

AUBURN SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

AUBURN, MAINE

REPORT OF REGULAR SESSION MEETING OF THE AUBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Fairview School

January 2, 2007

Members Present: Mr. Francois Bussiere
Mr. David Das
Mr. Lane Feldman
Ms. Bonnie Hayes

Mr. Tom Kendall
Mr. Jason Pawlina
Mr. Lawrence Pelletier
Mr. Ron Potvin

Others Present: Mr. Tom Morrill, Interim Superintendent; Tanya Gagne, Student Representative.

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A. Introductions

Mr. Das called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Committee members introduced themselves and stated which ward they represent.

B. Communications

There were no communications from committee members. Ms. Folan welcomed the Committee members and informed them about the events at Fairview School.

C. Recognition of New Student Representative

Mr. Das stated that Deacon Lasagna, the new student representative to the School Committee, was not in attendance tonight because school was closed due to snow. He noted that Mr. Lasagna is expected to attend the meeting on January 16.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Agenda

B. Approval of Minutes – December 19, 2007.

It was moved by Mr. Pawlina, seconded by Ms. Hayes and voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda for tonight's meeting.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public in attendance other than Auburn School Department staff members.

IV. STUDENT INFORMATION

Ms. Tanya Gagne and Mr. Deacon Lasagna were not in attendance tonight due to school closing.

V. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Planning & Development

1. Communication and Subcommittee Discussion

Mr. Morrill stated that providing information and gathering community input is extremely important. He reported that Mr. Pawlina has taken time to look into this issue and make some recommendations. The School Committee members reviewed Mr. Pawlina's proposal and discussed the purpose of the Communications Subcommittee. Mr. Morrill reminded the members that in 2002 the Community Relations Coordinator position was eliminated.

Mr. Pawlina stated that he understands that the budget may not allow the position to be reinstated; however, he felt that the School Committee members could fulfill this role with respect to connecting with the community.

Mr. Kendall stated that he learned that if we want to hear from citizens or speak with them we need to take the message to them. He reported that a speaker at a conference recommended that School Committee members go to luncheons, sports events, churches or other organizations that have group gatherings. He also noted that the speaker said that the best messengers are the teachers.

Ms. Hayes stated that the Brown Bag is a good idea, but reminded the members that the Chamber already has this event and suggested that Mr. Pawlina contact Chip Morrison to coordinate with him. She also suggested that contacting the PTO s and attending those meetings would be a good way to connect with the community.

Mr. Feldman stated that he was under the impression that members should be doing this already. He noted that his best friend is the PTO president and he often attends the meetings.

Mr. Pawlina stated that individually all members should be doing this; however, his proposal was just a suggestion to try something as a group to connect with the community. He suggested that this should be done at a regularly scheduled time.

Mr. Das stated that there is good reason to have a subcommittee and develop methods of connecting with the community.

Mr. Feldman stated that he also attends sporting events, but nobody knows who he is except the staff.

Mr. Kendall stated that it would be very important this year to get the word out and to let the community hear the good things happening in the school system. He noted that in June, the community would have more information and feel better able to support the budget.

Mr. Pelletier stated that he would like to see student representatives from all the schools, noting that this would also be a beneficial method of connecting with the community.

Mr. Potvin stated that informing the citizens about the proposal of rebuilding the high school is an important issue. He noted that in previous Ward meetings, he has heard comments that School Committee members were in attendance, but did not necessarily put the school agenda out for discussion.

Mr. Das stated that changing the dynamic of the Ward meetings is a good idea, and creating a subcommittee to develop structure for getting the project information out would be very helpful.

Ms. Hayes stated that whatever presentation the subcommittee develops would be from the entire School Committee so everyone would be on the same page.

Mr. Bussiere stated that the only time citizens attend these meetings or the City Council meetings if there is something that they are concerned about. He expressed that he was in favor of Mr. Pawlina's plan, but feels that members must systematically approach this program.

Mr. Das stated that he felt the School Committee would need to give the subcommittee a charge.

Ms. Hayes stated that she felt that they should create a newsletter or piggyback with Auburn Highlights to help to inform the community about what is happening in the schools. She noted that members would need to put a rotating committee together to go to existing events with a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Pawlina stated that his intention is that the committee will provide a framework for the School Committee members to work at reaching out to the community.

Mr. Das suggested that the charge be to encourage community involvement and participation in School Committee and School Department issues.

Mr. Morrill suggested that it might be important to establish some outcomes and work the framework from those outcomes.

Mr. Cyr stated that in the late 1990s there were Business Partnerships and some of those still exist. He noted that this is a good resource for connecting with the community.

It was moved by Mr. Das, seconded by Ms. Hayes, and voted unanimously to establish an ad hoc subcommittee whose goals would be to encourage community involvement and to reach out to and inform the public of school department issues and events.

Mr. Das requested that members e-mail him if they are interested in participating in this subcommittee.

2. Proposed Budget Development Schedule

The Interim Superintendent presented a proposed Budget Development Schedule for the 2008-09 budget. He reviewed the proposed schedule noting that if the legislature votes to postpone the budget validation process for a year, the usual process will be used.

Mr. Feldman asked if there would be a clear message from the Mayor as to where they want the School Department budget to come in. He noted that last year we asked for this, but did not get the answer until after we submitted the budget.

Mr. Potvin responded that this is on the agenda for Monday's meeting.

Ms. Hayes stated that she felt it was the committee's responsibility to build a budget according to what they feel is appropriate and she recommends coming in at a zero increase. She noted that if we build a fair budget we should have no problem selling that to the community.

Mr. Morrill stated that he is concerned about a zero percent budget.

Mr. Potvin stated that it is the City Council that will be telling the school department how much money they have to work with and not the other way around. He noted that the City Council has a huge commitment to return something to the taxpayers.

Mr. Das stated that it is the responsibility of the School Committee to ensure that students' educational needs are met.

Mr. Feldman expressed that he would prefer to work within particular parameters when developing the budget.

Ms. Hayes stated that she feels this proposed budget schedule is soft. She noted that she would prefer to see the presentation prior to discussing the particular budget. She stated that she felt that February 29th is too late to get started on the budget and suggested that we could begin preparing for what we will need to be ready for the budget process. Ms. Hayes suggested that during the next four meetings the School Department could arrange for some of the presentations that will be necessary to hear prior to developing the budget. She recommended that the next regular meeting of the School Committee include a presentation by the Administrators giving a true picture of what they do.

Mr. Morrill responded that this could be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. He noted that he would make suggested adjustments to the proposed calendar.

3. School Committee Retreat.

The School Committee members discussed plans for a retreat tentatively scheduled to be held at Auburn Hall on January 9, 2008. Mr. Das noted that this is the process used in the past to bring the School Committee together to discuss issues, hopes, and concerns.

B. Personnel

1. Superintendent's Title

The School Committee Chair recommended rescinding the Interim Superintendent status and approving Thomas Morrill as Superintendent of the Auburn School Department for the remainder of his three-year contract.

It was moved by Mr. Kendall, seconded by Mr. Pelletier and voted unanimously to rescind the Interim Superintendent status and approve Thomas Morrill as Superintendent of the Auburn School Department for the remainder of his three-year contract.

2. Superintendent's Contract Review as Required by Maine State Law

Mr. Das informed the members that Title 20-A, sections 1051, 1053, and 1902.3 A, B, C and D require that all supervisory units employing a Superintendent of Schools shall meet in December of each year to decide upon the election or reelection of the Superintendent's contract.

It was moved by Mr. Kendall, seconded by Mr. Potvin and voted unanimously to authorize the Chair to certify the Superintendent's employment.

VI. INFORMATION / COMMITTEE REPORTS

- City Council Update

Mr. Potvin reported that there was one meeting with Mayor Jenkins to remind him that we have two appointments needed for the Master Plan Subcommittee. He has acknowledged that and Mr. Potvin will inform the members of the appointments as soon as he is aware of them.

It was moved by Mr. Potvin, seconded by Mr. Bussiere and voted 1 in favor and 7 opposed to recommend that all citizens who applied be appointed to the Master Plan Subcommittee. Motion failed.

Mr. Kendall expressed that he felt the balance would not be maintained if all members were allowed to be voting members. He noted that there are a significant number of people recommended to be on the subcommittee already and this would make for a total of sixteen members.

Ms. Hayes requested that if all these people are representing only one school, the members would need to be sure that all schools be represented and a balance achieved on the subcommittee.

Mr. Das noted that four of the seven are from East Auburn Community School neighborhood.

Mr. Feldman suggested that the four who were not selected be considered alternates.

Mr. Das stated that he felt the rules should not be changed midstream and no mention had been made regarding the use of alternates. He noted that the meetings will be public meetings and other citizens are welcome to attend.

VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- School Committee Retreat – January 9th — 4:30 – 8:00 PM at Auburn Hall
- Regular School Committee Meeting – January 16th — 7:00 PM at Auburn Hall
- Joint Lewiston/Auburn School Committees Meeting – January 30th - Dingley Building in Lewiston.
- Regular School Committee Meeting – February 6th — 7:00 PM at Auburn Middle
- Regular School Committee Meeting – February 27th — 7:00 PM at Auburn Hall

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

- Develop campaign efforts to notify public of Master Plan.
- Safe and Drug Free Schools Committee - January 16, 2008.
- Discussion of Middle and High School Structure of Administrative positions –January 16, 2008.
- Discussion of moving budget meetings to Auburn Hall
- Discussion regarding outside groups expecting funding from the School Department
- Plan to increase community involvement of School Committee members
- Discussion of Early Release Wednesdays

It was moved by Mr. Potvin, seconded by Mr. Pawlina and voted 4 in favor and 3 opposed and 1 abstention to place the Early Release Wednesdays issue back on the agenda at a later date.

Ms. Hayes stated that there are so many agenda items to work on this year, it seems that we will bog ourselves down if we go back to previous issues.

Mr. Bussiere stated that he would like to see this placed back on the agenda for further discussion. He noted that this may not be the time to do it, but a future date may be possible.

Mr. Feldman stated that if we need to revisit this issue he would like to get through the budget first.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

It was moved by Mr. Feldman, seconded by Mr. Pawlina and voted unanimously to adjourn from regular session at 8:23 PM. and enter executive session for the purpose of discussion of information regarding a confidential student record pursuant to MRSA 405 (6) (F).

It was moved by Mr. Kendall, seconded by Mr. Potvin and voted unanimously to adjourn from executive session and return to regular session at 9:50 PM. with no further business.

X. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Kendall, seconded by Mr. Potvin and voted unanimously to adjourn from regular session at 9:51 PM.

Attest, a true record,

Thomas Morrill, Secretary
Interim Superintendent of Schools

TM/rmw