

**GILFORD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 5, 2007
GILFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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The Gilford School Board held a regular meeting on Wednesday December 5, 2007 at the Gilford Elementary School Tocci Library. Present were board members Sue Allen, Paul Blandford, Derek Tomlinson, and Margo Weeks. Representing Gilmanton were Walter Mitchell and Zannah Richards. Administrators present were Paul DeMinico, Scott Isabelle, Jim Kemmerer, Sandy McGonagle, and Ken Wiswell.

OPENING

School Board Chairperson Sue Allen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., led the Pledge of Allegiance, and confirmed re-posting of the meeting.

Margo Weeks made the motion that the board approve the minutes of the November 5, 2007 meeting. Walter Mitchell seconded the motion and it was voted in the affirmative.

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Senior Class Trip

Ken Wiswell introduced the Senior Class Advisor Denise Sanborn, and the class officers, who gave a brief presentation on the spring Senior Class Trip proposal. He indicated that he and his staff endorse the trip.

The class president pointed out that this trip differs little from last year's, adding the Broadway show and the medieval-themed dinner, which raise the cost slightly. She discussed the results of a student survey which showed broad support for the planned trip. Those who chose not to attend either had relatives in the area and thus traveled to the city often, or have been there too many times to want to go again.

Ms. Sanborn elaborated that the medieval dinner, in contrast to a dinner dance, would offer educational opportunities as well. She also noted that the price of fuel has contributed to the increased cost of the trip overall. She added that the students had a very successful craft fair to help those who might need assistance with the fee.

Margo weeks complimented the group on the thoroughness of the proposal.

Derek Tomlinson moved that the board accept the senior class trip as presented. Margo Weeks seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

Paul DeMinico introduced Gilford Police Chief John Markland and Fire Inspector Dana Pendergast, who along with Dr. Deminico, Deb LaLiberte, Mike Balcom, Kevin Keenan, and Kris Kelley from the Gilford Police Department, attended a full week training session in Jacksonville Florida about inter-agency information sharing. The schools, police and fire departments, social services, and county attorney's offices can all combine their efforts to increase safety at school through sharing of information. The session focused on how a community can interact among and through its agencies to look at students and situations from a preventive standpoint. For example, there are aspects of students that only the school or police are aware of, the sharing of which information could be helpful in deterring potentially disruptive situations. Any confidentiality issues can be addressed by seeking approval at the local court level.

Paul remarked that during the training, many different real-life situations were analyzed. Notably, the Columbine incident in Colorado is now being viewed as one that could have been prevented, or at least its losses minimized, by earlier recognition and intervention. He suggested that the school is presently doing everything within its power to make the students safe, with the hopeful outcome that not a single incident of injury or harm will result. With inter-agency collaboration, the likelihood of injury or harm would be further minimized.

Chief Markland related that while his focus is primarily from a law enforcement

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standpoint, the training brought back for him the perspective of a School Resource Officer, or an ability to put himself in the point of view of a firefighter or teacher. He discussed the notion of social time lines of children, and described what should seem “an obvious connection” between police officers responding to a domestic situation at home and the possible consequences for a student’s behavior subsequent to that incident. He concurred that many of the cases the training examined displayed “red flags” which, had they been properly recognized early on, could have been dealt with and made the situation less serious.

Fire Inspector Pendergast agreed, noting that such involvement and information-sharing from the fire department could contribute to the prevention of more serious issues.

Paul noted that one of the outcomes of the collaboration was the recognition of the Lakes Region Boys and Girls club as a possible intervention “safe place.” He closed the discussion by thanking the police department for writing the grant that allowed all to attend the training at no cost to the district.

Meadows Advisory Committee Report

Sue Allen reminded that the Meadows Advisory Committee (MAC) has been investigating the addition of a locker room at the Meadows, and had been inquiring after its cost.

Scott Isabelle summarized that Dave Pinkham was asked to make a suggestion on what a locker room would entail; Dave met with the MAC, who approved his rough plan. Paul Fluet, design engineer for the Meadows fields, does not design buildings, but worked with CCI (Conneston Construction Inc.) to put together a proposal. His fee would be ten percent of the locker room contract cost. The proposed facility included a boys’ and girls’ locker room, a separate football locker room, shower facilities, trainers’ rooms, and storage. The proposed cost was \$550,000. Scott pointed out that Mr. Fluet’s contract is presently limited to developing a concession stand with bathrooms; if the board elects to have Mr. Fluet continue through construction, he needs to know within the next two weeks. Having him continue would add approximately \$56,000 to his contract.

Sue reiterated that the MAC is seeking guidance from the board on whether and how to proceed.

Paul Blandford recalled that since sewer connections already exist, only pipe sizes may need changing. He also voiced a concern that there is approximately 15,000 square feet of building space presently on the Meadows property that has not previously been considered for use, as fire laws would require that it be equipped with sprinklers. Paul voiced alarm at the cost of the proposed new facility, and suggested that the existing space could be outfitted with sprinklers and reconfigured for locker room, as well as other uses.

Sue commented that NHIAA requirements are also a significant factor in the design, for example separate changing and bathroom facilities are required for referees. She added that one of the points of discussion at the MAC level was the locker room’s location: it should be sited such that family members would not be tempted to rush across a line of traffic to greet a team member. At this point, MAC seeks guidance from the board: since the addition of this facility will incur additional planning costs, should MAC pursue this line of inquiry (newly-built facility), or investigate alternatives? She noted that the notion of locker room space was brought up at the MAC’s presentation to the Board of Selectmen.

Zannah inquired about water supply. Paul Blandford replied that there is well water on-site; Scott added that its flow rate would have to be verified.

Margo Weeks commented that if the addition of a new building or refurbishing existing building space will have an impact on Mr. Fluet’s scope of work, it would be well that the district be aware of that now rather than later. She echoed

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Paul Blandford's concern that the proposed figure seemed high, and that the issue should be examined very closely.

Derek Tomlinson voiced some discomfort about the process and the possibility that the board could be perceived to be holding up progress at the Meadows due to a reluctance to spend a significant sum of money on a building that had not previously been discussed. He indicated that MAC needs to come to the board with alternative suggestions. "They need to go through this before we do."

Margo concurred, indicating that as the board is the ultimate decision-maker, MAC needs to do more research and make recommendations.

Walter Mitchell summarized the conversation: the message to MAC is that the board does not wish MAC to pursue building a new facility, based on its present knowledge.

Scott agreed that MAC was seeking that kind of direction. He reviewed that in the original design of three years ago, there was no locker room, and Paul Fluet was directed not to consider using the existing buildings because they might be used for other purposes.

Paul Blandford remarked that other options could include downsizing the existing new-structure proposal, or retrofitting the existing buildings. Before the board can make a determination, however, it must be presented with information concerning cost-benefit issues. While it may be costly to install sprinklers in the existing buildings today, such installations could well enable the full use of those buildings, for whatever additional purpose may later be determined.

Margo concurred, noting that such installations could make subsequent projects less costly.

Paul went on to suggest that, if Mr. Fluet could subcontract the design and building of the facility, could the district not do the same. "There are plenty of architects in town." The structure could be designed now, and put out for construction bid at a later time. Meanwhile inquiry could be made of Mr. Fluet that a new structure is being considered, and could his plans accommodate such an addition?

Derek closed the discussion by summarizing that the message to MAC, by board consensus, is: investigate other options.

Gilford Elementary School

Sandy McGonagle highlighted her report by explaining the changes brought about by the recent fire inspection. Specifically, missing tiles in closet areas are being addressed by Tim Bartlett, overstuffed chairs or couches not meeting fire code have been removed, and hanging draperies and curtains have all been treated with fire-retardant materials. Sandy hopes to advise Inspector Pendergast by letter next week that the school has achieved compliance.

With thanks to the fire department, six more staff members are being trained in CPR. One CPR-trained person must accompany students on any out-of-building trip. An additional first-aid class is planned for the beginning of 2008.

Last, she reported an incident involving a kindergartener who found his finger stuck in a grommet on a bus safety belt: the fire department was able, after about 45 minutes of effort, to saw the grommet away from the student's finger. The student was taken to the hospital to be evaluated, and was found to be doing fine. Sandy read from a letter of thanks from the student's parents.

Derek Tomlinson inquired whether compliance with fire safety regulations was changing the learning environment for the students. Sandy agreed that the loss of comfortable seating is affecting the collaborative, community-inspired culture that the school seeks to achieve. Removing hanging items from the ceiling, and reducing to 20 percent the total surface area covered by learning materials and student artwork has had an effect. Her staff is seeking sources for fire-retardant

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beanbag chairs to replace the sofas.

Derek commented that compliance could be taken to an extreme, and pointed out the apparent dichotomy of sending a teacher to training sessions focused on achieving a group atmosphere, yet being unable to provide the desired comfortable environment due to fire regulations.

Scott Isabelle pointed out that two events occurred to bring about the recent fire safety changes: the state fire codes have become more strict, and the state Fire Marshall is putting more accountability on local fire inspectors. Further, there is a liability issue that would present: if the school did not comply and there was an injury, an insurance carrier may not pay because the school was negligent.

Paul Blandford inquired what other options might be available, such as using the same spray on furniture that was used on the draperies.

Derek suggested a budget item to cover replacement furniture, or possibly a fundraising effort.

Margo suggested that the issue might become a focus for the PTA.

Gilford Middle School

Jim Kemmerer described some of the coursework and workshops his staff are attending in response to the NELMS recommendation about staff development in the areas of differentiated instruction and course integration.

Jim noted that student Samantha MacDonald won the Record Citizen Constitution Day Essay Contest, and was recognized at an event in Concord. He also recognized Rob Meyers for his efforts to motivate students.

Jim announced that GMS is in compliance with fire regulations. Some sofas had to be removed, and he noted that often it is not the covering material, but rather the material inside that does not follow fire regulations, sometimes emitting toxic fumes when heated. He agreed that the removal has had some impact on the community, and remarked that furniture does exist that will meet all codes, yet be as comfortable. This furniture is available at a slightly higher cost.

Margo remarked that such furniture is likely easier to keep clean.

Jim closed his remarks by announcing with regret his decision to eliminate the Grade 7 Spanish class, due to difficulty in finding a 1/5-time teacher willing to travel from other districts or otherwise accommodate the school's need. He cautioned that the issue is not yet fully dead, and that efforts are ongoing to find a suitable teacher for the class.

Gilford High School

Ken Wiswell supplemented his written report by announcing that the school's football team was named "Most Improved" in the state by the Gridiron Club; the volleyball team has been invited to the State Senate when they reconvene in January to be honored for their performance.

Margo added that the football team also won two sportsmanship awards: one from coaches, the other from game officials.

Derek Tomlinson inquired about the origin of the term "heterogeneous classes."

Margo commented that some parents had heard the term from some teachers.

Walter Mitchell commented that the issue concerns the elimination of honors classes: he was told by a teacher at a parent-teacher conference that the administration is promoting the notion.

Ken replied that the elimination of honors classes is a misconception: "We want everyone to go to that level, we don't want to eliminate it." He described changes in education as long-coming. Occasionally ideas will be brought forward for discussion in meetings, and he sees it as part of his job to encourage new and different thinking about education. He noted that in the coming era of competency-based education, playing fields are leveled and continuing multiple

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levels of instruction becomes an area of discussion. That was the intent: to promote discussion.

Margo relayed a concern she has heard from other parents, an apprehension that a student will not be challenged enough in a homogeneous group.

Ken acknowledged that there will always be students who are able to progress more rapidly and be able to do college-level work, and stated that the school will adapt to continue to challenge those students. "We'll always have whatever advanced classes we settle on." He noted that when students are segregated into lower levels, a self-fulfilling prophecy is created: "We get what we expect in education." The discussions are focusing on bringing the "lower-achieving" students up to a higher standard, not lowering standards to put them in everyone's immediate grasp. He reiterated that there is no plan to eliminate AP classes, the same classes will be offered next year as are offered this year. "I have asked for conversation." He noted that any such conversations have occurred only in team leader meetings; there have been no presentations to the faculty.

Paul Blandford commented that it sounded as if some staff were giving vent to their apprehension by disclosing limited information to some parents, a process that would ultimately undermine the effort to begin dialogue. Paul voiced his disapproval and disappointment with this approach.

Margo Weeks concurred, indicating that to begin to create fear and confusion is undermining, and if a staff member has concerns he or she should address those with Ken Wiswell or Paul DeMinico. She remarked that some students have heard about homogeneous classes as well. To have discussions between colleagues is one matter, but to disclose to parents or students is unprofessional behavior.

Zannah Richards, hearkening to some major changes that the school has experienced, noted that "some teachers will always resist change."

CORRESPONDENCE

Internet Safety Guide from NH DOE and Attorney General Kelly Ayotte
Paul DeMinico displayed the guide, which came from Commissioner Tracey's office and was handed out to all students through Grade 11. He noted that the pamphlet contains a parent side and a student side to the guide.

Margo Weeks commented that a law is pending in the legislature which would fine Internet Service Providers for infractions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul DeMinico introduced Kinney O'Rourke who will be reporting occasionally for the *Laconia Daily Sun*.

OLD BUSINESS

Budget Proposals: Default, SAU Place

Paul DeMinico outlined three areas of discussion: setting a date for the school's deliberative session; the proposed default budget; and possible relocation of SAU office space.

Scott Isabelle noted that the town has announced its deliberative session on Monday, February 4, and invited suggestions for the school district's deliberative session, which must occur between February 2 and February 9. After brief discussion, Paul Blandford moved that the board establish its deliberative session for Thursday February 7 at 7:00 p.m. Margo Weeks seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Scott next introduced the proposed draft of the default budget, which at \$23,138,661 is lower than the proposed budget by \$61,000. He noted on the third page of the budget where the increases and decreases lie; the Municipal Budget Committee will receive a line-by-line breakdown. Assumptions that the board agreed on in past years have been made again this year, and include: new

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equipment is removed from the default budget, whereas replacement equipment is kept in the default budget; the food services budget is brought forward based on the projected and not actual past years' costs.

Margo Weeks moved that the board endorse the default budget as presented. Derek Tomlinson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Scott advised that the Budget Committee will be presented with the default budget on the first night of presentations.

Paul DeMinico suggested that, rather than invite discussion on relocation of the SAU offices at the board meeting, a subcommittee form to examine figures and legal opinion on assuming the old Library space, then return to the board with their findings. He suggested that Sue Allen and Kurt Webber, having inspected the library building previously, could continue their involvement, and be joined by Tim Bartlett and Scott Isabelle. He also indicated that he has an alternative option in the event the library cannot be used. After brief discussion, a consensus was reached that such a subcommittee should investigate and report back to the board.

My Voice Survey Results
Gilford Elementary School

Sandy McGonagle noted that this was the first time GES had participated in the survey. After reviewing the results from the staff survey, her staff identified four areas for further discussion:

- What meaningful professional development opportunities should be made available at GES?
- How can we communicate more effectively at GES?
- How can each staff member have a greater impact on school wide decision making?
- How can the staff reduce or manage its current workload?

A review of the student survey results culminated in "The Eight Conditions that Make A Difference" and Sandy highlighted the results in each:

- Belonging
- Heroes
- Sense of Accomplishment
- Fun and Excitement
- Curiosity and Creativity
- Spirit of Adventure
- Leadership and Responsibility
- Confidence to Take Action
- The role of Parents

Of particular interest was the difference in the responses of female and male students.

Sandy closed her review by indicating that the survey results will be helpful in discussing how to elevate student aspirations, improve student achievement, and promote the highest teaching and learning standards.

Gilford Middle School

Jim Kemmerer pointed out that this year's student survey results differed from last year's in that this year Grades 5 and 6 were not combined. He indicated that trends that surfaced last year continue to correspond with state and national results. He felt the results were very positive overall. Focus areas for next year include a continued effort to reduce bullying, and to increase the student council's involvement as the students' representatives in a democratic process. He noted that in many questions, one-third of the respondents indicated "undecided." One focus will be to help those individuals decide whether they fall on one side of an

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issue or the other, “Or maybe we just need to tell them that we’re proud of them on occasion.”

The staff survey revealed that a substantial percentage feel overwhelmed by all that is expected of them, and are seeking opportunities for meaningful staff development. Jim indicated that his teams will be dissecting the results carefully, and have staff members attend institutes geared to specific issues. He expressed his appreciation that the district has agreed to participate, stating that the results are very valuable.

Gilford High School

Ken Wiswell remarked that this year’s student survey results do not differ greatly from last year’s. He noted a slight improvement in the “Belonging” category, and suggested that changes in this area will come slowly, and are in a positive direction. He suggested that careful consideration not just of the majority of positive responses, but the minority of negative responses would give a truer sense of the opinion of the student body as a whole.

Of a potentially major impact on much of future student responses is Rachel’s Challenge: 40 students are actively participating in “random acts of kindness.” Ken related that one can observe in the cafeteria, for four or five days a student may be sitting by himself; then a participant of Rachel’s Challenge will either sit with that student or invite that student to join with others, thus turning the first student’s “worst experience into their best.”

Ken commented that the most significant staff survey response was Effective Communication. He indicated that his team will investigate the number of variables behind those responses, and inquire further what the staff considers lacking.

Derek Tomlinson indicated his surprise to read the survey results in the newspaper before they had been presented to the board, and asked if the sequence could be changed next year.

Ken replied that the results had been posted on the website, and a reporter had called him about them. He had asked the reporter to wait until the report had been released to the board, but the story appeared nevertheless.

Margo suggested that the results not be posted until after the board meeting.

Zannah Richards inquired how much time was spent on the surveys. Ken replied that 25 minutes is the maximum; many complete in 10.

Zannah further observed that more positive answers seem to come from Grade 9 students, and decreased each year. She inquired whether Grade 9 students are more optimistic as a group, and whether the decrease in positive responses in subsequent years comes as a surprise. Ken replied that the opinions of juniors and seniors are fairly well formed, and are not so subject to change by outside influences. “One good day is not going to overcome what they have decided is their school experience.” He indicated that the school’s awareness of the sophomores’ perceptions has improved the school experience for this year’s freshmen.

Paul DeMinico concluded the discussion by pointing out that the survey is provided at no cost to the district. He thanked Dr. Tracy’s office and Russ Quaglia for providing the opportunity to participate.

NEW BUSINESS

Policy Review

Paul DeMinico indicated that the current batch of policy revisions were required for the school to achieve approved status by the State, according to new regulations. He suggested that a subcommittee could review and vet the policies, then present to the board. Derek Tomlinson volunteered; Margo Weeks agreed to continue her policy involvement, so long as it is not in the immediate future. Dr.

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NEW BUSINESS

DeMinico indicated it would be postponed until February.

Acceptance of Federal Grant

Paul DeMinico brought forward for the board's consideration a Title I grant titled "Get a G.R.I.P. on Reading" at \$126,439.42, and sought the board's approval and acceptance.

Derek Tomlinson moved that the board approve the acceptance of the grant. Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

School Calendar 2008-2009 Draft

Paul DeMinico brought forward a "very rough draft" of the 2008-2009 calendar. He included a copy of the Laconia calendar, and noted that Gilford's proposed calendar is well aligned with Laconia and the Huot center. He reminded that the calendar is a work in progress, and had yet to be shared with GEA.

Paul Blandford noted that November is always very broken up with holidays and teacher workshops, and that the days immediately preceding Thanksgiving were of limited productivity. He inquired about moving workshops to Thanksgiving week, thereby giving students the entire week off. He added that shutting the building down for a week would save on heating costs, and would yield an ideal time to perform maintenance. He suggested that moving some workshops around could make better use of the time for all concerned.

Margo Weeks commented that her daughter had observed that there is not a full five-day week for four weeks before the end of the grading period.

After brief discussion, Paul DeMinico indicated he would investigate the suggestion, share it with GEA, and return with another proposal no later than February's meeting.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION
RSA 91-A:3 II (a) (b)**

At 8:05p.m., Margo Weeks made the motion to enter non-public session pursuant to the provisions of RSA 91-A:3 II (a), (e) and (c). Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous roll call vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

**Kurt Webber
School Board Secretary**