

Marlborough Board of Education

Regular Meeting

August 25, 2016

Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School Library/Media Center

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ruth Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

BOE Members Present:

Present and seated were Ruth Kelly, Betty O'Brien, Wes Skorksi, Louise Concodello, Theresa Brysgel, Susan Rapelye, Dr. Judithe Kaplan, Mimi LaPoint and Patrick Pabouet.

Administration Present:

Dr. David Sklarz, Superintendent

Dan White, Principal

Kim Kelley, Vice Principal

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Celebrations

New Staff Members

First Day of School

Board Member Recognition

4. Public Comments

Rich Storrs, 6 Stage Harbor Road, commented that the kindergarten numbers have often been approximately 10% inaccurate in the past years. He commented that building in a percentage number going forward may be beneficial when planning for the next year.

Pam Farrington, 95 Jerry Daniels Road, noted that she knows that there is a plan in place for class size, noting her concern regarding what she feels is large class size for kindergarten at 21 students per class. She asked the Board to consider class size going forward and to reexamine the current guidelines.

5. Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions made.

6. Consent Agenda

- 6.1 Minutes of 6/23/16 policy subcommittee meeting (Encl. 6.1A) and 6/23/16 regular business meeting (Encl. 6.1B) and 8/15/16 special meeting (Encl. 6.1C);
- 6.2 Personnel Actions-Appointment of school medical advisor(Encl. 6.2);
- 6.3 Reports-receive and file the following document: monthly enrollment report (Encl. 6.3);
- 6.4 Grants-none;
- 6.5 Approval of Policy Revisions-reference June 23, 2016 Agenda, Encl. 9.3

Ms. Brysgel commented that the previous meeting minutes were more general than in the past, noting that she felt that some of the dialogue was left off. She asked to pull the minutes from the August 15, 2016 meeting, 6.1C, for review at the September, 2016 meeting.

Ms. O'Brien commented that meetings are taped if anyone would like to listen to what was said at the meeting.

**Louise Concodello made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Susan Rapelye.**

**Discussion:**

**Susan Rapelye requested to pull 6.1B, page 4, the last two sentences of the first paragraph. She questioned if data collected regarding classroom makeup and potential budget cuts to fund an additional classroom were discussed.**

**Ms. Kelly noted that there was a discussion and the vote was taken not to add an additional kindergarten class. She noted that if a teacher had been added, then potential cuts, etc. would have been presented. Ms. Brysgel did ask to discuss it, but she noted that she was told that this item would not be discussed unless an additional teacher was approved. Ms. LaPoint commented that she agreed that there was no discussion regarding what was outlined in the June, 2016 meeting minutes regarding data collected regarding classroom makeup and potential budget cuts to fund an additional classroom. Item 6.1B was put back in to the Consent Agenda items for approval.**

**The motion carried with a unanimous vote.**

7. Oral Reports

7.1 Advisory Groups

7.2 Subcommittees

Policy- Ms. Concodello noted that they met on August 25, 2016, and noted that they reviewed two policies that will be in the September packet for a first reading.

7.3 Chairperson –Chairperson Kelly thanked Mr. Skorski for getting all the self-evaluation out to the Board and asked Board to return them back to him for the Special Meeting on August 29, 2016.

7.4 Superintendent and Administrative Team-

a. School Opening-Dr. Sklarz noted some difficulties with finalizing the bus schedules due, in part, to the reduction in the number of buses by one bus.

b. Superintendent’s Annual Report (Encl. 7.4)

Dr. Sklarz noted that some revisions were made to the Annual Report, which were distributed at the meeting. Ms. Concodello noted that it is in the charter that this report needs to be completed annually. Dr. Sklarz noted that he met with Mr. Corsa, and commented that it was a very positive meeting. Dr. Sklarz noted that a plan will be formulated and discussed regarding the necessary updates and repairs that are needed at the school and how they will be addressed, with a contingency put in place. Dr. Sklarz commented that First Selectman Amy Traversa has shown support. Ms. O’Brien noted her concern that funds cannot be carried from year to year. Ms. Brysgel commented that she thinks it is important to ensure that the Board of Finance remains aware of the continued needs of the Board and suggested the possibility of having a liaison to the Board of Finance. Ms. Rapelye commented that she too thinks it would be valuable to keep an open communication with the Board of Finance. Ms. O’Brien commented that the Board does have the revenue from MECCA as a means to fund building needs, noting that the MECCA revenue used to be paid to the Town. Ms. Concodello commented the CNR is not currently meeting, and noted that they are waiting for further direction from First Selectman Amy Traversa.

Dr. Sklarz addressed the current kindergarten enrollment, noting that the projections for this school year are spot on.

8. Unfinished Business

8.1 Discuss and Review FY 2015-16 Year-End Financial Report and Financial Transfers (Encl. 8.1)

Dr. Sklarz thanked Cindy Bourassa, Mr. White, and Ms. Kelley for their efforts in finalizing the year-end report and commented that it is a true representation of what was budgeted and what was spent. He noted that there were no surprises with the transfer amounts and that they did their best to minimize transfers.

**Louise Concodello made a motion that the Board approve the FY 2015-16 financial transfers as presenting in Enclosure 8.1. The motion was seconded by Susan Rapelye and carried by a unanimous vote.**

9. New Business

9.1 Review August Financial Report

Dr. Sklarz reviewed the financial report. He commented that it is always difficult to project for Magnet School attendees.

9.2 Approval of SDE School Lunch Program Authorization

**Wes Skorski made a motion that the Board of Education enter into an agreement with the State Department of Education Child Nutrition Department for the 2016-17 school lunch program and authorize David Sklarz and Daniel White to sign claims for reimbursement. The motion was seconded by Dr. Judithe Kaplan and carried by a unanimous vote.**

9.3 Review, Discuss and Take Possible Action Re: Class Size Guidelines and Class Size Research

Dr. Sklarz commented that the current guidelines were formulated after extensive research and committee review in 2012. Ms. O'Brien commented that the smaller class guidelines for kindergarten were based on a ½ day kindergarten schedule. Dr. Sklarz noted that they were always intended to be guidelines and that modifications could be made to those guidelines based on the need, noting that a paraprofessional is sometimes added when class size goes higher than the recommended guidelines. He commented that the definition of small class size is relative. He noted that 20 students in a kindergarten class is the standard size across the country for "small class size". Dr. Sklarz commented that he reviewed how surrounding towns address class size guidelines and noted that some schools have a generic approach, noting the importance of class size, without setting standards. He referenced the class size guidelines of Bolton and Canton, noting that both give more consideration to smaller class sizes for K-3. Dr. Sklarz commented that sixth grade in other towns is typically a part of the middle school, which has a team structure. Dr. Sklarz referenced Project STAR and its successes, noting that it was a unique population of students with no Pre-k experience and minimal support at home. He noted that while small class size was beneficial to this group of students, these results were based on a unique population that cannot be replicated. Dr. Sklarz also referenced funding in California that was utilized to fund smaller class sizes, noting that there were issues that stemmed from the inability to sustain the funds needed to maintain the class sizes without pulling from other needs. Dr. Sklarz also noted research that has shown that smaller class sizes are only successful if teachers approach the classroom differently with a more individualistic approach, noting that research shows if the classroom is approached the same as a larger class size room, then the result will be the same. Dr. Sklarz noted that there are other impacts that contribute to the learning progression of a student, including background, parental support of the student and the classroom, and other services funded to support student. Dr. Sklarz noted that according to

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research, class size is not always cost beneficial to suburban middle class schools. Dr. Sklarz reviewed some of the factors impacting class size including quality of the teachers, Pre-k program, teacher training, resources available to teachers, support services, community, parental educational background, and home environment. He noted that Marlborough guidelines fit within the State Guidelines and their continuous changes over time.

Discussion:

Ms. Brysgel commented that she did not see research that said that smaller class size is the most expensive approach with the least return. Ms. Brysgel commented that she continues to feel that 20-21 students in a kindergarten classroom is a lot. She commented that she does have concern regarding the students that do not come from a high social economic status that may get lost in the larger classroom. She commented that she feels it is important to prepare to the lowest denominator when making these types of decision. She commented that she would like to see some changes to the classroom guidelines for K-3. She commented that she feels the Board is a checks and balance whose role is to question things. Ms. Brysgel questioned what the next step will be.

Ms. Rapelye commented that when considering policy language, she liked the way Bolton worded their policy with focus on the K-3, ensuring that class size would not exceed the guideline. She commented that she too has done her research, noting that the Internet does allow you to find evidence to support what your opinion is. Ms. Rapelye commented that she would like to see what may have possibly been cut if the extra teacher had been maintained, noting that it would have helped her make her decision. She commented that she thinks it is important to provide the facts so she can make an educated decision.

Ms. Concodello commented that she sat on the policy committee that outlined the original classroom size guidelines. She noted the various support that is provided, including paraprofessionals, specialists, psychologists, social workers. She commented the teachers are not alone and have the support needed. She commented that the budget is so tight and that there is no wiggle room.

Mr. Skorski questioned if the research provided any information regarding the impact of support in the classroom. He commented that he would like to see more research to support this. Mr. Skorski questioned if the number of sections would change for next year. Dr. Sklarz noted that it is projected that it would drop to 24. Mr. Skorski commented that there they can also propose to decrease the ratios in the classroom and maintain the number of sections.

Ms. O'Brien thanked Dr. Sklarz for his efforts. She commented that she thinks that the Board should listen to Dr. Sklarz and his experience and not rely only on their own research

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and emotions. Ms. O'Brien also commented that the original guidelines were based on a ½ day kindergarten class. She commented that a choice had to be made whether to maintain small class sizes and a ½ day program or full day kindergarten with larger class sizes. Ms. O'Brien also commented that the Administration makes suggestions, but that it is up to the Board to vote on those suggestions and make the final decision.

Dr. Judithe Kaplan commented that she is impressed by the data and noted that it makes her much more comfortable with the current class sizes.

Ms. LaPoint commented that they are not just focusing on class size for kindergarten, but class size for each grade. Ms. LaPoint commented that she too would like to have more data regarding support outside the classroom and its impacts on class size. She questioned if there is any data for MES that shows how students do when the class sizes fluctuate at this school. Ms. LaPoint commented that she agrees with Ms. Brysgel that they need to consider all of the students when making these decisions, and not just base decisions on the median. She commented that the range does not always work and commented that they should pick a maximum number of students per class.

Mr. Pabouet commented that he thinks there should be a more general guideline and not tied by a number.

Chairperson Kelly commented that paraprofessional educators allow for more individualized education in the classroom because they are able to assist the teacher. She commented that she feels they should go with a more generalized statement with a recommendation for a maximum number.

The Board agreed to review the information and address at the next meeting.

9.4 First Reading of Proposed Policy Revisions

Ms. LaPoint questioned if teachers are actually required to get a chest x-ray, questioning if it is necessary.

10. Public Comments

Rich Storrs, 6 Stage Harbor Road, commented that the research is unruly and that having the Board make a decision as a whole is the best approach. Mr. Storrs commented that professional development is very important and noted his concern that it appears funding for professional development may have dropped in recent years.

11. Communications

11.1 2016-17 Staff Listing

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11.2 Staff Vacancy Summary

12. Future Meetings & Topics

12.1 Board of Education Special Meeting, August 29, 2016, 6:30pm

12.2 OPEN HOUSE, Grade Prek-3, Tuesday, September 13, 2016, 6:30-7:30pm

12.3 OPEN HOUSE, Grade 4-6, Wednesday, September 14, 2016, 6:30-7:30pm

12.4 Policy subcommittee meeting, Thursday, September 22, 2016, 6:30pm

12.5 Next regular business meeting, Thursday, September 22, 2016, 7:00pm

13. Adjournment

**Theresa Brysgel made a motion to adjourn meeting at 9:30pm. The motion was seconded by Louise Concodello and carried by a unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted

Karen DeCorleto