

Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, October 1, 2008

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

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Robert Milley, Assistant
Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Mary Kate Gentile, SEA
(until 9:00 p.m.)

1. Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. at the Noyes School.

2. Peter Noyes PTO Welcome by Co-chairs Asha May and Andrea Wang

The PTO co-chairs distributed a calendar of events and gave an overview of their fundraising efforts and the enrichment programs supported by PTO funds. Enrichment programs range from grade-specific author visits to evening family curriculum events. A very successful auction fundraiser held last Spring resulted in the purchase of 10 additional ActivBoards, enough to complete Grades 3-5, as well as the music classroom. Asha May reported a slight decline in revenue from traditional fundraisers, such as product sales, and an increased enthusiasm for adult-centered social fundraising, such as the auction. The PTO will use this year to assess which fundraising activities it will continue to offer.

3. The State of the Noyes School with Principal Annette Doyle

Principal Annette Doyle recognized the PTO for its financial support and its appreciation of Noyes' teachers. She characterized Noyes as a school committed to its core values and as a community of both student- and teacher- learners. Principal Doyle noted that Noyes will continue a "going green" initiative begun last year. Each Committee member was provided a reusable bag designed by a Noyes student.

Assistant Principal Kristin Moffat reported on the success of the student safety patrol, which includes 70 of the 103 fifth graders. The safety patrol is particularly helpful at dismissal and will assume more responsibilities as the year progresses. Additionally, she outlined the activities of the student senate, which comprises fourth- and fifth- graders. She also noted the energy surrounding the use of ActivBoard technology.

Principal Doyle outlined educational initiatives and goals, highlighting in particular the extension to all grade levels of the Lucy Calkins writing program. She also commented that performance on the MCAS long composition dictates a renewed commitment to topic development.

The Noyes staff is participating in before-school writing workshops led by Liz Richter. Additionally, the staff has been asked to read *The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn From Each Other* by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. Two staff meetings have been devoted to a discussion of the book. The School Council may organize a parent discussion.

The impact of budget cuts was described by Principal Doyle. The absence of kindergarten assistants combined with increases in class size has affected curriculum, classroom management, and safety. The lack of Genesis assistants in Grade 1 has had a similar effect. Challenges in conducting assessments were noted. There is concern that referrals for literacy support may increase as the ability to carry out guided reading in the classroom becomes compromised. Some use has been made of parent volunteers, but there are concerns regarding consistency, training, and confidentiality. Rich Robison encouraged the administration to report on these effects more broadly, particularly by making use of the parent community.

Final FY08 Budget

Finance Director Mary Will highlighted the line account adjustments made to the FY08 budget.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to approve the line account adjustments and the final revised FY08 budget. The vote was 5–0.

Donations

Sixth-grade science teacher Paula Feynman was awarded \$500 by the State to help fund an Earthwatch trip. Earthwatch wishes to donate \$800 to cover costs of substitute teachers during the trip.

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to accept \$500 from the State and \$800 from Earthwatch and to establish a gift account for these funds. The vote was 5–0.

6. FY09 Budget-to-Actual Quarterly Financial Report

Mary Will reported that she has completed a budget-to-actual report, but will present it in November. She highlighted some of the changes in line accounts and indicated that the District currently is in a position to handle unexpected expenses.

9. Open Forum

Laura Casey, Woodberry Road, suggested the Committee consider conducting assessments, particularly for Grades K and 1, before the start of the school year. Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley noted that the District plans to evaluate assessments this year and will include this suggestion in its review.

FY10 Budget Initial Discussion

Superintendent Brackett stressed that it is too early in the budget process to lock into specific dollar figures, especially given that enrollment and cost projections are still under development. He provided three reports to the Committee, each with a three-year projection, but differing in the staffing level. Dr. Brackett suggested the need to take a longer-term approach to staffing.

Dr. Brackett presented several budget scenarios that ranged from keeping programming and staffing at current levels to adding in “quality” programming (e.g., social worker, clubs, math enrichment, school psychologists). In all cases, he noted a deficit projected given the Finance Committee’s proposed cap.

Dr. Brackett asked the Committee for its thoughts on staffing. Rich Robison suggested that in the absence of teacher assistants, it may be necessary to fund a parent volunteer coordinator. He noted that lunchroom staff cuts several years ago ultimately led to compromises in teacher planning time, after a seemingly successful first year.

The Committee will continue this discussion at its next scheduled meeting.

Superintendent’s Report

a) Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

b) Integrated Preschool Enrollment and Staffing

Superintendent Brackett reported that enrollment of both regular- and special- education students is lower than expected this year. This may require a redeployment of teaching staff or students or a reduction in staff mid-year, depending on the enrollment trend as the year progresses.

c) Personnel Actions

As described in the Personnel Packet.

8. School Committee Report

a) Discussion of the FinCom Plan

Susan Iuliano reported that a meeting of the Budget Working Group (BWG) is scheduled for October 20. The Committee is concerned with the role of the BWG in light of the FinCom’s recent budget proposal decisions and is seeking BWG feedback.

Additionally, it was reported that two Lincoln-Sudbury School Committee members will work with Michele MacDonald and Jane Santinelli to draft a joint open letter to the Board of Selectmen expressing each Committee’s opposition to the FinCom’s budget proposal. The letter will be circulated to other SPS School Committee members for review and comment.

Michele MacDonald submitted a letter to the editor of the Town Crier, expressing opposition to the FinCom budget proposal. Jeff Beeler presented his letter of opposition before the Board of Selectmen at its September 23 meeting. Additionally, he submitted the letter to the Town Crier.

The Committee will hold off on submitting a guest column to the Crier.

b) School Committee Communication Plan

Susan Iuliano distributed an idea list. The Committee agreed that a process of communication must be established and appointed Susan Iuliano as the Committee's spokesperson. The Committee also agreed to reintroduce the monthly newsletter and other communications as an agenda item.

Jeff Beeler requested feedback on the appropriateness of copying all Members on his responses to inquiries from the public. The Committee agreed on the value of being copied. For feedback on other materials produced by individual Members, the Committee agreed that it should be provided only to the author. On that note, Jeff Beeler reported that his September newsletter was delayed and will be published in October.

11. Minutes – Regular Session September 17, 2008

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2008 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0.

12. Communications

As described in the Communications Packet.

13. Members' Forum

Susan Iuliano reported that she will not attend the upcoming MASC forum and asked for an alternate delegate.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to appoint Rich Robison as the delegate to the MASC forum. The vote was 5–0.

Rich Robison reported that the State has received federal funding to support its Medicaid waiver program. He suggested that State budget decisions will not be settled until after the national election.

14. Executive Session

None.

15. Adjourn

On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to adjourn the Regular Session.
The time was 10:40 p.m. The vote was 5–0.

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

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary