

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Winchester Public Schools
Winchester, MA 01890
March 8, 2005

Roll Call

Notice having been given in accordance with the requirements of law, a meeting of the School Committee was held at 7:24 p.m. on Tuesday, March 8, 2005, in the Lynch Elementary School Library. Present were Ms. Bodie, Ms. Swiger, Mr. O'Connor, Director of Finance Mr. Rippin, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kerble, and Superintendent Marini. Dr. Kounaves and Mr. Feblowitz were absent.

Ms. Bodie announced a moment of silence in memory of Edward F. O'Connell, a former school committee member for 15 years.

Student Representative

Meg MacCaughey joined the committee and began by congratulating the students who competed and won in the History Greater Boston Regional Competition. An Arts for the Ages program will be held Wednesday, March 9th at 2:45 at the Jenks senior center. A new event taking place at the high school is a dodge ball tournament which many are excited about. On March 16 from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. a community service fair will take place providing students with an opportunity to review the many services that they can participate after school and over the summer months. The Harvard Model Congress which took place last weekend was a success. The third annual Mr. WHS competition will take on April 3rd. The junior class is having a fiesta dinner on Thursday and the senior class dinner will be held later in April. Students returned from the Costa Rica trip and had a wonderful experience. Winter sports have ended and students are gearing up for the spring sports to begin in one week. The play "Little Me" was a great success last weekend.

The Promise Fund

Ms. Bodie stated that several weeks ago the school committee talked about how the latest reductions in the budget have put the programs in serious jeopardy. The committee has explored ways for community members to contribute to a fund which could be used to hire needed personnel.

Dr. Marini introduced Ms. Susan Swartz, co-president of the Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence (WFEE) along with Ms. Caren Connelly, chair of the Task Force. Dr. Marini stated that labor counsel was contacted to be assured that funds could be received for the operating budget. Labor counsel indicated that it can be done but the school system would have to follow municipal finance rules. Dr. Marini then met with members of the WFEE who agreed to assist in realizing funds for the school department's operating budget. This is a big change in the role for WFEE as their major role has been

providing grants to teachers. However, by establishing “The Promise Fund”, WFEE is once again demonstrating its leadership and its belief in the importance of excellence in education in Winchester. The WFEE will continue to raise funds for teacher grants. This will be a short term solution for the current crisis and the school committee will be exploring long term solutions.

Ms. Caren Connelly stated that by raising money for The Promise Fund, the WFEE can raise consciousness to all members of the community. The Promise Fund will begin tonight through May 15th. You can visit the WFEE website at www.wfee.org for additional information about how to contribute.

Ms. Bodie stated that the window for fundraising is very short due to the fact that once the high school scheduling is completed it would not be possible to add back teachers.

Dr. Marini provided the school committee with a memorandum outlining how the funds realized through the fund raising effort will be spent at various funding levels. It is the intention of the school committee to spend all of the funds raised for the purpose of addressing appropriate class size across the system for the 2005-2005 school year. To the extent, however, that the money raised falls between funding levels, the committee will expend those funds consistent with the spirit of the memorandum. If the increment cannot practically be spent in that manner, the school committee may at its discretion set aside the increment for use consistent with the memorandum in the next school year.

On a motion by Ms. Swiger, seconded by Mr. O’Connor, the committee unanimously

VOTED the affirmation of the school committee’s desire to seek private funding as a grant for operating personnel from the WFEE for the FY 06 school year.

The school committee asked Dr. Marini to include the word equity in his memorandum so that community members will clearly understand the intentions of the school committee with regard to add backs.

On a motion by Ms. Swiger, seconded by Mr. O’Connor, the committee unanimously

VOTED to allocate any money from The Promise Fund to priorities identified in the attached memorandum by Dr. Marini entitled “Recommended Staffing.”

Mr. O’Connor wanted to make it very clear to the public the exercise that was taken by the school committee and the Leadership Team as to how cuts and add backs to the system were determined. This fund raising effort is not just restoring funds stated Mr. O’Connor. Mr. O’Connor also stressed the issue that this is only a one year solution and the committee must look for a long range solution as well.

Mr. Rippin inquired about the possibility of allowing pledges for The Promise Fund. The WFEE has considered the possibility. However, Ms. Bodie stated that the school department cannot hire personnel if the money is not there.

Ms. Connelly stated that donation may be made to:

**The Promise Fund
Box 1005
Winchester, MA 01890**

Please indicate on the check that you wish to donate the funds to The Promise Fund.

EDCO Update

Ms. Swiger gave a brief update on the major programmatic changes in the school building assistance program. Included in the changes are the creation of the Massachusetts School Building authority, the creation of the School Modernization and Reconstruction Trust Fund (SMART Fund), the creation of an Advisory Board, grant applications, priority system, enrollment projection model, facilities assessment, needs survey, maintenance requirement, clearing house for best practices, project managers and contract forms, moratorium and determine eligibility of cost components for projects. Ms. Swiger indicated that the changes will have a significant impact on the timing and funding of the next school building project.

Ms. Bodie had concerns around the fact that this has already been passed and the school committee and board of selectmen were not made aware of the changes. Ms. Bodie would like to have our state representatives at a meeting to discuss this MSBS Legislation.

Warrant Articles

Ms. Bodie stated that at a recent school committee meeting there was discussion regarding a Warrant Article for the purpose of requesting funding for a demographics study to help determine which elementary school would be the next to be considered. The school committee would be requesting \$12,000 for the study and the deadline for warrant articles is March 11th. Dr. Marini recommended putting a place holder in for the request. Ms. Bodie stated that the article can always be withdrawn if need be.

On a motion by Ms. Swiger, seconded by Mr. O'Connor the committee unanimously

**VOTED to request an appropriation for a Demographics
Study for the Winchester Public Schools.**

Approval of Trips

On a motion by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Ms. Swiger, the committee unanimously

VOTED to approve the Boys and Girls Lacrosse teams to travel out of state to Hammonasett State Park in Connecticut for a pre-season Invitational Lacrosse Tournament.

On a motion by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Ms. Swiger, the committee unanimously

VOTED to approve the Boys Varsity Baseball team to travel out of state to Cooperstown, New York, for a league baseball game vs. Belmont High School.

On a motion by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Ms. Swiger, the committee unanimously

VOTED permission for the Winchester High School auto students to travel to New York City to visit the USS Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Marini stated that part of the teacher's contract is to form an Academic Advisory Committee (ACC) which allows a mechanism for teachers to express their thoughts, opinions, and consideration around academic issues. Members of the committee include an administrator, a school committee member, program directors, and teachers. At a recent meeting the AAC met with kindergarten teachers who are troubled by the large upcoming class sizes at the kindergarten level. The kindergarten teachers described the 5 year old child and how the class room is managed. Management issues will become far more important as class size grows and their fear is that the attention will be shifted over to management issues and not on the academic program.

The kindergarten teachers would also like to consider an extended or full day kindergarten. A study group has been formed to look into the particulars and they would like to bring their findings to a future school committee meeting. Dr. Marini also suggested looking into summer programs, and sport camps as this interest is growing in the community.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the school committee will be March 22, 2005.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

V. James Marini
Secretary