

TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 27, 1999

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Members Present: Lois Borgesi (Chair), Frank Wills, William Rogers, Adrienne Duncan.

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Susan Fleming (Superintendent), Michael Marino (PHS Principal), William Rokicki (VMES Principal/Director of Student Services), Phil Roderick (PAE Union representative), parents and staff.

REGULAR SESSION

Chair Lois Borgesi called the Regular Session to order at 7:09 PM.

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VISITORS= STATEMENTS

There were no Visitors= Statements

MINUTES

- December 10, 1998 - Postponed until the next meeting

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Fleming presented the following:

- after discussing the matter with Town Counsel, she had written to the union president concerning the issue of

staffing maintenance. She asked for a reply by February 12;

- a letter sent to staff with the Mid-Year Update. In that Update, she discussed the District Improvement Plan and the fact that the Department of Education has stated that the District will receive the grant for all three years, barring extreme, unforeseen circumstances. She has also spoken with the National Faculty concerning the Curriculum Institutes and they will be sending a proposal;
- a request from William Rokicki for approval of a trip to Nature=s Classroom. ***Adrienne Duncan moved to approve the trip, and Frank Wills seconded.*** Discussion: Frank Wills asked about the organization=s name and William Rokicki supplied more information about Nature=s Classroom. Lois Borgesi asked how the trip will be funded and William Rokicki replied that half the money will come from the school and half from the parents. The children will be supervised by Nature=s Classroom staff, though there will be two Provincetown chaperones. ***After discussion, the Committee voted, 4-0, to approve the motion.;***

William Rogers asked for further explanation of the proposed custodial staffing change and Dr. Fleming explained the issue, saying that the union is not being positive about the proposal. Phil Roderick, PAE Union representative, spoke from the audience, saying that the union had lots of concerns about the custodial staffing and that they will oppose the elimination of a union position. Lois Borgesi stated that the Committee had voted to fill a position temporarily and Mr. Roderick said the position cannot be filled temporarily. He reviewed the history of custodial help and especially of the Head Custodian, saying that the proposed change would return things to status as of 1985. The Union is not going to allow the creation of a non-union position that is equivalent of the current union position.

Lois Borgesi said they should set up a meeting between the Union and the Negotiating Subcommittee and the Subcommittee needs to become informed about the details. Mr Roderick referred to a letter of response sent to Dr. Fleming from the Union President and said that there are qualified people in the union now who could do the job. He said that the Administration is potentially committing three contract violations.

- Dr. Fleming referred to a memo from Susan Avellar, requesting approval for the annual ski trip. Michael Marino said he will be meeting with Ms Avellar to firm up trip details. Adrienne Duncan asked which grades were included and Michael Marino said it was usually 7 - 12. ***Adrienne Duncan moved to approve the weekend ski trip and Frank Wills seconded.*** Discussion: Frank Wills asked about chaperones and Lois Borgesi replied that Ms Avellar has years of experience and would not go without adequate supervision. ***After discussion, the Committee voted to approve the motion, 4-0.***
- Dr. Fleming presented a letter from David Driscoll, Commissioner of Education, stating the District had met the net school spending requirement for FY 1998 and the FY 1999 budget is sufficient to meet the net school spending requirement.
- Dr. Fleming presented a letter of resignation from English teacher Edward Terrell. Michael Marino said that he is working out a plan to cover Mr Terrell=s classes and that the program will continue uninterrupted. He said that the loss of a teacher at mid-year is devastating and that no one has yet met the qualifications for the position. He said he would prefer to not have to bring someone without the opportunity to investigate them thoroughly. Mr Marino has conferred with the other English teachers and has reconfigured the schedule, with Mr Marino to be teaching a Junior level class. Mr Marino stated he is confident he can handle the extra responsibilities. He reviewed the teaching assignments and said that the staff has come together on this and he feels comfortable with the arrangement. He will provide regular progress reports to the Committee. Mr Marino said that the time between now and the end of the school year will allow for a legitimate search for a replacement teacher.

Lois Borgesi asked about Mr Terrell=s reasons for leaving and Michael Marino said that he had taken a full-time job as a travel agent. William Rogers asked if Mr Terrell wasn=t under contract, and, if so, how could he leave at mid-year. Dr. Fleming replied that teachers can simply give a 30 day notice. Dr. Fleming expressed her appreciation for MM=s handling of the situation and said that he may need other support.

- copy of the January 26, 1999 VMES Parents= Newsletter;

- the most recent City and Town Newsletter;

William Rogers asked if they could return to the subject of the custodian, that he thought the Union was in agreement with the Administration proposal and he referred to the minutes of January 12, 1999. Dr. Fleming explained that Union President Sandy Turner originally had said that the interim arrangement might be OK, but that the Union had never agreed with the creation of a non-union position. The Union had said that appointing temporarily was all right, but that they have apparently changed their mind on that issue. William Rogers said that he now understood that the Union had only agreed to the interim arrangement to be put in place while both sides studied and discussed the issue.

EDUCATION UPDATE

MCAS Presentation - Dr. Fleming referred to a MCAS Results Comparison prepared by Frank Wills, saying that, for the first time the statistics had taken out the SPED kids. She said that only a tiny, perhaps non-representational sample was left. Frank Wills said the Comparison was his third attempt to compile the data and explained the chart. Provincetown had tested all its SPED kids, which was not required by the State - other assessment means could have been devised for SPED kids this time. Dr. Fleming concurred that it was a big, bold step to have all kids take the test. Frank Wills said that he had wanted to compare Provincetown's regular students with the percentages for regular students Statewide. He said that including the disabled or learning-impaired students (D/L on the chart) did generally bring Provincetown's averages down.

Dr. Fleming commented that the MEAP test scores have historically jumped around from year-to-year, that the district has done incredibly well in individual years. The problem is how to make the results consistent with such small numbers of students.

William Rokicki pointed to how the Provincetown D/L kids did better than the State averages in some categories, specifically in that a smaller percentage failed.

Dr. Fleming stated that they were making an increased commitment to Math & Science and reviewed the Provincetown Profile Sheets received from the Department of Education. She also referred to the MCAS Writing Score Guide, which she said was a rubric for how to do well on the test. Dr. Fleming discussed comparison with writing scores at the State level. She explained two visual displays assembled for the purpose of showing examples of writing at the various levels. She said they were making posters of the samples to hang in the classrooms.

William Rokicki discussed the handout entitled AVMES Planned Response to the Curriculum Framework Standards and the MCAS. He said that VMES staff was in the process of putting aside old methods and were stepping up efforts to achieve precision and focus. They needed to encourage the students and staff to work in the core curriculum. He said they are taking steps to start saving students' work and to have regular assessments of that work. Both schools currently have monthly writing work programs. The effort to focus will extend into homework, which will be built around the curriculum frameworks and will emphasize open-end responses. They have a student portfolio system and this system will now be more attuned to the frameworks. William Rokicki said he will be returning to the Committee with examples of student work and demonstrate how they fit with the test rubrics.

Mr Rokicki also said teams will be identifying students not meeting the standards and will be tailoring means and methods to provide support to these individuals. They will be looking to encourage full-flower applications in the various disciplines. Students will be learning to apply what they learn in real life situations. Students will be taught to recognize and take advantage of the spiral logic embodied in the test series.

Mr Rokicki said further that they do have to challenge the kids more and to not underestimate their abilities. Staff will have to be careful to get kids to understand why they are learning what they are being taught - and not just about the MCAS tests. Kids need to learn those things that will be important to them. Tests will identify the standards to be met. Staff then needs to work with the students to develop appropriate skills.

Mr Rokicki said that well-attended parent forums have been held and that at these forums students' needs and possible interventions were discussed. Also explained was the effort to transition to the curriculum frameworks.

Mr Marino spoke briefly about the MCAS response at the High School, saying his draft handout provided greater detail on the new strategies. He said there was to be a three pointed focus - on parents, on staff and on students. He also held a meeting for parents at which there was a high turnout. Every teacher will be required to include MCAS-related work in every class every day. He said that the MCAS was a wake-up call to achieve the potential of what can be accomplished. The problem is not unique to Provincetown - it exists everywhere.

Frank Wills asked about the experience younger kids have with testing. William Rokicki replied, using kids three and four years old (pre-K) as examples. He said that they use models where such kids are given small projects and the teachers can then assess on pre-literate skills. In Kindergarten the models change - all the children are the same basic age - they do have extended evaluative activities. He then discussed how assessment means changed from grade to grade. Frank Wills said that it was good that kids develop at an early age concepts of test-taking and learn test-taking skills. William Rokicki mentioned the preparation for the IOWA tests and that he had reassured parents that the kids were not being made to Acram. @

Dr. Fleming commented that she had submitted a application for an Academic Support Grant to develop the 5/6, 7/8 and 9/10 programs.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

FY 2000 Budget Discussion/Administrators= Recommendations

Dr. Fleming referred the Committee to the Proposed Budget Page and other handouts. Both Mr Marino and Mr Rokicki went over the details of their recommendations on how to accomplish the 1.1% increase budget. Dr. Fleming reported that they had hired a new Technology Coordinator and gave some details about his credentials. Because of his degree level, the district will be saving \$7,300 in salary by hiring him. Dr. Fleming said that with that savings and other adjustments, the budget will increase by \$39,100, meaning that they only had to find cuts of \$22,000. Each school made adjustments as detailed in the budget handouts. Mr Marino is realigning and reorganizing to be able to hire the additional Social Studies position.

Adrienne Duncan moved to make the line-item adjustments necessary to accomplish a 1.1% total increase, Frank Wills seconded and it was so voted, 3-1 (William Rogers).

Dr. Fleming said she would have budget packets ready for Committee members before the Public Hearing.

Discussion on Consolidation Study (School, Recreation Department, and Town Library) - Dr. Fleming said that, after the previous night=s joint meeting, she was of the opinion that they need to now continue on a path that will be good for the schools. She referred to the Maguire Group=s draft report on required repairs and maintenance, saying the estimated total cost is \$1.3 million. She and William Rogers are reviewing the draft report and will be discussing it with the Maguire Group.

Dr. Fleming said that they will be starting the demographic study the next day and that the next step will be to decide on an engineering/architectural study.

Lois Borgesi reported that Maghi Geary of the Library Trustees has asked for a joint meeting and was hoping for three tentative dates. Frank Wills suggested waiting until the Trustees have an opportunity to cool down. By consensus, the Committee agreed to try and meet with the Trustees at 6:00 PM on either February 9 or February 23.

PSC Policy, Tobacco Use by Students, File JICG

Frank Wills moved to approve the revised policy, ATobacco Use By Students,@ File JICG, for a second reading. Adrienne Duncan seconded and it was so voted, 4-0. Rachel Crosby will make the revisions in the Policy Manual.

Other

William Rogers mentioned the letter he had received from former teacher Fred Turner and asked if there had been any progress made. Dr. Fleming said she had looked into the issue and said that part of the problem was that an appeal had not been filed in a timely manner. The lack of a valid appeal could make further action difficult.

Dr. Fleming responded to a question from William Rogers concerning the National Faculty, affirming that that organization will be coordinating the Summer Institutes.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business

CLOSING STATEMENTS

There were no closing statements.

Adrienne Duncan made a motion to adjourn at 9:08 PM and it was so voted unanimously.