

Joint School Committee Meeting
Thursday, May 22, 2014
Nauset Middle School, Cafeteria

Present for the Committees:

Region: John O'Reilly, Sara Blackwell, Brian Kavanaugh, Sue Skidmore, Ed Lewis, Jayne Fowler, Chris Galazzi, and Chris Easley

Brewster: David Telman, Brenda Cazeault, Trish Hill, Marie Enochy, Claire Gradone

Eastham: Ann Crozier, Mary Lou Sette, Amy Handel, Joanne Irish, and Judy Lindahl

Orleans: Josh Stewart, Ed Rohmer, Gail Briere and David Abel (7:35 p.m.)

Wellfleet: Jan Plaue, Jill Putnam, Mort Inger, and Martha Gordon

Present for the Administration:

Dr. Hoffmann, Keith Gauley, Tom Conrad, Maxine Minkoff, Mary Beth Rodman, Diane Carreiro, Scotti Finnegan and Joanna Hughes

Call to Order

Dr. Hoffmann called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and introduced the new members including; Claire Gradone from Brewster, Martha Gordon from Wellfleet, Judy Lindahl from Eastham and Gail Briere from Orleans. He then accepted nominations for Chair of the Joint School Committee. Jan Plaue was nominated by Ann Crozier, seconded by Sara Blackwell and it was voted unanimously to appoint Jan Plaue as Chair of the Joint School Committee.

Chair Plaue took nominations for Vice Chair. Ed Lewis was nominated by Marie Enochy, seconded by John O'Reilly and it was voted unanimously to appoint Ed Lewis as Vice Chair of the Joint School Committee.

Agenda Changes

Citizens Speak was not on the agenda but the Chair allowed citizens to speak at the request of a few members. Margie Fulcher addressed the committee with her concerns about the policy subcommittee, the staff communication policy, more training for school committee members, the International Student Program, and the Superintendent's contract renewal.

Ann Crozier, Chair of Union 54, gave a summary of the evaluations that she received noting that only 65% of the members completed an evaluation. (see attached summary)

John O'Reilly, Chair of the Region School Committee, gave a summary of the evaluations that he received noting that eight members submitted an evaluation and two did not. Mr. O'Reilly read comments from individual evaluations. (see attached summary)

Chair Plaue thanked John O'Reilly and Ann Crozier for their summations that ranged from good to bad, as well as exemplary.

Mr. Inger gave the Superintendent high marks in the first two years and commented on his energy and his good presentations to Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen. He did not like his attitude during negotiations and felt the Superintendent was too focused on little details like personal days. He stated his performance was unsatisfactory.

Mr. Lewis stated he could only comment about the relationship the Superintendent has with the Region School Committee and the town officials. He finds the relationship with the Regional School Committee lacking and that the school committee is a necessary evil and not in a partnership. He does not involve the Regional School Committee in decisions, according to Mr. Lewis and he feels they should be more involved.

Brenda Cazeault indicated that communication is an issue and less than anything other than exemplary is not acceptable. She stated there is increasing pressure on the district and the schools with parents having alternatives for educating their children.

Trish Hill indicated that she thoughtfully composed the Superintendent's evaluation. She still has concerns about issue surrounding communication and formal engagement with families. She would like this to be a high priority for the Superintendent. She further stated that school committee members need to ask questions to make the best decisions. She felt there was a lack of evidence in the evaluation. In the future, she would like to see evidence reflective of action steps to show that the goal has been met.

Ann Crozier indicated that Dr. Hoffmann has a great deal of open dialog and discussions with the Eastham School Committee. She stated he has never been in a mindset of not hearing concerns and that he answers questions from the Committee. She indicated he does a great job with the budgets making it a smooth process and that she received positive feedback from Selectmen and Town Administrator in that regard.

Sue Skidmore found the vehicle which the committees have to evaluate the Superintendent is cumbersome. She felt questions have been answered and information forthcoming. She gave him high marks on that. She felt communication needs to be addressed. She suggested members sit back and look at the system that they can be proud of and noted it doesn't happen by itself but with the Superintendent, Staff, School Committee and Parents.

Mr. Kavanaugh stated it is the School Committee's job to provide the schools with an exceptional leader who is fully committed and wise in collective decision making. Nauset needs to find an inspirational leader to empower the principals and teachers. He stated our Superintendent is reactive, fights fires, and looks for positional power. A succession plan is necessary to provide the district with a new Superintendent.

Mr. Galazzi indicated that it doesn't seem like we invite and actively promote open communication. He stated that innovative leadership fosters good relationships with teachers and families.

MOTION:

Mr. Galazzi made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Kavanaugh that the Committee begins a search for a new Superintendent to fill the position after the current contract.

Ms. Enochy called a point of order as committees have not reorganized. Discussion ensued about the need to reorganize or not and it was determined there were ample voting members, as alternates are designated for each committee.

Ms. Blackwell indicated that the Superintendent's contract was not on the agenda and should not be brought up tonight. Mr. O'Reilly noted that the contract will expire on June 30, 2015 and the committee does not need to act by June 30th. Mr. Lewis felt an attorney should be present and that another meeting should be scheduled.

Ms. Enochy clarified the vote of a Union 54 member is a vote as an individual and not the vote of the respective committee.

Dr. Hoffmann addressed the Committee and reviewed accomplishments and challenges over the year. He also indicated that members who have not submitted an evaluation have until June 30th to complete one. He reviewed the process of evaluating the Superintendent based on the state rubric and the focus elements chosen. He questioned whether or not the rubric was followed in many evaluations. He also indicated that the comments on the evaluations were very helpful. He noted that the Administrative team accomplished a great deal and the teachers and staff are second to none.

He reviewed the evidence for goals and indicated significant progress was made on most goals including having math assessments in place, educator goals in place, student safety and health concerns are in place. Extensive high quality professional development, induction programs and teacher mentoring has been established.

Financially – creation of dash board reports for the Region and significant improvement and transparency in budgets. Regionally, the financial position has improved dramatically since he was hired in 2009. MSBA grants have been obtained and capital projects moving forward.

Family and Community Engagement – The Superintendent referenced the parent survey where 77% of parents indicated satisfaction very favorable with schools. He initiated a workshop with principals on how to improve parent involvement. Partnerships have been expanded in the communities. 81% indicated communication between schools and home is favorable. He indicated he would work further on

this and establish more informal ways to meet with staff and parents, like coffees or office hours at each school.

Commitment to high standards – The Superintendent referenced exit tickets from the Administrators indicating he is doing a great job. He stated that he is invited to speak at student events and verbalizes these high standards as models for students.

Verbal Communication Skills – Verbal communication are evident with town officials, Department of Education, annual reports, hiring process for principals at Eddy and Orleans by consensus building, and noted technology plan in strategic plan for completion in 2015. He will improve his skills to employ strategies for actively involving school committee members as partners. He noted that all towns now have long range capital plans for the schools.

He concluded by saying the staff, students, families and school committees are outstanding and the reason for the success of Nauset. It is a team achievement. He asked that the Committee consider extending his contract for one year, 2015-16 and then work on a leadership succession plan.

Chair Plaue indicated that the Superintendent's contract is not on the agenda but because Committee members wish to discuss it and the Superintendent does as well, she allowed the topic and discussion.

Mr. Galazzi reiterated the motion that he made, that was seconded by Mr. Kavanaugh, to begin a search for a new Superintendent and to fill the position at the conclusion of the current contract.

Chair O'Reilly indicated he was in agreement with the motion as he has come to the conclusion that Nauset does need a change. He also indicated he was not in favor of the additional year on the contract. He stated that the Middle School and High School are thriving and everyone is doing a good job, however, looking forward, the collaboration and team building is lacking.

Ms. Enochty stated that she did not complete an evaluation but is concerned about the unsatisfactory remarks, worried about the overall feeling of stress in the culture, and felt the committee should vote tonight.

Mr. Rohmer supported taking the vote at the meeting. He felt Nauset needs a new style of leadership.

Ms. Briere wanted to be sure there was a clear understanding of the evaluation process. She suggested it is time for the Committee to be thoughtful about what the Committee wants in terms of leadership. She stated the Committees want a leader who has met goals in light of what you are looking for. She indicated there was no rush to make a decision this evening. She suggested that all members should see comments and be thoughtful about the next steps.

Mr. Kavanaugh indicated that the motion includes the remainder of the present contract. He felt the evidence was compelling and worries about the competition siting Sturgis and Monomoy.

Ms. Fowler indicated that the Superintendent is professional in his position. MCAS scores are higher, good commitment to high standards, and she thinks he has done a good job getting Nauset where it is now. There are issues. Communication needs to get much better with the teachers and keeping the school committee informed. She indicated she was not prepared to vote tonight.

Ms. Cazeault indicated that sometimes life and fact present and make action. She felt the committee should vote tonight. She indicated that she felt informed and comfortable in making a decision.

Mr. Easley addressed the Committee indicating he was very impressed with the amount of time and work the Superintendent and his staff puts in. He also indicated that changing leadership is not always a good thing and sometimes a bad thing. He stressed that there are a lot of different committees and meetings and that it is not an easy job. He is surprised and feels like he has been jumped on. He felt the decision needs to be thought about and needs more time.

Mr. Lewis indicated that this is not on the agenda and the Committee is breaking the Open Meeting Laws. The votes will be challenged. He does not wish to violate state law. He also indicated that there are some personal issues that are part of the discussion that he wishes weren't there. He does not wish to vote quickly because there are some underlying thought processes.

Chair Plaue indicated that the Superintendent has one more year on his contract and has requested one more year after that. Consider that or consider voting tonight. She did not want members to vote quickly because there is some underlying thought process. She indicated there needs to be more discussion on this issue.

Ms. Putnam indicated that the conversation is difficult for many. Some of the things she heard tonight are surprises and she needs time to digest it. She also needs to hear more data and would like to hear full disclosure and authenticity. She indicated that the Superintendent's evaluation is new and this evaluation is rigorous. She indicated that Dr. Hoffmann has a lot of positives, has done a lot of good work, and is just one person. It is a collaborative effort. She also indicated she is very perplexed about the staff communication thing and does not know what to believe. She would like further information and would like to hear from Dr. Hoffmann and what he would do to remedy things.

Ms. Irish was astonished that contract extension even came up at this meeting and indicated she was not prepared to vote on anything that is this important. She felt blindsided and feels people have been saying things and talking to each other behind doors. She felt that some School Committee members have not been transparent and that all of a sudden this comes up. She felt appalled. She suggested the Committee go back to what is on the agenda and talk about this another point in time. She made a motion to call the question and then withdrew that motion.

Ms. Crozier made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Easley to table the motion and set up another meeting. This would temporarily suspend action on a pending motion.

Mr. Galazzi withdrew the motion and Mr. Kavanaugh withdrew the second.

Discussion ensued on what verbiage should be used on the agenda. Ms. Enochty indicated all that it has to say is to discuss the Superintendent's contract. Mr. O'Reilly suggested the committee meet in July after school has gotten out because June is so busy. The Committees agreed to meet on July 10th at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Briere asked that School Committee members get the summary evaluation in writing of what has been submitted. Mr. O'Reilly indicated that he has a summary and he just looked at the pages of the evaluations for comments. It was suggested that all members get all the evaluations. It was noted that discussions that took place in negotiations were included on one evaluation and should not be public. However, Mr. Lewis indicated that the documents are a public record.

School Calendar

On a motion by Mr. O'Reilly, seconded by Mr. Telman, it was voted unanimously to rescind the vote of the Committee on the school calendar for 2014-15.

On a motion by Mr. O'Reilly, seconded by Mr. Telman, it was voted unanimously to approve the revised school calendar for 2014-15.

Policy Update

Chair Plaue indicated she would limit discussion to 20 minutes on the policy items and noted that each policy has a legal opinion from our attorney.

Ms. Skidmore, Chair of the Policy Subcommittee, indicated there has much discussion on policy and the subcommittee has been meeting for over two years now with all meetings posted. Three policies have been reviewed and legal opinions sought. The School Choice Policy is clear and the legal opinion is very clear as well. The subcommittee advised the committees to keep the current policy for Non-Resident Students #5118. The attorney's legal opinion indicated that we cannot discriminate against any child in any community.

SCHOOL CHOICE – Non-Resident Student Policy

Brewster –

On a motion by Ms. Enochty, seconded by Mr. Telman, it was voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the current policy #5118 as written and as recommended by the attorney.

Region –

On a motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Fowler, it was voted unanimously (9-0) to approve the current policy #5118 as written.

Orleans –

On a motion by Mr. Stewart, seconded by Mr. Abel, it was voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the current policy #5118 as presented.

Eastham –

On a motion by Ms. Crozier, seconded by Ms. Irish, it was voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the current policy #5118 as written.

Wellfleet –

On a motion by Mr. Inger, seconded by Ms. Putnam, it was voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the current policy #5118 as written.

Fundraising Policy #9326

Ms. Skidmore brought forward the recommendation of the policy subcommittee to accept the current language as written. At the meeting held on May 15, 2014 it was voted unanimously to send the policy forward in its current state without change. Members of the policy subcommittee realize there is some consternation on this policy and if individual town committees vote against the recommendation, it was suggested they come up with their own version of the policy.

Ms. Hill stated that she attended the last two policy subcommittee meetings in March and April and that at both the March and April meeting the subcommittee discussed wording to have language options presented to the Committee from Mr. Hardy. She voiced concerns about people voting the policy. She also stated that nothing was ever presented to the subcommittee for consideration. At the meeting on May 15th, the subcommittee voted to stay with the original policy. She respectfully asked that the Committee not move forward until they have new language as requested.

Ms. Crozier stated that at the May meeting there was further discussion on the policy and that members decided to go with the legal opinion and stay with the policy. The subcommittee did not see it as a violation of PTO, but rather that the school committee was just asking for a list of fundraisers.

Ms. Hill indicated that this does not resolve the matter and that further language should have been brought forward. She respectfully asked that the Committee not move forward until they have new language as requested.

Ms. Enochy asked if other committees were comfortable with the current policy as Brewster could go back and revise the policy for Brewster only. Mr. Lewis agreed with Ms. Enochy. He also stated that whatever policy there is, he did not think it was being followed in the Region. He stated whatever policy

is put forward; it needs to be well thought out. Ms. Cazeault indicated that the wording revision that was proposed initially did not come out of Brewster but from the Subcommittee. Mr. Kavanaugh clarified that there was an existing policy, the policy subcommittee drafted new wording, the wording was rejected by the Joint Committees, and now the policy subcommittee has gone back to the existing language.

Ms. Skidmore reiterated that the Policy Subcommittee is putting forward the current policy #9326 for approval. Mr. Telman stated that he attended the last Policy Subcommittee meeting and voted to approve the policy knowing that Brewster will make changes for Brewster alone.

Brewster -

On a motion by Ms. Enochty, seconded by Ms. Hill, it was voted unanimously, 5-0, to table adoption of policy #9326.

Region –

On a motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Fowler, it was voted 6-1 (Sue Skidmore) to table adoption of policy #9326.

Orleans –

On a motion by Mr. Stewart, seconded by Mr. Abel, it was voted unanimously, (4-0), to adopt the present policy #9326 as written.

Eastham –

On a motion by Ms. Crozier, seconded by Ms. Sette, it was voted unanimously, (5-0), to adopt the present policy #9326 as written.

Wellfleet –

On a motion by Ms. Gordon, seconded by Mr. Inger, it was voted unanimously, (4-0), to adopt the present policy #9326 as written.

Mr. O'Reilly indicated that two committees tabled this but that doesn't change the current policy. Brewster and the Region will have to come up with their own language. Dr. Hoffmann concurred that the existing policies are still in place and the committees are voting "approval in form." Chair Plaue reminded the Committee of their policy updating initiative and agreement with MASC to help with this endeavor.

Staff/School Committee Communication –

Ms. Skidmore indicated that a legal opinion was reviewed by the attorney at the meeting on April 2nd. Many staff members attended asking questions and sharing concerns. In the end, the idea from counsel is to leave the language as it is presently. When the Subcommittee met on May 17th, they reviewed this policy again. While there is still angst about it, the Subcommittee was hesitant to go against legal opinion. In a unanimous vote the Subcommittee decided to put forth the existing Staff and School

Committee Communication Policy #1390/4214 as written. The current policy is still in existence. Ms. Crozier indicated that it was agreed by the Policy Subcommittee to put forth the current policy with the provision that Administration arrange a communication in-service for everyone including school committee members, staff and administration. This would be a unified presentation so that everyone understands that they can speak at school committee meetings without recourse. Eastham School Committee was surprised at this as teachers have always spoken at meetings.

Mr. Inger stated that you don't need the Superintendent to speak and that the school committee decides what the policy is. He asked the Superintendent twice if he had to have permission to speak to the staff and the Superintendent indicated no. Mr. Inger made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Rohmer to remove the policy from the policy manual. Ms. Skidmore indicated that this must be in our policy manual as it follows the Education Reform Act of 1993, proper communication. We do not have the option of not having a communication policy in our manual.

Ms. Enocht indicated that this policy has been in existence since 2000 and that all of a sudden it is an issue. Is it the policy or the implementation of the policy? She felt eliminating the policy would not address the issue.

Mr. Mathison, President of the NEA, commented that he has been a teacher in the district for forty years and has always had an opportunity to address the school committee as a teacher. He indicated that letters of reprimand have been sent to staff members because they spoke out about issues. They were told they were violating the policy and were subject to being reprimanded. He mentioned the loss of data at the Middle School and teachers were not able to talk to the committee. He referred to a previous meeting where the chair of the policy subcommittee indicted that policy is needed so that there is some control. He stated at the April 2nd meeting a number of people attended the subcommittee meeting. The attorney indicated that the policy is not a problem and wanted people to know they could speak at Citizens Speak. Then he received the legal opinion indicating no change. He concluded by saying do you want a discussion with people or do you want control?

Mr. Lewis indicated the culture can change but thinks the language is incorrect. The school committee should have a right to hear teachers and school committee members have a right to find things out. According to the policy you cannot go to someone without clearing it through the Superintendent.

Ms. Hill stated at the April 2nd and April 17th meeting she addressed the fact that the lead statement in that policy was that the school committee wanted open communication. It further stated that all communication needs to go through the Superintendent. The Administration has chosen to use that language to influence the culture. She suggested the second sentence be removed. The attorney said the policy was legal but that does not mean it is good policy. New language was not presented to the subcommittee for discussion. The Superintendent suggested new language to add to the policy. She is disturbed that staff members do not feel that they can speak freely to committee members. Specifics of the language need to be reviewed. This policy has had unintended consequences effecting the culture

negatively. She suggested bringing this policy forward to the attorney, removing the second sentence, and then see if it is legal.

Chair Plaue indicated that we need some sort of communication policy. The School Committees asked for a legal opinion and obtained one. The Policy Subcommittee is working under pressure and an expiring contract with MASC for updating the manual, but perhaps there is an over urgency in trying to push things through that have not been vetted.

Ms. Putnam indicated that she agrees a communication policy is necessary. She is also uncomfortable with the wording that everything must go through the Superintendent, and how can the committee word this so staff members know we want to hear from them. We want clear language so that teachers can come and express their opinions. We want respectful and free dialog. Perhaps Jim Hardy could help with the language.

Dr. Hoffmann agreed that the wording is convoluted but is legal protection for everyone. He stated he suggested adding wording to the policy that, “staff members are encouraged to bring their views to the attention of the School Committee at a public meeting or in writing addressed to the School Committee.” The attorney wrote back indicating this wording should not be added to the policy and to leave it as written.

Mr. Kavanaugh stated that the attorney indicated the interpretation was wrong. He disagreed that the policy needs to exist.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Hill and seconded by Mr. Inger to remove the second sentence of the policy that state that all communication goes through the Superintendent for approval, if the attorney indicates that is legal.

Mr. Lewis indicated that other parts of the policy are a problem as well.

Mr. Rohmer indicated that nothing says we have to have this policy. He stated that a chain of command is not necessary but we need communication.

Mr. Easley asked what method we could use so that there would be more communication between teachers and school committee. The solution is not changing the policy but coming up with a teachers group that takes part in a meeting. People are able to speak. Formal teachers’ union representatives are at meetings all the time and speak all the time.

Mr. O’Reilly requested that the motion be withdrawn, indicating there has been a lot of discussion on this. Obviously, some people are not satisfied with the subcommittee and the attorney. He suggested this be

placed on the summer meeting agenda and the attorney be invited to the meeting. He urged Brewster to withdraw the motion.

Ms. Hill withdrew her motion at Mr. O'Reilly's request to have this re-examined so it reflects the spirit of the district. The second was withdrawn as well. Mr. Inger and Ms. Gordon withdrew their motion and second as well. Mr. Galazzi suggested the attorney work on this language. Mr. Lewis and Mr. Galazzi indicated they would work on this and Mr. O'Reilly reminded them that their meeting must be legally posted.

Summer Meeting Date –

The summer meeting date was set for July 10th to discuss the Superintendent's contract and the Policy on School Committee and Staff Communication.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Mr. Telman, seconded by Mr. Galazzi, it was voted unanimously to approve the minutes of March 27, 2014.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Inger, seconded by Ms. Enochty, it was voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann M. Tefft