

Minutes
Rowe School Committee

March 13th, 2012 at 6:00 P.M.
Rowe Elementary School

Present: Chair Bill Loomis, Lisa Miller
Absent: Lisa Danek Burke
Other Attendees: Patricia Bell, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Bill Knittle, Rowe Principal; Paul McLatchy III, Minutes Taker; Sue Mitchell, Nurse Leader
Audience of Citizens: Noel Abbott, Dwight Beebe

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Loomis at 6:11 P.M.

Audience of Citizens: Mr. Abbott brought up the topic of the legal opinion from counsel regarding school issues that was being requested by Judy Willis. The argument as it stands is that the opinion is currently being protected by attorney/client privilege and not subject to Public Records Law at this time (though he did say it would be released at the appropriate time.)

Ms. Willis had lodged a complaint with the Attorney General's Office, Division of Public Records. Mr. Abbott received a communication from Rebecca Murray from the AG's office asking for more information. After speaking with her again, she stated that there were four conditions that needed to be addressed to fit the requirements:

1. There needs to be an attorney/client relationship. (Already met)
2. A communication seeking legal guidance. (Already met)
3. It was a privileged communication.
4. The privilege had not been waived.

She called Mr. Abbott before the meeting, who said that it may not be valid because public funds were used and because there was no actual litigation. Mr. Abbott called Town Counsel, who said that it is possible to have that privilege without being in litigation, and that the use of public funds is irrelevant.

Mr. Abbott said that as of now, the current legal opinion is protected under Attorney/Client Privilege, and is under the domain of the Rowe public officials.

Minutes: The following minutes were addressed:

October 11, 2011; January 10, 2012; January 19, 2012: Mr. McLatchy shared an e-mail with the Committee that Ms. Danek Burke has sent him earlier that day, saying that she did not have any substantive changes to these minutes, but would like a chance to review the minutes from February 14th. Chair Loomis made a motion to accept these minutes as written, and was seconded by Ms. Miller. The vote was 2-0 in favor.

February 14, 2012: As Ms. Danek Burke asked to have these held off for review, the Committee agreed to table them until the next meeting.

February 22, 2012: These minutes were tabled as Ms. Danek Burke was absent and Ms. Miller did not attend the 2/22 Meeting.

Selectboard/School Committee Budget Meeting: Chair Loomis reported that the meeting with the Board of Selectmen had gone fairly smoothly. There are minutes prepared by Ellen Miller in the packet for a summary (Ms. Miller was not in attendance), but otherwise, the budget was presented as had been decided by the School Committee. The only difference was a suggestion by Selectman Bob Clancy that the school research buying

tablets instead of laptops. The issue of transportation will be discussed at some point (primarily the issue of transporting students from the Hoosac Tunnel area). Selectman McLatchy had noted his opposition to the Spanish Program (he feels it is redundant), but in the end, the budget was more-or-less accepted and approved by the Selectboard. They commended the School Committee on a job well done.

FY13 Budget: The following items were discussed:

Gym Teacher: At this point in time, it did not seem like a good idea to change it from .2 FTE to .25 FTE. Ms. Mitchell said that in the new wellness policy, it recommends 45 minutes of PE twice a week, for a total of 90 minutes per week. It was clarified that Roberta Baker would not be doing the job next year.

Head Teacher: The amount has been \$945 for the past 2-4 years. It was put in the budget at \$1,200. The contract says it would pay between \$900 and \$1,200. A suggestion was made to reduce it to \$1,000 and raise it up over the years.

Furniture: Principal Knittle kept \$500 in the furniture line item in the event that a piece of furniture will need to be replaced or a new one simply bought.

Nurse Sub: Typically, a substitute nurse's pay came from the regular teacher's substitute line, but Principal Knittle wanted to put in a small amount for when the nurse was out.

Secretary: The Principal and School Secretary have agreed to reduce her work schedule by six days per year. This resulted in a \$939 reduction in the budget line.

Paper: As the paper is funded through recycling at the Refuse Garden, this cost is no longer dealt with by the school.

Principal's Professional Development: This was adjusted according to dues and the like for a total of \$2,000.

Tuition: There are three additional students going to Tech next year, for an increase of \$18,000.

Legal Services: The actual rate should be \$3,300.

Electricity: The rate was locked in for 44 months beginning in April 2011, so the current numbers should be accurate.

"Pink Slime": Ms. Miller talked about "pink slime", a substance found in less-than-ideal beef. Currently, Rowe buys their beef from the Government at \$2.50 for every forty (40) pounds. However, this does not change the fact that it may not be good quality. Ms. Miller would like to see the school come up with a price on how much was spent on beef, and how much it would cost to go through another supplier. Mr. Beebe commented that Carol Lively is very conscientious about how much is being given to kids, and makes sure they are nutritional and the kids are getting good food. Ms. Miller would like to see a buffer of sorts to perhaps buy better food.

Paving Specs: Though not entirely a budget item, this was discussed during the budget section. The bid specs were prepared and submitted to the School Committee. They need to be approved so they can be put out for bids. It was decided that the bids will be opened by a joint meeting of the School Committee and Board of Selectmen at 6:15 PM on April 10th. (There was some confusion about who has the ultimate awarding authority, the School Committee or the Board of Selectmen, so it was decided to simply have both there). If needed, the bid can be amended to include line painting. Chair Loomis made a motion to approve the specs with the above times and dates, and Ms. Miller seconded the motion. The vote was 2-0 in favor.

Capital Plan Request: There were a few typographical errors (the life of the laptops was off). The school is hoping to replace the laptops a few at a time over four years, and then in the fifth year replace the teachers' laptops. On another note, Mr. Beebe, who is the informal tech person for the school, said that so far three of the "newer" mac books have had hard drives crash. While this isn't an issue for the

students, it's an issue for the teachers. He suggested that perhaps the School Committee look into buying a large, separate hard drive for backing up the laptops. Chair Loomis made a motion to approve the CIP request, and Ms. Miller seconded the motion. The vote was 2-0 in favor.

Windows: Kevin Sullivan from the Massachusetts School Building Authority visited the building last Wednesday to take a look at all the doors and windows to see if the application for a grant should be recommended. The School should know in a month or so if the project is approved. If it was, the work would begin in the summer of 2013.

Custodian/Cafeteria Manager Salaries: Ms. Miller presented a handout on the range of salaries in surrounding districts of the wages for custodians and cafeteria managers. She found out that if you are a supervisor and salaried, you do not get paid overtime, but if you do not supervise anyone, you DO get paid overtime. She doesn't understand why Ms. Lively was taken off of her salary, and as she currently makes \$13.33 an hour, she is on the lower end of the spectrum.

Principal Knittle strongly believes that both Ms. Lively and Mr. Schramel do a wonderful job, it could set a precedent of raising salaries aside from the regular increases ("why did X and Y get an increase but not me", etc...) He also pointed out that they agreed to their wages when they were hired.

Ms. Miller wants to make sure that the employees understand the School Committee wants them to stay in their jobs, and that they are appreciated. She doesn't want to see someone quitting their job due to a low salary, and then having to raise the salary anyway to find someone new to fill the position.

Chair Loomis said that historically, the staff at the School has received higher raises than town employees. This is the first time in a while that it's been the other way around. Another factor to consider is the length of time they've served. He wanted Ms. Miller to keep this item on the table and that it will be addressed at the next few meetings, but noted that the budget needed to be approved ASAP.

Approving the Budget: Chair Loomis made a motion to approve the Rowe District Budget as presented on March 13, 2012. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor. The major issue is the additional funding for tuition. Chair Loomis wrote a letter to the Board of Selectmen and Ellen Miller to see what the possibility was of forming some sort of stabilization for the tuition, which may require an override vote. Ms. Bell noted that Special Education costs *cannot* be tied to an override vote.

Revolving Fund: Chair Loomis made a motion to have the revolving fund wording placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Miller seconded, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Separate Articles: Chair Loomis made a motion to separate the warrant articles to have at least two, possibly three. One would be for the K-6 budget and possibly the late bus and Spanish Program, with the other being transportation, and possibly the tuition (if it's not a third article). The exact wording for the warrant articles will be determined at the April 10th meeting. Ms. Miller seconded Chair Loomis' motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

GCC Clinical Program: Ms. The College has had their students start clinical training at local schools. They can't do this at a hospital because they are only working on an Associate's Degree, and it normally requires a Bachelor's. Their primary focus is pediatric care. The students will handle basic care, but must be supervised by the nurse at all times. The student would be coming in from 8:45-1:30 every Tuesday for four weeks.

Dwight Beebe said that he thinks it is a great program that is helpful to both the students and the nurse. All students are CORI-checked and the contract with GCC states that the College will assume all liability and malpractice coverage. GCC has already been in the Chicopee and Springfield schools. Attorney Russell Dupere has reviewed the contract and approved it.

Chair Loomis made a motion to approve the contract with two minor changes (changing seven students to one student, and spring to spring or fall). Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Superintendent's Report: Ms. Bell gave the Superintendent's report on his behalf.

Common Course Standards: The District is working towards aligning standards to reflect the new common course standards. This will likely take two years, but faculty are being introduced to the new requirements already. Rowe staff have an invitation to be a part of a curriculum writing project. They are expecting to be in line with what's required by 2014. This ties in with the new teacher evaluation system, as the new evaluations are somewhat contingent on whether teachers are successful in teaching these things.

Ms. Miller said that the MCAS results weren't as good as they have been in the past, and that the teachers seem like they're trying to improve the writing abilities of the students. Principal Knittle agreed. Ms. Bell said that there are standards provided by the State for certain grade levels, and that they are being shifted to the new core standards.

District Improvement Plan: Superintendent Buoniconti included a couple of documents for the School Committee to be aware of. He is asking all principals to design their school improvement plans on the three document packets in the Committee packets. Ms. Miller feels that the papers will be fairly labor intensive. There will be input from the LEC, School Committee, teachers, etc... Principal Knittle said that it will add "flesh to the bones" by getting extensive input from everyone.

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Report: Ms. Bell gave her report.

Program Review: Ms. Bell had the standards for how the school will be evaluated on the Coordinated Program Review. This is done every six years, and was last done in 2006. When it was last done (before she was in her current position), there were a lot of things that were not compliant that had to be "cleaned up".

Policies: Several policies need to be created in order to be in compliance with the State. Ms. Bell said that these policies need to be in effect by June 30th, so the process needs to begin soon, preferably in their April meeting. She will send Ms. Miller (Policy Sub-Committee Chair) a draft version of each policy where she can "cross out Mohawk and put in Rowe".

Civil Rights/Non-Discrimination: The law requires the school to provide evidence that they are in compliance with the Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination requirements. Ms. Miller asked how this is done, and Ms. Bell answered that the School needs to show a publishing. One appeared in the Goal Post in February.

Reporting: Previously, Rowe used to be included in a report to the State, but now there are three separate reports for the three districts. Because the reports have to be done with hard copies (and not digitally), it is much more time-consuming with the geographic distances. Ms. Bell said that they will likely be "slapped on the wrist" for that, she's not concerned because of the above issue.

Tiered Instruction: There was a conference today to discuss the new system the State has and recommend. This would include students that may not be on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) system currently has. The School may be eligible for a \$6,000 grant. The tiers were briefly explained as follows:

- Tier 1- Covers about 80% of the students, and includes students that understand the concepts and skills on a regular basis.
- Tier 2- Covers another 10-15% of students who may need some retraining/learning/practice, so they can eventually master those skills and concepts.
- Tier 3- The remaining portion of the kids (usually 5%) that need individual time for teaching and simply are not grasping the content well.

The whole point is about addressing each student's needs while working with the staffing. Their goal is to find out what they need and deliver it to them.

Letter: Chair Loomis handed out a draft letter regarding the proposed Three District Agreement (TDA). If the school uses the proposed agreement, Rowe will see increases of \$22,274, or a 26% increase. The issue has been tabled repeatedly because Rowe has not received enough answers to the questions asked. Along with the letter is a legal opinion from the attorneys hire via the funds allocated at the Special Town Meeting on December 21, 2011, which states that they believe the existing TDA is enforceable.

Chair Loomis wants the Committee to authorize him to sign the letter and send it to the Central Office for the Mohawk School Committee meeting tomorrow night. He made a motion to this effect, and Ms. Miller seconded the motion. There was a question of whether it'll be addressed tomorrow evening. The committee then voted 2-0 in favor. The letter will be e-mailed to Superintendent Buoniconti and a signed copy will be delivered by Principal Knittle.

Chair Loomis' goal is to simply sit down and begin a dialogue on this issue.

Payphone: The School Committee received a communication from the Selectboard that the town would no longer pay for the payphone outside of the School, which is costing the town about \$1,200 per year. Mr. Abbott said that the Selectboard is looking into buying their own payphone for the Town Hall location (the payphone there was ended) and could receive all proceeds from it, and could possibly done at the school. It has been agreed that there will be *some* form of telephone system available. Ms. Miller asked if they would be doing the same thing at the Park, and Mr. Abbott said he did not know.

Internet: The current T1 line is "horrendous" according to Mr. Abbott. The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) will be giving a presentation to the Selectboard at their next meeting, and perhaps someone from the School system would be interested in attending, especially if connectivity with the Mohawk District could be an issue.

Principal's Report: Principal Knittle gave his report, which was not addressed at the previous meeting (and is largely the same). (Topics are highlights, his full report is attached)

School Improvement Plan: The School is currently working on creating a respectful, safe atmosphere for the students to learn in. The nurse has been teaching the Second Step program for the past seven years, though it was intended to be taught by classroom teachers. His goal is to have the 3-6 grade teachers trained in Steps to Respect, and have the teachers in K-2 retrained.

Professional Development Day: Four teachers went to a professional development day in Boston, and Principal Knittle said that the experience was very helpful to the staff involved. There will be multiple days over the next two months for professional development as well.

Benchmark Assessment Tests: The Benchmark Assessment Tests were administered in January, and will allow students to be placed in small groups based on their reading levels. Teachers met in February to see which students have and have not made progress since the September test.

MCAS: MCAS is starting next week.

Report Cards: Report Cards will be going out on Friday.

Nature's Classroom Trip: The field trip to Nature's Classroom is coming up in May. Principal Knittle held a meeting with parents about the trip and fundraising ideas. It was decided to share a bus with Heath.

Washington DC Trip: The field trip next year is being discussed. The decision on whether to stay in the city at a higher rate or stay outside the city (but require more travel time) is up to the School Committee. The budget for food will be increased. Ms. Miller was not a fan of combining with other schools for bussing, because it could cause schedule and rule conflicts.

Adjourn: Chair Loomis made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Miller. The vote was 2-0 in favor, and the meeting was closed at 10:18 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul McLatchy III
Minutes Taker

Approved on: _____

Bill Loomis, *Chair*

Lisa Miller, *Vice-Chair*

Attached Documents:

- Agenda
- October 11th, 2011 Draft Minutes
- January 10th, 2012 Draft Minutes
- January 19th, 2012 Draft Minutes
- Report of the Business Administrator
 - FY13 Budget Summary
 - FY13 Proposed Budget
 - Capital Plan Request
 - Invitation to Bid, Paving
- Report of the Superintendent
 - ESE Professional Development & Technical Assistance Resources
 - DESE District Standards and Indicators
 - DESE Introduction to the District Self-Assessment Tool
 - District Improvement Plan, Leadership and Governance
 - Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment
 - School Improvement Plan, Effective School Leadership
 - MTRS System Professional Development Events, March 2012
 - GCC Student Nurse Clinical Program
 - Agreement Between GCC and Rowe Elementary School District for Clinical Nursing Education
 - Coordinated Program Review Procedures
- Report of the Principal
 - Absence Letter
- January 4, 2012 E-mail, Lisa Danek Burke to Bill Loomis, "Re: Proposed 1/10/12 Rowe School Committee meeting agenda"
- January 13, 2012 E-mail, Lisa Danek Burke to Judy Willis, "Re: Meeting Posting"
- December 2011 Rowe Goal Post School Committee Chair's Report
- January 2012 Rowe Goal Post School Committee Chair's Report
- February 2012 Rowe Goal Post School Committee Chair's Report
- Letter to Citizens of Rowe, "Why We Urge You To Approve An Appropriation For Independent School Counsel and Consulting Services"
- November 15, 2011 E-mail, Judy Willis to Bill Loomis, "Letter from Jonathan Diamond"
- Letter from Jonathan Diamond
- Mohawk Municipal Advisory Committee Meeting Posting for February 1, 2012
- 2011 Annual Report of the Superintendent

- 2011 Annual Report of the Rowe Principal
- 2011 Annual Report of the Mohawk Principal
- 2011 Annual Report of the Director of Pupil Personnel Services
- 2011 Annual Report of the Mary Lyon Foundation
- 2011 Annual Report of the Carl H. Nilman Scholarship Fund
- Press Release for Rowe Elementary School Budget Hearing
- February 15, 2012 Article, The Recorder, "Rowe School Solar Array Producing More Electricity than Expected"

Handouts:

- Draft February 14, 2012 Minutes
- Draft February 22, 2012 Minutes
- March 8, 2012 E-mail, Noel Abbott to Ellen Miller, "Re: Rowe Paving bid specs"
- March 5, 2012 E-mail, Jim Taylor to Noel Abbott, "Re: Rowe Paving bid specs"
- March 5, 2012 E-mail, Noel Abbott to Jim Taylor, "Re: Rowe Paving bid specs"
- Mohawk Municipal Advisory Committee, February 1, 2012, Draft Minutes
- March 7, 2012 E-mail, Noel Abbott to Bill Loomis, "Re: Outside phone booth option"
- Capital Plan Request, 3/13/12
- "Salaries in the Area"
- Draft Letter to MTRSD
- Student Attendance