

**KEENE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FINANCE COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes**

DATE: April 6, 2010

LOCATION: Cheshire Career Center Conference Room, Keene High School, 43 Arch Street, Keene, NH

CALLED TO ORDER: 7:50 p.m.

TIME ADJOURNED: 11:20 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Mr. Neil Donegan, Chair
- Mr. Mark Nugent
- Mr. Chris Coates
- Mr. Carl Panza

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Mrs. Kristin Blais
- Mr. Carter Chamberlain
- Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

- Mr. William Gurney, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. John Harper, Business Administrator
- Mr. Tom Remillard, Director of Buildings, Facilities and Ancillary Services
- Mr. Paul Cooper, Director of Human Resources
- Mr. Richard Cate, Symonds School Principal
- Mrs. Patricia Yoeger, Jonathan Daniels School Principal

OTHERS PRESENT:

- Mrs. Dru Fox, Stenographer
- Ms. Sarah Palermo, Keene Sentinel Reporter
- Members of the Public (approximately 30)

Mr. Neil Donegan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:50 pm.

1. Public Input

Mr. Eric Matte, 7 Barrett Avenue spoke about the girl's Cheshire County Knights basketball program that provides out of season basketball opportunities for girls age 8-17. He talked about the increase in enrollment, non-profit status, the space at the recreation center and the need for a larger facility. Mr. Matte asked for a waiver of rental fees associated with the rental of Purbeck gym. Discussion ensued pertaining to total costs associated with the rental, the need for custodian coverage given the fact that Mr. Matte is a teacher at the high school, past waiver decisions and consistency.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the fee waiver request from Eric Matte of the girl's Cheshire County Knights Basketball program, with the exception of the portion of fees associated with the custodial costs, for one season only. Mr. Neil Donegan seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes 4-0.

Ms. Misty Bohannon, 74 Dale Drive spoke in favor of restoring the 5th elementary school principal position given the fact that there is an expected surplus in the 2010-11 budget due to health insurance premiums coming in at a 14% increase rather than the 20% increase that was originally budgeted and the resulting \$400,000 savings before the year has even begun.

Mr. Mitchell Greenwald, 98 Peg Shop Road urged the committee to restore the 5th grade elementary school principal position and not to rush the study of this issue.

Ms. Maury Fauth, 9 Starlight Drive spoke against eliminating a 4th grade classroom next year at Symonds School. She talked about the students involved being an exceptional group of children who require a great deal of support and passed out a graph depicting the configuration of the students in the current three classrooms and what the composition of the classroom would be if there would be two classrooms next year.

Mr. Neil Giarratana, 93 Kendall Road spoke against eliminating a 4th grade classroom next year at Symonds School. He recognizes the challenges faced to balance the budget but emphasized that these are a very special and particular group of kids. He provided further information that the two classrooms next year will be 38.8% special needs and stated that the US Department of Education and Rehabilitative Services suggests 13.6% with New Hampshire being at 15.4%. Mr. Giarratana urged a closer look at this particular group of children and urged the committee to make an exception to the guidelines.

Ms. Heather Bell, 50 Blossom Street spoke against eliminating a 4th grade classroom next year at Symonds School and described her son's success in a small classroom. Ms. Bell said that Symonds School is the largest school in the district and has the highest percentage of special needs students and urged the committee to recommend three fourth grade classrooms next year.

Ms. Anne Faulkner, 42 Hurricane Road spoke against eliminating a 4th grade classroom next year at Symonds School and talked about their relocation to Keene due to the educational system. Ms. Faulkner spoke to the particular issues of her daughter and the progress that she has made at Symonds School. She said there are hardly any weeks during the school year when at least one or two of the children in these classrooms do not have a bad day and wondered about regular education children being left behind.

Mr. John Stewart, 70 Laura Lane spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and described his professional experience responding to various situations at each of the elementary schools and the necessity for the presence, cooperation and input from the leader of each school. Mr. Stewart expressed concern with safety issues, the enormous job site next door to Jonathan Daniels School and removing a full-time principal during a time when they would be needed most.

Ms. Mauri Fauth spoke once more against eliminating a 4th grade classroom next year at Symonds School and added that she has no problem with the change in policy regarding classroom sizes, that she is making a case for an exception to the rule. She urged consideration of how this policy impacts this particular group of children and their needs.

Ms. Carmen Trafton, 5 Pender Court spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and urged the committee to find the funds to restore the position. She expressed concern over restoring the Spanish program and eliminating the principal position.

Ms. Jennifer Chapdelaine, 52 Queens Road spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and spoke against eliminating a 4th grade classroom next year at Symonds School. She talked about having the money now with the savings in next year's health insurance premiums and reminded the committee that the issue is providing our children with the best educational program

possible. Ms. Chapdelaine read aloud the Keene School District's mission statement and questioned how eliminating an elementary school principal addresses that mission.

Mr. Neil Giarratana, 93 Kendall Road read aloud a letter addressed to the committee from his wife, Christine, requesting an exception to the policy on student-teacher ratio and class sizes for next year at Symonds School due to this particular group of students.

Ms. Susan Charles, 22 Evergreen Avenue spoke in favor of the foreign language program at the elementary schools and described how this early exposure fits into world language at the middle and high school levels, allows students to make an educated choice as to what language to study in middle school, explained the mechanics of the process and the fact that every town in SAU #29 begins foreign language study in kindergarten and how evident it is that Keene is way behind. She provided information on a study a few short years ago to improve and expand the foreign language program and how ironic she finds it that she is now defending it.

Ms. Hilary Switzer, 20 Beech Street spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and asked when a vote will take place on the issue. Mr. Neil Donegan replied that there will be a finance committee vote tonight on the issue with four of the nine school board members voting which should give everyone a good sense of what the final vote might be next week. Ms. Swifter questioned the logic behind posting the issue with the final vote not happening until next week and talked about the lack of communication and the seriousness of the issue.

Mr. Josh Greenwald, 39 Concord Hill Drive spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and eliminating a fourth grade classroom at Symonds School and questioned the tax savings by reducing the budget by the \$150,000 involved. Mr. John Harper said he would have to calculate it. Mr. Greenwald talked about the hostility this situation has created among the community, the negative feelings towards the school board and requested the board to reinstate the positions now that they money is there from the health insurance savings. He explained that the reason given for the cut was strictly to meet a budget target and now that is no longer the case.

Ms. Briana Thatcher, 28 Evans Circle spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and urged the committee to reinstate the position and return to the study of the issue.

Ms. Joan Hill, 38 Evans Lane read an article relating to the positive effect on children when they are exposed to a foreign language program. Their test scores are significantly higher, they outperform, the longer foreign language is studied, and the higher level of achievement on standardized test scores and reminded everyone that there are other benefits of a language program other than simply learning a language.

Mr. Mark Nugent asked how many of the Symonds School 4th graders next year are in the EH collaborative program and the response was that it was noted on the chart previously passed out as 3 students. Mr. Nugent then inquired if Mr. Cate recommended going down to two classes and Mr. Cate responded no.

Mr. Greg Leonard, 34 Matthews Road commended Symonds School 3rd grade on the results of their most recent test scores which were exceptional and speaks to the small class size of this particular group of students.

Ms. Jodi Greenwald-Ballaro inquired about the recent special education study that was completed and wondered how the elimination of an elementary school principal factored into the results. Mr. William Gurney replied that the results of the study were preliminary at this point and said it will be addressed when the final report comes out.

Ms. Mauri Fauth asked for an explanation of the vote tonight and the issue going to the full board and Mr. Neil Donegan provided information on the procedure of the vote tonight with a

recommendation going forward to the full board next week and the necessity for 5 affirmative votes to pass.

Ms. Karen Brehm, 81 North Lincoln Street spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and read a portion of the report that was sent home pertaining to the belief that “the disruption will be not be prolonged or long lasting due to the delegation of responsibilities”. Ms. Brehm spoke about the need for an 80% principal and in reality they will only have a 50% principal and questioned delegating moral, which does not seem feasible. Mr. Neil Donegan said that the report she is referring to went out before the board had a chance to review it and assured Ms. Brehm that he shares her frustration.

Ms. Pam Rogers, 38 Dale Drive spoke against eliminating an elementary school principal and said if it comes down to a principal or a foreign language program that there should be no question which should prevail. Ms. Rogers talked about the huge construction project next door to Jonathan Daniels School and the impossible task of monitoring everyone in and around the school and at the site. She urged the committee to reconsider.

Ms. Kathleen O’Donnell asked for an explanation on the recommendation for two fourth grade classrooms at Symonds next year. Mr. William Gurney explained about the hiring freeze set for 2010-2011, the class size guidelines, and enrollment numbers for next year and possible federal money to fund a position.

Ms. Mauri Fauth added that there could be no gambling with this particular group of children.

Ms. Karen Brehm wondered about board acknowledgement of the plan for the shared principal that has come out and Mr. Donegan replied that the report has to go to the board chairperson for a decision on whether or not it is feasible. He further explained that there would be votes tonight on whether or not to add money back in to the budget to reinstate the principal position.

Mr. Neil Donegan explained excess surplus dollars that need to be spent this year, specific money that cannot be used to hire staff for next year, insurance premium savings for next year and the availability of those funds for a principal or fourth grade teacher and then explained why we cannot use any of this years excess surplus for that purpose.

Mr. John Harper clarified that money for the foreign language position was put back in and will not be a use of health insurance savings and that the projected savings from 2010-2011 health insurance premiums is approximately \$400,000.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend that the Keene School Board of Education restore the 5th elementary school principal position for school year 2010-2011 and direct Mr. William Gurney to work with the elementary principals to determine how to fund the \$91,000. Discussion ensued. Vote taken, motion passes by a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Mr. Chris Coates assumed the role of committee chair and Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend that the Keene School Board of Education restore the 4th grade Symonds’ School teacher position for school year 2010-2011 at an approximate cost of \$75,000. Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Mr. John Harper recommended not specifying a dollar amount and gave reasons why. Discussion ensued. Mr. Neil Donegan amended his motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education restore the 4th grade Symonds’ School teacher position for the school year 2010-2011. Discussion ensued pertaining to the necessity for more information sooner, the severity of this issue and the importance of balance in the classroom.

Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Tom Cooke, 10 Highland Avenue passed out a letter from Mr. Harold Secore of the Keene Babe Ruth Baseball organization and spoke to the issue of a waiver request of field prep charges, grounds and rubbish removal. Mr. Neil Donegan asked if a letter went out last year when that waiver was approved, spoke about previous discussions pertaining to fee waivers and spoke to the longstanding relationship with Babe Ruth. Discussion ensued around Swampbats contribution to the lights, Babe Ruth's contribution, tournaments, poly-cap fencing donation, waiver list, fundraising efforts, Babe Ruth's long term goals and their ability to pay the fees. Mr. Mark Nugent recommended taking no action tonight as no one present has a copy of the letter that was sent last year to review the stipulations set forth. Discussion ensued about upgrades to the fields and the necessity to know about donations the Babe Ruth organization makes. Mr. John Harper said he would put the issue on next month's agenda. Mr. Remillard said he would provide a copy of the letter that was sent last year to Babe Ruth and Mr. Coates asked for the number of kids in the program, number of teams, number of games, etc. Discussion ensued. Consensus is to table the issue until next month.

2. Trustees of Trust Funds Update

Mr. John Harper presented information and a memo dated April 6, 2010 from Attorney John Wrigley concerning the Trustees of Trust Funds, the Memorial Scholarship Fund and the appointment of nominee Richard K. Fox. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education appoint Richard K. Fox as Trustee of the Keene School District Trust Funds for a term to expire June 30, 2013. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

3. Financial Report

Mr. John Harper presented the Financial Report dated April 6, 2010 and spoke to the issue of \$1,780,603 net available with no additional revenue savings but still reporting the sources of savings as we have had all year in energy, health insurance and special education. Mr. Harper reported the anticipation to spend roughly another \$200,000 that is currently unencumbered and recommends using \$500,000 of the surplus and returning approximately \$1,400,000 back to the taxpayers. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to accept the Financial Report dated April 6, 2010 as presented. Mr. Carl Panza seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

4. Use of Surplus Funds

Mr. Neil Donegan addressed the End of Year Capitol Projects list dated April 6, 2010 and Mr. Remillard presented information about and discussion ensued pertaining to topping off oil tanks, money going back to taxpayers, installation of alumni field lights, rebuilding of grandstands, expendable trust fund dollars, combining the jobs of rebuilding the grandstands and installation of lights, electrical work, particular motion to bring forward, actual costs and the possibility of the donations toward the projects and \$20,000 CIP for the design of the stands.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve \$110,000 to install lights on Alumni Field using 2009-2010 surplus funds. Mr. Carl Panza seconded. Discussion ensued on the process to move this project forward, emergency boiler issues, budget transfers versus expending surplus dollars, priority of the items on the list, how to buy as many projects as possible and leaving the boiler issue to a later dated. Mr. Mark Nugent spoke

against the motion and talked about the boiler issue being more urgent. *Vote taken, motion passes by a 3-1 vote with Mr. Mark Nugent opposing.*

Mr. William Gurney presented a list of Requests for Budget Transfers.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve \$30,000 for the Administrative Review Task Force Committee, \$8,971 for Keene Middle School Mathscares and Algebra modules, \$5,000 to contract with the UNH Survey Center, \$5,000 to replace an elementary piano and \$3,779 to pre-purchase math instructional materials for a total request of \$52,750 as presented by Mr. William Gurney using 2009-2010 surplus funds. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. William Gurney then spoke to the request from Mr. Alan Kmiel to pre-purchase next year's textbooks.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve \$57,376 for the pre-purchase of Keene High School textbooks using 2009-2010 surplus funds. Mr. Carl Panza seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve \$273,000 to reconstruct and make safety improvements to the grandstands on Alumni Field using 2009-2010 surplus funds. Mr. Carl Panza seconded. Discussion ensued pertaining to the cost, the process to put out for bid and the approval of the engineers. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

5. Budget Transfers

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$9,700 from the maintenance department natural gas and electric accounts to the maintenance department repair materials and grounds repair and maintenance accounts. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$6,400 from the maintenance department repair equipment and repair maintenance accounts to the repair maintenance account. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$6,000 from the maintenance department safety training and repair equipment accounts to the repair maintenance and supplies accounts. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$5,325 from the maintenance department snow removal and natural gas accounts to the repair maintenance and maintenance contracts accounts. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$7,800 from the maintenance department natural gas accounts to the maintenance supply accounts. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$22,000 from the maintenance department summer help, security and snow removal accounts to the maintenance supply account. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. John Harper presented information on two other budget transfer requests. One request from Mr. Richard Cate in the amount of \$3065 and one from Ms. Dorothy Frazier in the amount of \$6500.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$3,065 from the elementary math print media account to the elementary core reading account. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education approve the budget transfer request in the amount of \$6,500 from the Keene Middle School extended guidance salaries account to the private psych counseling account. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. John Harper then provided information on the Keene Middle School and SAU #29 construction budgets and asked for approval of the project budget amount. He explained that the process is to approve an amount that will essentially become the bond amount and discussion ensued pertaining to contingency issues, bond authorization, archaeological discoveries, digging issues related to the find, timeline for finding out, bonding in mid April, making bond payments if any contingency money is not used, memo of understanding with the city, school aide and unexpected expenses.

Mr. Carl Panza made a motion to recommend that the that the Keene School Board of Education approve a total construction budget and related bond financing for the Keene Middle School and SAU building construction projects in the amount of \$38,600,000 based on the recommendation of architect Frank Marinace. Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

6. Acceptance of Gifts

Mr. Carl Panza made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education accept the gift in the amount of \$500 from LGC Health Trust, LLC for the purpose of monitoring the health of asthmatic students at Wheelock School. Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recommend that the Keene School Board of Education accept the gift in the amount of \$1,000 from Liberty Mutual Group, Inc., to benefit the Keene Middle School 8th grade Washington D.C. trip. Mr. Mark Nugent seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dru Fox
Stenographer