

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
Education Committee
Town Hall Council Chambers
July 16, 2012-Monday

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Chairman
Francis Burke, Vice Chairman
Jane Hackett, Councilor
Ed Harrington, Councilor
Michael Molisse, Councilor

Also Present: Patrick O'Connor, Councilor
Sean Guilfoyle, Chair Weymouth School Committee
Garry Pelletier, Acting Assistant Superintendent
Jen Curtis Whipple

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Lacey called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He reported that he called the meeting to obtain an update on several issues surrounding changes in teaching curriculum to continue an active collaboration with the school committee and the school department.

Update on the introduction of the following curriculums:

- Common Core
- EnVision Math
- Reading Street

Sean Guilfoyle reported that they had hoped to include the new superintendent at the meeting; however he is out of the country. The department is preparing for the implementation of the Common Core curriculum for the 2013/2014 school year. Chairman Lacey responded that the committee was looking forward to meeting him also, and perhaps an early September meeting can be arranged. Mr. Guilfoyle responded that he will notify the committee once a contract has been signed with the new superintendent.

Asst. Supt. Pelletier reported that changes in federal and state governments is driving local changes in education. He provided a historical overview of the random testing at grades 4- 8 and at the high school level this year. Massachusetts has performed well over the last decade and even compared well to other countries; placing fourth. The commissioners of education and governors collaborated to produce a national curriculum- Common Core. It sets the standards for the states for PreK-12 Math and English Language Arts. Science is in draft form and will be released in spring 2013. Chairman Lacey asked if the program for math/ELA is in pilot form. Mr. Pelletier responded that it is not and that it was adopted in 2010. The department has been seeking to align with the curriculum before the budget process. A partnership has been formed with Bridgewater State. The testing will change but will still be called MCAS. RFP's went out in June for

the creation of the test. Performance -based will be more in-depth and address higher thinking skills. The new standards align with the curriculum and can be viewed on the DESE website. Councilor Lacey asked if the state has considered pausing the MCAS while the test transitions to the new frameworks. Mr. Pelletier responded that while the style of the tests won't change, the content will. He reviewed a history of the MCAS under the No –Child- Left -Behind -legislation. The goal was to have 100% of students proficient in all disciplines. Weymouth chose not to conduct the training for financial reasons and applied for a waiver. The state has backed off somewhat. Implementation will require training for educator requirements. There is also a referendum on the November ballot to do away with seniority criteria in teacher evaluations. Tenure is still a consideration and student data will become a part of this. The districts must arrive at standardized testing to assess student growth. All of the south shore towns are working together because student growth will be a part of the teacher evaluation. The ultimate goal is to prepare students for college or work in a new era. Mr. Guilfoyle also noted that Weymouth is the largest comprehensive high school in the state, and other districts want to see the CTE program.

Mr. Pelletier then reviewed the new system of accountability, which is comprised of seven components. The standards of the common core were deconstructed by grade and this was done during professional development time. They studied how to align the curriculum to college and career readiness frameworks as well as tying into each grade. The department agreed it was worthwhile to indicate what needs to happen while pushing the importance of literacy across all disciplines. The first goal is proficiency in reading by grade three and they have put into place the benchmarks to monitor students in K-3. He thanked the committee for their support to allow this to work. The department purchased Reading Street. Councilor Hackett asked if the answers will be provided to parents. Mr. Pelletier responded that parents will have access by web, except where there are copyright issues. He provided a brief review of the program. It will integrate media in 20th century skills and inquiry based learning. He also reported that the middle school schedule is changing to incorporate 90-minute math and reading blocks into the schedule. They are also partnering with MGH on writing an application for an \$850,000 grant. There are initiatives coming from the state to meet English language learning skills and professional development time set aside for training. Four and a half days have been built into the schedule for 2012/13 for professional development.

Mr. Pelletier invited the committee to visit the school department. Chairman Lacey thanked the school representatives for providing the update and noted that the amount of work ahead to implement the changes in teaching, learning and assessment will be overwhelming, but that it is an exciting time in education.

Legislative letter regarding a uniform calculation for net school spending

Chairman Lacey reviewed with the committee the draft letter to be sent to state representation to address the inequity in calculation for net school spending:

“16 July 2012

Representative James Murphy
State House Room 254
Boston MA 02133

Dear Representative Murphy:

*I am writing to you regarding the current state formula utilized to determine which communities are meeting their NSS (net school spending) requirement. Each year in section three of the state budget it states... “**The department of elementary and secondary education shall not consider health care costs for retired teachers to be part of net school spending for any district in which such costs were not considered part of net school spending in fiscal year 1994.**”*

Retired school employee insurance costs, although reported to DESE, are not counted towards the net school spending calculation for the town of Weymouth. As the current legislation is crafted, 60% of school districts are allowed to count this substantial amount towards NSS with the remaining 40% not able to do so. Unfortunately, Weymouth falls into the latter 40% category. Had the town been able to utilize this amount (equates to \$3.5 million per year) we would have met our NSS mandate each year.

Many school districts which are allowed to count retired school employee insurance costs, would not have met their mandate without inclusion of this expenditure. Additionally, the budget language only refers to retired teachers, who have their own pension system. DESE infers it to mean all retired school employees, which we also feel is inconsistent and creates inequities as to how communities are compared to meeting the net school spending mandate. We believe we should be able to count retiree health insurance for retired “non-teacher school employees,” since the language does not exclude them. I have enclosed documentation showing the inadequacies inherent in this situation, as indicated by community, for your perusal.

There are many other major costs that Weymouth pays for education that are also not allowed to be counted towards NSS. These include costs for capital project costs and transportation. We understand that these costs are excluded for all school districts.

The Town Council Education Committee voted favorably on 16 July 2012 to authorize me to write, on behalf of the Weymouth Town Council Education Committee, requesting your support advocating a change to the NSS calculation to be a standard, uniform calculation for all communities, which we believe is a fair and reasonable request.

As Chair of the Education Committee, I respectfully request your advocating on behalf of the town of Weymouth for legislation to affect a fair and equitable resolution to this issue, such that all communities are on a level playing field when measuring their school districts investment in education and compliance.

Please note that a similar letter has been sent to Senator Hedlund and Representative Mariano seeking their assistance as well.

Please contact me directly with any questions at 781-340-5020.

Sincerely,

*Thomas J. Lacey
District Two Councilor
Chairman/Education Committee*

Enclosures

*CC: All Councilors
Mayor Kay
William McKinney, Chief Financial Officer*

A MOTION was made by Councilor Hackett to approve the draft letter and send it from the committee to Representatives Murphy and Mariano and Senator Hedlund and was approved by Councilor Burke. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:22 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Councilor Burke to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Hackett. . UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Chairman Thomas J. Lacey