

Carlisle School Committee
Minutes
February 4, 2009
Carlisle Town Hall, Clark Room
7:00 PM

Present – School Committee: Chad Koski, Chair; Wendell Sykes, Vice Chair; Dale Ryder; Bill Fink, Louis Salemy.

Present – School Administration: Marie Doyle, Superintendent; Heidi Zimmerman, Business Manager; Joyce Mehaffey, Principal; Patrice Hurley, Principal; Karen Slack, Director of Student Support Services; Claire Wilcox, Assistant to the Superintendent.

Chad Koski called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

Public Comment Period

Mr. Koski welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked if any members of the public had comments. There were no comments.

Review of minutes

Wendell Sykes made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 21, 2009. Dale Ryder seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the minutes.

Administrator Reports

Elementary Principal Patrice Hurley reported on the following:

- First grade kindness and justice project
- Spanish teachers' website
- Family leave positions

Middle School Principal Joyce Mehaffey reported on the following:

- Seventh grade play

Karen Slack, Director of Student Support Services reported on the following:

- Second round of observations in process for the teacher evaluation process

Ms. Ryder asked for clarification of the teacher evaluation process for the off-year when observations are not required.

Members'/Committee Reports

Mr. Sykes reported on the Long Term Capital Requirements Committee and stated that the committee and the Finance Committee have had very a successful relationship. The LTCRC has asked all departments for multi-year plans, particularly for equipment maintenance and is taking a very sensible long-term look at requirements.

School Building Committee. A letter was received from the MSBA agreeing to 700 students as the number of students the building will serve. The next step is to reconcile the amount of space needed in the context of the size of the rest of the campus. Ms. Doyle added that they hoped to hear back from the MSBA on this in the next few days. Mr. Fink stated that the committee is looking for graphic arts help for publicity for the project. Mr. Sykes added his thanks for the many volunteers involved in the project and also recognized the extraordinary efforts of the administration.

Information/Discussion Items

- A. **Third Grade presentation.** The third grade team of Chris Denaro, Cindy Morris, Jen Rowland, and Gene Stamell discussed the third grade curriculum. Mr. Stamell discussed language arts first. He stated that all third graders read Stone Fox, which is a very powerful novel. He discussed the writing connection to the book in which the students write an ending that differs from the actual ending. He distributed samples of the students' writing.

Chris Denaro reviewed a science unit on rocks and minerals. She described an activity in which the students become mineral scientists for a day. They study characteristics of minerals and then are asked to identify the minerals. She stated that the hardest concept for students is to determine the hardness of the mineral. She then distributed minerals to School Committee members and asked them to determine hardness.

Cindy Morris discussed a Massachusetts study unit, which the classes work on throughout the year. The students choose one of 5 topics, do research, and then develop a Massachusetts brochure.

Ms. Doyle thanked the third grade for their presentation.

- B. **School Council update.** Elementary principal Patrice Hurley reviewed the work of the School Council. She stated that the School Council has been meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee, led by Ms. Doyle. She noted that the strategic plan will serve as an umbrella with its long-term goals, and the school improvement plan will address specific areas on a yearly basis.

Ms. Doyle added that the School Committee had asked for more measurable goals and that this process addresses that request.

- C. **Four-day kindergarten proposal.** Ms. Doyle discussed a proposal under consideration for a four day kindergarten program in place of the current schedule of 3 half days and 2 full days each week. She stated that a roundtable would be held in March so that parents can have input into this. She noted that there are a number of educational benefits to a four-day schedule, which would also result in the saving of \$21,600 because of the elimination of mid-day buses.

Mr. Sykes asked if there would be day care coverage for the fifth day, and Ms. Doyle stated that the local pre-schools would be ready to accommodate the change.

- D. **STEM update.** Ms. Doyle reviewed the numbers of students participating in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math after-school programs as follows:

- Fall: 6 Classes -- 60 students
- Winter: 7 Classes -- 86 students
- UMass Lowell Design Lab: 2 classes -- 23 students

Ms. Doyle thanked Peg Gladstone, Wendy Powell, and Patrice Hurley for their help with these programs.

- E. **Lexia.** Ms. Doyle reported on a new software package being used this year to reinforce reading skills in grades K - 3. Jen Rowland, third grade special educator noted that it's a great program, which focuses on reading skills at different levels. Vocabulary and reading comprehension are key parts to the program. Tedy Storrs, third grader present in the audience, stated that he likes the program and that it helps him to learn vocabulary more easily.

Mr. Stamell thanked the parents for providing support so that students each have a set of headphones.

- F. **Administrative consolidation with Concord -- continued discussion.** Ms. Ryder and Mr. Fink presented a slide show highlighting the potential consolidation and what it would involve. Ms. Ryder began by stating that the discussion is in the very early stages and that much research remains to be done. She thanked Ms. Doyle, Ms. Zimmerman, and Ms. Wilcox for their help with the presentation.

The first slide described the role of the School Committee. Then Mr. Fink discussed administrative costs and the 3-year school budget. He stated that a first look indicated that many dollars might be saved through a union. He stated that if the administrative structure is not changed, as enrollment decreases, it will become a larger cost per student.

Ms. Ryder discussed potential ways of managing the budget shortfall and noted the challenge to continue to provide a quality education given budget constraints.

She then discussed the definition of a superintendency union and stated that this is not regionalization, but rather shared district level staff. She further described the way a union would be formed, how it would be governed, and what would be changed and what would remain the same. She described the next steps, which would include a process to gain input from many community groups.

The floor was opened to comments.

Lori Tucker of East Riding Drive asked what it would cost to hire a consultant. Mr. Salemy stated that he contacted the DESE and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees for suggested consultants. There is a meeting on February 27th to between the administration and the recommended consultant. Ms. Tucker further asked if a consolidation might be partially implemented. Mr. Koski replied that this has not yet been decided.

Jill Adams asked for clarification regarding the timeline of the decision and how contracts currently in place would affect this. Mr. Fink stated that the members would be getting advice regarding this from the consultant. Ms. Ryder stated that the first goal is to get the budget and savings numbers finalized. Mr. Koski added that this would be a joint decision with Concord. Ms. Zimmerman stated that the budget numbers shown have a contract factor built in, and that it is unknown at this time what the contract would be.

Mr. Sykes asked Ms. Doyle to comment on the budget numbers that were presented. She stated that it would be important to have a consultant involved in the process. She stated that the decision should be based on the numbers and on what is educationally sound.

Mr. Sykes expressed a concern about how much control the Carlisle School Committee would actually have under the proposed system. He stated that there is a range of possibilities and it would be important to look at what we would gain and what we might lose under this system.

Ms. Adams asked when there would be information about the implications of the decision, not just the benefits. She asked if there would be a forum with an open discussion about potential issues. Ms. Koski stated that tonight's meeting is part of the open process.

Mr. Koski described the process he had used to determine the budget numbers used in the slide show and stated that they were as conservative as possible.

David Model from the Finance Committee then discussed a 3-year model for educational costs through a series of slides. He presented a set of assumptions

about the school budgets and stated that it's very difficult to control the high school budget. Regardless of a union, Carlisle is not going to have the money for the regional budget in the next few years. He stated that the town faces possible regionalization in a number of services, including police. He further stated that after 2013, the budget would level off again. Mr. Fink thanked Mr. Model for his presentation.

Following Mr. Model's presentation, Mr. Koski opened the floor again to public comments.

Philip Gladstone of Curve Street stated that he had spent time looking at data from the DESE. He stated that the administrative costs in Carlisle are somewhat high and that Concord's are higher than Carlisle's. He discussed the economy of scale achieved by adding students to Concord's administration. He further stated that larger class sizes should be looked at and that the Carlisle teacher/student ratio is very low. Achievement is what counts, not class size.

Alex Krapf of Ice Pond Road stated that he had made his doubts about the financial impacts of this known at the last meeting. He talked about how we had gotten to this point and stated that things should have been done 4 years ago to mitigate the bulge in the high school budget. He stated that he does not think any administrative over-haul would change the picture of cyclical budget crises. He stated that he doesn't think the long-term problem can be solved without re-negotiating contracts.

Mary Beth Stevenson of Cross Street read a statement from the School Advisory Council requesting that the School Committee thoroughly research the proposal for a union and share all findings with the community before making any decision. Further the School Committee should review the changes in culture and customs that would result from a union.

Nancy Sczesniak of Aberdeen Drive expressed a concern with losing the current administration, as she has seen many positive changes with this administration. She further stated that Carlisle has been trying to run itself on a flat budget and that the discussion of what Carlisle is going to do to increase revenue should be a town-wide discussion. The town needs to make some hard decisions regarding revenue. She further asked if the consultant was going to look only at the cost effectiveness of the superintendency union. Mr. Koski stated that the charge would be for the consultant to look at the numbers. Mr. Sykes disagreed with this approach and stated that he thought it would be important for the consultant to look at other issues.

Mr. Model stated that the town is looking more broadly at ways the town can deal with revenue issues.

Bob Clark of Robbins Drive stated that we are in big trouble both short-term and long-term. He asked if the committee has looked at cutting any of the administrative positions now, rather than waiting. He further discussed the teachers' contract and stated that there should be reductions in the teachers' contract.

Paul Sellew of Shady Brook Lane first thanked the School Committee members for serving the town. He stated that all his expectations for the school system have been met with his children through the years. He is in support of the work of the School Committee in developing a 3-year budget. He is in favor of a superintendency union, and noted that it speaks of common sense in the economic environment we currently have. He further stated that this has nothing to do with Ms. Doyle and her leadership.

Nicole Burkel of School Street stated that she has a concern about the cost savings on a long-term basis. She stated that this is a great option to investigate but also asked if the School Committee had asked the administration what they might recommend to save money.

Don Rober of Rutland Street stated a concern that only one option is being studied, rather than looking at other options such as school choice, and changing the existing school structure. He further stated that the cost is a systemic problem and that in a number of years we would be facing the same problem. Mr. Koski responded that this is true, but that the School Committee has an obligation to do what it can to mitigate the problem.

Hunter Hutchinson of Cross Street asked if Concord and Carlisle have ever shared a superintendent in the past. Mr. Sykes responded that it had been done in the past but not with Concord, and that he thought the town had moved away from it to save money.

A resident of Stony Gate asked what other things the School Committee has been looking at besides a superintendency union. Mr. Koski stated that it would be an override, or cutting services. Ms. Doyle stated that she would like to look at some other things internally that we might do. Mr. Salemy stated that the budget has been squeezed as much as possible.

Mr. Koski thanked those who attended the meeting for their comments.

Communications/Correspondence

The following items were reviewed:

- Thank you letter to Eric Rencs for Lego Mindstorm donation
- Thank you letter to the second grade team for their School Committee presentation

- Letter waiving our membership cost of \$375 for PowerOptions, energy purchasing consortium
- MASC Legislative Bulletin

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Marie Doyle reported on the following:

- Strategic Planning meeting
- Low temperature alarm, paid for through a grant obtained by David Flannery, went off over the past weekend, saving damage to the Spalding Building.
- Chinese New Year town celebration
- Kindergarten Mitten Plays
- Upcoming parent and staff coffees on Friday, February 6th
- Thanks to the School Committee

Ms. Ryder noted that David Flannery had been a great help to the Gleason Library with a recent water problem.

Mr. Sykes reminded members of a meeting on Monday with the Finance Committee and Selectmen to discuss the consolidation study process.

Action Items

Ms. Zimmerman reviewed the bus contract information presented at the previous meeting.

Ms. Ryder made a motion to award the transportation contract to Bedford Charter for 3 years with one 2-year option to extend at full discretion of the awarding authority, the Carlisle Public Schools. Mr. Fink seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Other Business

Ms. Zimmerman requested that the School Committee request a warrant item to go out to bid for a 3-year contract for the Wastewater Treatment Facility with a 2-year extension possible similar to that of the bus contract.

Ms. Wilcox reminded members that the Town Report is due early next week and that she would like all comments and suggested changes by tomorrow.

Ms. Ryder discussed the Health Behavior Risk Assessment Survey done in Concord. She stated that it's a wonderful report with extensive information. She asked if this had been considered for Carlisle.

Ms. Doyle stated that it had been discussed and has been handled internally due to costs and due to the sensitivity of some of the material. She further stated that there are regular parent programs that discuss risky behaviors.

Citizens' Comments

There were no additional comments.

Adjournment

There was no additional business, and **Ms. Ryder made a motion to adjourn the meeting and enter executive session to discuss contract negotiations. Mr. Fink seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor as follows: Ms. Ryder, yes; Mr. Sykes, yes; Mr. Koski, yes; Mr. Fink, yes; Mr. Salemy, yes.**

The public meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire M. Wilcox
Assistant to the Superintendent