

Minutes

Rowe School Committee

April 10th, 2012 at 6:00 P.M.

Rowe Elementary School

Present: Lisa Danek Burke, Lisa Miller

Absent: Chair Bill Loomis

Other Attendees: Joanne Blier, Business Administrator; Michael Buoniconti, Superintendent; Bill Knittle, Rowe Principal; Paul McLatchy III, Minutes Taker

Audience of Citizens: Noel Abbott, Gail May, Jennifer Morse Sprague, Patricia Tierney

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Miller at 6:02 P.M.

Minutes: All minutes were tabled for review or due to Bill Loomis' absence.

School Payphone: Mr. Abbott brought forth the subject of the payphone outside the School. At a Board of Selectmen meeting a few months ago, they voted to end payment of the phone as of April 1st. The Selectboard said that if the School wanted to continue this service, they would have to take it on out of their budget. They made a recommendation to pursue an alternate option, such as putting in a line from the school and an inexpensive phone that would only make local and emergency calls. It currently costs \$89.68 per month to have.

Principal Knittle said he was slightly confused, as he believed that the matter had been settled and that another phone would be installed. He doesn't understand why the school is paying for a cost that the people want and that the town has thus far been paying for. He read a passage from the draft March 13th minutes that mentioned buying a payphone, but that possibility had been dismissed at a subsequent Selectboard meeting.

Ms. Danek Burke said that this is a School Committee issue (she also asked that Mr. Abbott direct all comments and questions to the Committee, not the Principal). She would like to see a copy of the letter the Selectboard sent to the school, or the minutes if the letter cannot be made available.

Ms. May said that it was a public phone that everyone has access to, and though she said she didn't know to whom the bill should be given to, it should nevertheless be kept.

Ms. Miller said that right now, there were two options- get another line and phone out there, or pay the bill. She questioned whether a phone could be bought that would be safe from tampering/vandalism and Ms. Danek Burke asked if there was even a spare line.

Ms. Blier asked Mr. Abbott if the town had officially cancelled the service, as they may have to give 60-90 days' notice. Mr. Abbott said he wasn't sure about the notice, but that the town had not officially cancelled it yet. However, the Town Coordinator was told to cancel the one at the town hall.

Ms. Danek Burke was of the opinion that she didn't want to cancel the current phone until a substitute was found, especially with the upcoming sports season. Ms. Morse Sprague said that a phone should be available at all times, even for non-sporting events.

As the submitted budgets are well over the levy limit, Mr. Abbott said that all things had to be looked at to save costs. One was the two phones at the town hall and the School (which cost about \$2,400 for the year). He agreed that there should be a phone there.

Ms. Danek Burke said that the school is being "held hostage" in this situation. Ms. Miller agreed, but said that the Selectboard has made its decision and now it was up to the School to decide what to do.

After a brief discussion on opening up the school for events, it was decided that may not be the best way to go, as children might be in the building unattended at times.

Ms. Danek Burke wants to make sure that a phone is left, even if the school has to pay for it. She will work with Principal Knittle to discuss possibilities before the next meeting. Mr. Abbott said he will propose at the Selectboard meeting the following evening that they pay for the phone until June 1st to give the School Committee time to find a solution.

Paving Specs: Ms. Blier reported that the paving specifications approved at the last meeting were illegal, and as such, she was unable to process it. The School Committee will either need to change certain parts of it to make it legal, or someone else would need to do the bid.

Mr. Abbott said that he had received Ms. Blier's March 17th e-mail, and he had spoken with Highway Superintendent Jim Taylor about dates. He was told that the project could be done up until June without any problems.

Ms. Danek Burke said that the School Committee was losing their ability to get competitive bids, as other companies are lining up work. She asked whether the money would even be available after June 30th, and Mr. McLatchy told her that the Selectboard would simply have to roll the money over, and did not require any action at a town meeting. She asked why the Selectboard and School Committee simply couldn't call a joint meeting and read them at that time.

The planned process is to have Ms. Blier receive all of the bids, open them at the designated time, and compile a list of said bids. She will then deliver this list to the two boards, who can review it and award a bid. Ms. Blier said that unless there is a valid reason not to, the town must choose the lowest bidder. Highway Superintendent Taylor had told Mr. Abbott that it was likely only two companies would submit bids, and that they were both good.

Mr. Abbott asked that if he had a chance to review the specs by Thursday, could Ms. Blier still do everything necessary and legally by next month. Ms. Blier said that she would e-mail him to let him know.

Ms. Morse Sprague asked why this process was involving the Board of Selectmen at this time, but was not answered.

Ms. Danek Burke made a motion that the School Committee approve the original bid specs with the addition of the elements from Ms. Blier's March 17th e-mail, and to reflect dates that would allow for the bids to properly be posted. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Windows: Ms. Blier was confused as to her involvement. She said that if she were not involved, her name and certification had to be pulled from the application, which would make the town ineligible. Mr. Abbott explained that the issue at hand is whether the additional costs required of the project will be covered by the rebates, and as such, fellow selectman Bob Clancy did some research on the subject. It was not done to remove Ms. Blier from the picture.

Ms. Danek Burke stated that she was concerned that the School Committee was "abdicated" their responsibility to oversee the building. Ms. Miller replied that she was okay with getting input from other people who know more about the subject.

When Ms. Danek Burke said that it was a School Committee issue, Mr. Abbott replied that the Selectboard was *required* to sign the application in order for it to be valid.

Ms. Blier said that another meeting will need to be held soon in order to get all of the work done. Ms. Danek Burke suggested having a joint meeting, and no one objected. A meeting at 6:00 on Wednesday the 25th was tentatively set.

Splitting Budget Articles: At this point in time, no action needs to be taken, as articles are written by Town Accountant Ellen Miller. As of now, it is likely that one article will contain the Elementary School budget, shared expenses, Middle School Spanish, and the late bus. The other will have transportation and high school tuition. Mr. McLatchy will forward the draft articles to the Committee and Administration.

Ms. Danek Burke said she was not in favor of tying an override vote to the tuition (as had been discussed at the last meeting), as it could be seen as a reason *not* to approve it. Ms. Miller was of the opposite mindset, that it would encourage people to vote for it since the town **has** to pay it.

Mr. McLatchy spoke up that an override question was not being tied to the tuition, or any article for that matter. The town is currently \$30,000 over its levy limit, including all cuts made to date. The Selectboard voted the previous evening to place an override question on the ballot and warrant to raise and appropriate an additional \$320,000 to pay off the ESCO contract. If passed, this would open up about \$50,000 a year in additional funds, and would avoid the need to make any further cuts. He asked the School Committee to support this measure, because if it fails, the \$30,000 will need to be taken out of budgets, including the school.

The School Committee was pleased to hear that the override will not be tied to any school issue.

Superintendent's Report: The Superintendent gave his report.

Recognition of Teachers: Ruth Manna had submitted an article on Janice Lapointe and Patricia Tierney to Scholastic News, recognizing them for their excellent work. All members in the room applauded Patricia Tierney, who was in the audience.

Curriculum and Core Standards: The Mohawk District currently has a plan on adapting the curriculum to the core standards required by the State. MCAS is going to become aligned with said core standards. There is no specific plan existing as to how Rowe will approach this, but a plan will be made soon.

Educator Evaluation System: This new system will need to be negotiated between the School Committee and teacher's union. The State has not yet released a list of approved consultants, but Superintendent Buoniconti suggested that when Rowe needs to utilize the services of one, it be done in conjunction with the other two districts to save costs. (Rather than three districts paying for the same service three times). There will be a cost to teach school committees and teachers how to use the system. At the February 15th meeting, there was consensus that more training was needed.

District/School Improvement: The Administration will have something by next month, and Superintendent Buoniconti said that the plans need to be approved by June. Principal Knittle had added up the evaluations done by the PTP, teachers, LEC, etc..., and it had shown areas that are doing well and need improvement.

Learning Walkthroughs: The three districts have received two presentations from the Department of Education. This is seen as a way for staff to continuously evaluate themselves.

No Child Left Behind: Due to the high performance of schools in the Commonwealth, over 80% of the schools were not meeting their adequate yearly progress (which requires a higher "bar" every year). The State received a waiver from the program, and will be following a state rubric. Rowe was designated a level-1 school, which is the highest level.

Business Administrator's Report: The Business Administrator gave her report.

Operating Statement: There is a surplus in the budget this year, due to less heating and "positive school management". The School Committee will need to decide what to do with these funds (turn back to the town or put it in the revolving fund). Ms. Danek Burke would like to wait until June to make a decision, and was supported by Ms. Miller.

She stated it was also difficult to keep track of grants, because certain work was not being done by the town, so it was very difficult to manage.

Transfers: As the teachers' contracts were not settled, the School Committee had to make a guess last year when budgeting. There are excess funds in the teacher salary line item, but it needs to be transferred to the individual line items. Ms. Danek Burke made a motion, which was seconded by Ms. Miller to make the following transfers: (Vote was 2-0 in favor)

FROM:

- \$4,940- Teacher Salaries
- \$4,840- SPED Teacher Salaries
- \$1,400- Teacher Sub Salaries
- \$446- Custodial Water System Stipend
- \$11,626

TO:

- \$289- Psychologist Salary
- \$1,666- Library Manager Salary
- \$568- Custodian Salary
- \$2,595- Teacher Aid Salary
- \$1,204.50- SPED Summer Tutors Salaries
- \$700- School Committee Advertising
- \$900- Nurse Sub Salary
- \$300- Subs Sped Teacher Salary
- \$3,303.50- Teacher Aid Sub
- \$100- Nurse- Other

Expenditure Transfer: This is for a bill that has already been paid, but was paid for out of the wrong line. In this case, a membership to the CES was charged to the Principal's dues, but should've been charged to the School Committee line. Ms. Danek Burke made a motion to make an expenditure transfer of \$165 from the Principal's Dues line to the School Committee Other Line. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Ms. Danek Burke made a motion to make an expenditure transfer totaling \$5,000 from the Food Costs Revolving line to the Food Costs Line. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Letter to Commissioner: Superintendent Buoniconti included a draft letter in the School Committee's packet. This letter is from the Superintendent to Commissioner Mitchell Chester of DESE. He asked for the Committee to authorize him to sign and send the letter. Ms. Miller saw no reason not to. Ms. Danek Burke made a motion to approve the draft letter dated April 2nd, 2012 from Michael Buoniconti to Mitchell Chester. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Principal's Report: The Principal's report was submitted as read, but highlighted the following items:

Spaghetti Supper: The fundraiser held last month raised over \$2,000, the highest in memory.

Book Fair: The Book fair hosted by the PTP raised an additional \$1,200. Students that brought in non-perishable items were given a free book, and Principal Knittle said that five boxes of food were donated to the Good Neighbors program, the largest yet.

Beef: Liz Buxton told Principal Knittle that all purchased ground beef if bought from a provider that is LFTB (Lean Finely-Textured Beef, also known as "Pink Slime"). The School will be using them next year.

Ms. Miller requested that it be put into the newsletter letting people know this, so as to allay any possible fears. Ms. Danek Burke made a motion that the Rowe School not purchase, accept, or serve beef containing LFTB. Ms. Miller gladly seconded the motion, and the vote was 2-0 in favor.

Capital Improvement Plan: All requested changes were made with Ellen Miller.

Attendance Policy: Principal Knittle was looking for input. The current policy is rather "toothless", and doesn't provide for any direction or consequences other than what state law provides for. He spoke with other principals about the matter, and Massachusetts General Law allows towns to choose how to handle absences. He would like to stress the importance of regular attendance, and if it gets to a certain point, he'd like to have something to fall back on. It's optional to do, so if a child is sick and is out for two weeks, there's no requirement to send them a letter. He gave the School Committee members a draft policy to take home and review. Suggestions will be sent to Lisa Miller as the Policy Subcommittee chair. This is considered to be the first reading.

Personal Electronic Device Policy: A number of students have received electronic devices in one way or another, and some have said that they would like to use them for reading. Principal Knittle looked at different districts and "mashed" their policies together. He presented a first draft, and would likely be a permission slip of sorts.

Old Business: The Committee would like Bill Loomis to be present in order to discuss old business.

Information Brochure: Typically, Superintendent Buoniconti puts together an information brochure for the Annual Town Meeting. He had not done so yet, as he wanted to see if the School Committee wanted to do it again. Ms. Danek Burke said that she likes it, and that it helps voters. She would like to see it created so voters can see where the increases are. Ms. Miller was fine with having it created.

Executive Session: Ms. Danek Burke made a motion to enter into executive session under Chapter 30A, section 32A for the purpose of reviewing minutes from June 2, 2011 and July 28, 2011, and to come out for the purpose of a vote and adjournment. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Lisa Danek Burke- Aye

Ms. Miller- Aye

Ms. Danek Burke invited Superintendent Buoniconti and Ms. Blier. The Committee entered into executive session at 7:55 PM.

Adjourn: The Committee exited executive session and made a motion to adjourn at 8:05, which passed 2-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul McLatchy III

Minutes Taker

Approved on: _____

Lisa Miller, *Vice-Chair*

Lisa Danek Burke, *Secretary*

Attached Documents:

- Agenda

- Draft February 14, 2012 Minutes
- Draft February 22, 2012 Minutes
- Superintendent's Report
 - Letter from Michael Buoniconti to Dr. Mitchel Chester, Commissioner of Education, Permission to tuition students from Rowe to Mohawk
 - February 9, 2012 Masslive Article, "No Child Left Behind waiver granted to Massachusetts, 9 other states"
 - February 17, 2012 Memo, "Update on Massachusetts' Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver Request"
 - MCAS Assessment Transition Plans
 - Educator Evaluation, Frequently Asked Questions
 - DESE "Supporting School and District Improvement in Massachusetts", Learning Walkthroughs 101: Overview
 - MTRS Professional Development Events, April 2012
- Business Administrator's Report
 - Budget Transfers, April 3, 2012
 - FY12 Operating Statement, April 3, 2012
 - FY11-FY12 Rowe Elementary School Expense Report, April 4, 2012
- Principal's Report
- Letter from Hawlemont School Committee to Bill Loomis, March 22, 2012

Handouts:

- January 21, 2010 Memo from DESE Re: "Information Regarding Ammoniated Beef- BPI Talking Points from USDA"
- Ground Beef and Turkey Purchased or School Year 2011/12 Spreadsheet
- April 10, 2012 E-mail, Joanne Blier to Judy Willis & Michael Buoniconti, "Fwd: Rowe Elementary School MSBA"
- Scholastic News Article, "Co-teaching- Janice Lapointe and Patricia Tierney's K-2 Class"