

AUBURN SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

AUBURN, MAINE

REPORT OF REGULAR SESSION MEETING OF THE AUBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Auburn Hall

November 28, 2007

Members Present: Mr. Raymond Berube Ms. Bonnie Hayes
Mr. David Das Mr. Thomas Kendall
Mr. Lane Feldman Mr. Ross Leavitt
Dr. Susan Gaylord Ms. Tara Paradie

Others Present: Tom Morrill, Interim Superintendent and Jude Cyr, Business Manager, Francois Bussiere, Jason Pawlina, and Lawrence Pelletier, new School Committee members.

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A. Introductions

Mr. Das called the meeting to order at 7:08 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Committee members introduced themselves and stated which ward they represent.

B. Communications/Recognition

Mr. Das expressed his appreciation to Mr. Leavitt, Mrs. Paradie, and Dr. Gaylord. He presented a token of appreciation to Mr. Leavitt for his nine years of service.

Mr. Morrill presented certificates and tokens of appreciation to Mr. Berube, Mr. Leavitt, Dr. Gaylord, and Mrs. Paradie.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Agenda

B. Approval of Minutes – November 7, 2007 & November 13, 2007

It was moved by Dr. Gaylord, seconded by Mrs. Paradie and voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda for tonight's meeting.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public comments at this time.

IV. STUDENT INFORMATION

V. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Planning and Development

1. Early Release Wednesday

Ms. Elaine Dow, Co-Director of Office of Learning and Teaching, presented the Early Release Committee's recommendations for School Committee consideration.

Robert Cavanaugh, 127 Field Ave. – Reported that he was able to attend all but one of the subcommittee meetings and knows that the participants thoroughly researched this issue and did a wonderful job. Mr. Cavanaugh stated that he supports the recommendation to reduce the early release days to six noting that this will give students six more full Wednesdays for education. Mr. Cavanaugh further recommended that the School Department incorporate this recommendation into the next school year calendar.

Mr. Feldman stated that he is absolutely against early release Wednesdays and has heard nothing to change his mind. He wanted to know why we didn't go to the number 18.

Ms. Dow responded that there are three stakeholder groups and the recommendations took into consideration the needs of each of these groups. After a great deal of research, the subcommittee agreed to present the recommendations before the School Committee tonight. She noted that each stakeholder group has a voice that should be heard, but the School Committee must decide what weight to give to each group.

Mr. Kendall reported that he served on the committee and did not feel that there was a strong voice to say this is absolutely what should be done. He stated that after careful consideration, he felt that no change would be the best decision. Mr. Kendall noted that there is tremendous value in a requirement that teachers have the time for professional development. He recommended that the School Committee make no change in the Wednesday release program as it now stands.

Ms. Hayes reminded the School Committee of the information presented by the teacher from Sherwood Heights regarding the conference that she attended. She noted that this example shows how important professional development is to teachers, students, and parents; however, she still supports the recommendation as presented.

Mr. Berube stated that he does not feel that teachers need that many afternoons for professional development.

Ms. Paradie noted that this subcommittee has done a great deal of work on a difficult topic and she supports their recommendation. She noted that this may not conclude the issue, but she expressed appreciation for the efforts put into this project by the subcommittee members.

Dr. Gaylord stated that we have a quality education program in Auburn and keeping those six days could be very important to keep that level of education. She recommended no change to the program.

It was moved by Ms. Hayes, seconded by Mrs. Paradie and voted 3 in favor, 4 opposed, with 1 abstained to approve the recommendations from the Early Release Committee as presented reducing the current twenty days by six days. Motion failed.

B. Business

1. Land and Facilities Sale

Mr. Jude Cyr presented information regarding the sale of land and facilities owned by the Auburn School Department. He noted that we have been in this property for twenty years and we were mandated by the state to either vacate this property or enter into a lease purchase agreement, which we did. Mr. Cyr reported that in the lease purchase agreement, 55% of the investment annually was reimbursed by the Department of Education. Mr. Cyr provided history of the School Department's use of this property and the reasons for vacating the property and allow the City to enter into a purchase and sale agreement with Mr. George Schott, who has submitted an offer of \$900,000. Mr. Cyr reported that in this offer there are contingencies that will allow Auburn School Department to hold the property until June 30, 2008 to give us some time to relocate our programs, the fees from the child care facility will be retained by the School Department until June 30, 2008, there is a \$25,000 non refundable retainer, and Mr. Schott will have 30 days to inspect the buildings.

Mr. Berube congratulated Mr. Cyr on the negotiations for this deal.

Mr. Kendall asked if the money from the sale goes to the School Department or the City.

Mr. Cyr responded that \$394,107.34 balance is due to the City; however, in order for the School Department to relocate their program to the old Webster School building will require some renovations and money to do this.

Mr. Morrill noted that there would be a joint City Council and School Committee meeting on December 10th and Mr. Blatt will present a Master Plan with information relative to this sale and the relocation of the RETC/SOS program.

Ms. Hayes stated that she is aware that the City purchased Gooseberry Barn and noted that she would want to be very careful that the funds were available for the School Department to relocate this property.

Mr. Leavitt cautioned that we ensure that this amount of money is not held against us at budget time.

Mr. Cyr noted that RETC/SOS is a regional program; however there are twenty-four students in this program and Auburn pays \$22,500 per student for their education. He noted that a similar program could cost from \$30,000 - \$60,000 per student plus transportation if we did not have this program in Auburn.

Ms. Hayes requested that information be made available for the City Council / School Committee meeting to indicate the savings realized by relocating this program.

Mr. Kendall expressed concern regarding voting on this issue without information from the City.

Mr. Morrill stated that legal counsel has determined that we can move ahead with this motion. He noted that the School Department could spend some money to investigate this or propose to the City that we would like a provision stating that we retain funds to assist with the relocation of this program.

Mr. Das stated that he felt we should move forward with this plan in good faith that we would have funding to move forward with relocating this program. Mr. Das noted that the reality is that we need to relocate the program and it would be beneficial to vacate this property and turn it over to the City for sale.

It was moved by Mr. Leavitt, seconded by Mr. Feldman and voted 7 in favor 1 opposed (Mr. Kendall) to vacate at the end of the 2007-08 school year the property located at 154 and 180 Mt. Auburn Avenue, which houses the RETC/SOS program and the Maine Children's House Foundation, in order for the city to enter into the purchase and sale agreement for said properties.

2. Gifted and Talented Subsidy Plan

Ms. Carrie Beaulieu presented the Gifted and Talented Subsidy Plan and a request for approval from the School Committee. Mr. Morrill reminded the School Committee that this is an annual event that requires that the School Committee to act on this issue prior to receiving funding for the program.

Ms. Beaulieu outlined the staff credentials, services offered to students, and explained how the program works and how the subsidy is used for this program.

It was moved by Dr. Gaylord, seconded by Mr. Kendall and voted unanimously to approve Gifted and Talented Subsidy Plan as presented.

3. Finance Report – October 2007

Mr. Cyr reviewed the October 2007 financial report noting that the Finance Subcommittee met on Monday.

Mr. Morrill stated that the combination of changing to a new software program and moving to the new State Chart of Accounts has been a difficult process. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Cyr and Mr. Martel for their successful efforts to produce this report for tonight's meeting.

Mr. Cyr stated that the Auburn School Department ventured into a new territory with a new software package and also a new chart of accounts. He noted that we started off with an excess of 12,000 account codes and now have 4,800 account codes. Mr. Cyr noted that we are ahead of our projections for the current year, doing well, and envision that our fiscal year will be on target. Mr. Cyr noted that the bottom line for the expenditure is at 28% of our fiscal year. He stated that our budget line items are being monitored and changed to ensure that information is falling into the appropriate location so that our budget items match the state required budget codes.

Mr. Kendall requested that another column be added to the report stating percent of total expenditure.

Mr. Cyr responded that this could be used to replace the current period column, but he would need to check the array of options to see if this is an option that is available. He responded to questions from School Committee members and clarified areas of concern.

It was moved by Mr. Berube, seconded by Mr. Kendall and voted unanimously to approve the Financial Report for October 2007.

4. Reorganization Alternative Plan

The Interim Superintendent presented the Auburn School Department's Alternative Plan and requested authorization to submit the plan to the Department of Education by December 1, 2007. He explained the history behind the decision to file the alternative plan and the requirements to show good faith in how the reductions will be achieved. Mr. Morrill noted that some possibilities have been drafted and noted that we will explore all of these, but not necessarily enact them. He reported that other systems near us are operating over and above the EPS allocation, but Auburn is operating below that level. Mr. Morrill explained the changes in the allocation of funds. He reviewed each piece of the alternative plan providing further details and answering questions from School Committee members. Mr. Morrill stated that a five percent reduction in Special Education is required; however these reductions must not impact the education of students. He stated that this is a very difficult objective to achieve; however we are exploring options. Mr. Morrill stated that this is only a plan and we are not obligated to implement any or all of this; however we will receive reduced funding so it is to our benefit to explore options for cost savings.

It was moved by Mr. Kendall, seconded by Ms. Hayes and voted unanimously to authorize the Interim Superintendent to submit the Alternative Plan to the Department of Education by December 1, 2007.

VI. INFORMATION / COMMITTEE REPORTS

- City Council Update

VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Inauguration – December 3rd - 6:00 at Central Maine Community College
- Regular School Committee Meeting – December 5th - 7:00 at Auburn Hall with MSMA Workshop at 5:30 PM
- Joint City Council/School Committee Meeting – December 10th - 6:30 Auburn Hall.
- Regular School Committee Meeting – December 19th – 7:00 at Auburn Hall

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

- Joint Lewiston/Auburn School Committee Meeting – January
- Discussion of plans for Retreat - December

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

X. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Kendall, seconded by Mr. Berube and voted unanimously to adjourn from regular session at 9:13 PM.

Attest, a true record,

Thomas Morrill, Secretary
Interim Superintendent of Schools

TM/rmw