

Carlisle School Committee
Minutes
January 2, 2008
Ruth C. Wilkins Library, Robbins Building
7:00 PM

Present – School Committee: Nicole Burkel, Chair; Wendell Sykes, Vice Chair; Dale Ryder; Michael Fitzgerald, Chad Koski.

Present – School Administration: Marie Doyle, Superintendent; Patrice Hurley, Principal; Claire Wilcox, Assistant to the Superintendent.

Nicole Burkel called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

Public Comment Period

Ms. Burkel welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced the members of the Physical Education department and asked if any members of the public would like to comment. There were no comments.

Review of minutes

Wendell Sykes made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 5, 2007. Dale Ryder seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the minutes with one minor change.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Marie Doyle reported on the following:

- FinCom budget guidelines
- Snowstorms and school schedule changes

Administrator Reports

Elementary Principal Patrice Hurley represented the Administrative Team and reported on the following:

- Safe and Drug Free audit
- Mentor meetings
- ELA review process

Members'/Committee Reports

Mr. Fitzgerald reported on a regional school committee meeting held in December. The budget for next year was voted at the meeting, and the committee will be meeting with the Carlisle Finance Committee in the next two weeks. The committee is anticipating an override of \$250,000 for Carlisle to meet the budget. Mr. Fitzgerald discussed issues with the special education portion of the budget for both this year and next.

Mr. Sykes stated that the School Building Committee has been working on an RFP for a project manager, which is a requirement of the MSBA to continue the project. We are still waiting for further information from the MSBA about the process, and a meeting will be held.

Ms. Ryder asked about the status of the Highland sub-committee. Mr. Sykes stated that he had been invited to participate. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the committee has been selected and will begin meeting during January. Ms. Ryder expressed an interest in serving on the committee. Ms. Burkel will talk to Tim Hult, the chair of the committee, about including Ms. Ryder.

Ms. Ryder stated that the long-term caps committee has been meeting, but she stated that she had no update, as this is an ongoing process.

Information/Discussion Items

- A. **Consultant process update.** Ms. Burkel stated that John Littleford would begin his interviews on Friday, January 4th. That day and during the following week, he will be meeting with 22 teachers, 2 support staff members, the administrators, and School Committee members. The interviews will be followed by a 3-hour workshop with all participants on Monday, January 14th.
- B. **PE/Health curriculum presentation.** Margaret Heigl introduced the health and physical education department members and described their roles. She continued by thanking the School Committee for their support of department programs. She noted that Kathy Horan, RN is also a member of the department.

Ms. Heigl discussed the fall and winter athletic teams and schedule; she is the athletic director, a new position this year. She thanked parents and others who had helped with the programs, including Phil LaPalme, Jay Luby, and the CSA, who will provide new girls' soccer uniforms for next year.

The intramural basketball program did not take place this year because of low enrollment. Wall climbing was also not offered because of new MA public safety requirements. The department is working on ways to comply with the new requirements so that the climbing wall can once again be used.

Next Ms. Heigl discussed things that are new or different in physical education and health education this year. These include the use of a new, dedicated room, an Activeboard, skill based health education, written quizzes for middle

school units to better assess student progress, and an interdisciplinary unit in hopscotch for first graders to support classroom study on children from around the world. The department has been meeting with the Kindergarten team to discuss the possibility of increasing the time for physical education and other specials. As a result of the meetings and research, the time for specials in Kindergarten has been increased from 30 to 35 minutes twice a week.

Dan Hunt then reviewed some of the assessments done in the 3rd grade basketball unit and in the middle school classes. He discussed an assessment rubric, which was included in the meeting handout. Ms. Ryder asked if the middle school rubric had been distributed to students. Mr. Hunt responded that this was done at the beginning of the year.

Department members had a number of recommendations for the future: police officers assigned to cross-country meets, providing JV teams so all students could participate in after school sports, establishment of a rotating replacement plan for team uniforms, reinstating a part time PE teacher and a fulltime PE/health coordinator, adding health education to grades K – 5, time and additional funding for the athletic director, resumption of the athletic task force, potable water for the Spalding field, fixing the sound system and water fountain in the gym, better storage solutions for the gym.

Ms. Heigl thanked the School Committee and the administrative team for their support. She also thanked David Flannery and his staff, the CSA and CEF, and Cindy Nock and Jan Deyoe from the Carlisle Recreation Commission.

Ms. Ryder stated that she would like parents to better understand what the department does, particularly in the area of Middle School assessment.

The presentation ended with a short movie showing students participating in a variety of activities.

- C. **MSBA update – Robbins reimbursement.** Ms. Doyle reported on information the school has received regarding the reimbursement for the Robbins link (Grant) Building and the wastewater treatment facility. Larry Barton is working with the MSBA on obtaining additional reimbursement.
- D. **Class size discussion.** The meeting packet included two documents regarding class sizes, and Ms. Doyle discussed the documents and showed Power Point slides. First she reviewed the following class size guidelines: Grades K-2, 18 or fewer students; Grades 3-5, 18 – 21 students; Grades 6-8, 21 – 25 students. Educational research strongly supports small class sizes, and there are many examples and reports tying small classes to high achievement. Ms. Doyle referred to several on-line reports and provided the websites to members.

Discussion then moved on to a review of the current class sizes at the Carlisle School. The class ranges (K-2, 3-5, & 6-8) meet the recommended guidelines, although grades 3, 4, 6, and 7 each have one more student on average per class than recommended.

- E. **Fees.** Ms. Doyle reviewed the current year's fees for school activities, including varsity, JV, and intramural sports, bus fees, full day kindergarten, preschool, and after school clubs. She showed a slide comparing Carlisle's fees with those of comparable towns. An additional slide showed that our 7th and 8th grade bus fees cover approximately \$50,000 of the \$400,000 transportation budget. A listing of fees for all other Massachusetts schools was included in the meeting packet.

She then discussed an estimated profit and loss statement for the athletic program for the 07 – 08 school year. It is estimated that even with the current fee level, the program will lose \$8,097 this year. This issue will need to be considered as the budget process continues.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he is opposed to fees, and that they seem to be increasing each year. Ms. Ryder responded that she would prefer to have fees rather than lose teachers in a tight budget situation. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that although most Carlisle families can afford the fees, there are families who do not want to ask for scholarship aid. Ms. Doyle agreed that fees are unfortunate, but that they are a reality in this budget and a better solution than additional staffing cuts.

- F. **Principals.** Ms. Doyle reviewed a chart comparing numbers of students and principals in the Concord and Carlisle elementary and middle schools. She also discussed the importance of continuing the two principal model, which has been in place in Carlisle for the past two years.

She showed a chart comparing several communities similar to Carlisle in terms of administrative and direct service to student costs.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked whether small class sizes or two principals would rank higher in a tight budget situation. Ms. Doyle stated that she would like to maintain both small classes and the two principals. Mr. Fitzgerald pressed for a response to his question, and Ms. Doyle stated that it would depend on the actual sizes of the classes and that she believes we can maintain both. Ms. Burkel suggested that this particular discussion be continued at the January 16th meeting when the FinCom guideline, level funded budget would be discussed.

- G. **Budget.** As requested at the December 5th meeting, Ms. Doyle presented a detailed level service budget for 2009. As an introduction to the budget, she reviewed the school vision, mission, and core values, the District Goals for the current year, recent school accomplishments, and current initiatives. Ms. Ryder asked for more information regarding one of the listed accomplishments: the

world language program, particularly elementary Spanish and middle school Chinese.

Ms. Doyle reviewed the Carlisle education model and then summarized the main budget drivers. To provide services comparable to the current school year would result in a 6.9% or \$605,112 increase over the current 2008 budget. She noted the areas that caused the increase, including contractual salary increases for teachers, special education teacher and support staff salary increases, lower circuit breaker reimbursement, and funds for extraordinary maintenance needs.

Ms. Burkel asked Mr. Halliday, based on his experience, what his view of having two principals or an assistant principal. He stated that it would partly depend on what the salary difference would be between the 2 models. He further added that it would be important to reduce the turnover in the principal position to ensure continuity. Ms. Hurley added that she did not believe it would be cost effective to have one principal with an assistant, although she believes that administration should share in the cuts required to meet the budget requirements.

Ms. Burkel stated that she believes that the school over the years has already greatly reduced staff, who do not deal directly with students.

Ms. Ryder asked for details regarding the permanent substitutes. She further asked whether in our system it would be possible to have a combined superintendent/principal and if other schools do this. Ms. Doyle responded that this might be possible, but that the school would lose a great deal in terms of curriculum, participation in outside organizations and meetings, and other areas.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked for clarification regarding the School Committee contracted services line item, the increased cost for permanent substitutes, increased special education teacher costs, energy, and utility costs.

Ms. Ryder referred to a slide from the presentation and asked why the 4th grade MCAS scores are so low. Ms. Doyle responded that Ms. Hurley and the 4th grade team have been meeting to discuss ways to increase the scores in the 4th grade.

Ms. Burkel asked that members review carefully the information distributed at tonight's meeting in preparation for the January 16th meeting. She thanked Ms. Doyle for the work she's done on the budget in the absence of Ms. Zimmerman, who is out on maternity leave.

Mr. Sykes stated a concern that to meet the Finance Committee budget guidelines, a significant change in the way we educate our children might be required because of the large budget reductions needed. He stated that it

would be very important for parents to understand that we would not be able to continue to have a superior school system with the budget constraints. Ms. Burkel agreed. Mr. Fitzgerald added that this is similar to what the system went through 10 years ago, and that the system has recovered and grown stronger. Ms. Ryder stated that she is not willing to accept an inferior education for our children. Mr. Sykes is concerned that the public does not understand the issues, and he is uncertain as to how to educate the public.

Thornton Ash of the Finance Committee was present and noted that this is not a single year problem, but that the problem will persist for several years.

Lewis Salemy of Concord Street asked if regionalization has been explored as a way to handle the budget issues. He stated that he thought parents would be very opposed to this.

Lisa Harris of School Street stated that once the specific budget cuts are known, parent groups would begin to form around the issues.

Ms. Doyle stated that it's important for all constituencies to come together and promote the excellence of the school during the budget process.

Mary Storrs of Brook Street raised an issue regarding school supplies that each student purchases each year. She is concerned that this already high cost to families would increase to cover budget cuts in the supply budget.

Ms. Burkel asked if the middle school treasuries might be used to support after school activities.

Julia Krapf of Ice Pond Road stated that she did not believe treasuries should be used for this purpose.

Adjournment

There was no additional business, and **Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to adjourn the meeting and enter executive session to discuss a contract issue. The meeting would not return to open session. Ms. Ryder seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor: Ms. Burkel, yes; Ms. Ryder, yes; Mr. Fitzgerald, yes; Mr. Koski, yes; Mr. Sykes, yes.**

The public meeting was adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire M. Wilcox, Assistant to the Superintendent