

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday June 9, 2010**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jeff Beeler, Vice Chairman;
Dr. Rich Robison, Michele MacDonald, Lisa Gutch

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Bob Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Business and Finance Director; Mary Taylor, SEA

Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. METCO Restructuring Recommendation

Superintendent Brackett presented an overview of his recommendation to reaffirm our commitment to the METCO program and to share a director with L-S. It is his belief that sharing a director will provide continuity and a common path through graduation. Currently, the SPS METCO director is a 0.6 FTE position. Dr. Brackett believes SPS will benefit from a full-time regional director by having full-time access to the director.

Superintendent Brackett restated the goals of restructuring: improving learning and achievement, maintaining fiscal viability, increasing direct services to students, and improving the parent network and parent involvement. He acknowledged the concerns raised about the process of considering and developing a restructured METCO program and also noted concerns about student welfare and cultural differences within the school community.

Dr. Brackett shared the timeline of METCO restructuring discussions. Additionally, he touched on transition activities, partnerships, programs for parents, and the presence of a building-based educational and cultural advocate/academic advisor for each school. The middle school advocate/academic advisor will serve as the assistant to the director and as the liaison between the director and the individual schools' advisors.

Superintendent Brackett noted the support of the Sudbury Administrative Leadership Team (SALT) and stated that the District recently began an affiliation with Empowering Multicultural Initiatives, EMI, which provides anti-racism and cultural education professional development services, as well as the Greater Boston Students of Color Achievement Network. He also emphasized that the SPS and L-S programs were not being merged into a single program.

Dr. Brackett noted that METCO enrollments have little direct impact on class size and that placements are made on a space-available basis. He highlighted the incorporation of a now non-existent parent advisory board and a vision of increasing in-class academic support. After-school tutoring will continue as long as it is deemed cost-effective. Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley reported that the in-kind administrative assistant would likely devote approximately one-half day each week to METCO responsibilities.

Finally, Superintendent Brackett noted that the G4 will continue its work, particularly on transportation. Rich Robison emphasized that coordination of transportation is not a key component of this plan for this year.

Susan Iuliano reported that a petition signed by 18 people was received, essentially stating opposition to METCO program consolidation and requesting postponement until a process is established to include input from all stakeholders.

6. Open Forum

Debbie Howell, Victoria Road, is the parent of Loring third- and fifth-grade students and the Loring cooperating family parent liaison. She expressed appreciation that the proposal reflects comments received; however, she takes issue with comparing the recommended METCO administrative changes to a teacher or middle school administrator lay-off. In her view, the METCO director has more meaningful relationship with METCO families and students than a teacher does to his or her students. Ms. Howell furthermore recommends transition activities similar to those utilized for redistricting. She also recommends including a METCO liaison on the School Committee. Finally, Ms. Howell noted that she attended the L-S School Committee meeting and observed a dramatic difference in emotion and attachment to the L-S METCO director. She recommends that the School Committee reach out to Nicole Stewart for the regional director position.

Lincoln-Sudbury student Stephanie Bosquet commented that for students, the process was more of an issue than was taking away the L-S director. She noted that L-S Superintendent/Principal Scott Carpenter told students that the program would last one more year in its current form and that administrators had been working on changes for three years. Ms. Bosquet feels misled because students only learned of the proposal recently. She requested that the

Committee take this year to work together to come up with a plan. Ms. Bosquet expressed frustration at the level of misinformation students received, as well as the fact that students were not given a voice. She also asked why the vote is taken separately by SPS and L-S. Susan Iuliano responded that SPS and L-S are separate legal entities that can work collaboratively, but must vote separately. Ms. Iuliano acknowledged that some informal discussion has occurred in the past as budget constraints continue to grow. She noted that April was the public roll-out. Superintendent Brackett characterized the process as “status quo”. Ms. Bosquet reported that students have held many meetings at L-S and believe the restructuring should be postponed.

Bob Stein, Thompson Drive, is a member of the Finance Committee, but is not representing them tonight. He characterized this meeting as a 100% improvement over last night’s L-S meeting. He observed that many classroom sizes are over guideline, which should mean that the space-available METCO program cannot be accommodated. Mr. Stein also suggested that with an average cost-per-student of \$13K (corrected to \$11K by Mary Will), it is a losing proposition to continue the program at a lower reimbursement rate.

John Shandorf, Associate Director of METCO, Inc. stated his belief that we can learn from the obvious disagreement on the process. He asked the Committee to consider three things, regardless of its decision: invite METCO, Inc. to be part of the selection process; have a METCO voice on the School Committee; and work together to get funding increased at the legislative level. Mr. Shandorf also submitted a letter from the METCO, Inc. Board.

Jean McGuire, METCO, Inc. Executive Director, reinforced the idea of having a non-voting member of the proposed parent advisory committee on the School Committee. She also reported that the current L-S METCO Director Nicole Stewart is joining a Boston school. Finally, Ms. McGuire emphasized that education is part of the state’s shared costs. She believes it’s a great plus to have the children attend school together and wants to see the program continue.

Nyeilla Davis a student at L-S stated that it seemed to her that since the restructuring plan was already in place in March, it doesn’t seem like a proposal, but rather, a decision. She stated that Nicole Stewart told students that she would not retain her position. Ms. Davis stated that students want a voice and asked the Committee to take a year and involve students at L-S.

Members’ Comments

Susan Iuliano stated that the Committee has received many phone calls and emails, both in favor and opposed to the restructuring proposal or the METCO program in general. She emphasized that a decision to consolidate to a regional director is not an end, but a first step. She also reported that L-S approved the proposal.

Jeff Beeler reiterated his unwavering support for the METCO program. He read from the email comments of three residents who suggested that the METCO program be terminated because of a belief that its termination would free up sums for other operations. Given such comments and suggestions from residents like Mr. Stein that significant sums could be saved by terminating the program, he asked if there would be material savings to the District if the program was terminated. It was again explained that, as restructured, the METCO grant and the c. 70 funds generated by the METCO students for the District would more than cover the direct costs of the program – including employee benefits. This funding – both the grant and the c. 70 funds generated by METCO students – would be lost if the program was terminated. The Superintendent acknowledged that there are ill-defined marginal costs associated with having these students in SPS classrooms – things like paper, pencils, etc., but that even with those marginal costs he supported the continuation of the METCO program.

Superintendent Brackett reemphasized that the \$11K per student isn’t necessarily recovered as a student leaves SPS. It is only when a teacher can be eliminated that material savings is realized. He also noted that only the Haynes 5th and Loring, Nixon, and Noyes, 4th grades are over guideline. He stated that class size is driven by budget constraints, not by METCO; in fact, the METCO program amounts to about one-half a pupil per class and the program provides grant funding to the District. Chapter 70 funds would be lost by cutting the program, which might necessitate additional staff cuts.

Lisa Gutch noted that when buying a home in Sudbury, people buy into the multi-cultural experience that being a METCO-participating school district provides. They are buying into an excellent school district.~ Part of what makes it so is this experience.~ And she agreed with Superintendent Brackett that the METCO program provides educational and social benefits that cannot be quantified.

Rich Robison stated his belief that supporting the METCO program is within the core mission of public education, which he characterized as perpetuating democracy in a world of diversity and teaching children to navigate in a world where differences enhance the quality of life. Mr. Robison stated that METCO is not a “nice” program, but rather, an essential program. He emphasized the need to work creatively to ensure that resources for direct student support are maximized.

Susan Iuliano noted how differences in student experiences enrich classroom discussion, citing an example from an

eighth-grade social studies discussion of the fourth amendment. She also noted that other district directors have K-12 responsibility.

Lisa Gutch stated that she appreciates the Superintendent's prompt attention to the METCO program's needs and structure in light of the failed override and continually diminishing grant funding.

Rich Robison recommended utilizing the Superintendent's outline of four goals as a way to monitor progress over time.

Open Forum

Debbie Howell, Victoria Road, confirmed that transportation savings in the absence of restructuring would amount to approximately \$90K.

Bob Stein, Thompson Drive, reviewed a letter from Scott Carpenter in which savings were projected to be about \$4-500K rather than \$1.1 million on per-pupil expenditures. He asked whether the METCO program at SPS is run at a profit. Jeff Beeler indicated that the public school District – unlike private business – does not run programs for profit. He directed Mr. Stein to the District's website for financial details which had already been reviewed at the meeting.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to approve the recommendation of Superintendents John Brackett and Scott Carpenter that SPS and LSRHS share a METCO director beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, subject to a Memorandum of Understanding agreeable to both the SPS and LSRHS School Committees. The vote was

5–0 in favor.

2. Budget

(a) FY10 Budget to Actual

Business and Finance Director Mary Will presented the FY10 Budget to Actual summary through June 4. She called attention to the deficit line items, including \$400K in SPED expenses largely due to prepaid tuitions and a larger-than-expected number of children receiving in-home services. She reported that the "frost" on spending for school supplies was lifted. The District will return approximately \$15K to the town for FY10.

(b) FY11 Budget Update

Mary Will recently met with Town Treasurer Andrea Terkelson and L-S Director of Finance Judy Belliveau, focusing on state aid. It is expected that the Town will receive less than \$27K from the state in additional aid over the amount appropriated at Town Meeting if the state adopted the Senate budget numbers.

Rich Robison noted that state legislative actions indicate that anticipated additional revenues might not be forthcoming. There is a recommendation from the State for 3% reductions in all accounts. The Committee discussed the possibility that the state may not receive federal Medicaid funds that had been built into the state budget; thus, the final state numbers may be lower than anticipated. It is not clear when the State will present its budget.

3. Adoption of 2010-2011 District Goals

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to adopt the 2010-2011 District Goals as presented. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

4. Decision on School Choice

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Rich Robison, to decline the District's participation in the school choice program and to decline opening its enrollment to School Choice students. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

5. School Committee Report

(a) Communication/Public Relations

Tabled.

(b) Approve Anti-Bullying Policy (first reading)

Massachusetts recently adopted a new law requiring school districts to have anti-bullying plans in place. Susan Iuliano circulated a summary relative to this law. She noted that SPS already has a strong anti-bullying program and policy. The prevalence of cyber-bullying requires additional focus. Ms. Iuliano asked that the Committee review the District's current policy.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to approve the first reading of the revised SPS Anti-Bullying Policy. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

- (c) Proposed Revision to the School Committee By-Laws (first reading)
The Committee agreed that dates should not be specified in the by-law.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to approve the first reading of the revised SPS Fiscal Policy draft by-law. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

- (192 Boston Post Road: Right of First Refusal under Ch. 61B
Town Planner Jody Kablack had asked the Committee for input regarding a prospective purchase by the Town of this parcel under Ch 61B. Although the Committee concurred that, given current enrollment trends and uncertainty regarding the economy, it cannot predict a need for a school, it recognized the ongoing need for administrative office space. To that end, the Committee is interested in any conversations the Town has regarding this property. Nonetheless, the School Committee does not recommend that the Town pursue the purchase of this property for school needs.

7. Superintendent's Report

- (a) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve with thanks a donation from John and Trina Waitkunis to the Partner's Program of six complete workspace cubicles. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

- (c) Recognitions
None.

- (d) Bill Schedule
A Bill Schedule was presented.

- (e) Personnel Actions
As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

8. Minutes—Regular Session, May 26, 2010

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2010 Regular Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Susan Iuliano abstained.

9. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet. Additionally, Susan Iuliano reported receiving a letter from a Loring parent regarding class size and the lay-off plan.

10. Members' Forum

Jeff Beeler reported that the Energy Committee had been informed that the designation of Sudbury as Green Community will not lead to the level of funding that was originally anticipated to be available. The Town will be eligible for up to \$137K in Green Community grants and it was anticipated that some of this would be for lighting controls in the SPS schools leading to energy savings. He also noted that if the Green Community funds in the amount of about \$137K were received, due to the Energy Committee's work, approximately \$300K in grant funds would have been obtained by Sudbury. He made particular note of the work and dedication of the technically-inclined members of the Energy Committee, through whose time and work these funds were coming to Sudbury.

Susan Iuliano will inquire by email about summer meeting availability.

Rich Robison notified Mary Will and Superintendent Brackett that he was appointed to a task force to examine how to contain SPED costs.

11Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss strategy regarding non-union personnel, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:42 p.m.

Yes	Susan Iuliano
Yes	Jeff Beeler
Yes	Rich Robison
Yes	Michele MacDonald
Yes	Lisa Gutch

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary

