

BOXBOROUGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 11, 2008
Regular Session Meeting – 7:30 PM
Executive Session Meeting (to follow Regular Session)
493 Massachusetts Ave., Boxborough

1. Opening

Ms. Bieber opened the meeting at 7:30 PM. School Committee members present were: Maria Neyland, Dr. Scott Lukas, and Mary Brolin. Bruce Sabot was absent.

Others present were: Dr. Curtis Bates, Superintendent/Curriculum Director; Maryellen Driscoll, Principal; Dr. Sandra Daigneault, Director of Pupil Services; Charles Mahoney, Business Manager; Anthony Tomah, Communications and Technology Information Director; Jason Dimen and Janet LaVigne, BTA Co-presidents, and Paula Grieco, PTF President. Members of the Blanchard Staff and Boxborough Community were also present.

2. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Bieber requested a motion to approve the 11/13/08 School Committee Regular Session and Executive Session meeting minutes, the 11/18/08 Budget Work Session meeting minutes, and the 10/7/08 Executive Session meeting minutes. Ms. Bieber requested a motion to approve minor amendments to be made to the Regular Session minutes and approve the 11/18/08 Budget Work Session meeting minutes, and to hold the release of the 10/7/08 and 11/13/08 Executive Session meeting minutes. Ms. Neyland moved and Brolin seconded the motion. It was voted and the motion was accepted (4/0) to approve the amended Regular Session and Budget Work Session meeting minutes and to hold the release of the Executive Session meeting minutes.

Ms. Bieber requested permission from the public to take agenda items five and six out of order due to weather conditions.

5. Technology

5.1 Technology Report

Mr. Tomah reported on a second meeting with representatives from Cisco Corporation regarding the replacement of the school's telephone system. Mr. Tomah informed members that John Mann, CBE Technologies, and Rob Cass, Cisco Education Representative, visited the school and reviewed what needed to be done. Work on a pricing package will be executed after the holidays.

6. 6.1 Facility Report

Mr. Mahoney reported gas usage for November was normal. The rate is down to about \$1.1897 per therm and rates continue to drop for gas. Updates on cost were requested from several sources within the past week and received quotes of \$0.98 and \$0.88. The .88 cent rate was only for a certain amount of therms, not our full requirement, and we will be checking on this periodically. We continue to estimate/budget at higher rate. Electricity usage was down somewhat from previous years for November. We continue to work on heating units and thermostats regularly. Electrical contractor reviewed lights in the library and we are waiting on a quote. No roof leaks were reported. We continue to work on the items referenced in the Energy Audit completed by the Town.

The Hager House continues to run on automatic. Reports indicate uranium is still present in the well, but it's being filtered. We met with the electronics contractor at Hager this week to look at fluctuating LED systems. The contractor shut down power and both the PH and depth monitors came back. Was at the Hager earlier this evening to change the chart and noted still having the fluctuating issue. Depending upon reason for this, it could cost approximately \$2,000 if it is the mechanics, less if it's the LED.

Notification was received from DEP regarding next year's monitoring schedule. While we still need to test the water after treatment each quarter, we only need to test the raw water in the first quarter.

No problems were reported in the monthly inspection of the Bio-Clere Unit by Whitewater. Samples taken were analyzed and results are within acceptable limits.

No pests have been noted.

3. Public Input

There was no public input.

4. Educational Report

4.1 Math Curriculum Meeting Update – 12/9/08

Dr. Bates reported working on grade level math vocabulary list. Sue McMaster, Title One Math Support Teacher, and Robin Smirlock, Special Educator, will determine which vocabulary words are to be introduced, practiced or mastered at grades K-2. Grade level teachers will review the vocabulary lists and provide input. Currently reviewing the Scott Foresman's Massachusetts Mathematics Diagnosis and Intervention System program and highlighted how the intervention program would meet some of the RTI criteria.

Dr. Bates reported on completion of the Social Studies Curriculum maps thanks to Betsy Peterson, Information Technology Specialist, for making sure they were formatted properly.

Dr. Bates reported the Science Subcommittee is working on curriculum maps.

5. Technology

5.1 Technology Report

Agenda Item Moved.

6. Facility Report

6.1 Facility Status Report

Agenda Item Moved.

7. Old Business

7.1 FY'10 Budget

Dr. Bates reported presenting the budget to the Finance Committee and the budget will be reviewed at the Boxborough Leadership Forum next Wednesday night. Dr. Bates reported that the Speaker of the House, Dimasi, suggested a 10% reduction in local aid and plans on a reduction of 65% in Circuit Breaker monies. Dr. Bates reported receiving preliminary CASE assessments and the assessments are down. Ms. Neville, Boxborough Town Selectman, reported that the town needs to cut \$600,000 from the 2010 budget, \$300,000 will come from the school's budget and \$300,000 from the town's budget.

7.2 2009-2010 School Calendar – Vote

Dr. Bates reported on the 2009-2010 proposed school calendar. A parent, Christine Marlow, questioned what the decision was based on for eliminating Jewish holidays and expressed concerns that her children received homework, missed a test, and was charged an absence because they exercised their holiday observance. Ms. Marlow requested that the School Committee consider using a half day for children to take off to observe their religious holiday.

Ms. Bieber thanked Mr. Marlow for sharing her concerns and explained that the absence is required by the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education to be logged but

will not count on the child's absence report and will address the homework issue with staff. The School Committee shared their input.

Ms. Bieber requested a motion to approve the proposed 2009-2010 school calendar with one minor change regarding February vacation. Dr. Lukas moved and Ms. Neyland seconded the motion. It was voted and accepted (4/0) to approve the calendar.

7.3 Music Subcommittee Presentation.

Dr. Bates thanked all the subcommittee members (Maryellen Driscoll, Chris Baird, Margie Callaghan, Mary Brolin, Dr. Scott Lukas, Lisa McElroy, Catherine Rudolph) that spent the last eight weeks together. Dr. Bates reported that last year he was directed to look at a long-range plan regarding declining enrollment and to explore other funding alternatives for the music and chorus programs. Dr. Bates acknowledged that the Boxborough community and Blanchard School are extremely lucky and proud to have such high caliber programs.

Dr. Lukas reported working on the possibility of finding state and federal cultural programs that would support both programs but found it doesn't seem to be a very viable way to get capital for the programs. Cultural programs available to the school would bring in too small of an amount of funding that it would not be worth initiating.

Dr. Bates reported after reviewing alternative funding and discussions regarding elementary school programs, a survey was sent to Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) to get input from other districts. Eighty two superintendents responded from 56 communities whether they have chorus and/or band programs and, if so, are the programs held during the school day and are pull out programs. Also asked superintendents to respond how teachers felt about pull- out programs. Teacher responses were found very disruptive and cuts the day for them. Some schools eliminated the programs completely.

Ms. Brolin reported sending out an online survey to get input from parents and received a 48% response rate. Overall, parents overwhelmingly expressed positive support about the quality of the program. Ms. Brolin thanked parents, BBPO and Betsy Peterson, Information Technology Specialist.

Ms. Brolin reported the survey provided cost levels and parents were asked what would be the most amount they would pay for the programs. The Subcommittee reviewed parent responses and suggested \$40 for the chorus fee and \$60 for the band fee.

Dr. Bates reported the subcommittee looked at standards of music, current level of financial support the district currently provides, reports of status of the choral program with changes that had to be made with cuts, Mr. Baird and his report, decrease in enrollment in woodwind and brass ensembles, applying for PTF grants for scholarships, funding from the BBPO organization, and talked at length about suggestions and recommendations for the School Committee to try to maintain a high quality chorus and band program. The options are presented below:

Option 1

Reinstate .1 music teaching position
Cost – additional \$43,640

Option 2: maintain current structure .1 music teacher

Financial cost to this including raising \$4300 stipend to \$4400. There would be a percentage increase in the Band Director's salary as well.

Option 3:

If user fee necessary

Ask that user fee be no higher than \$40 for music and \$60 for band.

Ms. Bieber thanked everyone for their hard work in getting this information and acknowledged that there was no doubt the two programs are extremely important to Blanchard. Ms. Bieber acknowledged the band for their wonderful performance last night at the concert as well as thanking the teachers and their commitment to the students. The School Committee shared their input.

Ms. Neyland suggested researching how much the current chorus and band programs cost and compare that amount to a program conducted during the school day (as a pull-out program) and review financial options and model. Dr. Bates agreed to have the Leadership Team review it again and present it to the School Committee.

7.4 Full-Day Kindergarten Subcommittee Meeting Update

Dr. Bates reported meeting with the subcommittee this morning. Site visits to other districts were complete and working on developing a question and answer sheet to create a flow chart. A parent information meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, December 16, at 9:30 AM and 7:00 PM. A census report was received from Town Hall of eligible kindergarten students in 2009. Personalized letters were sent to all in hopes to receive input before developing a plan. A list of frequently asked questions as well as a curriculum outline will be created and presented to incoming parents.

8. New Business

Ms. Bieber reported on Dr. Bates' mid-year evaluation coming up. Ms. Bieber directed Dr. Bates to send a draft to the School Committee and for School Committee to write a draft evaluation to Brigid by December 31.

9. Budget Reports

9.1 Suspense List – FY'09

Mr. Mahoney reported including gas on the suspense list as something to watch – will drop this when contract. Maintenance is high due to work done over summer, Tech is over at the moment due to the Internet costs which is awaiting a reduction in charges, Special Education tuitions and collaborative costs included based upon projections. These are offset by a proposed added use of Circuit Breaker funds, the gas contract and use of some Extended Day funds. Transfers on these would be done at end of year.

9.2 Operational Budget – FY'09

Mr. Mahoney reported through warrant #6 and payroll #12. Have projected out and encumbered salaries through to the end of the school year. School Choice funds have been transferred on individual accounts at this time, not the \$150,000 account as yet. Circuit Breaker funds have been transferred also.

9.3 Special Education Budget – FY'09

Dr. Daigneault reported payments in Special Education contacted services line and supplies line were based on regular, expected expenditures. While a balance shows in the supplies line, Special Education staff members need to continue to do some ordering of instruction materials. The overrun in the Special Education tuition line reflects the previously reported unanticipated placements. As noted in the suspense list, this overrun can be addressed with circuit breaker funds.

The small difference in special education tuition from last month to this month and the apparent decrease in expenditures in the collaborative line are due to the application of circuit breaker funds.

- 9.4 Grants/Articles Summary – FY'09
Mr. Mahoney reported FY'08 grants completed and the same for warrant #6 and payroll #12. Other programs such as school lunch, extended day and preschool are included. Continue to gather information on 2009 grants.
10. Personnel
There was no input at this time.
11. Regional Sharings
Ms. Bieber reported attending the Acton/Boxborough School Committee meeting and discussed a couple of scenarios of the budget for the region. Also discussed the superintendent search focus group meeting that was held last Monday night with public attending.
12. Information Packet
Dr. Bates highlighted documents in the packet i.e., state audit being conducted in January for the lunch program. Dr. Bates attended the first instruction curriculum assessment seminar by the DESE with Ms. Driscoll and Dr. Daigneault.
13. School Committee – Questions, Concerns, Reports
There was no input at this time.
14. Press Questions
There was no press present.
15. At 9:25 p.m., Ms. Bieber polled members to go into Executive Session for bargaining in preparation for negotiations with personnel and to discuss any legal issues under MGL Chapter 23B, Section (3); Bieber, yes; Neyland, yes; Brolin, yes; Dr. Lukas, yes. Ms. Bieber noted that the Regular Session would reconvene solely for the purpose of adjourning.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathy Bower
Executive Secretary

Approved by:

Dr. Scott Lukas
Clerk