

Amended 10/15/08

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS SESSION

OF

AUGUST 25, 2008

SUBMITTED FOR THE APPROVAL OF:

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

“AN OPEN MEETING ADVANTAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF METHUEN”

RECORDED BY:

DIANE LASONDE, PUBLIC RECORDER

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD
METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
BUSINESS SESSION
AUGUST 25, 2008

Mayor William M. Manzi, Chairperson, called the meeting of the Methuen School Committee scheduled for August 25, 2008 to order in the Superintendent's Office at the Central Building posted for 6:30 pm.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mayor William Manzi, Chairperson
Mr. Gary Marcoux, Vice Chairperson
Mr. Kenneth Henrick, Secretary
Mr. Evan Chaisson
Ms. Barbara Grondine
Mr. George Kazanjian
Mr. Robert Vogler

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Dr. Jeanne Whitten, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. MaryEllen Kelleher, Director of Public Schools
Dr. Jennifer Smith, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Mr. Frank Colvario, Acting Director of Finance and Operations
Ms. Diane Lasonde, Public Recorder

Salute to the Flag

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Manzi.

Acceptance of Minutes

Methuen School Committee Sessions of April 14, 2008 Business session, May 27, 2008 Workshop session, June 9, 2008 Business session, June 12, 2008 Workshop session, June 16, 2008 Public Hearing and Budget Adoption Meeting and the June 23, 2008 Workshop session and July 14, 2008 Workshop session.

MOTION BY: Mr. Vogler seconded by Mr. Henrick to accept.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Staff Reports

A. Supervisor of Custodians and Maintenance/Quarterly Report

The Custodial Maintenance Department submitted a quarterly report with information on all five Methuen Schools buildings with regard to work performed in-house as well as by outside contractors. MPS (custodial, grounds/maintenance staff) provide students and staff and the community with clean, safe and well-maintained facilities. Included in the daily activities are the maintenance of parking lots, playgrounds and fields to provide a safe environment during the school day and after school activities.

B. Supervisor of Food Services

Mr. Vogler requested a letter of commendation be sent to Wayne Vespa commending him for the job he has done. He has done an excellent job and has been innovated relative to the YMCA, a year long program that will realize additional revenue.

MOTION BY: Mr. Vogler seconded by Mr. Henrick to accept.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Old Business /Other Pending Matters

A. Proposed Revised and Readopted–Policy BDA–School Committee Organizational Meeting – Second Reading

MOTION BY: Mr. Henrick seconded by Mr. Chaisson to approve

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

B. Proposed Revised and Readopted – Policy BEDD – Rules of Order – Second Reading

MOTION BY: Mr. Henrick seconded by Mr. Kazanjian to approve.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

C. School Calendar 2008-2009

MOTION BY: Mr. Vogler seconded by Mr. Henrick to accept.

Mr. Vogler would like to extend the Christmas Vacation by two days (Monday and Tuesday). They are energy days; by closing the buildings down for the additional days it could help to reduce the energy costs for the schools.

Mr. Marcoux stated he would not vote for the school calendar because he has heard from a number of parents and teachers who are concerned with this issue. He supports conserving energy if the community desires this. Superintendent Whitten stated she did speak with some of the unions. Unit A did not receive the information until just recently and they have concerns with **timing**. Unit B was fine with it but some of the other unions have questions. The units are wondering how we will do this. Dr. Whitten will not rule it out for this year but would like to discuss it at the next public meeting in order to get the word out (to parents and teachers) that this is a possibility. We would have to add two days at the end of the school year and that would have to be ratified by the unions.

MOTION BY: Mr. Vogler suggested that we table until the next meeting in September, seconded by Mr. Henrick.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

New Business

A. School Committee 2008-2009 Calendar – Approval

MOTION BY: Mr. Vogler seconded by Mr. Henrick to accept.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

B. Change in Existing Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative Agreement–Approval

Superintendent Whitten stated that our collaborative is going to assume responsibility for Coastal Collaborative. Also Mr. McArdle has stepped down and there is a new Executive Director who will assume the responsibility of the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative as well as Coastal. We need to have school committee members' approval to

sign off on the changes to the contract in order to bring it to the attorney for the Collaborative, and get this moving forward.

MOTION BY: Mr. Vogler seconded by Mr. Henrick to approve.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

C. Proposed Newly Adopted –Policy ADDA-C.O.R.I. Requirement – First Reading

MOTION BY: Mr. Kazanjian seconded by Mr. Vogler to approve.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

D. Proposed Newly Adopted – Policy ADDA-E-C.O.R.I. Investigation – First Reading

MOTION BY: Mr. Henrick seconded by Mr. Chaisson to approve

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

E. Superintendent, Personnel and Business Office Updates

Mr. Frank Colvario, Acting Director of Finance and Operations presented a slide presentation and summary of reports including executive summaries and action plans. He sited interviews with the Superintendent’s staff as well as leadership team member’s comments concerning openness and inclusiveness. The initial comments about improvements were to have better and more open communications. Mr. Colvario also noted that some of the schools policies went back to 1978/79. The revisions and updating of school policies should be developed and need to be addressed (currently, Mr. Kazanjian and Mr. Chaisson have undertaken this responsibility.)

F. Ice Rink Rates – Approval

MOTION BY: Mr. Kazanjian seconded by Mr. Chaisson to approve the rates revision.

Mr. Colvario spoke of a needed increase in the Ice Rink Rates in order to help the school department efficiently run, rent, operate and maintain the ice rink. The packet presented to the committee included a summary of the changes made, in-house work, purchasing of equipment and other repairs. Also included were the expenses of hockey rink data 2006 to present, hourly costs to run the ice rink including profit and loss (2007-2008) with a summary of Ice Rink revenue to expenses, and the new rate revisions.

Mr. Vogler stated that in 1971 the (school) Committee and the town manager set it up as a revolving account because it would be a profit and loss situation. Mr. Vogler asked for data to explain why the participation numbers dropped in the past five years.

Mayor Manzi stated that he would ask that informational data be provided to justify the drop in the usage number.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

(No Action Taken)

Notification of Appointments and Other Personnel Matters

A. Resignations, Leaves, Retirements

B. Professional Staff

C. Support Staff

D. Personnel Matters Requiring Committee Action

E. Notification of Vacancy Postings.

9. Superintendents Report including Communication / Correspondence / Recommendations on Financial Matters, Old and New.

A. Up-date – Summer Activities in the Methuen Public Schools (presentation)

B. Superintendent's Reorganization – Presentation/ Discussion

The presentation included;

- Communications between the School Committee, staff and the Superintendent's office that is open and productive.
- The need to get a permanent business manager on board.
- The responsibilities and accountability for Business Office functions need to be clearly defined.
- Continuing to update job descriptions.
- Updating the policy manual.
- The need to continue the search for grants and a grant writer.
- Need to conduct program evaluations for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Making sure curricula are appropriate and staff gets what they need.
- Evaluate the progress of starting up the "parent school info center."
- Look to the future relative to growing our own administrators (succession planning.)

10. Business from the School Committee

Mr. Henrick referenced an article in the Eagle Tribune (August 13, 2008) concerning the finance director-working part time and getting paid a full salary. Mr. Henrick wanted to state for the record and make clear that Frank Colvario is doing a tremendous job and works many hours more than twenty hours a week. He also works Saturdays and Sundays for our schools. He has brought us through a very difficult time this past year. Mr. Henrick and the committee members appreciate everything he has done and will continue to do in the coming year.

Superintendent Whitten thanked Mr. Henrick for his comments and support. She stated that we do have in our district good people who have integrity and know how to manage the system well in order to help move us forward and get us through this dark time so that we can enjoy the fruits of all the hard work that we do. "We are all stressed but this will resolve itself and we will move on. Mr. Colvario does work more than the reported twenty hours. This week alone he has logged forty-two hours. There is a lot of work to be done, Mr. Colvario does an excellent job, and he has turned the system around. He continues to help us all do a really good job. He will slow it down and transition in the winter and spring of 2009. He will help bring a Business Manager on board." Dr. Whitten is truly grateful for all that he has done for our schools.

At the conclusion of the Superintendent's report, Mr. Vogler commented that the Superintendent should look at class size. Mr. Kazanjian commented that one of the first things Dr. Whitten did upon arrival to Methuen was to reduce class size. Mr. Kazanjian also noted that the former Superintendent and former School Committee member did not do that. Mr. Kazanjian stated that class sizes were in the 30's.

Mr. Kazanjian also stated that when he first became a member of the School Committee his priority was reducing class size. Mr. Vogler asked "Do you mean to tell me that previous Superintendent (Dr. Littlefield) did not care about class size?" Mr. Kazanjian responded by stating "That is exactly what I am saying." Mr. Kazanjian went on to say, "Martha Welch,

former School Committee members asked Dr. Littlefield to hire an additional teacher to reduce class size and she was told no. She then asked him to hire a program assistant to assist in the classroom. She was told no. He would not hire a program assistant.” Mr. Vogler then called Mr. Kazanjian a liar. Mr. Kazanjian responded by asking Mr. Vogler who he was calling a liar, and the response was “You” (referring to Mr. Kazanjian). Mr. Vogler said to Mr. Kazanjian, “You misconstrued the truth.”

An argument pursued between Mr. Vogler and Mr. Kazanjian. School Committee Chair Manzi called a 2 minute recess.

Mr. Kazanjian and Mr. Chaisson left the room and were not present when a motion was made and a vote taken to close the open Business session and enter into executive session.

Executive Session

Litigations

MOTION BY: Ms. Grondine seconded by Mr. Vogler to enter into executive session, closing the open Business Session.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

The committee entered into Executive Session at 8:30 pm

ADJOURN

With no further business to discuss, Mayor Manzi entertained a motion to adjourn.

MOTION BY: Ms. Grondine seconded by Mr. Vogler to adjourn from executive session.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Executive session was adjourned at: 9:00 pm

Diane Lasonde

Recorder

Methuen Public Schools

Date: August 25, 2008

Upcoming Date

Monday, September 8, 2008 – School Committee Business Meeting – 7:00 pm
Searles Building, Great Hall