

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
September 22, 2008**

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Chairperson
Kenneth J. DiFazio
Robert Conlon
Michael Molisse
Victor Pap, III

Also Present: Mary Jo Livingstone, Superintendent of Schools

Recording Secretary: Janet Murray

Chairperson Lacey called the Education Committee meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Update from School Administration on Current School Year Progress and Budgetary Impacts

Ms. Livingstone introduced Paul Desmond who is the new Director of Special Education and Mary Jane DeMello who is the Assistant Superintendent. Matthew Ferron and Sean Guilfoyle were also present.

Ms. Livingstone gave a presentation which was delivered to teachers district- wide on September 16, 2008. She noted that the school's greatest challenge in education is to prepare students for jobs that do not yet exist, to solve problems that have not yet been identified, all while using skills that have not yet been invented.

Ms. Livingstone referenced a workforce survey which indicated what employers want when hiring high school graduates. The attributes are work ethic, collaboration, proper communication skills, social responsibility, critical thinking and problem solving.

Ms. Livingstone then discussed the current fiscal concerns of the school department. She stated that although there were new hires right up until the first day of school- it was due to the following; 157 positions were vacated by retirements, layoffs, and position transfers; of the 157 positions vacated, 85 of the positions were eliminated.

Ms. Livingstone stated that due to the budget constraints no conferences are allowed, needed textbook replacements are not being replaced.

Ms. Livingstone noted that class sizes are larger. The primary classrooms are averaging 24/25 when previously they were at 20 or less.

Ms. Livingstone stated that adequate yearly progress (AYP) is expected improvement over time of a town's student body. Although the town may be improving, the improvement may be not be fast enough to meet the AYP guidelines.

Councilor Pap stated that he agreed with the need for developing new skill sets for our students.

Councilor Conlon agreed with the concept of reinforcing team work. He would like to see increases in the number of graduates going on to 2 and 4 year colleges.

Councilor Conlon stated that he has an issue with the MCAS. He stated that whatever the rationale for the testing, it is not working.

Ms. Livingstone stated that there is a knowledge base that all children should know before they leave high school. She stated that the MCAS as an assessment tool is certainly useful. Unfortunately, this isn't what has happened with the testing, instead it is used as a graduation requirement.

Councilor Lacey commented on the workforce survey. He stated that when you look at areas that may be deficient is communication skills especially in light of the advancements in technology.

Councilor Lacey asked about the capital needs that may not be met. He also asked if "good" teachers are leaving.

Ms. Livingstone noted that 29 professional staff members resigned this past year. She noted that there is an exit interview when staff leaves. She stated that there are the usual reasons such as moving out of state, family reasons, etc. She pointed out that a new category has appeared; job security considering the economy and have obtained a job closer to home. She stated that this occurs mostly in the younger teachers in their first five years as opposed to veteran staff.

Ms. Livingstone noted that the department is on an emergency equipment/furniture replacement cycle rather than an overall replacement cycle. This has been a yearly capital request that has never been funded.

Referral of "Abstinence Program" to School Administration to Consider for Implementation

Councilor Pap stated that he had sent a packet to administration and school committee members. He acknowledged that there may have been a lag in receiving the information.

Councilor Pap pointed out that this program is federally funded and is a supplemental, complimentary curriculum. He asked for an opportunity to come before the School Committee to present this program.

Ms. Livingstone stated that there is policy regarding introducing new curriculum. She stated that there is criteria that has been set in force, a review process that includes a committee of professionals. Ms. Livingstone stated that a preview copy will be requested. She pointed out that some of the topics are already included in the current K-12 curriculum.

Councilor Pap stated that he would like to see a timeline established to look at the curriculum and if it were to go forward that 2009 be a target date.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:25 pm, there being no further business, A MOTION was made by Councilor Pap to ADJOURN and was seconded by Councilor Conlon and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by: _____
Thomas J. Lacey, Chairperson