

HADLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

HADLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

May 23, 2011

6:30 PM Regular Meeting

Hopkins Academy Music Room

PRESENT: Chair: Ms. Robie Grant, Vice Chair: Mr. James Michalak Members: Mr. Tom Waskiewicz, Ms. Linda Dunlavy, and Ms. Molly Keegan.

Dr. Nicholas Young, Superintendent of Schools, Carol Trane, Administrative Assistant, Gazette Reporter, Nick Grabbe, TV5's Walter Mantani, Hopkins Academy Principal, Diana Bonneville; Teachers, parents and community members.

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chair, Ms. Robie Grant called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOTION: (Dunlavy/Waskiewicz) move to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2011, meeting as presented. VOTE: Unanimous.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Grant informed the audience that this portion of the agenda allowed for public comment, that there will be a two minute time limit and topics are limited to items on the evening's agenda with no response from the School Committee other than to thank you for sharing your comments with the board. Hearing none, Ms Grant moved on announcements.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Grant offered the following:

- Belated congratulations on the Hopkins Academy Drama production of The Sting with a cast of thirty participants. Appreciation was offered to Mr. Fred Goodhue for returning to Hopkins as director, and to Betty Vachula, Sally Serio and Pat Serio for their assistance.
- Congratulations to the Hopkins Academy Equestrian Club on winning the National Championship and to Mrs. Susan Duncan their advisor. Also recognized Mallory Hudak for her thank you note to the SC for the financial support.
- Recognized the PAC Award recipients, Mrs. Sara Lavalley and Mrs. Paula Cristoforo.

Superintendent Young offered the following:

- Recognized Mrs. Diane Zak on her recent election as the Chapter One Delegate Elect to the School Nutrition Association.

V. SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

- **Communication with superintendent and among members**

Ms. Grant said she's attended some professional development orientations for school committee members and believes Hadley has become isolated from what other school committees are doing. After being elected Chair, Ms. Grant spoke with Glen Koocher of the Mass. Assoc. of School Committee's Executive Director who suggested that the board have a discussion on school committee governance with respect to how the board runs things, how the board wants to proceed, etc.

One area to discuss is communication with the superintendent, saying currently members communicate directly with Dr. Young and she didn't see any reason to change that. Ms. Grant noted that emails among members are limited to sharing information, setting up a meeting, etc., but the committee does not deliberate by email. All emails are copied to Mrs. Trane who keeps them in a file.

Ms. Dunlavy questioned whether members had received the new rules governing the Open Meeting Law and the findings that agendas need to be specific. Dr. Young noted that members did receive the update. Ms. Grant noted that there will be a training offered by the Attorney General's office open to all who are interested in attending.

- **Meeting schedules**

Having a regular meeting schedule had been discussed in the past, noted Ms. Grant, and is once again up for discussion. Ms. Dunlavy and Ms. Keegan supported setting a regular meeting schedule while Mr. Waskiewicz said it is harder for him since he works a lot of nights and is obligated to the 4H volunteers of several counties. Mr. Michalak said he's willing to try it and if it presents too many conflicts, then it can be discussed again. Members agreed to the fourth Monday of the month starting in August. For the month of June the Committee will meet on the 20th at 6:30 PM.

- **Meeting agendas, posting schedule, use of School Committee website**

Ms. Grant will try to get meeting agendas out as quickly as possible but not more than a week before. The agendas are being posted on the school website, along with approved minutes. The agenda will also be posted on the PTO website and filed with the Town Clerk.

- Meetings of varying content and purpose

Ms. Grant said this deals with academic presentations. Members received a sample printout of an effective model for diverse presentations by department heads, key teachers and staff on a month-to-month basis. Dr. Young proposed working with the administrative team to come up with a list of topics to present. Mr. Waskiewicz questioned how this might affect the teacher's contract with Mr. Michalak also questioning the additional workload for teachers. Dr. Young remarked that negotiations are about to begin and thought this should probably be brought into the negotiation perspective. Ms. Dunlavy remarked that she has staff members give presentations at the Franklin County Council of Government meetings to allow them to highlight their work. Dr. Young said he would like to have the opportunity to take this to the union and have a conversation as part of a collaborative process, adding, there might be some who want to volunteer to give a presentation. Ms. Dunlavy said she didn't believe every month had to have a teacher presentation, perhaps they could meet with the School Council, have a school lunch discussion, and other topics of interest.

- **School Committee self-evaluation tool**

Ms. Grant provided a ten-page sample evaluation tool provided by MASC, adding that if committee's are charged with developing evaluations for teachers and evaluating the superintendent, it seems only fair that they evaluate themselves. The sample form could be used by this committee and sent back to MASC for analysis. This particular document covers the roles and responsibilities of the school committee, broad areas, policies, professional development, how meetings are run, what is covered at meetings, relationship with the superintendent, relationship with other town boards, curriculum and instruction, assessment, student support, financial and asset management. Ms. Gant, in response to member's questions on how to proceed, said she would like the members to complete the evaluation, send it off to MASC, and then have MASC come to a meeting to discuss the results. Mr. Waskiewicz questioned having the form numerically based, asking if the committee should have a pre-discussion before embarking on individual rankings, given that some members may be low markers and some

higher, giving way to a middle result and miss the nuances. Committee members asked the Chair to set a schedule of sections for review at the next meeting.

VI. MASC MEMBERSHIP

Ms. Grant said she supports joining MASC and believes Hadley is only one of five in the state that doesn't belong. MASC provides monthly informational mailings, and maintains a list serve that provides good information. Dues are assessed on a fiscal year, currently at \$3,100.

MOTION: (Keegan/Michalak) move to join MASC on July 1 for fiscal year 2012. VOTE: Unanimous.

VII. POLICY BEDG – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Ms. Grant noted that this policy has been discussed previously, however, the revised policy is being presented for the first time this evening with noted changes. Ms. Grant gave an overview of the policy, which is filed with and made a part of these minutes. This will be the first reading of the revised policy on Public Participation at School Committee Meetings and will be brought back at the June meeting for a second reading and approval.

It was suggested that #3 include language to allow the Chair discretion in responding to a speaker if the Chair deems it appropriate.

VIII. RETENTION OF LEGAL COUNSEL

Ms. Grant said it's the responsibility of the School Committee to determine who legal counsel is and that legal counsel should report to the Committee but does a lot of work with the superintendent on personnel matters and other legal matters. The SC policy gives the Chair authority to communicate with the attorney, not individual members.

Dr. Young said legal services have been provided by Attorney Fred Dupere & Associates for about 25 years. He is currently on a retainer for \$425 per month, or \$5,100 a year. Dr. Young noted that he contacted the Town Administrator and learned that the Town is currently spending \$165 an hour and budgets \$35,000 a year and is spending approx. \$15,000 a year. In his conversation with Mr. Nixon, he expressed concern that Kopleman & Paige have a lot of junior associates that respond while we are fortunate to have a senior attorney at our disposal, adding by all accounts one of the most experienced educational attorneys is on retainer

here. There is no contract because it's a retainer situation, based month-to-month. Attorney Dupere represents the vast majority of districts in the region.

Mr. Waskiewicz said he had the opportunity to work with Attorney Dupere both with negotiations and issues requiring legal advice and had been able to speak with him as early as six in the morning or have him return calls on his way home from the eastern part of the state, sometimes as late as 9:30 at night; his response is always within 24 hours. Dr. Young said we get more from our attorney than the general retainer. He provides updates on legal matters concerning personnel issues and other subjects that may impact school operations; and in response to Ms. Keegan, Dr. Young said Attorney Dupere also does collective bargaining that is included in the retainer. Attorney Dupere will be asked to meet the Committee, perhaps in August.

IX. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

- Sue Jekanowski will retire from the cafeteria after 11 years. Dr. Young said Sue has assumed varied responsibilities over the years and will be missed.
- Margie Strauss, Hadley Elementary Kindergarten Teacher, will retire after 25 years. Dr. Young said she has gained extraordinary respect in the community and with staff for her warm personality and strong commitment to students.
- Mr. DiPietro's tenure as the elementary principal is coming to an end in early July after ten years of service.
- Mr. Jeff Udall will assume the elementary principalship in early July. Members received a copy of Mr. Udall's contract. Dr. Young welcomed him on behalf of the team. There will be an overlap of few days with Mr. DiPietro and Mr. Udall.
- Projected Enrollment. Dr. Young distributed an updated projected enrollment for the elementary school, concentrating on the in-coming numbers in kindergarten; adding, the likelihood of breaking 50 is very high and in particular the number of students enrolled in kindergarten is a source of anxiety for some families. Thirteen families have expressed an interest in enrolling their students from outside of Hadley and some families that could change their custody arrangement to allow them to enroll. Dr. Young said at this time of year he is comfortable recommending that a third kindergarten teacher be hired. While Dr. Young said he is reluctant to incur expenses, yet believes the expense will be incurred anyway, and by waiting we will incur the expense without the opportunity to offset some of those cost and believes financially it is better to address this sooner; adding, those monies will come out of the School Choice Account for a kindergarten teacher and a paraprofessional. With the retirement of Mrs. Strauss, a kindergarten teacher, Dr. Young said there may be internal transfers for those teachers interested in applying. This will allow us the lead-time to make this much more organized.
- **MOTION: (Keegan/Waskiewicz) move to establish a third section of Kindergarten and staff it with a teacher and paraprofessional. VOTE: Unanimous.**
- **MOTION: (Dunlavy/Michalak) move to open Kindergarten to School Choice students for 2011-2012. VOTE: Unanimous.**

It was agreed that every effort will be made to keep class sizes small.

- Dr. Young addressed an enrollment issue at Hopkins that involves our Foreign Language program that has grown. 8th Grade French for next year has 33 students and can't be split up because of the scheduling. Dr. Young recommended having a teacher's assistant, who is fluent in French, assist the classroom teacher and would result in a very modest cost. Dr. Young also noted that due to the nature of our block scheduling, our teachers teach beyond the general guidelines. To make sure we have the staff to offer AP Spanish, we need to offer one teacher an overload status and pay that teacher to teach an extra class and would estimate this cost at approx. \$11,000, adding it could cost \$16,000 to address both needs.

MOTION: (Dunlavy/Michalak) move to approve a sum of money to allow for an additional teaching period to cover AP Spanish and to also allocate funds for a teaching assistant for the 8th Grade French class. VOTE: Unanimous.

- **Pumpkin Contest**

Mr. Ed Dudkiewicz is sponsoring a Pumpkin Contest in memory of his youngest brother Myron. In 1965 Myron was in second grade and planted some pumpkin seeds his father gave him. One of those pumpkins grew to 188 lbs. He entered it at the Three County Fair and won first place. He also entered his pumpkin in the Men's Garden Club of America and won first place as the biggest pumpkin in America. The seeds the students will receive are from the last pumpkins grown by Myron.

- **Green Repair Project – Hopkins Roof**

Dr. Young said Hadley has gone through a series of steps since the Committee last met. Hadley had to select an OPM (Owner's Project Manager) and Strategic Building Solutions out of Chicopee was selected off the list from the state. Also selected CSS Architects from Wakefield, MA. The state issues the contracts and the next step will be to have them signed. In response to Ms. Dunlavy's timeline inquiry, Dr. Young said there was no way the project would start this summer. He would venture to guess this project will start in late fall or early spring. Nothing is definite at this time.

- **Virtual School**

Dr. Young reported that the Commissioner of DESE has decided that in his view, to deny the waiver request that Hadley had submitted and also denied the second request for a waiver from Greenfield for a virtual high school and put Greenfield's initial virtual school on notice that they will only have twelve more months at which time all of these schools will dissipate and in their place the state would adopt three virtual charter schools provided the Board endorses them. Dr. Young said he is aware of disagreement on the part of the legislators. It appears the House can't move on this in the current session to force a change and seems unlikely the Senate will move on this to force a change, and it remains uncertain whether this will come up again in the next legislative session. Right now the Board of Education is the only empowered body to make decisions. The Commissioner works for the Board of Education, and his recommendation is that they deny our request and that they stop virtual schools that fall under the auspices of school committees. In a meeting with the Commissioner, Dr. Young learned that the Commissioner felt the state has minimal control over virtual schools that are under the auspices of school

committees because they have little regulatory authority over the conduct and decisions of school committees. However, DESE has regulatory control over charter schools and is recommending virtual schools go the charter school direction. Dr. Young said he believes it's the end of the conversation for right now, whether it's the end of the conversation come next fall is a whole other question. This means Hadley is done now with the virtual school. Mrs. Dunlavy said this doesn't change existing innovation school legislation; adding, Hadley could look at moving forward with looking at an innovation school within our existing school.

Dr. Young said there were always two creative options. There was a virtual innovation school option that was 100% online and involved the waiver request from Hadley. The second option is an innovation school that could be a virtual innovation school. The difference under this category of innovation school has 21% or more of instruction needs provided within the context of the district; meaning 79% of instruction could be virtual. The commissioner has no say over that whatsoever; it is strictly a local decision by the school committee. Dr. Young has addressed this previously when discussing having an open campus that may have a virtual component and is an acceptable path to take.

Dr. Young said the 71F account that was put off to the fall town meeting would still be a required piece to handle tuition from the outside that needs to be funneled through a tuition account and that is a 71F account.

Ms. Grant wanted to clarify that Hopkins will continue to offer students the opportunity to take virtual classes in the fall.

Ms. Keegan asked if Hadley would go forward with an innovation school plan with opportunities for community input. Dr. Young said without the 71F account nothing could be done for September, but said he would expect to address this through the fall months and try to develop a very solid proposal by January for the school committee.

Ms. Dunlavy said from her conversation with state officials she learned that our waiver is being denied not because we didn't have a good proposal but because they want to stop and pause and look at virtual school education in Massachusetts.

- **2-Year NEASC Progress Report for Hopkins Academy**

The report is very favorable from NEASC. Dr. Young thanked Hopkins Principal, Diana Bonneville and the capable and committed staff at Hopkins for their great work in maintaining Hopkins NEASC accreditation. The report is filed with and made a part of these minutes.

- **Independent Audit School Financial Report for 2010**

Dr. Young shared a copy of the Hadley Public Schools' fiscal audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2010. The accountants found "no findings." This is a 100% perfect audit from our financial external review.

- **DESE Parent Survey**

Dr. Young reported, as a coming attraction, that the state has selected us for dissemination of a new parent survey. Part of what the state is looking for is the level of engagement of families in schools to determine if involvement correlates to MCAS success. Dr. Young believes we were selected because Hadley is a high performing district.

X. HOCKEY ATHLETIC CO-OP WITH AMHERST

Hadley has had a hockey coop with Amherst where three students participated. It is now time to renew the application with Amherst, Palmer and Hadley. Dr. Young said under this arrangement students pay the current user's fee that Amherst students pay. The only cost that Hadley incurs is our percentage of ice time computed by the number of students participating. Example: If two students participate, ice time would cost approx. \$1,500 and would be paid for out of the athletic revolving account, not the local budget.

MOTION: (Keegan/Waskiewicz) move to renew the Co-op application for a cooperative ice hockey team with Amherst and Palmer. VOTE: Unanimous.

XI. DATA GATHERING ON FAMILIES OPTING OUT OF HADLEY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Dr. Young said the school committee discussed doing this survey come June. Hadley did a survey some years back, plus Dr. Young reviewed other schools and took what we had and made some enhancements to offer a document to begin the conversation. Members received a draft of the survey. Dr. Young reminded the committee that some students never set foot in the Hadley Public Schools. This survey would cover any students we have in the records who are not currently in the Hadley Public Schools would get the survey.

Mr. Michalak asked if we ever take a survey of the students who chose to come to Hadley under Choice. Dr. Young said that instead of asking why they are leaving; ask why they are coming in. Mr. Waskiewicz said he received a note from a parent and asked Mr. Waskiewicz to read it since they couldn't attend. The parent said she wanted to address the claim that 20% of the kids in the district are leaving and wanted to compare apples to apples, asserting that this figure is not accurate and further noted that 70 plus students come into the district under Choice and asked that the survey present both sides.

Dr. Young said he will fine-tune the survey and welcomed input. He will also prepare a survey for the inverse that will address the same categories of why they leave and why they came in. Members will have until Tuesday morning to offer comments.

XII. OTHER (Reports, and/or Information Items, etc.)

- a. Balance Sheets 7/1/2010 to 5/22/2011 were distributed at the meeting.
- b. Members discussed items for the June agenda. They included: curriculum materials, handbooks, enrollments, goals, formation of subcommittees, including a field committee to talk about the land acquisition from the Trustees to expand the playing fields at Hopkins.

Mr. Michalak noted that much had been done to upgrade Hopkins in the last few years, but there are still things that need to be done. There are some middle school classrooms needing upgrades and asked that there be a running lists of improvements that still need attention, mentioning the locker rooms. Dr. Young said there is a capital plan that should be brought back for review.

XIII. NEXT MEETING

June 20, 2011, at 6:30 PM, Hopkins Academy Music Room.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: (Waskiewicz/Dunlavy) move to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of strategy planning with respect to collective bargaining with Unit A and Unit C; and further state, that conducting the aforementioned business in open session will have a detrimental effect on the public body's negotiating position. The committee will not reconvene in Regular Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

The Chair called for a Roll Call Vote: Voting Yes: Waskiewicz, Michalak, Dunlavy, Keegan and Grant.

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XV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: (Waskiewicz/Michalak) move to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 PM. VOTE: Unanimous.