

Roll Call

Notice having been given in accordance with the requirements of law, a meeting of the School Committee was held at 7:36 p.m. on Tuesday, November 12, 2002, in the Lynch School Library. Present were Chairman Haley, Ms. Swiger, Ms. Bodie, Mr. Feblowitz, Director of Finance Mr. Rippin, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kerble and Superintendent Marini.

Public Comment

None

Student Representative

Student representative Laura Anglin joined the committee to report on recent student activities. Last Friday was the end of the first quarter. The seniors were measured for their caps and gowns today, which begins the first of many senior activities. Students have begun utilizing the Language Lab at the high school and the students were amazed with the technology. There was a forum last week focusing on Gay and Straight students, which was very well received by students and community members. The math team wanted to thank the committee for their efforts in providing bus service to and from the meets. The sport teams have been doing very well with three students performing outstanding in the State cross-country competition.

Superintendent's Report

Ms. LaDow joined the committee.

Dr. Marini reported that the Safe Schools forum at the high school demonstrated the values Winchester has for human rights.

Dr. Marini thanked Laura Anglin for writing the article in the Times regarding the needs of the math team and the importance of its continuation.

The Strategic Planning Committee had their first organizational meeting. A Community Conversation on Education will be held on Saturday, December 7th from 8:30- 11:45 a.m. in the McCall Middle School cafeteria. Dr. Marini encouraged interested community members to attend.

Dr. Marini stated that three teachers were identified in the Who's Who Among American Teachers. Included are Ms. Cataldo, a fifth grade teacher at Ambrose, Mr. Heckley, a mathematics teacher at McCall and Mr. Rinaldi, a social studies teacher at the high school. Congratulations went out to all three teachers.

Jack Waite, a former long-time mathematics teacher and math department head for Winchester was inducted into the Massachusetts Teachers Hall of Fame last June. The School Committee congratulated Mr. Waite for this honor.

Brandeis University is conducting a study and has selected Winchester and Brookline as comparable communities to study working two-parents families on how arranging school transportation for their children impacts their households.

Vote on .4 Guidance Position

Dr. Marini has been working with guidance counselors and the WEA regarding the current caseload of existing counselors around the desired ratio of 250 students per counselor at the middle school level. Currently the middle school ratio is 289:1. Dr. Marini recommended a .4 guidance counselor be hired beginning in January to bring the ratio in line within contractual guidelines.

Mr. Haley stated that at previous meeting Alice Schellhorn presented information regarding the caseloads indicating the need for additional personnel. Mr. Rippin stated that the cost associated with the .4 addition would be an estimated \$10,000 for the remainder of the 2002-2003 school year and he favorably recommended this addition.

Ms. Bodie was concerned about the caseload at the high school and inquired how this would be addressed. Dr. Marini stated that he would be working with Mr. Belmont, Dr. Kerble and Ms. Schellhorn to clearly define the roll of the guidance counselor and how the high school wants to utilize their resources.

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

VOTED to add a .4 guidance counselor position at the McCall Middle School effective January 2, 2003 for approximately \$10,000.

MCAS Support for Class of 2003

Dr. Kerble reported that five students at the high school did not pass the mathematics portion of the MCAS test and one student did not pass the mathematics and ELA section of the MCAS. Richard Thorne, a retired Winchester mathematics teacher, is currently working with these students in mathematics two periods a day. Beverly Cronin is working with the students in ELA in preparation for the December retake test. There are also three students new to the district that require additional support.

Dr. Kerble reviewed the details of the appeals process for students who do not pass the test. The process includes finding a cohort for the student to use as a comparison, participate in a tutoring program, attendance records, and recommendations from classroom teachers.

Ms. Swiger questioned the school district's responsibility if there are students who do not qualify for the appeals process and who cannot pass the test. Mr. Kerble will follow-up with the Department of Education and other communities and report back to the committee.

Budget Priorities

Dr. Marini stated that it is expected that FY04 revenues will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the Town of Winchester, which includes the school department. With this background in mind, budget summits have been planned with representatives from the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Finance Committee, Town Moderator and town and school administrators to develop an action plan to deal with this crisis.

Dr. Marini reviewed the budget priorities indicated in his October 18th memorandum. Dr. Marini stated that if the school department does nothing but maintain current programs the budget would come in at some percent higher than what the Town Manager is recommending.

Mr. Haley gave a review of the first budget summit held on November 9th. Mr. Haley indicated that there are two factors driving the town's fiscal pressures – a 2.5% cap in growth of the current tax base, and state aid decreasing by approximately \$500,000. The net result is the town's revenue will increase less than 2%. Under the Town Managers first take of allocation, he allocated \$919,000 above last years education budget, but ending up with a town budget in deficit of \$1.5M. If the school department only met contractual obligations of existing staff with no allocation for projected enrollment increase, no additional teachers at the high school, we would need \$1.3-\$1.5M above FY03 budget.

A discussion took place regarding enrollment and staffing guidelines. Mr. Haley presented maximum class sizes at the elementary level at 25, 28 at the middle school level and 30 at the high school level. A discussion took place around the importance of lower sizes in the K-2 level, perhaps having a teacher assistant in classrooms with larger sizes, equity concerns at the elementary schools, and the neighborhood school concept. Also discussed were the concerns around the workload for teachers in larger class sizes as well as the risk of having more children placed on educational plans, which would create higher fiscal costs. Another issue discussed included the long-range impact of larger class sizes at the high school and the MCAS graduation requirements. It was decided that Dr. Marini would bring these issues back to the Administrative Council to discuss the principals concerns and recommendations.

Mr. Haley suggested having a discussion at a future school committee meeting regarding fund raising to help with the budget. Mr. Rippin cautioned that the money would need to be available each year; otherwise the budget would be exposed.

Ms. LaDow suggested revisiting block scheduling at the high school and to see if there could be a cost savings for the school department. Dr. Marini stated that he has talked with Susan Morse regarding block scheduling and asked her to do some research on the matter. Ms. Bodie suggested that this process not take place until after the NEASC self-study process is complete.

Dr. Marini will review maximum class size numbers with the Administrative Council and report back to the school committee with their recommendations.

Ms. LaDow suggested adding neighborhood schools to the list of priorities. The Administrative Council will also consider exploratory courses at the middle and high school and elementary art and music.

Recess

EFPBC Master Plan

Ms. McWilliams joined the Committee.

The EFPBC considered the existing conditions of the schools, the current enrollment and enrollment projections, and ranked the buildings for needs and population. The EFPBC proposed the following: Vinson Owen would be completed in 2008, Muraco would be completed in 2011, Lynch in 2014 and Winchester High School in 2017. The EFPBC allowed for three-year intervals between school projects with a 3% rate of inflation.

Ambrose Update – The Ambrose project would be completed in December 2004 and students would return to the new building in September 2005. The project will be going out to bid in either late March or early April. Construction would begin when the school is vacated. The EFPBC voted on Option 2 as the design. The design will be previewed at the Wednesday, November 13th EFPBC meeting.

Areas in need of immediate repair at the schools will be addressed as deemed necessary.

Future Meeting Date

November 26, 2002 from 4-6 p.m.

Roll Call

Executive Session

For the purpose of a litigation matter and student records.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

V. James Marini
Secretary