

**HADLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
HADLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS
December 19, 2011**

6:30 PM Regular Meeting

Hopkins Academy Music Room

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

Chairman Grant report on the absence of Dr. Nicholas Young, Superintendent of Schools due to a family medical emergency.

Others present: Ms. Grant also introduced Matt Waskiewicz, Matt Jacques and Lauren Robinson, the three high school student representatives to the School Committee. Also present: Carol Trane, Administrative Assistant, HEA President, Jack Horrigan, State Representative, John Scibak, Tracy Kelley, Terri Earle, Heather Ciaglo, Andrea Elson, Dana Whitney, Charlene Vinton, Renee Hembrough, Hopkins Teachers Marilyn Judah and Cathy Niedzjela, Hopkins Principal, Diana Bonneville, Nina Pollard, Jim Hafner and Jo-ann Konieczny. Gazette Reporter, Ben Storrow and Kris Garand, for Ch. 5. Hopkins Teachers, Chris Pipczynski and Pat Lemieux, Elementary Teacher, Connie Douglas and Food Services Director, Diane Zak. Student Council Representative, Matt Jacques and Hopkins Principal, Diana Bonneville. Parents and community members: Jo-Ann Konieczny, Renee Hembrough, Heather Ciaglo, and Terri Earle.

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOTION: (Dunlavy/Waskiewicz) move to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2011, meeting as presented. VOTE: Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – NONE

ANNOUNCEMENTS – NONE

MEETING WITH REP. JOHN SCIBAK – HOPKINS LAND DEVELOPMENT

Chairman Grant welcomed Representative Scibak. Ms Keegan said the Committee thought it wise to invite him to their meeting to discuss possible grant money to develop the playing fields at Hopkins Academy due to the recent acquisition of additional land purchase at the fall town meeting. Mr. Scibak said there are a couple of grant programs that were restructured last year on the state level. One was a self-help grant and an urban self-help grant. He shared that South Hadley utilized the grants to acquire the land and refurbish their fields. Mr. Scibak noted that Hadley has never applied for any of these grants and he would like to see these funds applied equably since Hadley pays taxes just like other communities. He also encouraged the Committee to contact the Army Corp of Engineers who did the construction on the fields in South Hadley. Typically these funds are available in late spring with decisions made prior to the end of July. Rep. Scibak said he is also looking into private foundation dollars where funding is sometimes available through the Red Sox's, Cal Ripkin or other organizations.

Mr. Michalak asked when is the timeline to apply? Mr. Scibak believed it was around March. The Governor's budget should be released in January that will let everyone know the dollar amounts available for DCR funding. Mr. Rick Sullivan, former Westfield mayor, now Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs oversees many of the DCR projects.

Ms. Dunlavy said considering the timeline of grant awards in August with completion by June 30th and they want shovel ready, Hadley should be pushing on the design now. Mr. Scibak agreed, adding Hadley should at least have something that can be worked from, adding there is never a guarantee there will be unexpended funds, but he would hate to see an opportunity missed.

Mr. Scibak was thanked for this input and time. But before he left, he addressed the state budget process, noting there were discrepancies on projected growth. The income tax is being lowered from 5.3 to

5.25 and will result in a loss of revenue. This loss will exceed what was given back in additional local aid last year. The hope is there is an increase in growth to offset the loss in income taxes-and even if it breaks even, the state is at square one.

In response to Ms. Keegan's question on the potential loss of federal funding, Mr. Scibak said the biggest problem the state faces is the loss of Medicaid reimbursement.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATION – MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAMING

Hopkins Academy Principal, Diana Bonneville, said she would concentrate this presentation on, the Jr. High vs. Middle School concept. Mrs. Bonneville said Jr. High's were established in the early 1900's as a way to track students either through an academic or vocational track. They are considered miniature high schools. In years past, Jr. High's became under constant scrutiny because they didn't take adolescence psychology into consideration and not as supportive as parents would have liked. From that concern, the Middle School Team concept was developed to encompass many areas of development in this age group, typically 5 through 8, never 9th. There are special components to the Middle School, like team teaching, flexible scheduling, interdisciplinary instruction, advisories, cooperative learning activities, integration of technology, intramurals over team sports, teachers working collaboratively and student interventions are built into the school day. It is believed 7th and 8th graders have unique needs that can best be met by an environment that is isolated and separate from older high school students. Teachers can focus on their educational, social and developmental needs while they are transitioning between the elementary and high school. Mrs. Bonneville said the Middle School goals revolve around writing a challenging curriculum, preparing students to be successful on the high school level, maintaining open communication with parents to discuss academic and learning needs, encouraging students to advocate for themselves and play a larger role in being responsible for their learning by utilizing extra help sessions, planning activities that will foster research skills, critical thinking, organization, time management skills and teaching students personal responsibility for recognizing the changing developmental needs of early adolescence. The Middle School Team at Hopkins was created in 1995 with teacher common-planning time and 30 minutes of activity period that is critical to the Middle School Team. This approach was developed because standardized test scores were lower and there was also a need to increase parent communication. The activity period, called TAP, allowed students to explore careers, do community service projects, and work on interpersonal skills development. Due to the need for expanded Math and English instruction, this 30-minute period was cut. Mrs. Bonneville said there are discussions to see if something can be done quarterly, like a career development day and utilizing the half days.

This is the first year high school mentors are going into the Middle School and holding student advisories for students in grade 7 through 9. They cover subjects like time management, personal skills, and how to resolve conflicts diplomatically.

The Middle School Team is comprised of seven teachers and are given 50 minutes every day for common planning time; however some of this time has been lost when some of the teachers have to leave after 15 minutes to teach electives due to increased enrollment over the last five years. Each day of the week has a specific area the teachers cover: Monday is reserved for team planning-coordinating tests to prevent students from being overloaded and to plan field trips and cross curricular projects and activities; on Tuesday they discuss students at risk or attend student IEP or 504 meetings; Wednesdays are used to prepare weekly progress reports; Thursdays and Fridays are used for parent meetings, team planning or effective instructional strategies. Daily tasks included updating the website and meeting with the resource room teachers. Every 45 days teachers prepare quarterly reports and review grades to determine if student needs are being met. Annually they prepare for parent conferences and attend vertical team meetings with the elementary 5th and 6th grade staff to discuss mastery of skills and specific student needs and review strengths and weaknesses of our curriculum. MS teachers also do MAP testing in the spring and fall, plan MCAS testing schedules and review results to determine the best ways to improve student achievement, plan Spirit Week, discuss Smith Voke recommendations, do parent/student orientation in the spring and plan Step-Up Day and speak with 6th graders at the elementary school to help relieve their anxiety about transitioning to Hopkins.

Ms. Dunlavy said she attended the last council meeting and asked Mrs. Bonneville if she could talk about what is going to happen in math in the Middle School next year. Mrs. Bonneville said the teachers have been brainstorming different ideas but that it is just a brainstorming session and was not prepared to talk about any plans publicly yet. Ms. Dunlavy asked when Mrs. Bonneville would be ready to talk about this. Mrs. Bonneville said the in March, noting the master schedule is developed at the end of

January, beginning of February and much will depend on budget requests decided on by the School Committee, again stressing it is to premature to go into specifics. Ms. Keegan asked if Mrs. Bonneville could generally talk about the impetus behind looking at the math program. Mrs. Bonneville said that test scores play a huge role, not having made AYP, and while there could be curricular issues there are also scheduling issues, necessitating looking at a variety of solutions to help. There is also the need to align our curriculum with the new literacy standards and with the common core standards that will necessitate revamping from K-12.

SC Members thanked Mrs. Bonneville for her presentation.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY

- **Social Media Policy – Second Reading**

Chairman Grant noted that this policy had been discussed before and is now back to review the final wording and then pass it on to the teacher's association for their approval before adoption. Ms. Dunlavy had reworked the policy to remove the limiting term Facebook and changed it to digital and social network communications and also the original policy called for the administration doing an annual training. Ms. Dunlavy believed this put too much onus on the administration to remember to do the training; therefore, it was rewritten providing a clear policy that sets out what is the proper decorum for communicating with students. There was also a change removing the reference to part-time, temporary coaches since the policy gave this group more latitude than school employees who may also be coaching. The new language will allow coaches to contact students via other means (other than the school district network site) only after receiving approval from administration.

- **Student Representative to the Hadley School Committee – Second Reading**

Student representatives present said they had received the policy and understand their role. Mr. Waskiewicz asked how the representatives disseminated information and was told it was by word of mouth.

MOTION: (Waskiewicz/Michalak) move to adopt the Student Representative to the Hadley School Committee policy. VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. Keegan asked the student reps to think about how to formalize communication, perhaps through the Hawks Claw or through the student council.

- **School Choice Spending Policy – Second Reading**

Ms. Dunlavy noted that the changes to this policy following the first reading by the addition of the first paragraph that states a portion of school choice funds will be used to support the district's operating budget and then clarifies that choice funds can also be used for capital improvement projects staying within DOR policy. It further states that these improvement projects are from a prioritized and endorsed Capital Improvement Plan.

The word discretionary was added to the first bullet to allow for the maintenance of a reserve approximately equal to the prior year's discretionary grant monies received.

The last paragraph talked about when the SC went outside this policy the SC would put in writing why, but there was no language to require discussion and endorsement at a SC meeting. Language was added to address require discussion and endorsement at a SC meeting with the decision documented in writing that includes a full explanation of alternatives considered and the rationale used to arrive at the decision.

Mr. Michalak expressed concern that needed projects would not get done due to Choice funds being held in reserve. He expressed concern at having a large amount of cash just sitting there with the restrictions to hold reserves approx. equal to the prior year's ending accrued and unpaid vacation pay. Ms. Keegan responded by saying the SC could approve capital expenditures from choice funds if other sources are not suitable. Mr. Michalak said the choice funds will be needed because the regular budget won't have sufficient funding for capital projects that will be quite expensive.

Ms. Dunlavy said she would be very unhappy if the SC spent so much of the school choice fund and then lost discretionary grants causing serious cuts to the academic programs. Ms. Keegan said the SC has to think in terms of replenishment, noting that right now the school choice account has a healthy balance, yet this fiscal year the SC will spend all FY12 choice income and then some just to fund the gap in the budget.

Ms. Keegan reminded the committee that there are other funding sources, especially for something of a long-term nature, like building improvements where borrowing may be an option.

MOTION: (Keegan/Dunlavy) move to adopt the School Choice Spending Policy. VOTE: Unanimous

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE (Superintendent Young was absent)**FY'13 Preliminary School Department Budget**

Discussion – Addition of a HES Media Specialist – Chairman Grant noted that Mrs. Jo-Ann Konieczny had submitted a Sept. 14, 2011 letter in support of hiring an elementary media specialist and asked her to address the meeting. Mrs. Konieczny emphasized the importance of adding this position for a variety of reasons and had other parents present at the meeting who also spoke in support of hiring a media specialist. Mrs. Tracy Kelley and Mrs. Heather Ciaglo asked if this position is being considered in isolation instead of addressing other needs, like additional speech therapy and more psychology services.

Mrs. Bonneville said our students are ill prepared when it comes to research and believes with the new common core standards for college and career readiness the standards do stress information gathering, problem solving, and analyzing resources, especially using informational technology that is lacking at the elementary school.

In discussion, it was believed this position would be used like a specialist teacher where classes could go into the library and receive instruction. Mrs. Elson offered the SC a job description for a school librarian adopted by the Mass. School Library Association. Mrs. Elson also strongly supported the hiring of this position, noting she works in a school system that has both a Media Specialists and an IT in their elementary school.

In response to Mr. Michalak's inquiry as to whether the town has a certified librarian, he was told the town librarian is not a school media specialist. Mr. Michalak suggested asking the elementary school what their needs are and ask the principal to offer his input and that of the teachers and have parents come to the SC meeting to express their needs also. Ms. Grant said she didn't want anyone watching this meeting to think that anyone would be slighted in the programs that they require, particularly special ed children; adding, we are legally and morally required to give those children services and will not make any decisions that jeopardize those services. Ms. Grant thanked all the parents for their input and encouraged them to write to their SC members and attend meetings.

Pre-purchases for FY13 from the FY12 Budget

Chairman Grant said the request for \$150,000 in pre-purchases using School Choice funds are as follows:

\$72,000 for Grades 1-5 Reading Series

\$15,000 Elementary General Supplies

\$17,500 Sped Testing Supplies and Materials and Library Books

\$40,000 Hopkins Academy General Supplies

\$144,500 Sub-Total

\$5,500 Balance requested to be added to the General Maintenance Account

After discussion, members agreed to transfer \$144,500 and have Dr. Young come back in January to discuss the need for more maintenance funds if needed.

MOTION: (Michalak/Dunlavy) move to transfer \$144,500 from School Choice funds into the FY12 School Department Operating Budget to cover the following pre-purchases: \$72,000 for Grades 1-5 Reading Series; \$15,000 for Elementary General Supplies; \$17,500 for Sped Testing Supplies and Materials, plus Library Books; and \$40,000 for Hopkins Academy General Supplies. VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. Keegan reported to the Committee that one of the things talked about in the finance subcommittee meeting was having a presentation made by Mr. Andy Paquet of the Management Group to the full Committee. He and his partners provide business management services to school districts who may not have a fulltime business manager on staff. Ms. Keegan said where this firm has been hired, they have been able to more than pay for their services through achieving cost savings. This company has a menu of services they provide and are working right now in Granby, Easthampton, Ware, and Gill Montague and a school in the Berkshires. Members agreed to have Ms. Keegan arrange for a presentation in either January or February.

Capital Plan Memo from Dr. Young to Mr. Nixon dated 12/8/1 requesting the replacement of the 2004 Ford Econo Wheelchair Van in the fall of 2012.

Hartsbrook School Approval Process

Ms. Grant reported that Dr. Young had met with the Hartsbrook administrators and staff and all was in order.

MOTION: (Michalak/Dunlavy) move to approve the Hartsbrook School's request for permission to operate as a private school in the Town of Hadley for the 2011-2012 school year. VOTE: Unanimous

OTHER:

Balance Sheets dated July 1, 2011 to December 19, 2011

NEXT MEETING

January 23, 2012, 6:30PM.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: (Dunlavy/Waskiewicz) move to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. VOTE: Unanimous.