

FRAMINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Desmarais Room **August 16, 2005**

Present

David F. Miles, Vice Chair
 Philip A. Dinsky
 Pam Richardson
 Richard J. Weader II

Also Present

Christopher Martes, Superintendent
 Walter McClennen, Assistant Superintendent
 John Kubitza, Director, Buildings & Grounds Department
 Mark Abrahams, The Abrahams Group
 Shelley Metzenbaum The Abrahams Group
 Steve Kruger, Benchmarking Working Group
 Andy Limeri, Benchmarking Working Group
 Eugene Brundage, Benchmarking Working Group
 Matt Handverger, Student Representative
 Ann Greenberg, Administrative Assistant
 Charlie Breitrose, Reporter, MetroWest Daily News

Absent

Diane M. Throop, Chair
 Laurie Jeanne Carroll
 Cesar Monzon

AGENDA

- I. Meeting with the Public
- II. Minutes for Approval: May 31, 2005, June 6, 2005, June 21, 2005 – Open Sessions
- III. Committee of the Whole – Survey Agenda
- IV. Release of Historical Executive Session Minutes – Years 2000 & 2001
- V. Announcements/Recognitions
 - A. Retirements
- VI. Action Items
 - A. Policy KG-R (Civic Use of Buildings/Fee Schedule)
- VII. Discussion Items
 - A. School Health Services – School Nutrition
 - B. Benchmarking Project
 - C. Long Range Facilities Planning
- VIII. Superintendent's Report
 - A. FY05 Budget Closeout
 - B. Opening Day of School
 - C. School Committee Retreat
- IX. Reports of Committees
- X. Bills and Payroll
- XI. Executive Session
- XII. Reconvene in Open Session for Purpose of Adjournment

ACTION

Vice Chair David Miles convened the meeting at 7:35 p.m. with four members present. Mrs. Throop, Ms. Carroll, and Mr. Monzon were absent.

I. MEETING WITH THE PUBLIC

The Chair asked whether any member of the public would like to comment on an item that was not on the agenda.

Steve Hakar, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 3, asked whether the benefit of achievement in schools is greater than the cost that the Town puts into the schools. As an example, he stated that transportation costs are less essential than teacher salaries, and the benefit may not equal the cost given the current budget crisis. He said parents want good grades; teachers, principals and administration want good benefits, pay and support; students, in general, want to have fun; and the residents of Framingham want lower taxes. Mr. Hakar said all these interests must tied together into a universal goal, and all parties must be satisfied.

II. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

Vice Chair David Miles asked for a motion to approve the open session minutes of May 31, 2005.

MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the School Committee approve the open session minutes of May 31, 2005. Vote in favor was 4-0, with Mr. Dinsky, Mr. Miles, Mrs. Richardson and Mr. Weader in favor.

Mr. Miles asked for a motion to approve the open session minutes of June 6, 2005.

MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the School Committee approve the open session minutes of June 6, 2005. Vote in favor was 4-0.

Mr. Miles asked for a motion to approve the open session minutes of June 21, 2005.

MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the School Committee approve the open session minutes of June 21, 2005. Vote in favor was 4-0.

III. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – SURVEY AGENDA

The Vice Chair asked whether there were any changes to the agenda. There were none.

IV. RELEASE OF HISTORICAL EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES

Mr. Miles asked for a motion to release selected historical executive session minutes of 2000, as recommended by Attorney Aaron Bikofsky in letters dated June 15, 2005 and August 9, 2005.

MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the School Committee vote to release the executive session minutes of March 6, 2000 and October 10, 2000 in their entirety; and the executive session minutes as redacted of January 4, 2000, January 27, 2000, February 1, 2000, April 5, 2000, April 11, 2000, May 15, 2000, September 5, 2000, September 18, 2000, October 17, 2000, October 25, 2000, December 5, 2000 and December 19, 2000. Vote in favor was 4-0.

Vice Chair David Miles asked for a motion to release selected historical executive session minutes of the year 2001, as recommended by Attorney Aaron Bikofsky in letters dated May 12, 2005 and May 24, 2005.

MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the School Committee vote to release of the executive session minutes of March 27, 2001 and June 19, 2001 in their entirety; and the executive session minutes as redacted of January 9, 2001, January 30, 2001, February 6, 2001, February 13, 2001, February 27, 2001, April 23, 2001, May 22, 2001, June 5, 2001, August 21, 2001, September 24, 2001, October 2, 2001 and October 16, 2001. Vote in favor was 4-0.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Retirements

Dr. Martes recognized the retirements of Kenneth Comerato of the Transportation Department after eleven years of service and John Gillis of the Buildings and Grounds Department after twenty-one years of service. Dr. Martes thanked these employees for their service and wished them well.

VI. ACTION ITEM

A. Revised Policy KG-R (Civic Use of Buildings/Rental Fee Schedule)

Dr. Martes said the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee and the Policy Subcommittee have reviewed revisions to the rental fee schedule proposed by Director of Buildings and Grounds John Kubitzka to reflect current personnel costs and increased utility costs. The rental fee schedule for civic use of school buildings was last revised January 7, 2003. Mr. Weader, Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee Convener, suggested that the Policy Subcommittee review this policy annually given frequent utility rate changes.

Mr. Dinsky noted that proposed rental rate increases are relatively modest, ranging from 10.2% to 15.2% for district facilities including elementary, middle school, and high school auditoriums, cafeterias, gyms, and classrooms.

MOTION: Moved by Mrs. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Weader, that the School Committee approve revised Policy Regulation KG-R (Rental Fee Schedule). Note: The new fee schedule is effective September 1, 2005. Vote in favor was 4-0.

The Superintendent suggested that the Long Range Facilities Planning agenda item be considered next because several meeting presenters had not yet arrived.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Long Range Facilities Planning

Superintendent Martes said Long Range Facilities Task Force has been charged to assess current facility usage and future needs. In addition, the Administration has hired a consultant to provide a district enrollment projection and continues to look any new state initiatives to provide full-day kindergarten or expand early childhood education. Dr. Martes said current school building enrollments must also be reviewed with respect to the district's racial balance plan. Due to an extended FY06 budget process, a final report of the Long Range Facilities Task Force, originally planned for June 2005, was delayed. Assistant Superintendent Walter McClennen reported that NESDEC completed an in depth enrollment projection which will be helpful in future deliberations.

Dr. Martes said key aspects of any future planning efforts include a determination on the status of the Jonathan Maynard Building and use of the Juniper Hill Elementary School Building. Mr. McClennen said current Juniper Hill School Building leases would not impact district plans for September 2006. Long Range Facilities Planning issues will be discussed at the annual Administrators retreat in August and the School Committee's planning retreat in September.

B. School Health Services – School Nutrition

Dr. Martes said he and Marcia Buckminster, Director of School Health Services, met with representatives of the Massachusetts Public Health Association concerning legislation filed at the State House by Representative Peter Koutoujian to address issues of childhood obesity and early onset diabetes in children. Marcia Buckminster said Framingham school nurses have observed a growing obesity epidemic as well an increasing incidence of Type 2 diabetes in students. Both are national problems. Representative Koutoujian's bill would mandate that schools replace sodas with water, non-fat milk, and fruit juices; set healthy standards for fat and sugar in snacks; and make fresh fruits and vegetables available in school cafeterias. Ms. Buckminster said Framingham is doing better than many districts on this issue, through the efforts of the Health Advisory Committee, School Principals, and the Superintendent, but there is room for improvement.

Mr. Dinsky suggested that the School Committee consider whether it wanted to take a position on the legislation at an upcoming meeting, when it could review the full text of the legislation. He said any discussion should include students and parents.

Mrs. Richardson asked whether the legislation mandated a certain percentage of fat and sugar in lunch meals because it would be important to know what percentage Framingham's cafeteria meals contained before making a decision to support the legislation. She noted that a previous district decision to substitute 1% milk for whole milk at the elementary level generated a lot of discussion by parents. Mrs. Richardson

agreed that the discussion to support the legislation would need parent input.

Matt Handverger, Student Representative, said the FHS cafeteria has made some adjustments in food offerings, but he estimated that at least half of FHS students eat 'Mcflyers' burgers in the cafeteria.

Mr. Weader noted that the legislation would probably not include funding for the proposals.

Mr. Miles, the School Committee's representative to the Health Advisory Committee, said a lot of dedicated members of the Advisory Committee are looking at the issue, but there are many constituencies on these issues within the district.

The Vice Chair declared a recess at 8:25 p.m.
The meeting was reconvened at 8:31 p.m.

C. Benchmarking

Dr. Martes asked Mark Abrahams and Shelley Metzenbaum to provide a status report on the Benchmarking Study. Ms. Metzenbaum said the Abrahams Group had reviewed other studies on Massachusetts's schools to consider what demographic variables and factors effected outcomes. This information informed subsequent discussions with the School Committee concerning the selection of outcome variables. The School Committee selected three outcomes: Grade 4 MCAS (3-year average); Grade 10 MCAS (three-year average) and students attending four-year public and private colleges (three-year average). With respect to demographic variables, the School Committee selected three variables: median family income; percent in poverty; and percent with limited English proficiency. Ultimately, it was decided that two demographic variables had a strong relationship to outcomes—median family income and percentage in poverty. The Benchmarking Study seeks to answers this question: How does Framingham's education cost compare to communities with similar demographics? The Benchmarking Working Group selected 16 communities within 10% of Framingham's median income and poverty percentages. Three additional communities were added who may have had a little higher or lower percentage in poverty for a total of 19 communities. The Benchmarking Study will look at the outcomes and per pupil costs for these school districts. With this information, the district can benchmark for cost effectiveness.

Shelley Strowman, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 9, asked what school district costs the benchmarking study would consider.

Ms. Metzenbaum said the consultants would look at per pupil expenditures including instructional spending, transportation, support services, indirect services and tuition, grant revenues per pupil, grant-based spending per pupil, and ESL spending per pupil.

Mr. Abrahams said the Abrahams Group could provide its report to the Superintendent

within a week. Dr. Martes said he planned to have the School Committee review the report at the planning retreat.

Ms. Metzenbaum said the benchmarking report would not explain what is right or wrong about the district's cost effectiveness, but it would help Framingham focus on questions such as how can Framingham reduce its costs without compromising effectiveness or how can Framingham increase effectiveness without adding to costs. In addition, the district could ask the question: Is the community comfortable adding to its costs to so it can increase effectiveness?

Mr. Dinsky said the district could make site visits to communities who are spending fewer dollars and getting better results. He said data could be shared with those communities who may be doing better than Framingham.

Mr. Kruger, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 1, Benchmarking Working Group member, said there are two objectives to the study: first, to determine, objectively, how cost effective is the Framingham School Department; and secondly, if Framingham is not cost effective, how can it become more so. Mr. Kruger said there was a discussion about whether the study should include only those communities who appear to be doing better than Framingham or whether to include a more expansive group of communities with similar demographics. Ultimately, the more expansive group was included. Mr. Kruger said he believes there is reason to be optimistic that the results will be meaningful. Finally, he noted if Framingham is near the top, resources might be better-spent elsewhere rather than figuring out how we can be more cost effective.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. FY05 Budget Closeout

Dr. Martes said Mr. Proule would provide an FY05 Budget closeout report to the School Committee at the annual planning retreat. An end-of-year report would be available in early fall and will provide an opportunity for further analysis.

B. Opening Day of School

Dr. Martes said an orientation day has been scheduled for incoming Grade 6 and Grade 9 students on Tuesday, August 30. The first day of class for students is Wednesday, August 30. Dr. Martes will deliver an opening address to all staff on Monday, August 29 at 8:30 a.m. at Walsh Middle School. Approximately 184 parking spaces will be available at the high school for the senior class. The FHS Administration has returned to Framingham High School from their summer quarters at Cameron Middle School. District custodians will ready FHS classrooms for staff shortly.

With respect to the School Committee's annual planning retreat, Dr. Martes proposed discussion on the topics including the Long Range Facilities Plan, Benchmarking, and 2005/2006 District Goals. He asked School Committee members to suggest any additional topics to him and asked Ms. Greenberg to send a message to all members indicating that they are welcome to suggest additional retreat topics to the

Superintendent.

IX. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

A. Policy Subcommittee - Mr. Miles

Mr. Miles said the Policy Subcommittee met on Monday, August 15, 2005 to finalize the Superintendent's draft performance evaluation to be presented to the School Committee on September 20, 2005.

B. Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee – Mr. Weader

Mr. Weader reported that the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee met on June 23, 2005 to discuss the rental fee schedule and the situation concerning the building rehabilitation budget. Mr. Weader asked about the status of the "pot hole" fund.

Dr. Martes noted that the district has applied for FY06 state "pot hole" funds. He expects to hear about any funding from the state in late September or early October.

Dr. Martes said an RFP has been issued for the Stapleton Elementary School roof.

C. High School Building Committee – Mr. Dinsky

Mr. Dinsky said the high school had passed the fire alarm test recently. Wing E construction should be completed in November. Grounds work is ongoing.

The Chair asked for a motion to go into executive session for purposes of negotiation with non-union personnel.

MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the School Committee move to executive session for the purposes of discussion of negotiations with non-union personnel to reconvene in open session for the purpose of adjournment. Roll call vote in favor was 4-0, with Mr. Dinsky, Mr. Miles, Mrs. Richardson and Mr. Weader in favor.

This portion of the meeting ended at 9:12 p.m.