

MARCH 1, 2010

MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Brookline School Board was held on Monday, March 1, 2010 at 6:34 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Chairman Dave Partridge presided:

Members of the Board Present:           Beth Lukovits, Vice-Chair  
Forrest Milkowski, Secretary  
Marcia Farwell  
Wanda Meagher

Members of the Board Absent:

Also in Attendance:                   Susan Hodgdon, SAU41 Superintendent  
Mark McLaughlin, Business Administrator  
Jeanne Saunders, Assistant Director of Special Education  
Lidia Desrochers, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School  
Lorraine Wenger, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy  
James Doig, Assistant Principal/Special Education Coordinator, RMMS

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Chairman Partridge informed the board the non-public session would be moved to the end of the agenda, as all parties were not present.

PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. Amy Fesseden reminded the board March 1<sup>st</sup> through the 5<sup>th</sup> is Read Across America Week. She extended an invitation to board members to visit a classroom and read to the students. Ms. Meagher stated she had already signed up.

Ms. Madge Smith stated she had sent an e-mail regarding class sizes for the next school year. Principal Wenger responded, at this point, the need exists to review the needs of the children, understand the impact of the budget vote, and ensure discussions are taking place with appropriate personnel for appropriate placements. Consideration is being given to whether or not juggling can occur within 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms. At this time, there are 61 registered kindergarten students and 10 registered incoming first grade students.

Chairman Partridge commented, by adding the 10 incoming first grade students to the current enrollment number of 73, and considering the possibility of an additional 4-5 students from the Readiness program (estimate of 16 believed to be too high) the first grade class size will be approximately 87. Principal Wenger commented there is no indication, at this time, as to how many Readiness students will move into first grade. Chairman Partridge remarked there are 101 students heading to second grade. When asked, Principal Wenger stated the current first grade class sizes to be 20 and 21. Chairman Partridge commented if we continue with four teachers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, class size for the coming year would be 25.

Ms. Lisa Albach questioned when a decision would be made. Chairman Partridge responded teacher assignment requirements are due April 15<sup>th</sup>. However, there are budgetary impacts. If positions have to be cut, due to budget constraints, all items will need to be reviewed. If shuffling within groups were to occur, it would have to be finalized at the April meeting.

Ms. Meagher informed the public there is no new teacher position within the proposed budget. Ms. Smith stated she wanted to be assured her child will not be in a 2nd grade classroom with a size of 25. She questioned the class size being proposed for 2nd grade. Ms. Lukovits responded 25. She added it is still early to predict class size for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>

grades as teachers have yet to make decisions with regard to readiness students and not all registrations are in. She added class sizes for both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are undesirable.

Ms. Smith stated New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) recommends no more than 25 students per class. Ms. Lukovits responded class size can be dependent upon the make-up of the particular class, i.e., number of identified students, etc. Mr. Meagher stated she has a strong opinion on smaller class sizes, and believes the need exists for an additional teaching position. Ms. Smith plans on attending the district meeting, and questioned how the board would vote should a motion be made for the addition of \$72,000 to the school district budget with the intent the monies be utilized to fund an additional teaching position.

Ms. Lukovits stated she would absolutely vote for the addition of the position. She added, as a board member, she did not feel she could motion to add the funds to the proposed budget. Superintendent Hodgdon informed the board of research she had done on class sizes. She reviewed the book Visible Learning by Geoff Petty. The author looked at 800 META studies on a variety of educational topics. He rated the impact of class size to be a .14 rating (rating of .4 indicates needs attention). Research indicates class size is less significant than people believe it to be. Determined to be most important in students' learning was teacher effectiveness with a 29% impact (with regard to student growth per year).

Mr. Milkowski asked for statistical information to be available for the district meeting.

Ms. Albach informed the board she works in Nashua (school district), but lives in Brookline for a reason. In Nashua class size is 30, which is very challenging. At present, her 5<sup>th</sup> grader has a class size of 27. She is not happy her second grader will have a class size of 25.

Superintendent Hodgdon stated it has been long-standing practice to keep class sizes low as students are learning to read. Chairman Partridge commented we are asking teachers to do more and more for each individual child. The more tasks required per child the larger the burden becomes with each additional child.

Ms. Farwell stated the administration does a great job at grouping children. Superintendent Hodgdon added we are fortunate in the SAU as a whole in that we are able to design balanced classrooms. Ms. Smith remarked it is difficult to design classrooms to be perfect year after year as dynamics change. She did not agree with the logic of a good mix of students.

Mr. Milkowski remarked in order to make the necessary decisions, additional data is needed and consideration has to be given to budgetary constraints. He stated the board is not prepared to continue to increase the budget to a point like last year. Ms. Meagher stated grouping has worked well year to year. Ms. Lukovits was not agreeable with waiting for the economy to improve to return to what is desirable in terms of class sizes. She stated the need for taxpayers who find this unacceptable to stand up and say so.

Ms. Albach questioned the tax impact of \$72,000 and was told it would be \$.12 or approximately \$36 on a \$300,000 home.

Ms. Smith questioned whether the board would support such a proposal if made at the district meeting. Mr. Milkowski reiterated the board is not prepared to propose an increase. Ms. Lukovits stated, although she would support the addition, she did not feel it appropriate for the board to propose it. Ms. Meagher stated she would support such a proposal by the public. Ms. Farwell stated the proposed budget already includes a 5-6% increase over last year, and she would not support increasing it further. Mr. Milkowski stated his belief the budget, in its present form, is already in jeopardy of being cut on the floor, which would cause some real issues. He believes there will be debates regarding teacher salary warrants. Chairman Partridge stated he was torn as he favors small class sizes, but is not happy about a 5% increase to the budget.

Ms. Albach questioned whether the \$72,000 would be for a one-year position or if that teacher would continue with the class. Ms. Lukovits responded that would be determined by class size. What has been recommended in the past is for class size to be up to 22 through grade 3. However, there have been class sizes of 25 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Ms. Meagher added grades 4 through 6 have a recommended class size of 25.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Business Administrator

Mr. McLaughlin had provided the board with an expenditure report covering the July 1, 2009 through February 28, 2010 timeframe (copy attached). He informed the board he had not yet had the opportunity to analyze the numbers. He will follow up later in the month after analyzing accounts that still need to be committed or items where there are known expenses that will be coming in.

Some areas highlighted;

- Although salaries are encumbered, not all items have been, i.e., gasoline for buses
- Have yet to receive \$8,000 in invoices against the snow line
- Have remaining balance of \$15,000 in legal line item
- Monies remaining in course reimbursement (approximately \$12,000)
- An approximate \$18,000 balance remaining in dental and life insurance
- FICA has to be paid (approximately \$45,000)

When asked, Mr. McLaughlin stated his gut feeling the district will be in a favorable position by year-end.

Mr. Milkowski stated the importance of understanding year-end number as they will be the platform for determining what needs to be spent next year. He questioned what the board would see as an acceptable margin of error. He believed the 4% margin of error with last year's budget was acceptable. Chairman Partridge stated, last year, the district returned \$347,000 to the general fund. However, those monies resulted from unanticipated revenue not unexpended appropriations. Ms. Lukovits stated the actual percentage was much lower as the 4% resulted from unanticipated revenue. Without that, the percentage would have been less than 1%.

Principals

Principal Desrochers informed the board; NECAP results were sent home February 12<sup>th</sup>, NWEA results were sent home February 19<sup>th</sup>, and early release is scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup> (voting day).

She made the board aware of a request from the Selectmen for the board to consider voting days as teacher workshop days in the coming year as a means to minimize police costs (paid by the town) required when voting occurs while children are in the building(s). The board was agreeable to accommodating the request.

Enrollment

Principal Desrochers stated the enrollment numbers have been updated since published. One additional 1<sup>st</sup> grade student was added bringing RMMS' number to 380.

Buildings & Grounds

Principal Desrochers informed the board she is awaiting additional information on the roof. There is an existing leak and flashing that was blown off the front of the building during the recent windstorm. Mr. Farwell provided temporary solutions including deflecting water from the trouble spot, which should hold until spring when the area can be dug up to see where the issue stems from. Ms. Farwell suggested the problem could stem from the gutters being torn off the building.

Principal Desrochers informed the board of unexpected maintenance costs; replacement of expansion tank (leaking) at \$3,053, security system failure (insurance claim submitted although not clear on coverage), door repair (Milford Street exit), panic hardware had to be replaced at a cost of \$1,852, wall in front stairway at \$600, and the need for flooring replacement (tile), due to safety concerns, at a cost of \$2,800 (work to be done in April).

Ms. Meagher questioned whether the maintenance line was over budget, and was told it was not.

Early Release Activities

Principal Wenger informed the board of work done on the analysis of NECAP and NWEA data as it relates to SINI work. The team will meet again in two weeks to analyze the analysis done by the teachers. Looking at growth, the results are encouraging in terms of performance. Principal Desrochers stated similar work has been done at RMMS with math as it applies to the SINI plan.

The board was informed of receipt of \$1,000 from Box Tops for Education. Ms. Tremblay submitted the districts' name resulting in winning the award.

When asked about the NECAP results, Principal Wenger stated CSDA made significant strides in math. Ms. Meagher commented 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading percentages of proficient with distinction were way down. Principal Wenger responded the tests are not standardized (change every year). She remarked AYP has to be met for two consecutive years in order to be moved out of SINI designation.

Early Matriculation

Principal Desrochers stated the school board policy addresses promotion and retention, but not acceleration. It was her recommendation the board look at acceleration as part of the policy. The district has compulsory attendance as policy (6 years of age before September 30<sup>th</sup> to enter 1<sup>st</sup> grade). The policy speaks to incoming transfer students and attending local schools on a temporary basis, but does not speak to kindergarten students going into 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

Ms. Lukovits stated the particular request relates to a child transferring into 1<sup>st</sup> grade from a private kindergarten. Mr. Milkowski felt the board should fall back to the primary position of 6 years of age by September 30<sup>th</sup>. He felt there were emotional considerations to be made, and the issue should be left to the administration to evaluate on a case-by-case basis.

Superintendent Hodgdon stated it would be a matter of policy, and, therefore, a decision for the board to make.

Ms. Meagher stated the situation looking to be addressed is not a concern for the current year, and since it is not clearly addressed within existing policy, the board should review the policy for possible revisions/additions.

Ms. Lukovits felt the parent should be notified a decision would be deferred until completion of the board's review of the policy.

**MOTION BY MEMBER MILKOWSKI TO REVIEW AND RECONSIDER THE POLICY (JEB) FOR PLACEMENT BASED ON AGE**  
**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LUKOVITS**  
**MOTION CARRIED**  
**5/0**

Assistant Director of Special Education

Assistant Director Saunders informed the board the Brookline School District has received \$136,037.00 in stimulus funding, \$9,900 of which is for the pre-school program.

An application identifying specific items needs to be completed (expected completion date of 3-12-10). Once submitted, the DOE will approve/disapprove. The focus is on new technology such as laptops for special education staff and students, sound systems in classrooms at both RMMS and CSDA, computer software in resource rooms, Wilson Foundations (used in regular education) for providing instruction as early intervening step, Life Skills materials for students at CSDA, SmartBoards and assessment tools (although Title II funding was used to purchase SmartBoards for RMMS and CSDA, both schools have requested one additional SmartBoard), counseling materials in terms of bullying, etc., and professional development and resources.

Ms. Meagher questioned whether any of the materials would be funded in the current fiscal year. Assistant Director Saunders responded, once DOE approval is received items can be purchased and submitted for reimbursement. She is working with the Business Administrator on how to allocate, reimburse, and track funds and on creating an inventory system.

She commented the equipment cannot leave school premises. In the event of an audit, all equipment purchases have to be accounted for. Mr. Milkowski questioned whether there would be asset stickers, etc. and was told there would be. Superintendent Hodgdon stated, as it is time to perform a capital equipment update, this would be part of a larger project. Mr. Milkowski questioned whether an asset tagging system could be incorporated into the application for funding. The response was that items applied for have to identify how they will benefit special education students.

When asked for the turnaround time for reimbursement, Assistant Director Saunders stated it to be thirty (30) days. Chairman Partridge questioned whether items had to be purchased in the current fiscal year. Assistant Director Saunders stated all funds have to be expended by September 30, 2011. However, consideration has to be given to time allocated toward installation, professional development, etc.

#### Superintendent

Superintendent Hodgdon presented Ms. Farwell with flowers as a token of appreciation for her 30 years of service to the Board of Education.

#### RMMS Interim Principal Search

Superintendent Hodgdon provided the board with a proposed search process (copy attached). She reminded the board if the April board meeting were to remain as scheduled, a decision would come after the April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for teacher nominations.

**MOTION BY MEMBER FARWELL TO CHANGE THE APRIL MEETING DATE TO APRIL 13, 2010**  
**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LUKOVITS**  
**MOTION CARRIED**  
**5/0**

Speaking on the proposed process (copy attached), Superintendent Hodgdon stated the first date had been realized as the February 19, 2010 application period had closed. All applications date stamped on or before February 19, 2010 were accepted. The proposed schedule is tight, but believed to be achievable as there is a good pool of applicants.

Possible dates for bringing the search panel together were proposed with a goal of conducting interviews by the 12<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of March after which nominations and finalists would be brought before the board for approval (March 16<sup>th</sup>).

The search panel would consist of the Superintendent, Principal Wenger, 1-2 board members, a representative of curriculum or special education, and teacher or staff representative. Ms. Meagher stated her agreement with the composition. Ms. Lukovits questioned whether there would be tours or visits to schools. Superintendent Hodgdon suggested, once the search committee has had the opportunity to review the applications, they could make that determination.

Ms. Lukovits remarked, in the past, there has been a member of the public or PTO as part of search committees. Superintendent Hodgdon responded the number of committee members was limited to facilitate moving quickly. Ms. Meagher approved of keeping the committee size limited, however, remarked input from a member of the public generally provides a different point of view. When asked how many applicants would be in the first round of interviews, Superintendent Hodgdon stated there would be 4-5 highly qualified applicants.

Ms. Jenny Dalo stated her opinion it is important for potential candidates to visit the schools, as the staff would have to embrace this individual. She questioned what the process would be in identifying teacher/staff member to participate in the search panel.

Superintendent Hodgdon stated she has looked at the schedule of SAU staff with regard to a representative from curriculum/special education. Assistant Director Saunders is committee to another search panel. Curriculum Director Mace will be in and out of the office throughout March. She would like to speak with Assistant Director Saunders with regard to a representative from special education. She also has curriculum coordinators she could turn to. She will need to determine whether the staff member should represent curriculum or special education.

Ms. Meagher suggested interviews begin at 5:00 p.m. When the issue arose, Superintendent Hodgdon stated interviews normally take place in non-public session for the sake of confidentiality.

Ms. Laurie Hestin questioned whether the teacher/staff representative would be from RMMS and was told it would be.

Ms. Fesseden questioned whether the choice of the teacher/staff representative should be that of the teachers and staff. Superintendent Hodgdon responded she is not that far into the process and needs to determine who the representative would be from curriculum/special education. She desires having as broad representation as possible.

#### Inform Data Management System

Superintendent Hodgdon informed the board Inform was learned about in early May 2009 in connection with PowerSchool, researched in May and June of 2009 for the Hollis School District, and in November of 2009 by the Leadership Team (as it relates to the five-year plan). A more favorable price quote was received from Pearson in November of 2009. The system was included in the Race to the top application this past December.

Chairman Partridge questioned if the expectation is to expand to Brookline and the COOP if the program performs well in Hollis. Superintendent Hodgdon responded it is. She remarked she would like to secure funding for the software package through Race to the Top funds to avoid spending funds in any of the districts.

#### Transportation

Superintendent Hodgdon informed the board she and Principals Wenger and Desrochers met with Nancy Orde on February 18<sup>th</sup> to review and debrief two recent incidents (lock down procedure at RMMS and an accident involving a bus).

With regard to the lock down procedure at RMMS, a bus driver attempted to return a student to school after discovering a parent was not at home on an early release date. The bus company was unable to reach the school. The SAU was unaware there was a lock down drill occurring as the bus company was trying to reach the school. That glitch has been addressed. A bus accident occurred when a sliding car collided with a bus. The bus slid safely off the road. No students were injured.

#### Staffing

Superintendent Hodgdon informed the board of a request received back in September from Sacha Norris, a teacher at CSDA, for a lane change. She has finished her courses and obtained her Masters. As such a request cannot be approved until after receipt of an official transcript (February 23, 2010) the request is now before the board. It was the recommendation of the Superintendent to approve the lane change.

### **MOTION BY MEMBER LUKOVITS TO APPROVE THE LANE CHANGE FOR SACHA NORRIS MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MEAGHER**

#### ON THE QUESTION

Ms. Farwell questioned the costs associated with the lane change and whether or not funds are within the budget. Superintendent Hodgdon did not have the figures available, but stated the contractual obligation. The effective date would be February 1, 2010.

### **MOTION CARRIED 5/0**

#### AlertNow

Superintendent Hodgdon informed the board, due to parent requests; the AlertNow messages are now coded (subject line). A three-tiered system was created; news item, important message, critical information. Chairman Partridge requested coordination be reviewed (as a parent of four, only one message is necessary). Superintendent Hodgdon informed the board and the public the parent portal is now open. Parents can access and make those types of changes.

RIF POLICY

*Given its first reading;*

Ms. Meagher remarked in the event of a reduction in instructional staff work force, the procedure calls for consideration to first be given to classification. Within the classification, probationary teachers would be laid off first. Chairman Partridge questioned the procedure if layoffs were targeted to a specific area(s). Principal Wenger responded if reducing by classroom it would come under classroom classification. If a specialist had to be cut, it would be looked at district wide and, all else being equal (New Hampshire certification, academic and professional preparation beyond minimum requirements, and teaching performance as determined by previous evaluations) seniority would dictate.

The question of determination of seniority arose. Superintendent Hodgdon stated start date would be based on date of hire rather than contract date as, legally, that is the date the contract was executed.

The draft policy for reduction in support staff will be brought forward separately.

**MOTION BY MEMBER LUKOVITS TO ACCEPT THE FIRST READING OF THE GCQA POLICY  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILKOWSKI  
MOTION CARRIED  
5/0**

FY11 BUDGET

When asked for status of the fuel contract, Mr. McLaughlin stated there were no confirmed numbers at that time, although the number would be within the ballpark of what is in the proposed budget.

Mr. Milkowski confirmed receipt of a copy of the MS26 and financial reports for the Town Report.

DISTRICT MEETING PREPARATION

Ms. Lukovits questioned whether there was additional information on the energy conservation proposal, and was informed the paperwork has been submitted.

Mr. Milkowski informed the board the warrant was not supported at the COOP Budget Committee. There was a lot of confusion on how the program would work and the use of SmartStart funding. There was also a concern with whether or not it was required that all work be done by union employees. He suggested Mr. Doberstein be asked to attend to respond to questions raised.

APPROVAL OF SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES

Brookline School Board . . . . . January 19, 2010

**MOTION BY MEMBER FARWELL TO APPROVE AS WRITTEN  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LUKOVITS  
MOTION CARRIED  
5/0**

Brookline School Board . . . . . December 22, 2009

**MOTION BY MEMBER FARWELL TO APPROVE AS WRITTEN  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILKOWSKI  
MOTION CARRIED  
5/0**

Brookline School Board . . . . . October 27, 2009

**MOTION BY MEMBER FARWELL TO APPROVE AS WRITTEN  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILKOWSKI  
MOTION CARRIED**

**4/0**  
*Member Lukovits Abstained*

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

**MOTION BY MEMBER FARWELL THAT THE BOARD GO INTO NON-PUBLIC SESSION PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3  
II (c) TO DISCUSS A MATTER, WHICH IF DISCUSSED IN PUBLIC, WOULD LIKELY AFFECT ADVERSELY THE  
REPUTATION OF A PERSON, OTHER THAN A MEMBER OF THE BODY OR AGENCY ITSELF**

**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILKOWSKI**

*A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Dave Partridge, Beth Lukovits, Forrest Milkowski, Marcia Farwell, Wanda Meagher

5

Nay:

0

**MOTION CARRIED**

*The Board went into non-public session at 9:16 p.m.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_