

**KEENE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**DATE:** February 9, 2010

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

**CALLED TO ORDER:** 6:30 p.m.

**TIME ADJOURNED:** 7:50 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

- Mr. William Gurney, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. John Harper, Business Administrator
- Mr. Paul Cooper, Director of Human Resources
- Mr. Tom Remillard, Director of Buildings, Facilities and Ancillary Services

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

- Ms. Sarah Palermo, Keene Sentinel Reporter
- Mrs. Chris Weeks, Public Information Coordinator
- Mrs. Dru Fox, Stenographer
- Members of the Public (10 plus or minus at given times)

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

**1. Public Input**

Ms. Carrie Stewart, 70 Laura Lane spoke against sharing a principal at the elementary schools and expressed her frustration that this is a done deal. She read from the letter Mr. Gurney sent home on February 5<sup>th</sup>. She felt the elementary principals were given an ultimatum to cut more from their budgets and that this was the only thing left to give. She read further from the letter that the elementary principals state, "this is not an ideal response and should not be viewed as a permanent decision". Ms. Stewart said the board is putting the cart before the horse. She urged the board to look again at other options while our community studies the task force review and develops a strategic and well thought out plan to put in place. She pointed out that we are only looking for \$76,000 as the \$15,000 stipend is still in the budget. Mrs. Stewart questioned the rationale behind keeping the cosmetology position and eliminating a principal.

Ms. Pam Rogers, 38 Dale Drive spoke against sharing a principal at the elementary schools and believes the letter from Mr. Gurney was purposely sent out late on Friday February 5<sup>th</sup>. She expressed concern that in all previous correspondence the particular

schools involved were never mentioned. She is not comfortable with any answers to questions about how this will work and feels that the stability of a full time principal is important in our schools. She said our kids are worth having full time leadership and that this is just not acceptable. Ms. Rogers said if there was a plan ready that was well researched that could be embraced and supported by everyone then she would feel differently. She questioned the effect it will have on schools in need and urged the board to look at other classes or programs that would affect fewer students. She wondered how we could have good middle and high school kids if we send a message to the younger students that they are not worth having a full time principal.

Ms. Carmelita Tonkinson, 18 Newbury Lane spoke against sharing a principal at the elementary schools and said how bad she feels about this going forward. Ms. Tonkinson expressed upset over the wording and timing of the letter from Mr. Gurney and pointed out language in the letter stating that the Keene Elementary Principals recommended this. She said it is the board's job to make these decisions and that it was not fair that the principals have been put on the spot. She said that although Patti Yoerger and Bill Harris did a great job trying to answer all of their questions there were really no answers to them at all. Ms. Tonkinson said this is the wrong way to develop a budget and she encouraged the board to find the money, to revisit this issue and look at line items that can be moved around. She was disappointed in the lack of board representation at the Franklin and Jonathan Daniels meetings and encouraged the board to represent themselves, answer the questions themselves and not to keep putting the principals on the spot.

Ms. Janice Ramirez, 18 Dale Drive spoke against sharing a principal at the elementary schools and that she echoes all that had just been said. She feels that even if monies are available that the board is saying no way, they are going to cut a principal no matter what. She thinks having a principal at each school should be a priority, is disappointed with the board's response and asked out right if there is money to be reallocated, will they reinstate the principal position until the study has been completed and a plan has been developed? She asked if this is enough of a priority to re-evaluate the budget and if the answer is no, then would like to know why not? Ms. Ramirez wants to work with the board and support administration, but feels this is very sudden and it does not seem right to just jump into it without the proper research. Until the schools were named no one really knew what to do.

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell responded that this issue would be addressed further into the meeting.

### **Report on Keene Middle School**

*Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion that the Keene School Board of Education hire MacMillin Company of Keene to build the new Keene Middle School and SAU #29 office building based on bids received on February 4, 2010 in the amount of \$26,596,516. Mr. Chris Coates seconded.*

Mr. Donegan spoke in support of his motion, provided a history to this point adding that it was a long exhausting process with 8 bids coming in from major contractors and naming numerous minor subcontractors. He reported on the two lowest bids coming from MacMillin Company of Keene and Hutter Construction of New

Ipswich and described the rationale behind arriving at the conclusion MacMillin was better suited. Mr. Chris Coates spoke in favor of supporting this recommendation because these were two equal bids from two strong companies.

Mrs. Carol Brown asked about a performance bond being included in the bid and Mr. Coates responded, yes. Mr. Frank Marinace provided further information on the requirements of a performance bond particularly from the issue of state funding. Projected completion date is May of 2011.

*Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.*

*Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion that the Keene School Board of Education approve John Turner Consulting, Inc. to perform testing services for the Keene Middle School and SAU #209 projects. Mr. Chris Coates seconded.*

Mr. Donegan spoke in support of his motion and described the series of testing that has to be completed to ensure compliance with all rules and regulations pertaining to the projects. He provided the rationale behind selecting John Turner.

*Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.*

## **2. Consent Agenda**

a. Agenda Item #3, Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, August 25, 2009; Special Meeting, December 15, 2009; Special Meeting, Board Retreat, January 5, 2010; Special Meeting, January 9, 2010; Regular Meeting & Public Hearing, January 12, 2010

b. Items Recommended by Committee Chairs

1. Approve the December 1, 2009 Financial Report
2. Keene Board of Education to donate the Ascutney Boulder located at the Keene Middle School, 17 Washington Street, to Keene State College.
3. Waive the rental fees associated with the Miss Keene/Miss Kearsarge Valley Scholarship Pageant on February 13, 2010, with the exception of those fees for event manager and custodians.
4. A transfer not to exceed \$30,000, requested by Cathy Reeves, Special Education Director, for adding a paraprofessional to the learning disabled collaborative program at Jonathan Daniels for the remainder of the school year.

It was requested that the minutes of January 9, 2010 and January 12, 2010 be removed from the consent agenda for further review.

*Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to approve the consent agenda items as amended. Mrs. Carol Brown seconded. Vote taken, motion unanimously passes.*

## **3. Approval of Minutes**

Handled in the above consent agenda items.

## **4. Report of Student Representatives**

None.

## **5. Report of Board Chair**

Marketing Committee - Mr. Neil Donegan reported on a January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting with the real estate broker and his belief that a bid will be coming soon.

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell announced a meeting between the Keene School Board and city officials this coming Monday night. The goal is to look at various ways to work together. Ms. O'Donnell also announced a March 5<sup>th</sup> reception from 2-4:00 p.m. with Senator Kelley and a delegation from the area to discuss legislative issues.

Gifted and Talented/Differentiated Learning – Mr. William Gurney said there will be a full presentation next Tuesday evening at the education committee meeting and that it is moving forward. Ms. O'Donnell addressed the importance of the public attending committee meetings. Mr. Chris Coates asked if the governor could be invited.

Strategic Long Term Planning – Ms. O'Donnell said they are trying to come up with a date to meet and a person to facilitate. Mr. Gurney said he is looking at ways to begin the process and a way to introduce it and bring people together from all over the community. Preferably this will entail a 3-5 year plan that will identify initiatives and anyone interested in being on this task force should contact Ms. O'Donnell.

Administrative Task Force Review – Mr. Gurney reports he is going to visit Exeter School District tomorrow along with the task force committee to find out how they went through the whole process a few years back.

Ms. O'Donnell reported the next full school board meeting will be on March 16<sup>th</sup> and then she commended and thanked Mrs. Carol Brown and Mr. Donald Parker for their hard work, contribution and service on the Keene School Board of Education.

Ms. O'Donnell requested and Mr. John Harper provided information on the anticipated surplus money at the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Harper said the several areas of projected surplus were; out of district placement costs, energy savings/particularly heating oil and savings in health insurance premiums. Mr. Harper projects a 2 million dollar surplus and talked about the first call for money will be to fund the expendable trust fund and then talked about the board having the opportunity to encumber additional funds for the purpose of purchasing items such as maintenance projects. He provided examples of those items being the heating plant and boiler situation at the high school and the condition of the grand stands. He explained once the books are closed the funds are then used to reduce taxes. He also explained that surplus money from this fiscal year couldn't be used for staffing or "buying" a principal position for next year. Mr. Donegan asked for a list of possible expenditures from the excess money at the next board meeting.

Ms. O'Donnell noted that the board would not be discussing the shared principal issue that was brought up in public input but that everything that was said will be taken into consideration. She encouraged the public to attend the upcoming meetings pertaining to the task force review and assured everyone that their concerns will be taken under advisement.

Mr. Coates reminded everyone that these issues are discussed many times over during various committees regular business and he understands the emotions going on. He spoke about the study that was conducted and the many items that were outlined in those results. He provided his perspective regarding the recommendation that came forth from the principals themselves to eliminate one position. He explained that Mr. Gurney questioned whether or not this could actually be implemented and with their assurance that it could be, the board moved forward. He said the board was looking at this as a possibility for the future and embraced it when the principals brought it forward now.

Mr. William Gurney spoke about the process and the meetings with parents and teachers with another one scheduled tomorrow night and the necessity to build a plan and

move ahead. Mr. Coates asked about and Mr. Gurney assured everyone that if the board does not like the plan or does not feel comfortable with it once it is presented then they will search for a different scenario and solution.

Mr. Neil Donegan explained that the principals were not asked to cut a position, only the budget, and they came back to the board with this proposal and we accepted it. If the plan they present is not acceptable, then plans will be changed in a hurry.

Mrs. Kristin Blais said this is not an easy decision and it is very clear to everyone how important principals are. She talked about asking them to do more and more with NECAP issues and Senate Bill #18 and all the other significant things principals have to manage. She talked about the board not taking this lightly and that on the other side of the coin there is a devastating economy that needs to be respected. She explained about the district spending so much more at the elementary level than at the middle and high school levels and because the principals involved are really talented principals and know the system and can do a lot the feeling is that it can be successful for a year. She said this does not feel irresponsible to her and the board looked at everything that could have been done. Mrs. Blais said she appreciates the input from parents and staff and the opportunity it presents to take another look. She explained why the board felt this was the best short-term plan with the smallest affect on children and their commitment to make it work. She talked about the less than ideal situation it was and how tricky the situation becomes when you ask the principals to bring a solution to the table and when they do, not hearing them out or saying no to them.

Mr. Carter Chamberlin agreed with Mrs. Blais and talked about respecting the decision the principals came up with. He encouraged the public to review the task force results especially the graphs and data to better understand what the board is talking about.

Mr. Carl Panza also added that the elimination of a principal position was not done casually, that there was research done which showed advantages and disadvantages and the criteria for making this work. He talked about “twinning” and the fact that this is not new ground we are breaking and he would like to make that clear.

Mr. Chris Coates announced a conflict with board members attending the meeting tomorrow night at Franklin School due to a previously scheduled SAU meeting that they all need to attend.

Mr. Neil Donegan requested a full board meeting on Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> after the finance committee meeting to address the memorandum of understanding with the city regarding the building permits and the partnership of three projects.

## **6. Report of Co-Superintendents**

Mr. William Gurney spoke about the incredible response and outpouring of generosity from Keene School District staff and students to benefit the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. Mr. Gurney named each of the groups and the amount of money they each raised including: numerous Keene High School groups, tent donations, school health office, KHS student council, 2010 class council to name a few, Keene Middle School bake sale, class community outreach project, Keene Middle School Hope for Haiti, Franklin School’s Hats for Haiti and he recognized numerous other groups, announced each of their donations and commended the specific people involved. Mr. Gurney talked about the Red Sox scholarship and KMS and KHS art awards.

Mr. Wayne Woolridge provided a legislative update by talking about Senate Bill #465 which holds some short term promise for Keene to extend the current level of transition aide for two more years, spoke about Senator Kelly's sponsorship of SB #486 to redesign the criteria used to determine which new school projects would receive future building aide, and the tracking of several additional bills of special interest to SAU #29. He announced a March 5<sup>th</sup> reception with legislators and Senator Kelly. Mr. Panza asked about and Mr. Woolridge further clarified that if SB #465 passes it will extend our transition aide 2 more years and if it fails, we will lose that aid beginning in 2011-2012 and explained all the harm it will cause as we already receive a third less than we did a decade ago.

**7. Report of Secretary**

None.

**8. Report of Standing Committees**

a. Building Facilities and Ancillary Services

None.

b. Education Committee

Mrs. Brown pointed out that policy review items listed are not action items at this time.

c. Finance Committee

None. All items were covered in the Consent Agenda.

d. Personnel Committee

Mr. Chamberlin reports there is only non-public business to conduct.

e. Communications Committee

Mr. Parker spoke about the possibility of conducting a survey at the middle school level to prepare for the opening of the new school. It will be discussed further at the next committee meeting on Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.

f. Policy Ad Hoc

None.

**9. Reports of Special Committees**

a. NHSAU 29 School Board

Mr. Neil Donegan announced a very important SAU meeting tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m.

b. Cheshire Career Center Advisory

Mr. Carter Chamberlin reported attending a CCC advisory meeting last week which was very interesting and provided him with a great deal of information from all sending schools. Discussion at the meeting included fewer conflicts in scheduling and future school district calendars.

c. NH School Boards Association

Mr. Carl Panza provided a lengthy report on the 2010 delegate assembly held on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the very interesting sessions with numerous hot discussions. Mr. Panza touched on the following; 125% Rule (also known as spiking), state building aide, accountability for adequate education, expansion of special education, right to know law,

mandatory school board training and the evergreen clause. He listed all items that will cost Keene money and discussion ensued around those costs.

d. Liaison Reports

Mr. Donald Parker spoke about the meeting last night with the Jonathan Daniels parent group and talked about all that caught his eye while he was there; community service projects, renditions of a new peace garden that they are doing and he commended the staff at JD for all the hard work they do.

Mr. Carl Panza reported on an upcoming meeting pertaining to Everyday Math and goal setting issues/future strategies regarding the North Campus.

Mrs. Kristin Blais congratulated Mrs. Ricky Greenwald and her math team for placing first place in competition last week.

**10. Old Business**

None.

**11. New Business**

None.

**12. Resignations**

None.

**13. Nominations/Election of Staff**

None.

*Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to move the meeting into non-public session according to RSA 91-A:3. Mrs. Kristin Blais seconded. Role call vote taken. Mr. Chris Coates-yes, Mr. Carl Panza-yes, Mr. Donald Parker-yes, Mrs. Carol Brown-yes, Mr. Neil Donegan-yes, Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell-yes, Mrs. Kristin Blais-yes and Mr. Carter Chamberlin-yes.*

***Meeting entered into Non-Public Session by a unanimous role call vote at 7:50 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**