

KITTERY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 25, 2009
SHAPLEIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA

I. ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- A & B Call to order and Roll Call: Chairman Jeff Pelletier called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. Present were: Bill Furbush, David Batchelder, Patti Ayer, Glennis Wright, Kim Bedard, Chair Jeff Pelletier and Student Advisory Member Lauren Kennison. Absent was Ken Lemont. Also in attendance were: Business Manager Sheri Rockburn and approximately 100 members of the public, staff, parents, students, members of the press and substitute recorder Barbara Boggiano. Chairman Pelletier introduced the members of the Council present at the table: Chair Jeff Thomson, Councilors George Dow, Ann Grinnell, Judy Spiller, Gary Beers and Glenn Shwaery. Town Manager Jon Carter was also present.
- C. Adjustments to the Agenda: Items VI E and VII-A, to approve Adam Caldwell as Head Wrestling Coach and to acknowledge the retirement of Linda Powell, teacher at the Mitchell School, at the end of this year.
- D. Approval of the minutes: Chairperson Pelletier accepted the sets of minutes for February 3, 2009 and February 18, 2009 as presented.
- E. Student Advisory Member Report: Lauren Kennison presented her written report:
- At Frisbee, 4th Graders had an excellent Electricity Fair;
 - 3rd Graders will exhibit dioramas on Indian life next week;
 - Three initiatives will begin on Friday, February 27th: recycling paper and left over food, and asking parents to stop idling their cars;
 - At Shapleigh, the “Relay for Life” team, the Cancer Dancers raised almost \$3,000 for the American Cancer Society;
 - The Japan Club is gearing up for the Japanese home-stay program and the arrival of the Japanese students in April;
 - Student Council raised nearly \$100 from Valentine deliveries the day before vacation and are collecting box tops for education to earn money for Shapleigh;
 - Art students are preparing for the annual K-12 Art Show at the Kittery Art Association, which opens on March 12th
 - Students at Shapleigh and Frisbee taking their MEA’s;
 - At Traip, preparing to move to Infinite Campus, new data management system, which should be up and running by April 30th;
 - March 4th is Sports Award Night at 7 pm in the gym;
 - March 2nd, there will be a breakfast for seniors who have a GPA of 3.4 or above,
 - March 6th juniors will be taking Accuplacer test;
 - March 7, the Drama Club is competing at Noble HS in the one-act play at 3;
 - March 11th is a staff development day and all staff will be learning from Ross Greene, author of the book, Lost in School.

F. FY10 Budget Discussion with Town Council:

Chairman Thomson opened the discussion noting that he appreciates the efficient manner in which the position of Business Manager was created for the school department and the town, and the thorough approach of the School Committee regarding their involvement on the Shared Services Committee.

He noted Kittery's per pupil expenditure rate, which is higher than neighboring towns and is above the State average. He noted that current revenue projections like property taxes, transfer station fees, excise tax and Fort Foster fees are six percent below expectations. Therefore, the Town Manager has placed a 1.5% curtailment on expenditures for town departments for the current fiscal year.

He felt the stimulus funds may help. However, property valuation has gone down and the Council is looking at the possibility of a 40-50 cent increase in the tax rate. The rate will not be set until October. He is concerned about a statewide referendum to reduce the excise tax by 40%. This will be on the November ballot, but it would mean \$600,000 loss of revenue for Kittery.

Extensive discussion ensued between the School Committee and the Town Council about the possible tax increase, reductions in budgets, and the fund balance.

Chairman Pelletier thanked Mr. Thomson for his remarks and said he would like to discuss the closure of Frisbee School, the proposed building project for Mitchell and Shapleigh and the budget because they are related. At this time, Chair Pelletier opened the floor for public comment.

II - PUBLIC COMMENT:

Steve Williams, Frisbee School teacher, joined by several faculty members, read a letter from the staff expressing their concerns about the closing of Frisbee School. Some of them are: congestion, emergency evacuation and safety concerns as well as 4th and 5th graders will be riding buses with students aged 12-18 and 4th graders will be sharing the restroom, nurse and guidance offices with 8th graders.

Dawn Tlemsley said she is a proud supporter of the music program and felt that cutting the high school teacher position will impact all students. She said the State of Maine indicated in their report that fine arts, such as music, are closely related to academic achievement and she urged them not to cut the music position.

Kate Woods felt the Grade 3 position is just as crucial to the children as the Kindergarten position or the 6th grade position. She was concerned about the greater pupil teacher ratio and urged the Board to maintain the Grade 3 classroom position and keep a reasonable class size.

Chris Andrews spoke to raising taxes and felt the Board should let the voters decide. He felt they do not want to lose any more jobs. He was also concerned about separating the younger children from the older children.

Lonnie Westcott, music teacher at Traip, explained his program and number of students he works with. He felt that Mr. Roth and Ms. Rhodes will find it very difficult to pick up the student load now taught by 3 teachers. He asked the Board to reconsider the music position cut.

Liz McKay Gherrin felt voters should be able to decide on the budget and cuts. She felt that if we have to raise taxes to give the students a good school system, then the real estate will increase in value. She said that Music and sports programs cannot be cut from the schools.

Mike Brown commended the Town Council and School Committee for not raising taxes and wanted to second the motion about not cutting the music program. He is willing to pay more money to keep the music program going.

Traip student Rachel Auger said she is a student in band and music theory. Mr. Westcott has been wonderful in providing necessary time for her to excel in music. She urged the Committee not to cut the music program.

Don Gagnon, teacher, felt that basketball and music are important. He said it is difficult for him to read about a \$13.4 million dollar stimulus funds yet talk about what they are going to do with Frisbee School.

Gil Roberts said it is frustrating to watch the process the town and school have been going through. He would like to see the budget. He wanted to know if the kids were going into trailers and was there some way they could accommodate the children through the Capital Improvement Program. He felt that education is the #1 priority and when people want to buy a home, they look at the schools.

Jennifer Wollacott felt there would be a severe impact on the children if the music program is taken away, and that students benefit from small class sizes. She would like to see the School Committee fulfill their responsibility to do what is best for the children at Frisbee.

Lee Perkins noted that she sent a letter to the Portsmouth Herald stating she is in favor of delaying the closure of Frisbee School and got 122 people to sign the letter within 24 hours. She felt they should step back and plan for the community to vote.

Mr. Perkins wanted to know what happens if the bond does not pass and the Board finds it necessary to re-open Frisbee and hire staff. Where would we get the money? He said he has seen them re-do the schools in the last 10 years and now they have all day Kindergarten and he felt they will become a self-fulfilling prophecy by driving families away if the cuts are made. He said the top priorities are families and education.

Christy Matheson asked how many taxpayers and students are in Kittery. Ms. Matheson felt that, if 45% of the population is involved with the schools, then is the other 55% telling us we don't want to see this happen.

Sandy Lutts, school staff member, stated her concern: Looking at a three-school configuration – closing Frisbee, and moving the kids, there is an enormous amount of changes for \$300,000 to make it right. She is concerned about voting on the money after this is done.

Amy Wilson, Frisbee teacher, expressed her concerns about the pupil teacher ratios being too large. She felt that moving out of Frisbee before the town has a chance to vote is premature.

Mark McNabb explained his analysis of some of the numbers that were being used this evening, and felt they are not all correct. Keeping Frisbee open would result in a 4½ % increase, not 15%. He felt that Frisbee School should remain open and the School Committee should use the \$300,000 as a placeholder.

Chris Perkins commented on the re-configuration numbers and said cuts hurt no matter where they come from. He felt that Frisbee should remain open and make sure the mix is right, and the plan should be approved by the voters in November. He said he is concerned about class sizes and children being lost.

Linda Lorrey said her three children have received a great education in Kittery and she is concerned about moving the kids. Then, in November, the taxpayers will see a 4% tax increase, and the bond may not pass because of the economy. In addition, a lot of people are retiring here and, if they do not have children in the system, they will not support the bond, and then what happens?

Barney Hoop, retiree and school volunteer, said he doesn't mind paying higher taxes because he feels it is an investment. He doesn't have any kids in schools now, but their success is our success and these kids are his kids, too.

Don Clark stated that he has three children in the system, and they are right at the heart of this decision. As a single dad, he doesn't want to see his children sacrificed for the greater good and appreciates the smaller class sizes.

Nicky Diaz was concerned about the pupil teacher ratio. She asked how big the Kindergarten class was and, wanted to know if they have room for the kids at Mitchell.

Betty Hallesy pointed out that Frisbee is going to be turned over to the town for the Recreation Department and the library. The town would have to replace the roof. She said there are lots of things they can do to bring costs town.

Chairman Pelletier closed the public hearing comment at 9:06 p.m. and declared a 10-minute recess.

G. FY10 Budget Workshop – Administrators: Sheri Rockburn, Business Manager, explained the draft budget document. Discussion of the budget then opened with the Board members and administrators. Further discussion involved the \$300,000 savings by closing Frisbee School.

Chairman Pelletier suggested that the Board should discuss the issue of closing Frisbee now, along with the FY 10 budget discussion, then vote on it when it comes up on the agenda.

Following a review and discussion of the budget, Chairman Pelletier closed the workshop.

It was MOVED by Kim Bedard, SECONDED by Glennis Wright and VOTED 6-0 to go past 10:00 p.m.

III. CORRESPONDENCE:

The Board acknowledged receipt of two letters, one from Commissioner Gendron informing Supt. Littlefield that Kittery qualifies as a stand-alone district and that the district must file an Alternative Plan as required by statute. The other letter is from a Traip student with a question about classroom equipment.

IV. STAFF REPORTS: None

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Take action to implement the three school plan (K-3, 4-8 and 9-12) beginning the school year 2009-10: It was MOVED by Chairman Pelletier, SECONDED by Bill Furbish, and VOTED 4-2 (Kim Bedard and David Batchelder) to close the Frisbee School effective June 30, 2009 and implement the three school plan starting in the fall of 2009.

B. Take action to transfer FY09 budgeted funds in accordance with the Chart of Accounts:

It was MOVED by Kim Bedard, SECONDED by Glennis Wright and VOTED 6-0 to transfer FY09 budgeted funds as recommended in accordance with statute and the Chart of Accounts.

C. Take action on a request to withdraw 30 days from the Unit C Sick Leave Bank: It was MOVED by Glennis Wright, SECONDED by Bill Furbish and VOTED 6-0 to grant the request to withdraw 30 days from the Unit C Sick Leave Bank.

D. Take action on first reading of policy DKC- Travel and Expense Authorization Reimbursement. It was MOVED by David Batchelder, SECONDED by Patti Ayer and VOTED 6-0 to accept Policy DKC as a first reading. Mr. Batchelder made suggestions for changes. It was MOVED by D. Batchelder, and SECONDED by P. Ayer and VOTED 6-0 to approve the revised policy DKC with changes. Mr. Batchelder will review the changes with Ms. Ayer, member of the Policy Committee.

E. Take action to approve Adam Caldwell as Middle School Head Wrestling Coach: It was MOVED by Kim Bedard, SECONDED by Glennis Wright and VOTED 6-0, to approve Adam Caldwell as Head Wrestling Coach at SMS.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

A. Resignation/Retirement:

1. Jim L'Heureux, Maintenance Director

Supt. Littlefield reported that Jim L'Heureux has been with the Kittery School Dept. for 21 years and will be retiring at the end of April, 2009. Mr. L'Heureux has done an outstanding work for the Kittery School Department. It was MOVED by Chairman Pelletier, SECONDED by Kim Bedard and VOTED 6-0 to acknowledge the retirement of Mr. L'Heureux. Chairman Pelletier thanked Jim for all his work, said he will be greatly missed, and wished him the best in his retirement.

2. Linda Powell, Mitchell Primary School teacher

It was MOVED by Chairman Pelletier, SECONDED by Kim Bedard and VOTED 6-0 to acknowledge the retirement of Linda Powell at the end of the school year. Chairman Pelletier thanked Ms. Powell for all her work with Kittery's children, and wished her the best in her retirement.

VIII. COMMITTEES & REPORTS:

- A. Design Team – No report given
- B. Town Council Information Report – No report given
- C. Health Coordinating Team – No report given
- D. Policy Committee – The committee has been working to update policies
- E. MSBA Executive Committee – No report given
- F. Advisory Committee for Information Literacy – No report given
- G. Legislative Committee – No report given
- H. Finance Committee – Committee met and minutes will be sent to Board members. There were no issues raised in the review of the warrants.
- I. Energy Committee – No report given

IX. QUESTIONS /COMMENTS/CONCERNS: None

X. EXECUTIVE SESSIONS: None

XII. ADJOURNMENT:

It was MOVED by Kim Bedard, SECONDED by Glennis Wright to adjourn the meeting at 10:59 p.m. All were in FAVOR by a VOICE VOTE.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Boggiano, Substitute Recorder

Date

Approved by:_____

Larry Littlefield, Superintendent of Schools

Date approved