

**GILFORD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
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The Gilford School Board held a regular meeting on Monday, January 7, 2008 at the Gilford Elementary School Tocci Library. Present were board members Sue Allen, Paul Blandford, Derek Tomlinson, Kurt Webber, and Margo Weeks. Representing Gilmanton were Russ Knowles and Zannah Richards. Administrators present were Paul DeMinico, Scott Isabelle, Jim Kemmerer, Sandy McGonagle, and Ken Wiswell. Student representative was Taylor Morrison.

OPENING

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

Derek Tomlinson made the motion that the board approve the minutes of the December 5, 2007 and January 3, 2008 meetings. Kurt Webber seconded the motion and it was voted in the affirmative, with Kurt abstaining on the December minutes.

Sue Allen suggested a slight change in the agenda: two warrant articles and a presentation on the Meadows and Carye programs would be taken out of order and heard first, in order to accommodate the schedules of the presenters.

OLD BUSINESS

Petition Warrant Article: Gilford High School Varsity and JV Football

Lou Athanas prefaced his remarks by commenting that his involvement in the process had brought to him a new appreciation for what the School Board does, and on behalf of the taxpayers and parents, he thanked the board for its efforts.

He briefly described the warrant article in the amount of \$22,500 to support the Gilford High School varsity and junior varsity football teams, and asked that the board recommend its passage.

Margo Weeks moved that the board recommend the warrant article as written. Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Petition Warrant Article: Gilford High School First Robotics Team

Mrs. Drever reviewed for the board some prior presentations, and remarked that the robotics group preferred to go through the town for funding. The Budget Committee had withheld a decision on the article pending recommendation of the school board.

Kurt Webber moved that the board recommend the warrant article. Margo Weeks seconded the motion.

Paul Blandford inquired about funding, specifically the source of the balance after the \$6,000 registration fee. Mrs. Drever replied that if the group participates in only one competition, an additional \$2500 to \$4000 comes from other fund-raising activities by the students. Additional competitions require a registration fee of \$4,000, and additional fund-raising supports transportation, accommodations, and the like. Mr. Drever added that the \$6,000 registration fee buys a "minimal" kit of parts, with which a team could develop a competitive, but perhaps not very effective, entry. An additional \$4,000 buys extra parts which would allow the team to compete more effectively. He pointed out that any additional fund-raising will determine whether the team participates in further competition.

Derek Tomlinson noted that the language of the warrant article indicates that the sum of \$6,000 will be included as a part of the school's ongoing operating budget, not just one year.

Kurt Webber pointed out that NASA had granted the school \$6,000 for two successive prior years, but ceases to make those grants after two years.

Mr. Drever confirmed that the NASA grants had been supplied for two years.

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The first year, the group raised an additional \$4,000; the second year, an additional \$7,500. Mrs. Drever related that for this year's competition, the group has generated enough to cover the entry fee and an additional \$2,000. She pointed out that time spent fund-raising, while important, has the negative effect of taking away time that the students would otherwise spend in learning programming, designing, or the like. Kurt's motion passed unanimously.

Meadows and Carye Programs

Esther Kennedy prefaced her power point presentation by asking that the board show by vote that it agrees with and supports these programs for students who are at risk of dropping out of school.

The morning program works with students at grades 9 and 10 in English and math in a small safe environment; the afternoon Meadows Program offers support with living skills, job search and interviewing, and academics. Esther emphasized that neither program is designated special ed: they are designed for students over 16 for whom traditional education is not working well. A plan is designed for each student using the Meadows, the school, and the community. Students earn credits for everything they do, and the goals are that each student will not only receive a high school diploma, but also become community members. Traditional learning is supplemented by hands-on, community-based or school-to-work activities.

Esther outlined that support has come over the years from many sources: plumbing services were supplied by students at the Huot Center; cabinets were donated; kitchen equipment was donated; local companies donated lumber and other building supplies. Proceeds from everything the students build are reinvested in the program, such as in tools.

Among the projects Esther described were: tomato plant sales; a kite project to teach aerodynamics; a picnic table; greenhouse maintenance; grounds maintenance; construction of a wooden canoe; menu planning and shopping, which occurs in conjunction with the local Cooperative Extension at no charge to the district; a clothing drive for students who cannot afford 'trendy' clothes (provided in strict confidence) wherein clothes are laundered and altered; a prom clothing drive (providing prom attire for 10 girls and 5 boys last year); and a bank of baby clothes and supplies.

The Carye Center is located in the old apartment, and offers computerized programmed instruction in conjunction with the Vocational-Technical college. Only a portion of a student's day is spent with the computer; the remainder is spent either at the high school or out in the community performing some kind of community service. Students also work at Gunstock in exchange for ski passes in the winter or swimming pool passes in the summer. Some students work for the Head Start program and do quite well; others work at senior centers and find that they can relate very well or better to seniors than to their peers or parents. Often, students who first volunteer at these venues find full- or part-time jobs there, which might not have happened had they not had the exposure.

One environmental project last year was a clean-up of the Gilford beach; this year they have chosen to sponsor an ongoing highway clean-up project directly in front of the Meadows, and the state has erected a sign denoting this adoption.

Esther noted that the programs are enjoying tremendous success, and in many ways are at the forefront of dropout prevention.

Sue Allen related that she testified before the State Senate on behalf of the New Hampshire School boards Association in support of changing the dropout age to 18, and many senators were interested in hearing about the Meadows and Carye programs.

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Paul DeMinico noted that this marks the second year of a one percent dropout rate; three years ago the rate was 3.4 percent, a remarkable achievement in his view. He asked that the board lend its support.

Derek complimented Esther on her presentation, and voiced his view that this information needs to be actively disseminated into the community, such as to the Rotary and other groups. Many think of the Meadows only as a sporting venue, and have little or no conception of the other programs and their value. "We need to get this out, to attract more sponsors, and get them interested in hiring students."

Sue remarked that the next public forum would be an excellent opportunity for Esther to give her presentation.

Taylor Morrison remarked that she first saw the facility during a painting project "and it was amazing."

Kurt Webber agreed with Derek, adding that this presentation "is exactly the type of information they [the Rotary] need."

Further discussion revealed that students participating in the Meadows programs, or who receive Special Ed assistance, no longer carry stigma of inferiority. Esther added that the center is open to all students, not just members of the Carye programs; any student can go there to receive support.

Kurt Webber moved that the board support continuation of the Meadows and Carye Programs. Derek seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Gilford Elementary School

Sandy McGonagle presented her report as written.

Gilford Middle School

Jim Kemmerer also submitted his report as written.

Gilford High School

Ken Wiswell added to his report a request for permission from the board for the Robotics Team to make an overnight trip to Manchester on February 29 and March 1, to participate in the annual First Robotics competition. He noted that in the past the team had tried to use buses, but that ultimately proved impractical. He recommended that the board approve the request.

Mrs. Drever added that the unpredictability of weather is a major factor: last year a storm caused the bus company to refuse to dispatch buses. She further pointed out that the competition is an exhausting experience, with team members competing from 8:00 AM until 6:00 PM; adding in travel time would make for a very long day. Mr. Drever added that a number of out-of-area teams will be staying at the same hotel (directly across the street from the competition arena), and the proximity would thus afford attendees opportunities to network that would not otherwise arise.

Margo Weeks moved that the board approve the overnight trip. Kurt Webber seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Meadows Advisory Committee

Sue Allen reported that the committee did not meet in December; its next meeting will be January 16, so she will have a report next month.

Student Representative Report

Taylor Morrison's report included the following:

- Being the first full week in school after vacation, students are just getting accustomed to being back in school.

REPORTS

- Mid-term reports come out on Thursday
- Winter sports are off to a good start
- The National Honor Society (NHS) sent out invitations to juniors this week
- PSAT results arrived the week before vacation
- With spring sports beginning at the end of February, students are beginning to train now
- Snow is a big problem, with the junior parking lot having lost five parking spaces due to accumulated snow. Black ice is also present.
- The 15-minute grace period granted on heavy snow days is deeply appreciated by all students. "It helps not to have to rush when the roads are bad."
- The flu affected a number of students last week
- The student council is planning its "Mr. GHS" pageant for February or March, which she described "as a spin-off of Miss America, only funnier."
- The French Club celebrates the French Epiphany next week
- The Battle of the Bands boasted high attendance, having gained popularity over the past several years
- There are seven more weeks of school before the next vacation period.

Derek inquired about NHS invitations. Taylor replied that first at student must have a 3.4 or higher GPA; a student must list what he/she has done for the community; a student must discuss his/her leadership qualities and character; finally the student must write an essay on NHS and volunteer work, and the student's ideas to serve the community. The applications are analyzed by a panel of five teachers who act as an advisory board.

Ken Wiswell pointed out that the charter is quite specific: a student cannot apply for membership, but must be invited, and the screening process is quite thorough. He related that every year brings surprises and disappointments among invitees.

Sue Allen asked about inviting the board to the induction ceremony. Ken asked the board to calendar April 9. This year's induction is planned as an induction dinner ceremony.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from Evans Juris re SAU Storage

Paul DeMinico acknowledged a letter from Town Administrator Juris asking that the SAU remove items it has in storage at the fire department building. The letter engendered further discussion on relocation of SAU offices, see Old Business below.

Letter from Plozdik & Sanderson re Audit Fees

Paul and Scott related that audit fees are rising to \$9600 due chiefly to the amount of federal funds that the school receives, which puts the school into a category of "single audit approach," which is more detailed and time-consuming.

Bulletin from US Department of Education, OCR

Paul acknowledged receipt of this bulletin, and related that the district is in compliance with all matters discussed therein. He pointed out that, in the schools he was affiliated with that offered both Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, it was easier to integrate students into the IB program because of the way it balances fact-level knowledge and memorization with the application of that knowledge. AP is tilted more toward the memorization and factual part of the equation. Special needs students

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CORRESPONDENCE generally do not do very well when they have to perform a series of recall questions: they can demonstrate their knowledge by application better than in a multiple-choice test.

Sue Allen noted one additional item: the chair of the Gilford Energy Committee had asked to meet with the school board, however that request was inadvertently omitted from the agenda. He had asked to convey to the board that the energy committee's next meeting was on January 9 at 6:30 at town hall; their findings based on their survey of the town will be presented to the Board of Selectmen on January 23. Sue suggested that the committee meet with Tim Bartlett, who conducted an energy survey a few years ago.

PUBLIC COMMENT No public comment was offered.

**OLD BUSINESS,
CONTINUED**

Budget Planning

Paul advised that the board needs to determine which member would be speaking to which motion, and which member would be seconding the motion, before the February 10 deliberative session.

Scott noted that he is presently working with Budget Committee Chair Dick Hickok about the presentations; he will release the results by Wednesday, January 9. He reminded that the public hearing is January 10, 2008 at 6:30, and will be preceded by a budget committee meeting at 5:30. Scott also related the information that some budget committee members had requested a re-vote on the football issue, claiming subsequent confusion on the issue.

Enrollment Study

Paul DeMinico presented NEASC's enrollment study findings. He explained that the study examines historical information about how students advance from grade to grade, and establishes ratios to help determine forecasts. He cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from the data. "We're dealing with human beings; they're dealing with ratios." Paul pointed out that the study does not take into effect an anticipated increase due to an influx from Gilmanton. He indicated that next time, perhaps these efforts will be combined with Gilmanton's. Overall the study suggests decreases at every level. He is confident that the SAU office will not soon have to undertake another move due to an enrollment increase.

SAU Office Space

Paul DeMinico opened the topic by referring to the letter from Evans Juris (see Correspondence, above) which he interpreted to mean that the SAU must begin searching for new quarters sooner rather than later. "They want the space: the most we can expect is another one-year contract," so planning should commence immediately. He offered to write the selectmen on the board's behalf, and noted that he thought the issue would be addressed at the selectmen's next meeting (Wednesday January 9). He also related that at the most recent Budget Committee meeting, the committee was reluctant to recommend a warrant article for \$63,587 to renovate Gilford Elementary School space into SAU office space. He noted that the committee chair suggested that the district consider changing an existing \$50,000 capital reserve warrant article for boiler replacement to instead fund SAU office renovations. Paul suggested that the boilers are anticipated to be replaced in 2011 and 2012, which means the SAU could conceivably be moved this year, leaving to more years to reserve \$50,000 each year, and be close to the anticipated \$165,000 boiler replacement cost by 2011. To accommodate a committee member's suggestion that \$63,587 is too high, Paul suggested

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eliminating the \$5,000 contingency fund, removing architectural and engineering services by moving those in-house, and having district personnel paint, which would bring the cost closer to the \$50,000 capital reserve called for in the existing warrant. He further proposed using language that would channel end-of-year surplus funds for the SAU office.

Paul Blandford recalled that the committee had indicated at their meeting that “they weren’t going to throw us out,” but agreed that it would be prudent to plan now for a future that would not involve the SAU occupying town hall space. The SAU’s time at the town hall offices is limited in any event; it would be wise to plan now for a move. Paul urged caution if the amount of the warrant article were to be reduced, as he felt Tim Bartlett’s estimate was sound. Paul pointed out that the SAU office lease is currently \$4,000 per year; over 10 years moving the office to the elementary school would yield a \$40,000 savings, meaning a net cost of approximately \$15,000 which is a bargain for new office space.

Derek pointed out that there is no commitment from the town that the SAU can occupy the space beyond June 30 2008, which gives the district essentially five months to make a decision on new quarters. If it were the private sector, a lessee would want a decision from the landlord immediately rather than wait for five months. The public meeting is impending: the time for any action would be soon. “This makes it look like we’re not planning properly.” He agreed with removing the contingency fund, but resisted lowering the amount to \$50,000, which he felt would do an injustice to the research that has already been done by the group.

Margo agreed, noting that from a budget perspective, there is little time to investigate options. She indicated that the town should inform the district as to the urgency of the matter, and whether or not another year’s lease will be offered. She reminded that the Budget Committee is holding a meeting immediately prior to the public hearing on Thursday January 10, which would be a good opportunity to bring up any proposal to modify warrant articles. “We need to plan now so we can have the money approved this spring for next year.”

Sue suggested either going to the next selectmen’s meeting or inviting the selectboard to the next school district meeting.

Kurt Webber understood that the town will not evict the SAU.

Derek Tomlinson moved that the warrant article be amended to read \$58,587 capital reserve to be used for SAU office renovations at the elementary school, which removes the contingency fund. The warrant would be clear that a request will be made to fund unforeseen expenses by using undesignated (surplus) funds.

Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Proposed School Calendar 2008-2009

Paul DeMinico presented the latest draft of the 2008-2009 school calendar. He noted that the October 10 and November 10 parent conferences and workshop days will be interchanged, and the next iteration of the calendar will clarify that change. He noted that GEA has seen the calendar, and made some suggestions which have been implemented.

Paul Blandford inquired about moving the Wednesday January 14 early release day to Friday January 16. He related hearing that half-days in the middle of the week result in a “choppy” flow; moving to a Friday would have the added benefit of extending the weekend somewhat. Paul DeMinico agreed to bring the suggestion to the team and return at the February meeting for the board’s action.

Dr. DeMinico then turned to the subject of late entries on Wednesdays. He related that Ken Wiswell had visited a school that had been successfully following this practice for over 10 years. It would afford teachers the opportunity to collaborate in areas such as NWEA testing, competencies, and the like. Ken

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shared some of his visit with staff and students, and very quickly a newspaper article appeared announcing that Gilford was establishing late-start Wednesdays. Paul underscored that the newspaper article did not represent the true state of the matter: late-start Wednesdays was an idea that was shared with staff and students to see if it merited further pursuit. Discussion with the leadership team brought up other implications, including busing, the impact on Gilmanton, free and reduced-fee meals, preplanned workshops, and contractual obligations. Paul acknowledged research indicating that high school students should be starting school later, while elementary students should be starting school earlier. He apologized that the board was among the last to hear of the discussion, and that the newspapers heard of it before the board. He indicated that the discussion is far from complete, this idea will not be implemented within the next year, and there are many other implications that must be considered before implementing such a change.

Margo added that such a change could implicate childcare with families having older and younger children.

Taylor related that in discussions with teachers she learned that they would prefer an early release as opposed to a late start, as the time would likely be used more productively in the afternoon.

Zannah Richards reported that the idea was presented to the Gilmanton board as if it had already been discussed, without any input from Gilmanton. She noted that busing and coordination of the two schools were two problems that surfaced immediately. She asked that Gilmanton representatives be included in any further discussions of this magnitude.

Paul related that Gilmanton was involved at the earliest possible stage. Ken related that he emailed the Gilmanton principal immediately following a fall 2007 6:45 AM meeting with Paul, Jim, Ken, and Sandy, at which he was given approval to start discussions with staff and students. Paul recalled that the subject was broached at the very next meeting.

Zannah reiterated that the manner in which it was presented to the Gilmanton board left the clear impression that Gilmanton had not been advised or invited to join the discussion.

Paul closed the matter by expressing his hope that other ideas will come forward, and that people will not be shy about introducing new ideas without fear that any discussion will appear in the media as a *fait accompli*.

NEW BUSINESS

Policy Review: Directory Information JRB

Paul asked that the board review the policy, noting that the present policy has a number of inaccuracies and errors. At the next meeting, Paul will present the policy in further detail, and relate the opinion of legal counsel.

Acceptance of Federal Grants

Kurt Webber moved that the board accept the following federal grants:

- IDEA-B at \$220,598.00
- Literacy Instruction at \$57,921.85
- Title IIA at \$38,869.17

Margo Weeks seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Organizational Chart Draft

Paul DeMinico presented his first draft of a circular organizational chart of the school district, with the students at its center, with concentric rings representing decreased direct contact with the students. Missing from the chart is the Director of Student Services and Librarians. He also presented a more traditional box-and-

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bar chart. The chart was prepared at the request of the Budget Committee.

Margo made various structural suggestions, adding that supplying positions with numbers (e.g., 16.4 FTEs) is more representative of the information that the Budget Committee seeks. Kurt Webber concurred, pointing out that not all staff are represented, and the Budget Committee seeks to understand the positions of all employees.

MBC Letter re Publishing Teacher Salaries

Sue recommended that the board take the following action with the letter:

- Take it under advisement
- Forward to GEA for their consideration and input
- Forward to Leadership team for their consideration and input
- Have Dr. DeMinico check with the selectmen to see how they are choosing to respond to the request at the town level.

Sue pointed out that the Budget Committee has historically had the requested information available to them.

Considerable discussion ensued, summarized as follows:

Paul DeMinico advised that in the public sector salary information is public information, available under the Right-to-Know (RTK) act. The district has a right to establish policies and procedures, but must conform to RTK's time limitations. Presently an individual must complete a form and file it with the SAU, and the SAU has a set amount of time (in this case, five days) to provide that information.

Derek Tomlinson's position is that if the district is to conduct this undertaking, it should first determine what the costs will be of the undertaking be, and what will be the benefits to the district. Gathering and collating the information is one cost; however responding to additional questions generated by the publication of such information will incur additional costs. One question to answer before further consideration should be: does the taxpayer indeed want this information? A warrant article would be the proper method of inquiry. He also inquired about the time frame for responding to the Budget Committee's letter. His assumption is that the committee wants the information for this year's Town Report.

Scott related that in the backup information the Budget Committee receives, each individual's salary is listed, then the total cost. This information is currently presented in a manner that would not permit an individual from determining the exact dollar amount of benefits each employee earns.

Paul Blandford pointed out that currently individuals requesting salary information need only to fill out a form, and the information is provided in due course. The district is afforded a certain level of protection in the ability to monitor the information disseminated, and to whom. With such procedures in place, he questioned what more the district needs to do in order to make the information even more readily available.

Margo Weeks related that part of the Budget Committee's discussion included a notion that having to present oneself to the SAU and fill out a form might be perceived as intimidating to some individuals. Also expressed was a belief that the more information people have at their fingertips, the better informed they are when making decisions. She supported review by the Leadership team, as such publication would have an impact on the staff, and the leadership team would be responsible for managing those impacts. She further supported the view that GEA should have an opportunity to review and submit input. She pointed out that negotiations will begin again in another year, and to approach from a position of fairness would be beneficial. She concurred that the reality is that the people actually making decisions already have the information.

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Margo moved that the board take the letter under advisement, and send it to the leadership team and GEA for their review and input. Derek seconded the motion, which carried by a majority. Paul Blandford voted against.

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

At 8:03p.m., Margo Weeks made the motion to enter non-public session pursuant to the provisions of RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous roll call vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

**Kurt Webber
School Board Secretary**