

WELLFLEET SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

Present for the School Committee: Jan Plaue, Jill Putnam, Martha Gordon, Mort Inger

Present for the Administration: Dr. Ann Caretti and Mary Beth Rodman, Principal

CALL TO ORDER/AGENDA CHANGES – Chair Plaue called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. and welcome Dr. Caretti to the Wellfleet School Committee meeting.

CHAIR'S REPORT – no report

MEMBERS SPEAK – Members reported on the meeting with the Selectmen and Finance Committee. The members took turns answering questions and everything went very well. Principal Rodman indicated they were confused by the Substantial Separate Program and she explained the enrollment and program to them. They asked about Circuit Breaker funds and Liz Sorrell explained that to them. Martha Gordon explained the transportation exploration that is taking place with the Cape Cod Collaborative to lower costs. They inquired about per pupil costs. They were also very pleased that the new substantially separate program may bring more students and revenue to the town.

CITIZENS SPEAKS – none

PRIORITY BUSINESS

Administrators' Reports

Principal Rodman's Report

Principal Rodman's report was included in the packet. She highlighted the following: Community Partnerships and the PARCC testing schedule. Discussion ensued about the *Choose to Be Nice* program at Wellfleet Elementary School which is their version of *Calmer Choice*. Principal Rodman indicated that not all staff has been trained in the *Responsive Classroom* and this summer will have an opportunity for training. Principal Rodman invited members to the Billingsgate Basketball Tournament on March 12th and reminded them of the Spaghetti Supper.

Assistant Superintendent's Report:

No report.

Superintendent's Report:

No report. Chair Plaue reminded the Committee that the Joint School Committee is meeting on March 31st when the Substance Abuse Task Force will report and some housekeeping items will be discussed and voted.

FY16 Budget Review

Principal Rodman reviewed the expenditure report and indicated it has a balance of \$100,679 and everything is tracking well.

School Choice – Public Hearing

The Superintendent recommended that the Committee not participate in School Choice for the 2016-17 school year.

Motion:

On a motion by Mort Inger, seconded by Jill Putnam, it was voted unanimously, 4-0, not to participate in School Choice for the 2016-2017 school year.

Community Week Update

Principal Rodman distributed a sample schedule for community week. She sent a formal invitation to the Selectmen, Finance Committee and Town Officials. Chair Plaue would like the event advertised in the Cape Codder and the Banner inviting everyone to attend. Principal Rodman indicated that she would be sharing plans for the community week with other Principals at the Administrative Team meeting. Chair Plaue and the committee members are very appreciative that the school wants to do this for the community.

Preschool Program

Discussion was held regarding the possibility of offering public preschool for four year olds at Wellfleet Elementary School. Chair Plaue would like to know if WES has the space and if it is affordable. She would like to see a program in place September 2017. She suggested talking to people in town, to Selectmen, and Finance Committee members as well as groups that sponsor preschool.

Dr. Ann Caretti indicated that one advantage would be that it would be a full-day program and would benefit the Integrated Preschool program. What is happening now is that the voucher system gives people the opportunity to enroll in a full day program and not in the Nauset Integrated Preschool which is a ½ day program.

Mort Inger indicated he was totally in favor of this initiative as research has proven that attending preschool has advantages all the way to graduation.

Principal Rodman indicated that the enrollment projection for Wellfleet in FY18 is 23 students entering Kindergarten and that space must be a consideration. Chair Plaue will contact the Town Clerk to obtain the Census Data. Principal Rodman stated that she must have room for the Integrated Preschool program.

Jill Putnam stated that the committee is in agreement that preschool is so important but she struggles with the fact that there are people in the community providing preschool. She suggested that maybe the need is not so much for preschool but before and after school care. Jill Putnam suggested a survey be sent as there may not be enough children to make it viable and that is how they ended up with the voucher system.

Principal Rodman informed the committee that presently attendance at school is not mandatory until a child is five years of age.

Mort Inger did not like that the school would be competing with existing preschools. Jill Putnam was concerned about the logistics, mandates by the state, and the space requirements. She also stated that the other preschools are licensed by the state. Martha Gordon suggested looking at other school systems that are doing this and doing it well. She felt the Committee should continue talking about it and explore it.

Chair Plaue thought having four year olds is a great benefit to the children. She realizes this will be fraught with difficulties but she would like to see the Committee try to do this. Jill Putnam agreed with the value but worried about the variable for practicality.

Dr. Caretti voiced her concern for the Nauset Integrated Preschool Program and maintaining the community friends. She too wondered if the private preschools would be hurt by this initiative. She suggested involving Joanna Stevens in this conversation.

Magnet School Concept

Chair Plaue read a note from Bestsy Pontius indicating that she is interested in brainstorming magnet schools. She suggested looking back at the survey data that was collected from parents. She indicated that magnet schools have a vision and Wellfleet is an interdisciplinary project-based instructional school. She indicated that Wellfleet has a lot of the magnet school pieces. She is happy to see the Wellfleet School Committee is considering this for Wellfleet Elementary School.

Chair Plaue stated the idea came from a conversation, thinking about the student population, and hoping Wellfleet can always have an elementary school. She thought in the future the school might have to do something unique in order to bring people to the school. (Fine Arts School, Foreign Language School) Chair Plaue noted that this is extremely premature, but if WES were to become a magnet school, what would it look like. Principal Rodman indicated that she would like to see an extended day school, a year round school, and would like to open up the enrichment piece. She would like children to move through the grade levels when they are ready to move. The school day should be lengthened and the vacations shortened. She did research on magnet schools and WES meets the criteria of their plan already. WES could be considered an Innovation School. Presently there is limited instructional time and time to remediate. She suggested making better what is already in place at WES.

Chair Plaue suggested offering courses like Robotics during vacation weeks. Principal Rodman indicated that she is working with Barbara Lavoine on a STEM Academy for the summer. She would also like to extend the Makerspace, Robotics, and Legos. Martha Gordon suggested working with the 3-D printers. She also stated that optimal learning time takes place early in the day and asked if there is a way to have PE and Art at the end of the day. Principal Rodman stated that some children need movement and a break mid-day. Chair Plaue suggested the longer day not be filled with things but just allow more breathing time during the day so teachers and students aren't pushing all the time. Principal Rodman also suggested a Reading Specialist, Math Specialist, and Science Specialist and that students move in and out of those classes. The General Education teachers would not have to be a master of every subject.

Jill Putnam indicated that a magnet school has a theme and tend to be in areas with a huge concentration of children. WES has such a wonderful reputation, is a community school and is a reflection of the community. The Arts are important in Wellfleet as well as small class size, student/teacher ratios, PE and a Library program. The staff already has project based themes. Jill Putnam also indicated that the teacher and the principal must have mentors and there would be a cost attached to that. She also said the Government Accountability Office, which is researched based, finds extended day a long day for kids. It gets to be too expensive, challenging, and might not be sustainable. They find that a strong after school program is better than an extended school day program as it gives kids a chance to have more hands-on learning.

Mort Inger felt the morning was optimal learning time for children and felt the day could get too long for some children who don't want to attend another class in an extended day program. Jill Putnam suggested that some students have individual pursuits. Some children want to play outdoors or read a book while others have appointments and sports activities. Some children have lessons of some sort like piano, CCD, Hebrew, or Scouts. She is hesitant that a longer day is needed. Principal Rodman suggested that intervention for reading, about 40 minutes, be added to the day.

Chair Plaue stated that a longer day would have to be negotiated with teachers. She also stated that something like this might save WES as a school in the future when enrollment may only be 60 students. If the Committee had to decide on a specialty type program, would it be language, arts, etc. This is just a very preliminary discussion in looking at the future. Martha Gordon suggested a school for kids that were project based learners. School Choice in the future was mentioned. Dr. Caretti suggested advertising the school and showcasing its greatness. She also said it is hard for people to live on Cape Cod and sustain their livelihood.

Chair Plaue suggested that there is potential for a variety in our 4 elementary schools and that the schools could complement one another. There would be something for everyone on the lower Cape.

REPORTS AND INFORMATION

Cape Cod Collaborative - Jill Putnam reported that she attended the Legislative Breakfast. The Director of the Sturgis Charter School was invited and there was a discussion on charter schools. Other topics included: the Executive Director's evaluation, hiring a business manager, bus drivers clearing snow off buses for \$15 per hour, and a Preschool grant for \$39,000. Dr. Caretti expressed her objection to the Collaborative being on the Upper Cape. She would like to see a program closer to the lower Cape for Nauset kids. She indicated the travel time was too much every day.

PTA – Principal Rodman spoke about the Spaghetti Supper and reported that the PTA is gearing up for WES Fest. There was a discussion about the dunk tank.

School Council – No report. Principal Rodman indicated they will be looking at the School Improvement Plan.

Nauset Preschool – Dr. Caretti reported that Cindy Fox is retiring and they are interviewing for that position. They had 11 applicants and there are two finalists. The finalist have been invited back to work in the program and see how they relate with the kids. The hiring committee will make a decision by the end of the week.

Transportation Subcommittee – Martha Gordon reported that the subcommittee will be meeting with the Cape Cod Collaborative in April.

Substance Abuse Task Force – Martha Gordon reported that they are reviewing plans on what can be accomplished in year one, year two and five years out. The subcommittee talked about ways to get programs for parents and see what programs are working in other school systems. They also discussed ways to get service for families on the Lower Cape and where they would be located.

Dr. Caretti mentioned that Administration is discussing how we identify programs in our schools. There is a curriculum assessment committee and everything should go through a process.

Approval of Minutes –

On a motion by Mort Inger, seconded by Jill Putnam, it was voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the minutes as amended, for February 9, 2016.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mort Inger, seconded by Jill Putnam, it was voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann M. Tefft

Included in packet: Administrative Reports, Expense Report, and minutes. Handed out at the meeting: Community Partnership list and schedule for PARCC testing.