

Winchester Public Schools
Winchester, MA 01890
October 22, 2002

Roll Call

Notice having been given in accordance with the requirements of law, a meeting of the School Committee was held at 7:32 p.m. on Tuesday, October 22, 2002, in the Lynch School Library. Present were Chairman Haley, Ms. Swiger, Ms. Bodie, Ms. LaDow, Mr. Feblowitz, Director of Finance Mr. Rippin, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kerble and Superintendent Marini.

Mr. Haley stated that at a recent school committee planning session the goal of the committee was to adjourn the regular meetings no later than 10:00 p.m. and adjourn executive sessions no later than 10:30 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Student Representative

Laura Anglin reported that the high school had exchange students visiting from Wales. PSATs and SATs were taken by many students the past two weeks. A National Honor Society fundraiser will be taking place and proceeds will go to a charity not yet determined. The first issue of The Red & Black is available. There will be a blood drive held at the high school on Friday, November 1st in honor of Susan Morse. Alexis Fleckenstein, a student and Winchester High School, participated in the Charles River Regatta and placed 1st in the youth competition and 3rd in women's competition. Congratulations go out to Alexis!

Mr. Haley referred to an article written by a student in The Red & Black that indicated the forum sponsored by the Athletic Department regarding alcohol abuse was ineffective. Mr. Haley would like to begin a dialogue to make some effective changes with alcohol abuse behavior at the high school. The Red & Black provided a survey to students regarding the use of alcohol in its first issue and the results will be published in a future issue.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Marini informed the school committee of the recent water damage at the high school due to the HVAC draining of the chillers. Dr. Marini reported that the DPW did a great job in dealing with the issue as well as Vice Principal John Pirani and high school staff. A claim will be filed with Trane, the company contracted to provide the services, to recover damages.

Thirteen administrators began a training session on Research for Better Training that is taking place at the Lynch Elementary School. Winchester is a host for the program with administrators from other communities taking part as well.

Administrators from Winchester participated in a training session on Technology Leadership, which focused on how to make technology useful for teachers in the classroom. Dr. Marini stated that the program was very informative and a great amount of material will be useful to our system.

Dr. Marini stated that there would be an early release professional day on October 29th. Many exciting events are scheduled for the teachers. Dr. Marini stated that the excellence in Winchester is directly connected to the professional development opportunities for teachers in Winchester.

Dr. Marini stated that The Green Round Table, which is involved in renewable energy, has indicated that we are eligible to apply for a \$630,000 grant that requires an extensive application. The architect and Town Manager Brian Sullivan will complete the application. Dr. Marini requested a vote of approval from the school committee to allow the grant process to move forward. The Town Manager is in favor of this opportunity.

On a motion by Ms. LaDow, seconded by Ms. Bodie, the Committee unanimously

VOTED to support The Green Schools Resolution as presented to the Committee modified to state the Winchester Public Schools.

Approval of Washington Trip

Principal Vandy French and Mr. Squeglia joined the Committee.

Mr. French reviewed the particulars for the five-day, four-night bus trip to Washington, D.C. for the 8th grade class from March 10 to March 14, 2003. Mr. French stated that there was unanimous support from the McCall staff to take a bus versus an airplane due to the events of September 11th. The cost of the trip is around \$640 with scholarships available from both the Meurling Fund as well as the travel agency. Cancellation insurance will be available to parents. Mr. French stated that the trip has great curriculum value as well as a social experience. For students not participating in the Washington trip many exciting, low cost alternative experiences at the school will be planned.

On a motion by Mr. Feblowitz, seconded by Ms. Swiger, the Committee unanimously

VOTED to accept the trip to Washington from March 10 to March 14 as documented in Mr. French's memorandum of October 16, 2002.

Dr. Marini suggested that Mr. French include a statement to parents stating that the trip could be cancelled right up until the departure date if world circumstances change.

Guidance Report

Alice Schellhorn, Director of Guidance, joined the Committee.

Guidance Secretary at the High School

Ms. Schellhorn reviewed the responsibilities of the high school guidance secretary. In the past five years there has been an increase in the number of students as well as the number of college applications. The average number of college applications has increased from 7 to 14 per student, doubling from five years ago. Some students have applied to as many as 25 schools. There is a parent volunteer who has been working in guidance for the past five years with an estimated 600 hours per year sorting and cataloging incoming mail. Currently there is one secretary servicing five guidance counselors. The current fee for a college transcript is \$3. This cost basically covers postage and copying fees.

Ms. Schellhorn indicated the importance of accuracy and confidentiality and did not feel comfortable with a part-time secretary or additional volunteers. Ms. Schellhorn stated that in other districts the registrar also works part-time in the guidance office. An additional .5 secretary would be an enormous help in the guidance office.

Mr. Haley stated that these issues would be considered when discussing the budget.

Counselor Caseload at the Middle and High School

Ms. Schellhorn stated that the role of the middle school guidance counselor differs from that of the high school guidance counselor. Middle school guidance counselors would like to spend more time with transition groups for 9th graders. The high school counselors would like to do career counseling. Ms. Schellhorn presented data indicating that the middle school counselors have caseloads significantly above the recommended average. Although the counselors are doing an excellent job, the impact of this has placed them in a very difficult situation.

A discussion around the high school caseload compared to other communities also took place. The student-to-counselor ratio for a full-time counselor at Winchester High School is approximately 220:1. The recommended average is approximately 150:1.

Dr. Marini suggested a comprehensive look at the responsibilities of guidance counselors before adding any additional staff. Mr. Belmont, Pupil Services Administrator, will be asked to review the responsibilities of guidance counselors.

Ms. Swiger requested information on how much time middle school guidance counselors spend on prevention, intervention and socialization.

Highlights of SAT Scores

Ms. Schellhorn stated that Winchester is currently doing an excellent job in college placements.

Mr. Haley would like to explore the possibility of having each high school student visit with their guidance counselor once or twice per year in order to build a better relationship.

Recess

Report on October 11th Professional Day

Dr. Marini thanked Dr. Kerble for his efforts in organizing the first full-day professional development in Winchester. Dr. Kerble reviewed the many sessions teachers took part in. The overall feedback from the teachers was positive. Teachers indicated that they preferred an all-day professional day because they were much more focused on the program. To have more all-day professional days impacts the contract as well as the amount of days students attend school.

Long-term Projection for Class Size and Building Utilization

Dr. Marini stated that Mr. Rippin compiled the information included in the packet for the EFPBC. At the last EFPBC meeting concerns regarding the order of buildings to be renovated and rebuilt were discussed. Concerns around the increase in enrollment for the high school prompted a discussion.

Mr. Rippin reported that in total, Winchester has 75 PreK students, 1,664 K-5 students, 867 6-8 students and 926 9-12 students for a total of 3,532 students. At the K-5 level the 1,664 students are housed in 87 classrooms system-wide and that total capacity is 88 classrooms or a 99% occupancy rate. The only available classroom is at the Muraco Elementary School. It was noted that two first grade classrooms at Ambrose are approximately 500 square feet each. Additionally at Vinson Owen, the art and music share a single classroom space.

Discussions with Principal Clarence Olson have begun regarding the projection at the high school in the next five years.

Ambrose construction will begin in September 2003 with a completion date of 2005. Ambrose will require 18 classrooms for swing space. The Mystic and Parkhurst buildings will provide sufficient space for the students to be housed during the swing space. Principal McManus has been working closely with Principal Burchill and Ambrose parents identifying swing space needs. Mr. Rippin reported that work has begun on projecting a swing space budget and preparing the Mystic and Parkhurst for occupancy.

Budget Assumptions FY04

Dr. Marini reported that Mr. Rippin has provided the Committee with budget projections going out to 2008. These projections were submitted to the town manager.

Dr. Marini and Mr. Rippin met with the Finance Committee last week to discuss what are the drivers of the school budget. We are currently in a deficit caused by teacher column moves on the scale. This cost will add to the base which in many ways is a result of our need to do a more thorough job anticipating column moves. This effort is currently being worked on. Dr. Marini provided the committee with a frame of issues to be used in developing budget guidelines. Dr. Marini also indicated that the Administrative Council would like to adhere to staffing guidelines currently in place.

Staffing guidelines for the elementary level include 18-20 students for grades K-2, 20-22 for grades 3-5, middle school to include a team size of 90 or less at grade 6 and 100 or less at grades 7 and 8, and high school C-2 classes at 14-16, 21-23 for C-2 classes, and 22-25 for honors classes.

The high school would like to continue with a comprehensive program by maintaining both core and exploratory courses. The Administrative Council also supports maintaining elementary music and art programs at the elementary level and restore 6th grade world language at the middle school with a .40 FTE.

A steady and predictable funding source, beyond the capital budget, is needed to support the technology initiatives in the schools.

For special education we are working to adapt to the federal standard of "Free and Appropriate Education."

In preparing for the high school accreditation visitation in March 2004, there is an estimated cost of \$15,000.

Initial analysis shows that in order to meet these obligations, as well as to purchase needed textbooks and supplies, and provide for the proper level of professional development, the budget will grow between 6 and 7 percent.

Dr. Marini stated that the school committee should have a good idea of their priorities by the next scheduled meeting.

Mr. Haley indicated that the superintendent should move forward with building the budget with a 6-7 percent increase at this time.

Ms. LaDow suggested creating subcommittees to address areas or programs. These subcommittees would be a resource to bolster the school committee's decisions.

Mr. Haley stated that at the next meeting the school committee will identify areas that could be explored for additional information to justify data.

Ms. Bodie stated that the subcommittees were a good idea, but we are constrained by the number of classrooms available at the elementary level. Ms. Bodie suggested having an unmet needs list such as the one created last year.

Mr. Haley stated that the agenda for next meeting will be to refine the discussion of goals and notion of subcommittees.

Town meeting begins Monday, November 4th. The School Committee will post a one-half hour session prior to town meeting.

Mr. Haley reminded the Committee of the Veterans Day parade on Monday, November 11th.

Roll Call

Executive Session

For the purpose of a personnel matter.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

V. James Marini
Secretary