

KEENE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular and Public Hearing Meeting Minutes

DATE: January 12, 2010

LOCATION: Keene High School Large Group Instruction Area and Auditorium, 43 Arch Street, Keene, NH

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:33 p.m.

TIME ADJOURNED: 9:14 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell, Chair
- Mrs. Carol Brown
- Mrs. Kristin Blais
- Mr. Carter Chamberlin
- Mr. Neil Donegan
- Mr. Carl Panza
- Mr. Donald Parker
- Mrs. Amy Speas

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

-Mr. Wayne Woolridge, Co-Superintendent of Schools (for a portion of the regular meeting)

- Mr. William Gurney, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. John Harper, Business Administrator
- Ms. Catherine Reeves, Director of Special Education
- Mr. Paul Cooper, Director of Human Resources
- Mr. Tom Remillard, Director of Buildings and Grounds
- Ms. Meredith Cargill, Director of Curriculum
- Mr. Alan Chmiel, Keene High School Principal
- Mr. James Logan, Director of Cheshire Career Center
- Ms. Patricia Yoerger, Jonathan Daniels School Principal
- Mrs. Dorothy Frazier, Middle School Principal
- Mr. William Harris, Benjamin Franklin School Principal
- Mr. Richard Cate, Symonds School Principal
- Mr. Paul Huggins, Fuller School Principal
- Mrs. Gwen Mitchell, Wheelock School Principal

OTHERS PRESENT:

- Ms. Sarah Palermo, Keene Sentinel Reporter
- Mrs. Chris Weeks, Public Information Coordinator
- Attorney John Wrigley
- Mrs. Dru Fox, Stenographer
- Members of Public (approximately 5 at regular meeting and approximately 20 to 25+- at the public hearing)

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. Public Input

None

2. Consent Agenda

Agenda Item #3, Approval of Minutes of December 8, 2009

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to approve the minutes of December 8, 2009.

Mrs. Carol Brown seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

3. Approval of Minutes

See consent agenda above.

4. Report of Student Representatives

None

5. Report of Board Chair

Mr. Neil Donegan provided a brief update on the Keene Middle School project and said that architectural prints are ready, a pre-bid conference for general contractors is scheduled for January 20th at KHS, lump sum bids are due February 2nd, lump sum bids for sub-contractors are due February 4th, at which time bids will be opened, and jobs will be announced and awarded to general contractors, alternates and subcontractors soon thereafter.

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell announced there would be a meeting scheduled later in February to discuss long term planning and a meeting to be scheduled with city officials early in February.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion for administration to formulate a plan for the elementary schools enrichment program to be more cohesive amongst the schools and to be implemented in school year 2010-2011. Mr. Donald Parker seconded.

Discussion ensued around after school activities, foreign languages, wellness program, cooking activities, expanding programs, resources and Math Beyond the Dots.

Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

6. Report of Co-Superintendent

Mr. William Gurney commended Mrs. Gwen Mitchell for being runner up for New Hampshire Elementary Principal of the Year.

7. Report of Secretary

None

8. Report of Standing Committees

No report other than Mr. Donald Parker announcing the next Communications meeting is on January 26th at the Cheshire Career Center conference room and the topic to be discussed will be the survey and publicity for the first session and vote in March.

Mr. Neil Donegan reported the next Policy Ad Hoc Committee meeting will be on January 25th, 6:00 pm at 34 West Street where policies IHBH, EF, EH, EHB, IF, IHAH, IMBA, JIH and JIHB will be discussed.

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to approve Keene School District Policy EGAA-Acceptable Use Policy (Elementary). Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to approve Keene School District Policy EGAB-Acceptable Use Policy (Middle School). Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to approve Keene School District Policy EGCA-Acceptable Use Policy (High School). Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

9. Reports of Special Committees

a. NHSAU 29 School Board

None

b. Cheshire Career Center Advisory

Mr. Carter Chamberlin reported the next gathering will be on January 27th.

c. NH School Boards

Mr. Carl Panza introduced 22 proposed resolutions coming up before the NHSBA delegate assembly on January 16th and said he will make a motion later in the meeting for the Keene School District to follow those recommendations.

10. Old Business

a. Other

Mr. Neil Donegan introduced a request from the architect and the ad hoc building committee to approve and create a purchase order to build our wood chip plant boiler.

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to accept the proposal of \$528,627 plus a performance bond of \$5,286 from Messersmith Manufacturing, Inc., dated December 15, 2009 for the installation of a biomass boiler system for the Keene Middle School and SAU projects. Mrs. Carol Brown seconded.

Mr. John Harper spoke to the issue and explained it as a necessary step in the process to obtain “green” certification for the building of the wood chip plant and that Mr. Marinace highly recommends it.

Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Mrs. Carol Brown made a motion to recess the Keene School Board of Education meeting until after the Public Hearing. Mr. Chris Coates seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

Regular session of the Keene School Board of Education meeting recessed at 6:50 p.m.

Public Hearing
“Proposed 2010-2011 Budget and Proposed Warrant
for February 2, 2010 First Session”

Public Hearing portion of the Keene School Board of Education Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Kathleen O’Donnell provided an introduction to the public hearing and Mr. Neil Donegan announced that the First Session of the annual school district meeting will be held at Keene High School, 43 Arch Street, Keene, on Saturday, February 6, 2010, at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, March 9, 2010, will be the Second Session of the annual meeting and that the official ballot voting and election will be held on Tuesday, March 9, 2010, from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Keene Recreation Center, 312 Washington Street, Keene, for registered voters from Wards 1, 2, and 3; and at the First Baptist Church of Keene, 105 Maple Avenue, Keene, for registered voters from Wards 4 and 5.

Mr. Neil Donegan presented the following Article #1:

“Article 1 Shall the District raise and appropriate an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant, or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$60,384,266. Should this article be defeated, the default operating budget shall be \$61,842,505, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of the revised operating budget only. (Note: This appropriation does not include appropriations in Articles 2, 4 and 6).”

Mr. Neil Donegan then provided a slide show presentation depicting a history of the budget development process showing supporting figures and a timeline of events to this point. Mr. Donegan spoke about staff reductions and additions and tax impact. Mr. Neil Donegan then spoke in support of Article 1 and opened the floor to public input.

Public Input

Mr. Vince Bradley, Jr., 12 Liberty Lane spoke against the budget cuts in the area of special education, expressed concern for regular education students, explained the necessity for his son to have a one-on-one tutor, described his concern for regular education students in the classroom and said he believes the greatest staff reductions are affecting the students who need the most.

Ms. Catherine Reeves spoke about Mr. Chmiel’s process to develop a zero based budget and the discovery that the high school will be able to make these cuts without diminishing the level of service. Ms. Reeves pointed out that although there are teacher and paraprofessional positions being cut, they are not necessarily special education positions.

Ms. Jenna Spear, 18 Martin Street spoke against cutting an elementary school principal, questioned the rationale behind implementing it so quickly and asked what the plan is to handle a disciplinary situation when the principal is not in a building.

Mr. William Gurney replied that right now there is no plan for that particular situation, emergency programs that have already been established to ensure instant communication between the buildings and that there is at least 6 months to develop other types of contingency plans. Ms. Spear then questioned why the elimination of the curriculum coordinator's position was not considered in place of the principal position and Mr. Gurney replied that the curriculum coordinator is an SAU #29 position and not a Keene School District position.

Mrs. Mari Fauth, 9 Starlight Drive spoke favorably about the recent administrative task force presentation and expressed concern with the abruptness with which this plan is now being implemented.

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell expressed appreciation for her input and said her concerns are being addressed and will be thoroughly studied.

Mr. Erik Murphy, 287 Roxbury Street stated that it is not the change, which causes the pain as much as it is how the change will take place. He spoke against making a change in the administration's organizational structure without a concise plan in place and reminded the board of the two recommendations coming forth from the task force study, which were to be implemented ahead of this change in the responsibilities of elementary school principals. Mr. Murphy pointed out numerous ways this plan is incomplete and unfinished and spoke against its immediate implementation.

Mr. Neil Donegan assured Mr. Murphy that this would be handled with the same diligence as the Keene Middle School project was handled and that the first committee has already been developed. He spoke about addressing every recommendation in the report. Ms. Cathy Reeves provided a rationale behind the tutor guidelines report and reassured that tutors are being assigned to every student that needs one, and that not all students need a tutor for the entire day. She provided examples of social instances where a tutor may hinder the student's development and supports creating goals for students' independence.

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell thanked Mr. Murphy and said that a team is already working on the first recommendation of the administrative task force review and that the second one will have as many layers and community involvement as the middle school project did.

Mr. Erik Murphy pointed out page 52 of the administrative task force report which referred to regular and special education aides and questioned broader concerns than simply managing personnel. Mr. Donegan provided information on the tutor study and Ms. Kristin Blais clarified that in an ideal situation the recommendations would be fully explored and changes would not be made until we knew exactly where to go however, this is not an ideal world and there is a budget to put in place.

Mr. Chris Coates added that the answer might not be here tonight, that the task force has been 2 years in the works; it is an excellent report and only a starting point to the next step and moving forward.

Ms. Misty Martinez-Bohannon, 74 Dale Drive spoke about her daughter's multiple medical and educational issues, described numerous concerns she has and spoke against implementing the reduction in an elementary school principal.

Mrs. Mari Fauth questioned the class size targets for grades 4 and 5 and Mr. Gurney responded that every classroom is a unique environment, state standards are 25 and that there is no data to support a class of 23 is less efficient than a class of 20.

Ms. Jenna Speas then asked about the elimination of positions and the budget process and Mr. Gurney responded that it is always easier to take money out than it is to put money in and Mr. Chris Coates added that the high school has a plan and the elementary schools will have 6 more months to provide a plan.

There being no further public questions or input, Article #1 was closed for discussion.

Mr. Neil Donegan presented the following Article #2:

“Article 2 Shall the District vote to approve the cost items that result from a collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the Board of Education with the Keene Association of Principals and Supervisors. For fiscal year 2010 – 2011, the first year of this two-year agreement, there are no increased cost items above the costs of the prior agreement, and no additional funds are required beyond that which is already included in Article 1, the operating Budget. The increased costs for the second year of the agreement are estimated to be \$35,694. (Note: The Board of Education recommends a “yes” vote upon this question).”

Mr. Neil Donegan provided a slide show presentation of highlights of the agreement showing a zero salary increase, reduction in tuition reimbursement, lower cost health insurance plans, increase in insurance buy outs and lower board contributions to health plans. Mr. Donegan spoke in support of Article 2.

Public Input

Ms. Kathy Blair, 175 West Surry Road asked if figures were based on 20 or 22 staff members and Mr. Neil Donegan explained the numbers in staff are frozen at the start of the negotiation process and if there are actually less numbers of staff then the budget would be reflected downward.

There being no further public questions or input, Article #2 was closed for discussion.

Mr. Neil Donegan presented the following Article #3:

“Article 3 Shall the District, if Article 2 is defeated, authorize the Board of Education to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 2 cost items only?”

Mr. Neil Donegan spoke in support of Article #3 and explained it as being standard language. There were no public questions or input.

Mr. Chris Coates presented the following Article #4:

“Article 4 Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of \$44,451 to fund cost item increases in fiscal year 2010 - 2011 in salaries and benefits as such increases result from an agreement negotiated by the Board of Education with the Association of Keene Tutors; and shall the District approve the financial terms of the second year of this two-year agreement? The increased costs for the second year of the agreement are estimated to be \$42,381. (Note: Pursuant to RSA 273-A:12(VII), if this agreement is approved, the terms of the agreement, including its pay plan, but excluding cost-of-living increases, will continue in force and effect until a new agreement is executed. This appropriation is in addition to Article 1, the operating budget article. The Board of Education recommends a “yes” vote upon this question).”

Mr. Chris Coates presented a slide show depicting highlights of the tutor negotiations with salary increases and additional information. Mr. Coates spoke in support of Article #4.

Public Input

Mr. Vince Bradley, Jr. questioned the elimination of 7 tutor positions at a budget reduction of \$70,000 and the addition of \$44,000 to the budget from the negotiation process. Mr. Neil Donegan reminded Mr. Bradley that these numbers were built around the base line number of employees at the beginning of the negotiation process.

There being no further public questions or input, Article #4 was closed for discussion.

Mr. Neil Donegan presented the following Article #5:

“Article 5 Shall the District, if Article 4 is defeated, authorize the Board of Education to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 4 cost items only?”

Mr. Neil Donegan spoke in support of Article #5. There were no public questions or input.

Mr. Neil Donegan presented the following Article #6:

“Article 6 Shall the District establish an expendable trust fund under the provisions of RSA 198:20-c, to be known as the “school buildings maintenance fund,” for the purpose of repairing and maintaining the school buildings within the District; and name the school board as agents to expend from this fund; and shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$100,000 to be placed in the fund with such amount to come from the June 30, 2010 unexpended balance of 2009 – 2010 appropriations? (Note: The School Board recommends a “yes” vote upon this question).”

Mr. Neil Donegan spoke in support of Article #6. There were no public questions or input.

Mr. Neil Donegan presented the following Article #7:

“Article 7 Shall the District discontinue the Capital Reserve Fund for “equipment” as established by the District at its annual meeting held March 28, 1957. (Note: The fund currently holds a little over \$2300. If this Article is approved, the funds in the account will be transferred to the general fund).”

Mr. Neil Donegan spoke in support of Article #7. There were no public questions or input.

Ms. Kathleen O’Donnell presented the following Article #8:

“Article 8 Shall the District authorize the Board of Education to lease or purchase land or land and buildings for school purposes as such land or land and buildings may be adjacent to any school buildings within the District and/or adjacent to streets which border such school buildings within the District?”

Ms. Kathleen O’Donnell spoke in support of the article and talked about the standardized language of this article and said that if there is an agreement entered into by the board it would ultimately have to be approved by the voters. There were no public questions or input:

The Public Hearing portion of the Keene School Board of Education was closed at 8:40 a.m. and after a short recess reconvened at 8:49 a.m.

11. New Business

a. Take Action as a Result of the Public Hearings

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to accept and post the Keene School District budget and warrant as presented. Mrs. Carol Brown seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

b. Proposed NHSBA Resolutions for 2010

Mrs. Carol Brown made a motion for the Keene School Board of Education to direct Mr. Carl Panza to represent the Board in its behalf and follow recommendations as put forward by the New Hampshire School Boards Association in the handout entitled "Proposed Resolutions for 2010 for consideration by the 2010 NHSBA Delegate Assembly – January 16, 2010" that we received. Mr. Donald Parker seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

c. Other

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell brought up recommendation #2 of the Administrative Task Force Review Study and discussion ensued around moving forward with the appointment of a committee.

Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion that the Chair of the Keene School Board of Education form a committee-based task force to study and make recommendations for the future configuration of our elementary school programs and have the initial recommendation ready for our 2011-2012 budget season. Mrs. Carol Brown seconded.

Discussion ensued pertaining to understanding the process in selecting members, soliciting community involvement, help from the Keene Sentinel, obtaining a cross section of people, developing an initial committee to research what other districts have done and devise a system to move forward, develop a second committee to further involve the community, develop a timeline, the planning process and establishing a larger committee to create the best model for our school district. Further discussion ensued.

Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.

12. Resignations None

13. Nominations/Election of Staff

None

Meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dru Fox

Stenographer

William B. Gurney

Co-Superintendent of Schools

Approved by the Keene Board of Education

Date: March 16, 2010