

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday June 20, 2012
Fairbank Senior Center**

Present: Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim, Bob Armour, Lucie St. George

Also Present: Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Judy Malone Neville, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Nicole Lamoureux, SEA

Open Session

Rich Robison called the Open Session to order at 8:31 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Concussion Policy

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Judy Malone Neville provided an overview of the development of the concussion policy. She noted that there is now a legal requirement for school districts to maintain such a policy and that LS already has a policy in place. She worked with Ellen Winer Joachim to develop the policy, which focuses on those students at Curtis involved in the after-school sports programs. Ellen Joachim described the major components of the policy, including educational pieces specifically for coaches, participants, and parents. Each group must take an online course and submit certification that they have done so before a student is permitted to participate. Other elements of the policy address notification of a pre-existing concussion, or a concussion that results from a non-school function. The third major element addresses the procedure if an injury occurs, specifically, rules around returning to play, homework, and school accommodations.

Rich Robison asked if there is anything that represents a significant deviation from current practices. The policy was defined as a mechanism to formalize procedures that are largely already in place; although, the parent training is new and the policy has been clarified.

Lisa Gutch asked who will be responsible for student reentry following a concussion. Judy Malone Neville stated that an array of individuals will be involved as appropriate: house administrators, counselors, the nurse, coach, parent, and finally, the physician. She also noted that there is now a reporting requirement at the state level at the end of each school year.

Bob Armour asked if such online tutorials have been utilized for other purposes. Superintendent Wilson replied that an online tutorial was used successfully to outline the state's Ethics Commission conflict of interest policy.

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Bob Armour to adopt the Head Injury and Concussion Policy as presented. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

2. MSBA – Nixon Roof Repair

Mike Melnick, Co-Chair of the Permanent Building Committee (PBC), presented an overview of the Nixon roof project. The need for repair was identified during the 2010 roof study that also identified the need for repairs on the Noyes roof. As with last year's Noyes roof, window, and boiler repair/replacement project, SPS has again been invited by the Massachusetts School Building Authority to submit a proposal to participate for approximately 37% of the funding to repair the Nixon roof. The anticipated total project cost is \$705,000. The District and Town must develop a project proposal including a schedule and funding plan, by July 11. Project funding will require both a Special Town Meeting and Election, as was the case with the

Noyes project. If accepted, the project must be completed within 18 months. Repairs are expected to begin right after school gets out next year. The PBC will facilitate and serve in a project management function, with Lisa Gutch serving as the School Committee's liaison.

Lisa Gutch commended Mike Melnick for the successful completion of the Noyes project, which came in on time and under budget. Rich Robison noted that over the last decade, the PBC has facilitated five major projects for the District.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to authorize Chairman Robison and Superintendent Wilson to execute the Massachusetts School Building Authority's Initial Compliance Certification for the General John Nixon Elementary School, MSBA Project No. 201202880025, certifying on behalf of the Eligible Applicant that the terms have been read and understood and certifying that each of the statements contained therein is true, complete, and accurate. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to authorize Chairman Robison and/or Superintendent Wilson, or their designees, to sign and execute any other documents, including the Proposed Project Schedule, to further the MSBA required process, without a need to convene a meeting of the School Committee, provided copies of the executed documents are made available to the Committee Members. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to authorize the Permanent Building Committee to use funds in the STM 97/4 – Expenses account for the necessary Feasibility Study associated with General John Nixon Elementary School, MSBA Project No. 201202880025. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

3. Budget to Actual

Business and Finance Director Mary Will provided a budget overview through June 20. She will present the FY12 quarterly report again in August for the Committee to approve final line-item transfers. Each school has been under a budget freeze since January, in part to make up for extraordinary out-of-district special education costs. Reserve benefit funds, savings from the rate holiday, and a higher circuit breaker, among other savings, will allow for the freeze to be lifted. In addition, funds are available for the purchase of curriculum materials related to the Common Core alignment, as well as technology. The District also traditionally pre-pays some special education tuitions, which Ms. Will recommends for FY13.

Ms. Will noted that funds for the Common Core alignment are for materials only and not for salaries. She also stated that out-of-district tuition costs and technology are always a concern. Additionally, although utility savings have been realized in the recent past thanks to the efforts of Maintenance Director Joe Kupczewski, ongoing maintenance needs remain a concern. Ms. Will offered to discuss the budget in greater detail with new Members, Lucie St. George and Bob Armour.

4. SPS FY13 District Goals and Strategies

Superintendent Wilson presented the final version of the FY13 SPS District Goals and Strategies, developed with input from the Committee, staff, and the administrative team. Bob Armour asked about the process to measure progress. Dr. Wilson responded that for each objective, there will be an action plan that details responsibility, resources, specific metrics, and a timeline. These will be developed over the summer and presented at the August meeting. Additionally periodic reporting over the next two years is anticipated, with a focus on the Common Core and new educator evaluation standards.

Rich Robison asked how other items that need to be addressed will be handled. Dr. Wilson stated that other matters, such as business or operational needs, will be handled in parallel.

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to adopt the FY13 SPS District Goals and Strategies as presented. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

5. School Committee Report

- (a) Communications/Public Relations
No report.

6. Open Forum

Rich Robison explained the protocol for commenting in Open Forum. He advised that matters of personnel and those involving student privacy are never on the agenda. He stated that the Committee would limit the comment period to 30 minutes.

Christine Hogan, Blueberry Hill Lane circulated a petition with a vote of no confidence in SPS Superintendent Anne Wilson. She stated that in less than two days, 130 signatures were collected.

Ms. Hogan asked if the Superintendent planned to look into the previous actions of Principal Annette Doyle against Mrs. J. Donahue, referencing specifically a meeting between the two and a union representative at which Ms. Doyle told Mrs. Donahue that this would be her last year teaching first grade. Ms. Hogan asked if there were notices subsequent to that of May 8, 2012. She asked what is being done to get back to a focus on teaching.

Ms. Hogan also read from a letter from the Department of Children and Families and addressed to Dr. Wilson that indicates that the 51a report was screened out. She stated that it is rumored that Mrs. Donahue was not notified that the report was screened out.

Maura Mitchell, Spruce Lane, has a child in Mrs. J's class. She expressed concerns about Superintendent Wilson's leadership and integrity in managing this incident. Referring to the statement Dr. Wilson made at the June 6 Regular Session, Ms. Mitchell was struck by the audacity of the claim that students' education has not been disrupted. Ms. Mitchell also noted that parents have reported manifestations of their children's stress, calling the Superintendent's statement at best, 'disingenuous' and at worst, 'not the truth'.

Ms. Mitchell suggested that filing a 51a was a tactic that has backfired and that the Superintendent's pattern of deception and half-truths has led to parents' loss of confidence in her ability to lead our schools.

Chairman Rich Robison called for order following a brief disruption.

Paul Hogan, Blueberry Hill Lane said that his issue is the lack of compassion shown to the children and parents. He stated that Mrs. Donahue's 29 years of service have been 'thrown away' and her life and reputation ruined unnecessarily. Mr. Hogan stated that this is not an incident to move on from. He reported on his daughter's disappointment that Mrs. J would not be able to attend her dance recital because of a requirement that the teacher have no contact with current or former students. Mr. Hogan stated that Mr. Donahue went in his wife's place and brought flowers for each of the four Hogan girls. Mr. Hogan shared a note his daughter had written to Mrs. Donahue, in which the child expressed her love for the teacher.

He referenced a meeting between Mrs. Donahue and Mrs. Valerio, who he identified as the attorney for the District. Mr. Hogan stated that the Administration is 'digging in its heels' because it thinks it's too late; however, he feels there is still an opportunity to return Mrs. Donahue, and hopes the Administration will make the difficult decision to do so.

Molly Gilmartin, Hudson Road, is both a parent and an educator with 17 years of experience. She quoted Superintendent Wilson's statement from the June 6 Regular Session regarding inaccurate information that is circulating. Ms. Gilmartin asked to speak on her own observations of inaccurate and misleading statements. She agreed that the classroom substitute

teacher is putting in his best efforts under very stressful circumstances, but took issue with comments surrounding adequate communication with families and the level of support received from the school counselor. In addition, Ms. Gilmartin contested the effectiveness of Principal Doyle's one-on-one meetings with parents in light of repeated requests to meet with the parent *community*. She characterized the meeting with parents, Mrs. Doyle, and Dr. Wilson on June 5 as 'too little, too late', given the damage that had been done both to classroom learning and the emotional state of the children. Ms. Gilmartin called it 'misleading' and 'deceitful' to state that students' education was not interrupted. In her view, the children are only continuing to learn and grow because of the support they are receiving from their parents. She concluded by stating that we are a school system in crisis, lacking caring and considerate leadership.

Bobby Beagan, Pine Street, has asked at prior meetings what the School Committee can do to help with the community's concerns. He reiterated his inquiry. Rich Robison stated that he is not sure he can respond.

Paul Hogan, Blueberry Hill Lane, expressed attendees' frustration in being 'heard', which in his view, includes receiving a response from those in charge. He believes that those who have attended meetings are being regarded as 'idiots' by the Administration and he's angered that an attorney was hired to fire a teacher. Mr. Hogan believes that School Committee Members care, but expressed that it is infuriating to have talked over the last six weeks (during three School Committee Meetings) without a response.

Mary-Michael Merhige, Pheasant Avenue, identified two issues: parents who waited for so long for a response about what is being done for the children; and the personnel matter. She wants the first issue to be addressed. Rich Robison referred to the outline presented in Superintendent Wilson's statement and the Superintendent's continued willingness to meet with those interested in doing so. Dr. Robison added that the Committee works with and through the Superintendent and that it is the Superintendent who speaks for the District.

Molly Gilmartin, Hudson Road, expressed her frustration over the initial lack of response to her requests to meet with the Superintendent. She characterized it as not only a lack of communication, but of consideration and empathy as well.

Julie Miller, Dutton Road, expressed concern for the students involved in the scuffle. In her view, they have likely been more harmed than if this matter had been handled in a more responsible way.

7. Superintendent's Report

(a) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lucie St. George, to accept with thanks a donation of \$50,000 from the Jack and Mae Rosenberg Charitable Trust to be applied for the ongoing benefit of the Aspirations Program. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

(b) Recognitions

Noyes fifth-grade teacher Michelle Archambault was recognized Monday at the State House as a Massachusetts Teacher of the Year semifinalist.

Superintendent Wilson attended the Curtis sixth-grade Emerald Team June Finale, at which students presented their independent research on a topic of choice.

Dr. Wilson also attended fifth-grade moving on ceremonies at both Haynes and Nixon, characterizing each as a wonderful send-off.

(c) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(d) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

Superintendent Wilson made the following statement:

As superintendent, my 1st priority is to ensure the education, safety and well-being of all students in the Sudbury Public Schools. We have high standards for every adult in our system and we are fortunate to have so many dedicated and highly effective professionals who meet and exceed these high standards, every day, in every class, for every child.

Recently there has been media attention, rumors and statements, and tonight a petition from members of our school community as a result of a personnel matter. As I have previously stated, school administrators are required to protect the confidentiality of personnel matters and cannot, by law disclose these matters or any circumstances surrounding them. We also cannot correct misinformation about a personnel matter in the media or in the public in general.

As the superintendent of schools, I have and always will place the best interests of students first. When the school district receives a complaint about the conduct of an employee, we take immediate steps to ensure the safety and well-being of students and we do a thorough investigation into the reported conduct. I will always take immediate and corrective action when a report is brought to my attention that impacts the safety or well-being of students. When it comes to the safety and well-being of our students, no one is exempted from meeting the high standards of conduct that we have in Sudbury. Although it may be easier or less controversial to lower standards or take minimal action where student safety/well-being is concerned, I will never lower our standards or put the best interests of students below any other interest in the system.

Concern has been expressed regarding a teacher's ability to break up a fight. No teacher has been or will be disciplined for breaking up a fight. And to clarify, again, there was no fight between students and no report of a fight between students was made to the administration.

It is admirable and understandable that there is so much support for employees who have served our district for many years - this is very much deserved. This support is welcomed and appreciated by me and the SPS administration. However, all employees are expected to maintain our high standards for compliance with policies and standards of conduct whether a first year teacher or a veteran of many years. Every child deserves to be in a classroom where our high standards are maintained every day and we as a district are fortunate to have so many excellent educators who meet these standards every day for every child.

8. Communications

None.

9. Members' Forum

Rich Robison read the following statement and asked the Committee to consider a vote to accept it and give its support to Dr. Wilson:

The Sudbury Public School Committee wishes to express its unreserved support for Dr. Anne Wilson as Superintendent of the Sudbury Public Schools. Recent developments at the Noyes School have resulted in a petition being circulated in the local media which contains partial, misleading information and does not paint a complete or accurate picture of all events surrounding Dr. Wilson's job performance.

In April 2012, the SPS Committee completed its annual review of Dr. Wilson's first year as Superintendent of SPS and concluded that Sudbury Public Schools is fortunate to have Dr. Wilson as its leader. We stand by that statement. While recent events have been difficult for many, Dr. Wilson has in our opinion discharged her duties in good faith, according to the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and in a professional manner. We are committed to working with Dr. Wilson to move our district forward.

Any questions concerning this matter may be referred to Richard Robison, Chairperson Sudbury School Committee.

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to accept the statement as presented and give support for Superintendent Wilson. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

Assistant Superintendent Judy Malone Neville reported having a wonderful time at Odyssey. She noted that for some students, learning outside the classroom was easy. For those who found it more challenging, she stated that they overcame their difficulties. She noted that students beat parents in the game, ‘Are you smarter than a fourth-grader?’ Dr. Malone Neville also attended the Living History Museum at Haynes, which is a third-grade biography project. This is the final meeting for Dr. Malone Neville. She thanked the Committee for inviting her to be a part of Sudbury. Rich Robison applauded her for her good humor, expertise, and presence and wished her the best.

Bob Armour reported attending two recent LS School Committee meetings. He shared some highlights that he thought the SPS Committee might consider, including the idea of a school improvement plan. Mr. Armour hopes that a strong relationship between the two Committees will continue. Rich Robison noted that each of our schools presents an improvement plan annually.

10. Minutes

VOTED: On a motion by Bob Armour, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the May 30, 2012 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

11. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining, as discussion in Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the position of the School Committee, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:14 p.m.

Yes Rich Robison
Yes Lisa Gutch
Yes Ellen Winer Joachim
Yes Bob Armour
Yes Lucie St. George

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary