

**HADLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
HADLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS
January 25, 2010**

5:00 PM Regular Meeting

Hopkins Academy Music Room

PRESENT: Chair: Mrs. Tracy Kelley, Vice Chair: Mr. James Michalak. School Committee Members: Mr. Thomas Waskiewicz, and Ms. Robie Grant. Absent: Ms. Linda Dunlay. Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nicholas Young, Finance Committee Member, Molly Keegan, Carol Trane, Administrative Assistant, Gazette Reporter, Nick Grabbe and Walter of TV5.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair, Tracy Kelley, called the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOTION: (Waskiewicz/Grant) move to approve the minutes of the November 23, 2009, meetings as presented. VOTE: Unanimous.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Chairman Kelley congratulated Dr. Nicholas Young on being named Superintendent of the Year by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, adding he will be honored at the annual AASA meeting in Phoenix, Arizona on February 11, 2010.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

1. School Facilities Update

Dr. Young said the school facilities update has been a running agenda item to keep the School Committee apprised of where the projects stand at any particular point in time. At this juncture, the window project is well underway and should be completed by mid-February utilizing part of the February school vacation to wrap up the cafeteria windows. This is the final project of the vaunted summer projects.

2. Policy-IHBAA – Second Reading

Referring the members to Policy IHBAA, Dr. Young noted there is a new law sponsored by the DESE (MGL71B:3) adopted on January 8, 2009, noting this was developed by the Mass. Association of School Committees with their legal team and took some time to develop. The law states the schools must develop a mechanism and system for allowing parents of special needs students to come in and do observations and go through a process.

Dr. Young wanted to make known the fact the Hadley schools are always accommodating to parent requests; however, this policy speaks more to special needs students or students that are to be evaluated sending in teams to do their own observations and collect data as part of an evaluation process. This policy lays out a timeline for parents to make notification so that the teacher can be prepared and anyone else needed to assist in the evaluation is available.

MOTION: (Michalak/Waskiewicz) move to adopt Policy IHBAA, as presented. VOTE: Unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Memorandum of Understanding- Race to the Top

Dr. Young explained that this has to do with Race to the Top funding by the federal Dept. of Education where over 4 billion dollars is being released to states in the form of stimulus to education.

While Dr. Young said there are a number of things we don't know, we do know that a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) is a document used by other states. There are two pots of money: one is a pot that is rather small where Hadley is concerned, that being a percentage of the Title 1 funding, estimated to be approx. \$7,000. That amount in and of itself would not make it worth going through some of the challenges that may be required in the end and is the reason some small districts have opted not to participate. However, Dr. Young said what potentially makes it viable is there is another pot of money that is competitive money although it is unclear at this time what the criteria will be for this money, adding

Hadley has done well with competitive money, doesn't seem demographically oriented, noting there will be some for urban centers but some of that money will be earmarked for the best proposals and the best creative ideas. What was required now was to get a document signed in by January 13 with the understanding that we would bring it back to the School Committee for a larger endorsement. There are several steps that need to be taken before this can materialize.

First, Massachusetts as a commonwealth needs to be selected as a state that is eligible to receive funding. If this doesn't occur than everything else is mute.

Second, assuming the funding comes, the competitive funding criteria would need to be established and the criteria by which districts could receive the non-competitive funding would need to be established, also adding, which may or may not be palatable to the School Committee or the teachers' union.

If Hadley were to receive money and spend said funds, it would require negotiations between the School Committee and the teachers' union, either side could reject it at any point in the process. All we have now is a good faith MOU to enter this set of discussions to remain competitive for the competitive funding, adding, in his view the non-competitive money is not all that viable given the challenges Hadley would have to go through.

Dr. Young believes the appropriate course of action at this time is to seek an endorsement by the School Committee to stay the course, noting the union has already offered theirs and he as the superintendent being the third party also is committed at this juncture. Dr. Young said he believes we would be remiss if we didn't apply for competitive funding.

In response to Ms. Grant's inquiry as to what types of grants might be funded, Dr. Young admitted that right now it is extraordinarily confusing. He said it seems clear there will be some money earmarked for urban-centers and some for innovation. The thinking at this point is the innovation will be more focused on ways of considering student growth data and evaluation and improving of curriculum and professional development, noting again, he believes it will be on strength of proposal based upon how one plans to approach those areas. Given our demographics, Dr. Young believes our only shot at the funds will be to do something innovative, like using data to drive improvements.

MOTION: (Grant/Waskiewicz) move to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding as it relates to the federal Race to the Top funding. VOTE: Unanimous.

2. HEA Side Agreement

Mrs. Carol Pineo, Elementary Art Teacher, prepared a description of the proposed mural for the 4-6th grade wing. The first two murals are now complete and there is great interest in moving forward on this phase of the project. Dr. Young noted that Mrs. Pineo deserves an enormous amount of credit for the work that she has done and the time she has devoted. What was learned from the previous projects is the extraordinary amount of time spent after school, weekends and vacation hours required to complete that kind of work. Dr. Young said he believed it was fair to say that Mrs. Pineo did a great job engaging the students and would take nothing away from their contribution, but the quality of the final art product has quite a lot to do with Mrs. Pineo's own artistic talent as well. Interestingly, the PTO also expressed an interest in supporting the new mural project, and in fact came forward and offered to pick up the costs of the stipend for Mrs. Pineo. The stipend took into account the amount of time that it takes per week, matching it to the HEA contract as closely as possible, to determine a fair stipend with the extracurricular salary schedule and determined that the yearbook salary was a close match in terms of time and effort with a stipend of \$3,300 to be covered by the PTO as a donation to the schools. This requires a Side Agreement since there is no such provision in the current contract, adding this will be a one-time non-binding agreement and not a bargaining item in future negotiations.

The proposed mural project will deal with the ancient civilizations as outlined in Mrs. Pineo's memo dated Feb. 12, 2010 and filed with and made a part of these minutes along with a copy of the Side Agreement.

MOTION: (Michalak/Waskiewicz) move to authorize the Chair to sign the Memorandum of Agreement by and Between the Hadley Public Schools and the Hadley Education Association, M.T.A., N.E.A. to allow Mrs. Pineo to serve as the mural adviser at the elementary school and further set a one-time stipend of \$3,300.00. VOTE: Unanimous.

3. HEA-January 12, 2010 Letter re: Opening Contract Negotiations

Dr. Young received a letter dated January 12, 2010 from Jason A. Burns, H.E.A. President stating the union's desire to open the contract for negotiations as of January 15, 2010, with formal discussions and negotiations to be delayed until April 1, 2010. (This letter is filed with and made a part of these minutes.)

Dr. Young explained that the School Committee has a contract with the teachers' union (Unit A) that states there has to be an opening of negotiations as of January 15. This letter serves to meet the contract stipulation and ask that the actual discussions and negotiations be delayed until after April 1. Dr. Young said his sense, while not speaking for the union, is that the April 1 date was selected perhaps to allow for more information to become known about the fiscal status of the community as determined by state levels of funding, community allocation, those kinds of things and seems to make sense. This fulfills the contract's opening requirement. With School Committee approval a letter will be forwarded on to the HEA notifying them that their letter was discussed and welcoming the chance to meet with them after April 1.

MOTION: (Michalak/Grant) move to acknowledge the HEA's January 12, 2010 letter to open contract negotiations as of January 15, 2010 and further to delay until April 1, 2010 as requested.

VOTE: Unanimous.

4. Project Strong Start Pre-K

Dr. Young presented the Committee with a proposal for collaboration between the UMASS School Psychology Program and the Hadley Public Schools, noting one of the professors has expertise in preschool programming along with one of her doctoral students that also has a particular interest in preschool programming. The schools have had a strong, longstanding collaboration with the University, sending us numerous interns both for teachers, school nurses and for many years Hadley has had a school psychology intern. In the spirit of continuing the strong ties, they would like to work with us in our preschool program. Dr. Young reviewed the Project Purpose's as outlined on page 2 of the proposal. There are a number of procedures they propose to use to accomplish this particular set of protocols.

Dr. Young noted the district's protocol always is that if and when students are involved with outside groups and individuals, a parent signoff is required to safeguard privacy and confidentiality.

While Hadley has a very strong K-12 curriculum, the preschool curriculum is an educational play version of a kindergarten curriculum. There are frameworks to look at that are developmentally appropriate for preschool and believed all along that one of Hadley's secret weapons for effective instruction and for the fact that our students do so well are related partially to a really strong start in the early childhood grades. Therefore the idea of strengthening our preschool curriculum is in keeping with our desire to seek early intervention and be as systematic as possible with the use of our educational time.

Dr. Young said the proposal is exciting and the preschool staff is enthusiastic; therefore he fully recommends its acceptance and believes it will enhance the preschool program.

MOTION: (Michalak/Waskiewicz) move to accept and approve the Project Strong Start Pre-K in Collaboration between UMASS School Psychology Program and the Hadley Public School as presented. VOTE: Unanimous.

5. SCHOOL CHOICE

Dr. Young noted, that by law, the School Choice Program tenets are as follows: (1) once a student is accepted into the program they are allowed to stay through the remainder of their academic career; and (2) the School Choice Program needs to be passed on an annual basis by the School Committee.

Dr. Young provided the School Committee with several documents showing enrollment data and demographic trends. While numbers fluctuate, enrollments are reported as of October 1 at which time we show 78 Choice students; however, Dr. Young said we are at 75 right now. While many schools have a higher percentage of choice students, Hadley has been guarded and careful with our numbers as shown by the increments in enrollment starting with the first year in 2005. Dr. Young noted that from 2007-2008 we had an increase; however, many of those students' families moved from Hadley but opted to keep their children here under Choice.

The Choice Program provides more diversity; economically it provides resources to sustain the district. Dr. Young said from his vantage point this program is an essential, critical absolute must kind of program to continue and sustain at least at the levels that they are at now or even increase where room is available, noting he would not be seeking huge increases. Numbers are quite fluid and may change in the next few months. Working with Hopkins enrollment, Dr. Young said the goal is 65 students in grades 7-8 and 9 with reluctance to accept students in 11th or 12th grade due to course selection, etc., but would evaluate on a case-by-case basis. In the lower grades, numbers come into account along with needs/culture of the particular grades, etc., noting in some grades numbers do not tell the whole story and must be

assessed for their particular needs. Next year, the average class size is around 21 in the elementary school, yet if a class is 24 the average has little meaning, intending to offer both perspectives.

In response to Mrs. Kelley's inquiry as to the state recommended average of 25, Dr. Young responded that is true if you are working off the Net School Spending formula; however, he said this doesn't work for Hadley for a variety of reason, but the central one is this number has not been embraced by the parents or School Committee in this community which means in every instance in the district we are running classes with less than 25 students and therefore are economically out of whack when trying to apply the Net School Spending formula. Looking at this two ways, Dr. Young said from a CPA's perspective we are overspending on direct instruction, but if you look at this from a parent perspective you might say, we are under spending when a class hits 23 or even 22, a parent may want 18. What we have is the economics vs. the preferred.

Dr. Young said he would be remiss if he didn't recommend continuing the Choice Program, however, he is not prepared at this time to identify where slots will be available.

Ms. Grant questioned the numbers used to determine class size for Kindergarten. Dr. Young said this is a general discussion point and said the SC could develop a policy around specific grades. He cautioned that under School Choice we are more likely to get students in the earlier grades because the parents want to make a commitment to a system. The other consideration is that as we get closer to Net School Spending, there are economic concerns, too. Ms. Grant said she understands the state minimum but that it is difficult for parents who are concerned about class size. Dr. Young said he defers to the Committee on how they want to handle that, while adding that he has been very cautious about the lower grades, yet acknowledging that if we continue to be stressed economically, that this is one of the few areas that the Committee has some sort of discretion over ways to raise money.

Members continued to discuss ways to determine enrollment numbers with Dr. Young suggesting that the Committee continue the program and secondly decide if there is some sort of proposal around limiting numbers in particular grades or whatever guidance the Committee want to offer.

MOTION: (Michalak/Grant) move to continue the School Choice Program. VOTE: Unanimous.

(Dr. Young will provide the Committee with enrollment projections for the lower grades in the next couple of months for further discussion.)

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

1. January 2010 Quarterly Report for the Finance Committee

Dr. Young provided a one-page report, noting that it is difficult at this time of the year to identify major budget shifts; however a list of accounts were offered. Dr. Young said he was entirely uncomfortable with this document and process at this time of year since there is so much fluidity around Special Ed and other costs, adding the figures offered today are very date specific and can change tomorrow. If you do the pluses and minuses, we should be up about \$21,000; however, it could go higher, adding this is the tightest we've ever run and it's the best he can do at this particular point in time. Dr. Young said there are no large sums of money, no money for any large-scale projects nor any resources for any kind of summer projects unless something were very minor in scope, perhaps one or two classrooms. If by chance money were available, he would recommend it be invested in technology, noting sustaining technology is problematic. The Net School Spending formula never allowed for technology nor school nurses when it was conceived in 1992, adding many districts have a separate account outside the school budget to fund technology in the schools.

The computers in the lab and library are high use, passed the five-year mark and are getting sluggish. Dr. Young said he offers this to plant the seed. He also reminded the Committee that we are part way through the renovation of the middle school classrooms and believes the remaining rooms need some degree of attention over time as well.

2. January 1 Enrollment Figures

3. Balance Sheet dated July 1, 2009 to January 25, 2010

NEXT MEETING

February 23, 2010, at 5:30 PM, Hopkins Academy Music Room.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: (Michalak/Waskiewicz) move to adjourn the meeting at 6:08 PM. VOTE: Unanimous.