCO students. John Brackett explained the revenue, cost, and distribution of the students across the district.

Lauren Mahoney, Harvard Drive, expressed concern about taking away kindergarten and 1st-grade assistants as well as not adding the 0.5 teaching assistant.

Abby Ward asked how teachers are selected for lay off. John Brackett stated that after identifying areas to be cut, the contract outlines how the decisions are made. There is some discretion for those teachers within their first three years of employment in SPS.

2. Completion of Discussion of the FY09 Budget Balancing Plan

The School Committee agreed by consensus to the plan for the additional funds.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Recorded by John Brackett, Superintendent
Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary