

**BURRILLVILLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 10, 2008**

1. Welcome/Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

Reported By: Janice Peterson

Location: Media Center, BHS

Time Began: 7:02 PM

Adjourned: 11:05 PM

Attending: Chairman Raymond Trinqué, Vice Chair Joan Cote, Clerk Peter Lambert, Scott Moore, Paul Couture, Dorothy Cardon, Student Representative Keith Chamberland

Absent: Mary Karmozyn (Excused)

2. Consent Agenda

Chairman Trinqué announced seven rules of conduct to be used during Public Comment and throughout the meeting.

J. Cote (M), S. Moore (S) to open the Consent Agenda for discussion. VOTE: Approved 6-0. D. Cardon (M), P. Couture (S) to approve the Consent Agenda (minutes of the 5/13/08 Negotiation Sub-Committee Meeting, 5/13/08 Regular Meeting and (2) Executive Sessions, 6/3/08 Special Meeting and Executive Session; warrant for the payment of payrolls and expenses for April 2008 in the amount of \$3,251,710.07.) VOTE: Approved 6-0.

3. Public Comment

1. Tracy Bailey-Gates, parent of three High School students, related information that two of her children had been told they would only be able to carry 5.5 credits in the coming year; they would have to choose between band and foreign language; Mr. Boulé explained that, due to budget cuts, students who had acquired more than the required number of credits would be allowed to carry 5.5 credits and be placed in study halls to make room for students in need; expressed frustration that information was being received via students and the Bargain Buyer. Ms. Bailey-Gates suggested that to “cut corners” the “lucrative” benefits to the School Committee be cut, allowing one teaching position to be retained and asked that politics be kept out of school events. She stated, “The parents in this town will not stand for injustice, and we are not going away.” Ms. Bailey-Gates introduced her son, Michael, member of the Freshman Class and Student Council.
2. Michael Bailey-Gates, Freshman, BHS, commented in support of the teachers and on the effects of not having a teachers’ contract.
3. Michael Clifford, BTA, requested the Committee to consider moving Item E to immediately follow B to allow Mr. Servidio and Sheehan to possibly amend their presentation on Program Eliminations/Curtailments. There was not objection.
4. Brooke Pasano, grade 2 student at Steere Farm, questioned why the sprinklers were on every morning – even if it is raining. R. Richards indicated he would research the situation.
5. Barbara Hudon, applauded the efforts of the administration and their support staff, credited teachers for separating what belonged/didn’t belong in the classroom regarding negotiations. Ms. Hudon raised concerns regarding the District’s policy on bullying, indicated it is ongoing in the schools and she has not seen any actions to stop it. A major concern is that this has occurred during the school day, with students witnessing, when the focus should have been on other things.

4. Personnel

Appointments

S. Moore (M), P. Lambert (S) to appoint David Cole, Ice Supervisor, effective 6/11/08, at an annual salary of \$25,000, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. The Superintendent noted the position would eliminate the need for part-timers and would ensure an adult on site at all times. J. Cote asked requested a job description be developed and presented at next month's meeting. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

J. Cote (M), S. Moore (S) to appoint Kerri Simpson, MS Summer School Director, at the stipendiary rate of \$3,000. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

Retirement

J. Cote (M), D. Cardon (S) to accept with regret the retirement of Sandra Ventre, Speech/Language Pathologist, District, effective June 30, 2008. J. Cote commented Ms. Ventre has left a great impression with students in the district and has her great respect. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

Recission of Non-Renewal Vote of February 12, 2008

"With great pride," J. Cote (M), P. Lambert (S) to rescind the non-renewal vote of 2/12/08 for the following: Sara Gaulin, Helen Pereira, Nancy Morelli, Kristen Manning, Holly Andersen, Cindy Giguere, Anne Blissmer, Peter Godfrin, Kara Vessella, Mary Lou Tupper, Sally Curtis, Mary Belisle, Timothy Durigan, Kyle Rose, John Fair, Valerie DeMarco, Maria DiPaolo, Dena Lucia, Jay Brochu, Lisa Ricci, Janet Beard, Susan Sutherland, Stacy Lamontagne, Megan Taylor, George Grace, Michael Kropman, Donna Roderick, Kevin Stockwell, Brian Limoges, Michael Meehan. Superintendent Welford reported the list reflects special education positions and some high school; pending legislation will determine further recissions; there are still (29) non-renewed. D. Cardon noted some of those on the list have only been here one year and asked if evaluations had been completed; Mr Welford indicated they had. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

5. Old Business

A. FY08 Budget Update

J. Cote (M), D. Cardon (S) to open the item for discussion. VOTE: Approved 6-0. R. Kimatian reported no line item transfers are being recommended. J. Cote (M), P. Lambert (S) to receive and file the FY08 budget update. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

B. Formally Approve FY09 Budget

J. Cote (M), P. Lambert (S) to open the item for discussion. VOTE: Approved 6-0. Superintendent Welford deferred to D. Cardon, Chair of the Budget Sub-Committee. D. Cardon called attention to the Budget Sub-Committee report (there was no objection to move the item from Item 9B.) D. Cardon reported on the meeting of 5/27/08: the addition of a .4 administrative secretary; the impact of 11 retirees on the budget; discretionary monies earmarked for increases this year and next are in jeopardy of being lost if there is no settlement by the end of June 2008. Savings are attributed to belonging to GHGRI. Ms. Cardon called attention to concerns of the Budget Board raised on March 27 which they asked the Superintendent to address: a contingency plan when funds from Ocean State Power are no longer available, and an unfunded liability line item. Ms. Cardon indicated she would support the budget but would have preferred to have gone to the cap to ensure students and teachers receive a high quality of education. Mr. Welford reported the budget presented is the same as the one to be presented to the Town Council tomorrow evening; level funding would result in the elimination of one high school teacher, one middle school teacher, one special education teacher, one secretary, a library assistant, one Teacher Assistant and one Custodian. The secretary, Teacher Assistant and custodial positions are eliminated through attrition. J. Cote (M), P. Couture (S) to approve the FY09 Budget. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

E. Change in Grading Policy

M. Clifford provided the following overview:

- Students currently need 22 credits to graduate and have 6.5 credits per year – four classes can be failed and they will still have the required number; guidance had requested more “hands on” classes.
- Teachers learned about the change at a 2/8/08 faculty meeting and were told the change was being made to address the dropout problem; a teacher commented that a dropout typically misses the mark by 10-20 points, not 2-3. The principal said he disagreed, based on exit interviews with students.
- Middle School learned of the policy the day after it had been implemented.
- Expressed concern the policy was being implemented “mid stream”
- Students are given innumerable opportunities to make up work; a student has to work to fail by 1-2 points.
- Questioned whether the policy had been addressed by the Committee prior to February.
- Noted discrepancy between the Superintendent’s comments that the change was not to address the dropout program and Committee member comments that it was.
- Citing Roberts Rules, questioned whether the policy had actually been approved for a first reading in March. No action was taken because it was believed the policy had been tabled. Additionally, teachers expressed surprise that the change would take effect in 4th quarter.
- Calling attention to e-mail from principal, questioned how this change would not impact class rank and GPA for this year.
- Students who now only need to master 65% of the material in a class will have more time on their hands, resulting in more referrals, behavior problems.
- Expressed concerns about sequential courses (e.g., a student in French I being required to have a minimum grade of 75 in order to take French II)
- Introduced Kathy Forrest, mathematics teacher and former actuary who provided examples of the effects of changing a passing grade from 70 to 65. Formerly need 420 points to pass for the year (4 quarter grades, mid-terms, and finals (6) times 70; now need 370 points.
- Math classes are cumulative - an average of 65-68 does not provide enough knowledge to have students succeed at the next level.
- Lowering the scores to 65 is not going to be helpful to raise SAT scores.
- Mr. Clifford commented that all of the responsibility of the students passing and receiving good grades and achieving success on standardized testing lies on the teachers; common sense would indicate that those who mastered 70% or better of the material would score better (on average) on standardized testing than those who achieved 65%; teachers will reflect on this policy as a contributing factor whenever those scores do not come out the way “we all want them to.”
- We’re doing the students a disservice when we don’t raise expectations. Mr. Clifford admitted he found little research on raising or lowering a minimum passing grade except information from a small district in Kentucky (slightly more than 300 in middle/high school) that accepted a D as a passing grade but eliminated the practice in 2002; standardized test scores improved 13% at the middle school level and 10% at the high school level. The district is planning to eliminate C’s (minimum of 80 as passing) by the 2009 school year.
- Questioned who would be better prepared to work in society – the student who had higher standards required or the student where the mastery was low to demonstrate proficiency.

- N. Servidio questioned the policy itself (P3521) and indicated it was not on-line and he had not received it. Concern on the effect the policy has on eligibility for dances, sports, class rank, GPA, etc. Looking for the official copy of P3521.

N. Hodys, town resident of Pascoag, teacher at A. T. Levy School, expressed surprise at “lowering the standard”; findings were to meet the challenge, not lower the standards. Citing a study following students the after they graduated for whom they “lowered the bar”, had a 25% higher unemployment rate.

Superintendent Welford referred response technical questions (i.e., GPA, etc.) to the High School Principal and noted 91% of high schools across the country have a “D”; the 10 highest performing high schools in RI employ a grade of D, some D-. The Superintendent noted in the first quarter 767 D’s were given among the 839 high school students; second quarter, the number of F’s rises to 763; in 3rd quarter, just over 900; we are on a pace to issue over 4,000 F’s on a class of 839 students.

M. Clifford stated student attendance must be addressed and that the high number of failures, especially in grade 9, are due to parents overriding recommendations of the guidance counselors.

S. Moore said it was necessary to work together; Mr. Clifford said he had brought his concerns to every high school administrator, except Mr. Boulé, for the past six years. He added that all three guidance counselors have gone “point to point” with each principal to describe what schedules should look like for at-risk 9th graders; those recommendations have not been implemented in six years; Mr. Rebello agreed with all the changes but reportedly could not get administrative approval. Mr. Welford clarified that Mr. Rebello had wanted more classes of wood shop; graphic arts, robotics, were put in instead because that is what graduates will face. Mr. Clifford disagreed. The Superintendent added that the ramp-up program instituted last year was at the suggestion of Kristie Craig, Mindy Ryan, and Don Rebello.

P. Lambert commented he had read the drop-out report and the failure rate data and noted the importance to communicate.

M. Clifford asked the Chair if he would allow Mr. Boulé to answer his question about how GPA’s and class rank will be calculated for the year; Chairman Trinqué stated he would not allow Mr. Boulé to comment this evening and suggested he meet with the principal.

J. Cote implored people to attend the public meetings and make concerns known in a timely manner and not wait until things escalate. M. Clifford said it was not brought forward because it was believed it had been tabled. Chairman Trinqué said there is a difference between “laying on the table” and “tabling” and item.

P. Couture commented he approved the policy because he believed it “saved” the freshmen.

D. Cardon commented “prepare for life. The higher the standard, the better prepared.”

Maureen Paquette, parent and teacher, commented she had not been informed of any changes. Kathy Forrest, commented that in calculating GPA, a student with a 65 would have a higher GPA than one with a 70. (For example, a student with four 80’s and a 65 would have a GPA of 80, whereas a student with four 80’s and a 70 would have a GPA of 78.) Superintendent Welford suggested working together with Mr. Barrette, the principal, and guidance. No action taken.

C. Program Eliminations and/or Curtailments

Mr. Clifford noted that Items C and D are interrelated and asked that they be discussed simultaneously. M. Clifford gave a chronology of events: the Guidance Department had initially been told to schedule students for 6.5 credits, then 5.5 and back to 6.5; schedules are nowhere near completed. The Superintendent noted signing with GHGRI (for health insurance) helped to free up some money; he is leaving final cuts to be made by the principal. The Superintendent called attention to correspondence requesting and denying a waiver on 330 minutes of instruction time. Mr. Clifford asked why they were only told to reschedule on May 29th. D. Sheehan asked what the vision for music, art, etc. is; Mr. Welford responded that they will look the same as they are now if the budget is level funded. Only three teaching positions will go (including Title I Math.) P. Couture commented it all hinges on the budget. J. Cote commented that the chain of command is derailed; there is a lack of communication. Mr. Clifford distributed correspondence to the Committee. Mr. Sheehan said they (union) usually meet with the Superintendent prior to layoffs. Chairman Trinque commented the labor issue should not make a difference on how business is conducted and gladly received the information provided. S. Moore commented the Committee does not want to curtail or eliminate any programs, stating, "We are pro-education." No action required.

Hearing no objection, Chairman Trinque called a 5-minute break at 9:35 PM.

At 9:46 PM, Chairman Trinque called the Committee to order and requested taking up Item 8 prior to Item 7. There were no objections

8. Administrators' Reports

P. Couture (M), P. Lambert (S) to receive and file the Administrators' reports. Discussion: D. Cardon thanked the administrators for their reports and congratulated them and their staffs. P. Couture accepted as a friendly amendment to suspend monthly reports for July and August and adopt "casual attire" for the summer. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

8. Superintendent's Reports

D. Cardon (M), J. Cote (S), to open the item for discussion. VOTE: Approved 6-0. Superintendent Welford reported:

- there has been no decision on yesterday's hearing
- NWEA – assessment in reading, English, math (grades 2-11); will be able to get results within 24 hours; funded by Article 18; training (compensated) will be provided prior to implementation. Discussion: cost is approximately \$12.50 per student per year with some one-time setup fees (about the same as CAT and MAT8.) Principals will oversee implementation as well as Susan Moore, reading specialists. Does not see this being used as a teacher evaluation tool. Has the unanimous endorsement of administrators. It is an assessment tool. Teachers will initially be required to use this. Goal is to provide training during staff development at the beginning of the school year. J. Cote raised concern of teacher acceptance; suggested disseminating information about it over the summer. SALT surveys will no longer be done; Board of Regents would like NECAPs to be a requirement for graduation. M. Clifford commented that in previous years the association met with the Superintendent prior to submission and had to sign off on the Article 18/31 application; the Superintendent noted that RIDE had approved the application.
- Reading Consultants – a one-year program; come into the classroom, have been working with staff. D. Cardon questioned the cost; the Superintendent noted it was being paid with Article 31 funds, which are earmarked for professional development. J. Cote commented the program helps teachers learn new techniques and strategies within the classroom setting. Superintendent Welford added that an imbedded program such as this is much more effective than a one-day workshop.

- Dropout report has been disseminated to staff and town.
- Will attend Town Council meeting to request revolving fund to collect preschool fees.
- Budget has been sent to staff.
- RIDE has recalculated the way in which graduation rate is determined. Burrillville's numbers are only slightly different because reporting has been done accurately here.
- Kristen Lavalley received Robert C Byrd Honors scholarship; Cox Cable has nominated the boys' hockey team for "Team of Year" and Kyle VanRossem, Carrington Dinges, and Karissa Koprusak for individual awards to be given on June 18.
- NRIC will not be purchasing or renovating a building; are exploring a lease.

9. Reports of Standing School Committee Sub-Committees

J. Cote (M) P. Couture (S) to attach the Budget Sub-Committee and Sick Bank Committee reports to the minutes. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

10. Correspondence/Communications

None

11. New Business

A. Schedule Meeting for the End of June

Superintended Welford suggested a Special Meeting be scheduled for Wednesday June 25, 7:00 PM, at BHS. Meeting will be advertised.

B. Summer Meeting Schedule

July 8 and August 12, at 7:00. Discussion of holding meetings at Administration Office, High School, library (Community Room).

12. Committee Comments Regarding Agenda Items

None

13. Move To Executive Session

At 10:40 PM, J. Cote (M) P. Couture (S) to move to Executive Session under R.I.G.L. 42-46-5 (a)(1), Personnel – Superintendent's Evaluation. Chairman Trinque polled the Committee VOTE: Approved 6-0.

14. Reconvene in Open Session

At 11:00 PM, the Committee reconvened in Open Session. Chairman Trinque announced no votes had been taken in Executive Session.

J. Cote (M) S. Moore (S) to adopt the Superintendent's evaluation. VOTE: Approved 6-0.

15. Adjournment

S. Moore (M), J. Cote (S) to adjourn the Regular Meeting. VOTE: Approved 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 11:05 PM.

Clerk of the Committee