

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY ~ JUNE 3, 2013**

**Newburyport High School
Meeting Convened at: 7:06pm**

**Room 118
Mayor Donna Holaday/Cheryl Sweeney Presided**

Present: Bruce Menin, Steve Cole, Cheryl Sweeney, Mayor Holaday, Nick deKanter, Audrey McCarthy, Dan Koen

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Donna Holaday called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

Mayor Holaday called for the roll call, which found all members present.

Mayor Holaday asked for a moment of silence to recognize the husband of Mrs. Kennedy, longtime note taker here, who passed this past weekend.

All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

READING OF MISSION STATEMENT:

Mayor Donna Holaday read the Newburyport School District Mission Statement.

At this point Vice-Chairman Cheryl Sweeney assumed chairmanship of the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motions

Warrants:

On a motion by Dan Koen and seconded by Audrey McCarthy it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant: **\$16,454.20**

No Conflicts

Discussion: Mr. Koen pointed out that these warrants are bills that the school district concurs on a revolving basis and are a combination of payroll and invoices.

Motion passed unanimously

On a motion by Dan Koen and seconded by Audrey McCarthy it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant: **\$196,689.87**

No conflicts

Motion passed unanimously

NHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

NHS student representative Julia Bradley reported on the following:

- Senior Week
- Senior Banquet Monday
- Ivy Day juniors and Seniors Tuesday
- Senior Trip to Giggles Comedy Club Tuesday
- Red Sox game Wednesday
- Senior Prom Thursday
- Senior Singout Friday
- Graduation Day June 9th
- Steve Preston, senior, won the All State title in discus
- Open mike day at the Kelley
- Student Advisory Council Field Day June 14 Field Day with NBPT Youth Services

SCHOOL COUNCILS 2013-2014

Vice-chairman Cheryl Sweeney opened the School Council topic which was being continued from a previous meeting. At this point Dr. Kerble addressed the school committee. Dr. Kerble discussed the work of School Councils and a schedule for the implementation of School Councils for the 2013-2014 school year.

Dr. Kerble directed the School Committee to the School Council attachment in their packet.

Dr. Kerble explained that the attachment was an outline of the laws and regulations governing school councils and is broken down into three categories: the Council, the Meetings and the School Improvement Plans.

Dr. Kerble reviewed each line item.

Dr. Kerble stated that the Superintendent of Schools shall convene all of the School Councils no later than forty days after the first day of school. Dr. Kerble stated that he would commit that the superintendent should convene all of the school councils together. At that time select a co-chair, review goals, review purpose, talk about when and how councils meet, identify educational needs, when and how to review the annual school budget, and when and how to assess the progress of the schools.

Dr. Kerble stated that what we learned in public conversation was the need to educate parents that:

1. there is a school council
2. there is a purpose
3. encourage people to apply to serve.

We need to do a better job in terms of marketing the school council itself.

Dr. Kerble stated that the purpose of the School Council is really to work with the school principals on school improvement efforts.

Dr. Kerble then proceeded to review the purpose of School Improvement Plans. School Improvement Plans are for a two year period and updated annually. They are submitted to the superintendent and the superintendent then submits plans to the school committee for approval annually. The school committee is updated periodically when it makes sense.

Dr. Kerble stated that packets with questions had been given to the school principals last Thursday.

Dr. Kerble asked Angela Bik if she had anything to add.

Angela Bik said that she spoke to the meeting last Thursday.

Cheryl Sweeney asked for clarification in regard to the law about the school council meeting regularly with the principal of the school. She asked "What is the tenure of the appointments to the council?"

Dr. Kerble stated the spirit of the law is to rotate to give parents and teachers the opportunity to serve.

Bruce Menin: When are the elections held by the PTOs? In the spring or early September?

Dr. Kerble: will have to get back.

Bruce Menin: Comments are that he is glad that we are setting some parameters and some benchmarks around the school council engagement. The school councils have an important role to play.

Dr. Kerble: All principals have school councils.

Dan Koen: As a committee or central office, is it necessary to establish some operating principles for these school council meetings just so there is some uniformity with school councils? Mr. Koen stated any avenue that gets more involvement from parents in the schools is only going to benefit. Do you feel that the principals feel that they are going to be able to market this better? Have we been able to identify what some of the possible issues are?

Dr. Kerble: All of principals are committed to running effective school councils next year.

Dan Koen: Would like to commit the school committee to assist in any way it can to get enough parental involvement.

Nick deKanter: As a veteran of school councils, one of the challenges is getting people to be involved. If the principals use the school council to guide their decision making, vision of school improvement plan, uses the school council as a sounding board for ideas, for approaches to discipline, for new ways of addressing curriculum... If that principal acts on their advice, then those people feel empowered and will want to continue to come. If they feel that they are coming to a meeting where a School Improvement Plan is decided by some other administrative group within the school and presented to the School Council and is rubber stamped, it will be harder for them to get involved.

Nick deKanter's question to Mark: In conversation with the principals about school councils: Did you talk about how to engage people? How to make them feel that they were contributing to the council? Is it because people feel that they are not being listened to or being effective? That needs to be talked about.

Dr. Kerble: That piggybacks on Dan Koen's comments on operating principles. Both made good points in terms of engaging parents, including the principals and the teachers.

Cheryl Sweeney: Anything further on that? Thank you Dr. Kerble.

Cheryl Sweeney: Next item on the agenda is the Molin School Improvement Plan

MOLIN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN PRESENTATION

Dr. Kerble introduced Tara Rossi, Molin School Principal and explained the transitional period with which she is in as she gets to know her staff and the areas of strengths and the areas that need improvement at the Molin School.

Tara Rossi presented the Molin School Improvement Plan by referring to the insert each School Committee member received in their agenda packet. In regard to the Molin School Improvement Plan, Tara Rossi stated that she met with Kristina Davis and Amy Sullivan. The Molin plan is modeled after their respective school plans, Bresnahan and Brown, thus bringing the Molin in line with the elementary schools.

Tara Rossi mentioned the highlights of the plan by giving the objectives and in depth explanation of each:

1. Implementing the new evaluation system
2. Data Collection
3. Aligning daily instruction design
4. Building strong community relationships
5. Instruction models to meet student needs

In closing Tara Rossi stated that the school climate is amazing. Community is going to play an important part next year, starting with the classroom community. A lot has been done in a year and there is a lot still to do. Moving forward, consistency will make a difference. The teachers are dedicated and hardworking, and really put students first.

Cheryl Sweeney asked if there were any comments.

Steve Cole asked Tara to talk about the turn over and how it has affected the school.

Tara Rossi: The turn-over has not been with the teachers, but with the principals. Teachers want consistency; it takes time to really become a team; cannot do it in one year.

Steve Cole: Would also think that teachers want their principal to know what they have been working on and what they hope to achieve. It is a shared learning process.

Tara Rossi: I have gotten to know some of the teachers extremely well, but still learning about others. It takes time.

Cheryl Sweeney: Thank you for your presentation. We did give you extra time. It seems as though you are on the right track.

Tara Rossi: Thank you.

Dan Koen: Wondering if we are gelling on the technology plan at the Molin. Are you working with staff on new technology that will come with the building renovation?

Tara Rossi: The building renovation and systems updates in technology needs were addressed through a survey distributed to staff. It is of high priority.

Bruce Menin: I do appreciate the whole idea seeing the classrooms as micro community and helping the students see what their rights and roles are in the community. I also encourage the work around differentiated instruction. We would support and would like to hear conversation coming out your school council with what resources you would need to do that in an effective way.

Cheryl Sweeney: Thank you again for your presentation.

USE OF FACILITIES, SUBCOMMITTEE

Dr. Kerble recommended the creation of a sub committee to review the structure for the use of our facilities. This group can meet over the summer.

Dr. Kerble referred to the packet and asked the school committee to put together an ad-hoc committee to review restructuring of fees and to include members of the community, as well.

Mayor Holaday asked if anyone is interested in being part of this.

Bruce Menin: maybe, depending on how time shakes out

Dan Koen: remembers bringing this up a couple of times. The whole goal was to realize revenue if possible. Dr. Picone even agreed that there is room for improvement in what we charge given what we pay out for custodians, heat, air conditioning, etc. Great idea. I'm happy to serve on the committee.

Dr. Kerble: In closing, he suggested it would be terrific to include a member of the custodial staff on the ad hoc committee.

Dan Koen: absolutely

PUBLIC CONVERSATION

Cheryl Sweeney asked if there is any Public Comment at this time.

Roseanne Nercessian, 466 Merrimac St. **CONCERN:** She would like to make a comment about the discussion earlier about school councils. Her opinion is that she feels that the feedback at the district level is that you want it suppressed and don't want "us" here at these meetings and are pushing toward school councils. Although it is important to get involved at the school level, the issues that have been brought up, technology, special education, advanced curriculum go across our schools and are issues that need to be addressed at the district. She is concerned about the transition from school to school to school and the quality of education across the district. There is a need for leadership at district level across the board. She thanked the board.

Ralph Orlando, 4 William Hall Drive **CONCERN:** With regard to School Councils, I have a lot of interest. Unfortunately you don't get a lot of opportunity to dialogue at these meetings, it is like a monologue. The School Councils are the eyes and ears of the schools. How do you get people interested? He suggested that someone in authority mandate to the school principals to roll out in the fall a plan to sell school council in whatever shape or form the school principal chooses. The principal is one of the co-chairs, but a parent is the other co-chair. The parent is allowed to speak their mind, have a vote and the majority rules. This is a level that you can make an impact on the schools. It is a commitment. School Council is not to be confused with the PTOs. School Council looks at strategic planning, policies at the school level and it is a council that allows for the dialogue. It is a forum for a dialogue which you are not allowed to have here. He suggested having a plan developed over the summer that rolls out in September, with regular meetings. This needs to be fine tuned. He suggested having previous members get up and give a blurb about on what it is like to be a school council member and about the impact you can have.

The School Committee thanked Mr. Orlando.

Cheryl Sweeney: any further comment? Hearing none, we are going to take a short recess. When we return, we will be discussing the Superintendent search.

SUPERINTENDENT'S SEARCH UPDATE

Cheryl Sweeney reconvened the meeting at 8:07. All members present.

Discussion: work done by all involved during the past 4 months.

The process began in March with the School Committee voting to engage New England School Development Council as consultant in the search. Cheryl Sweeney explained that numerous focus groups were held. A leadership profile paper was developed. A 17 member search committee made up of parents, teachers, community members and school committee members was formed. There were 17 applicants. The search committee narrowed that to 8 candidates, then to 4 that were brought to you for your consideration. The School Committee decided to bring 2 candidates back - Susan Viccaro, who is a sitting Superintendent in Durham, CT. and Jean Briggs-Badger, sitting superintendent in Dover, NH.

Steve Cole reviewed visits and discussed the candidates positives. The strengths and positive attributes of each candidate were reinforced throughout the visits.

Cheryl Sweeney asked if there were any questions about the site visits from the material received.

Mayor Holaday thanked Mrs. McCarthy, Mr. Menin and Mr. Cole for the reports.

Dan Koen echoed the mayor's comments.

Steve Cole remarked that they met with very responsive people and received gracious hospitality. The site visit team put together and he thanked the site visit team for bringing everything together

Mayor Holiday commented on the continuity of the reports and site team members comments.

Cheryl Sweeney asked for each member to discuss strengths of each candidate using the two round method.

Audrey McCarthy: Visited Dover, NH. She stated that she was impressed with Jean Briggs-Badger's character, skills and ability.

Bruce Menin: visited CT He thought that it was noticeable that the staff and community members felt empowered and heard. Both candidates seem to be very confident in what they say and do.

Dan Koen: Jean Briggs Badger spoke of lack of initiatives in NH school system. He was impressed at her looking at the opportunities to make improvements there, rather than an overload of having to do things herself. He remarked at the way she spoke with confidence and her value of herself as a leader as to her comments of "charging up a hill into battle" and being able to turn around and her staff was fully behind her. Her strengths would be very beneficial to this district.

Nick deKanter spoke to strengths he saw in both. Both are very able leaders who are professionals with a sense of vision. Both have successfully navigated precarious situations. Both have managed to get people to follow along with them. Both have an understanding of 21st century education and what that means in using technology as a tool and that there is no one size fits all approach to technology. Two words came out consistently for each candidate... Impressed with Jean Briggs-Badger commitment to making sure the job gets done. For Susan Viccaro it is integrity. Integrity means simply doing what you say you're going to do and getting it done. Would be comfortable with either one.

Bruce Menin had concerns that we were starting late in the process. He had proposed to go with an interim. After site visits he felt he no longer needed to hold on to the idea of an interim. He feels that one candidate would be a very good match. He expressed that he is comfortable moving ahead in making a decision tonight.

Mayor Holaday added that she agreed with Mr. Menin's comment. She expressed that she is grateful to Cheryl Sweeney and the search committee for the work that has been done and the presentation of two strong candidates. She thought that it was interesting that both candidates are from out of state and bring a different perspective than one that has come up through the Massachusetts school system and that is a good thing. She was very impressed with both candidates. She met with one of the candidates and had an extensive phone conversation with the other. She is leaning towards one candidate who would be a better fit in terms to the needs of for our district.

Steve Cole said that he is impressed with what NESDC has done with respect to the search in the shortened period of time. He reflected on his time being on other search committees in the past. He thought that both are good candidates, but the districts from where each is coming are quite different from each other and different from Newburyport. He stated that he is on the fence.

Dan Koen addressed Mr. Cole. Are we closer to one or the other?

Steve Cole stated that he was impressed with the power point presentation on Dover website. Dover is dealing with diverse economic factors. In terms of achievement we are probably closer to Ct. In terms of fiscal and budget. we are closer to Dover.

Mrs. McCarthy mentioned that she was impressed with Jean Briggs-Badger's ability administratively. Point being it is notable in what she has done with her schools with half the staff as in comparable size districts.

Bruce Menin stated that we are trying in some ways to compare apples to oranges. He stated that NH has significantly less paperwork in reporting out to the state. He spoke of the new evaluation system. CT system looks a lot like ours. This was not the case in NH.

Cheryl Sweeney stated that one of the criteria of the focus group was a visionary...a person who could move the district forward and the follow through to do that. Both have proven that they can do this. They both focus on community involvement, safety and they both put kids first. She proceeded to give detail to each candidate's history in their careers.

Cheryl Sweeney stated that she would like to move into 2nd round and have each member respond as to what has been said about each candidate.

Dan Koen: asked about the rounds.

Cheryl Sweeney referred to the notes in the packet and described the rounds of discussion.

Steve Cole asked the vice chair if it makes any sense at all to consider an interim. He would be willing to make a motion. He stated that he is on the fence with the situation and having trouble looking at these candidates, being that they are both from out of state and their budgets so different.

Motion:

Steve Cole moved that we consider an interim hire as opposed to choosing one of these two candidates.

Motion seconded by Dan Koen.

Discussion:

Steve Cole with respect to the search committee, to NESDC, to the press in general, stated that people have done a great job. Mr. Cole referred to the most recent process of searching for a new superintendent and compared those two previous candidates and where they are presently. The gentleman we chose is retiring after three years and the other flourishing. Here we are again looking at two candidates in the face of the year that has been full of initiatives from the MA Department of Education, but that neither of these folks have any MA experience. He agreed they are great leaders, but wonder if we would be better served with an interim.

Bruce Menin: have to say that we are complicating something that doesn't have to be quite as complicated. He is opposed to an interim and believes that one of these candidates can do the job exceptionally well. He is also opposed to an interim; that the message from the people is to get the job done. He is convinced that we have a candidate here that can do that.

Dan Koen echoed Bruce Menin. He stated that if we were to turn down either one of these candidates, that it would be perceived that our ideal candidate doesn't exist. Feedback forums clearly had a front runner and is quite clear, do not go with an interim. It would be a giant step backward for the district. He is In favor of moving forward with a vote.

Nick deKanter: Massachusetts is having a tremendous turnover of superintendents and the pool of qualified candidates is shrinking. He is surprised that we do not have a Massachusetts candidate, but does not take that as a negative. We have chosen the two candidates that would be best suited to our

community. We have to find the best candidate, not the perfect candidate. He is confident that we have good candidates. He does not believe that going the interim route is going to buy us any advantage.

Mayor Holaday: addressed Mr. Cole and appreciates his comments. The skill sets that both bring to the table are what we're looking for, are matched up to the leadership profile and focus groups. She has been asked to please do not go interim. She cannot support us redoing this process.

Cheryl Sweeney: has been invested in this search since the beginning and would not have brought forth candidates that she didn't think would match Newburyport. An interim was in her thought process in the beginning, but does not feel that way anymore. We requested that NESDC look far and wide for candidates. She does not feel at this time, with the quality of these two candidates that we should go with an interim.

Steve Cole respectfully withdrew his motion.

Dan Koen seconded the motion.

Bruce Menin commented that the Bruins are up 4 to 1!

Steve Cole thanked the members for the discussion.

Cheryl Sweeney thanked Steve Cole for bringing up the motion for clarity.

Cheryl Sweeney stated that the Consensus Round would begin.

Dan Koen had one more point to present. Do we think that there is an advantage to the candidate's roots and that one candidate is from the north shore and one from close by. Is this relevant or up for discussion?

Mayor Holaday stated that one candidate is from Essex and that is an encouraging point.

Cheryl Sweeney said that it would be relocation for one of them.

Dan Koen was thinking of similarities in communities.

Nick deKanter expressed that both saw the opportunities and the challenges here in Newburyport.

Dan Koen thought that maybe Jean Briggs-Badger has been a little closer to Newburyport for a while and might have an edge on familiarity and on what goes on in Newburyport, possibly.

Cheryl Sweeney stated that she would like to move now into a Consensus Round.

Cheryl Sweeney stated that both candidates are outstanding. Susan Viccaro would make an outstanding candidate for this district. She is extremely impressed with her strategic plan, the core values that she brings forward and hoping that she will bring them here. They are very simple. There are 5 of them and this is what her strategic plan is based on.

1. I am showing respect.
2. I am accepting responsibility.
3. I am practicing honesty.
4. I am showing kindness.
5. I am showing courage.

My candidate for superintendent would be Susan Viccaro.

Mayor Holaday: My candidate for superintendent is Susan Viccaro.

Nick deKanter would support and encourage his colleagues to support Susan Viccaro for superintendent.

Audrey McCarthy in the spirit of cooperation she will support Susan Viccaro.

Dan Koen: this is a very difficult discussion and going against his gut because of feedback forms. Believes that feedback forms favored Susan Viccaro, and therefore he will be supporting Susan Viccaro.

Bruce Menin will be supporting Susan Viccaro.

Steve Cole spoke to Jean Briggs-Badger and the Dover school district. Steve Cole stated that what he most liked about Susan Viccaro is that she is very reflective; she thinks; she responds; she also has developed leadership. Susan Viccaro does seem to be the right person to be the next superintendent in Newburyport.

Discussion

Roll Call vote:

Mr. Menin yes

Mr. Cole yes

Ms. Sweeney yes

Mayor Holaday yes

Mr. deKanter yes

Mrs. McCarthy yes

Mr. Koen yes

Mayor Holaday to call Susan Viccaro

Cheryl Sweeney to call Carolyn Burke of NESDC to call Jean Briggs-Badger.

Steve Cole called for a recess.

Nick deKanter seconded

Cheryl Sweeney reported that Susan Viccaro has accepted the offer to become the next Newburyport Superintendent of Schools and will enter into contract negotiations.

Motion

Motion to adjourn was made by Audrey McCarthy and seconded by Cheryl Sweeney.

Discussion

All in favor

School Committee meeting adjourned at 9:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn DelTorchio

