

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**PUBLIC CONVERSATION**

**Tuesday, July 1, 2014**

**Newburyport High School**  
**Meeting Convened at 6:35 PM**

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

**Present:** **Bruce Menin, Steve Cole, Cheryl Sweeney, Mayor Donna Holaday, Nick deKanter, Audrey McCarthy,**

**Absent:** **Michael Luekens**

**Christine Doherty** inquired regarding the permanency of PARCC vs. MCAS. **Mayor Holaday** said this is a pilot this year, and we want to have a voice in this.

**David Hark, 2 Forrester Street** inquired regarding the field test that was done this year:

- ⤴ Was it a full field test? **Superintendent Viccaro** said no, it was a very limited test.
- ⤴ Does that mean the rest of school is sidelined? **Superintendent Viccaro** said it does not have that kind of impact. The state is looking to gather data. There will be some limited feedback. From a technical point of view we did very well.
- ⤴ Design of test – without our students’ scores, will the test be less capable of launching? **Mayor Holaday** said we do not know how many municipalities will be participating – may not be a good cross section. **Superintendent Viccaro** said the state wants to have a balance between PARCC and MCAS – there are so many unanswered questions here.
- ⤴ He stated that coming from New York testing there was a disaster – questions were different – adds to insecurity in the building. **Superintendent Viccaro** asked, “where was the concern ?” Mr. Hark said a decrease in test prep – limited amount of test items presented.

**Pam Wool** inquired

- ⤴ Is this a different test or the same type of test? Mr. Hark explained.
- ⤴ What types of pros and cons from perspective of teachers.
- ⤴ Is this a test that was designed to have less preparation? **Superintendent Viccaro** said she cannot answer that now.
- ⤴ **Mayor Holaday** said this is testing at a higher level of skill.

**Larry Giunta** stated he doesn't want to be a testing site for what they are putting together – no need for us to be a testing ground. He stated he wanted a forum on this.

**Superintendent Viccaro** stated she recommended PARCC – moving towards on-line testing. She wants our students to have the opportunity to practice – that is why she recommended it. She stated she believes we are moving towards on-line testing.

**Mary Foley**

- ⤴ Stated she agreed with Mr. Giunta. She asked if anyone has gone to a PARCC Forum. **Superintendent Viccaro** said they have been to PARCC workshops – we don't know what the end product will be.
- ⤴ State doesn't decide until 2015. You have to train teachers to administer test.
- ⤴ **Superintendent Viccaro** said Newburyport participated in the pilot and had some limited feedback from students. At this point MCAS will sunset and the state is moving toward electronic testing. MCAS is a graduation requirement.
- ⤴ What will the benefit be to teachers and students?
- ⤴ **Superintendent Viccaro** said a bit more practical applications with 20<sup>th</sup> Century learning skills trying to mirror with where we want to go.

**Roseanne Necessian** said that MCAS is still a high school requirement. If students take PARCC will they be prepared to take MCAS.

**Nick deKanter** said as we talk about assessment tools we can't lose sight of what we are assessing. PARCC is assessing that kind of teaching.

**David Junta** asked, "What is the risk to stay with MCAS? Why do we need to jump in – take the path of least compliance?"

**Ralph Orlando** had several questions:

- ⤴ Have teachers been polled – what is their opinion? Superintendent Viccaro said the teachers have not been polled.
- ⤴ Funding – is it going to be funded in years to come?
- ⤴ Com. Chester said a pilot program would be available on line. Superintendent Viccaro said it is not there yet.
- ⤴ Why did we decide to participate in the pilot program? Superintendent Viccaro said we wanted to know what it was all about.
- ⤴ What is Common Core all about – there has been no conversation – we need to define what Common Core is about.

**Mary Foley** Stated MCAS was coming out with a Common Core aligned test. Is MCAS a profit making endeavor. PARCC is. PARCC is time tested. MCAS isn't. Superintendent Viccaro said both tests have same times – but with differences.

**Larry Guinta** said feedback is not good. Read feedback from some schools re: PARCC. Look at us as a school system and ask why we are doing this. Do we want them to get the bugs out first?

**Pat Levitt (NTA Teachers Assoc.)** - The Teachers Assoc. is concerned that while the district is held harmless, teachers will not be held harmless.

**Superintendent Viccaro** asked what percent was that.

**Ms. Levitt** did not know, but it will impact teachers' evaluations. The only people it will affect is teachers. They recommend staying with MCAS.

**Diane Koocher:** Are there accommodations for SPED?

**Superintendent Viccaro** said we are staying with the version that MCAS has. There will be accommodations. The pilot was luck of the draw.

**Cheryl Sweeney** asked if the SPED students who took the pilot were accommodated the same.

**Superintendent Viccaro** said this was no different.

**Superintendent Viccaro** said questions will be raised and they will be answered.

**Peter McClure** asked what do the teachers think – it is unfair to them – bringing extra pressure.

**Superintendent Viccaro** asked Ms. Levitt if she had polled the teachers.

**Ms. Levitt** said she spoke with them on Friday – they are very concerned – not necessarily against PARCC, but the Dept. of Educ. is holding the teachers accountable.

**Christine Doherty** – Was this the expected process all along.

**Nick deKanter** said the State has done the pilot, and now they are ready to go to the next step.

**Christine Doherty** asked if there was a third test.

**Superintendent Viccaro** said yes – Connecticut has ASPED – on line – different type of test, but similar.

**Ralph Orlando** said Com. Chester is Chairman of the Board of PARCC – is this a conflict of interest?

**Mayor Holaday** said we should stay with MCAS.

**End of Discussion Period, move to Business Meeting at 7:30 PM**