

**GILFORD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
MONDAY MARCH 3, 2008
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The Gilford School Board held a regular meeting on March 3, 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 Walter Mitchell 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 7:00 p.m., led the Pledge of Allegiance, and confirmed posting of the meeting.

Paul Blandford made the motion that the board approve the minutes of the February 18, 2008 meeting. Kurt Webber seconded the motion. Sue outlined corrections, after which Paul's motion was passed by a majority with Margo abstaining.

REPORTS

Meadows Advisory Committee

Sue Allen related that the committee met on February 20 with Paul Fluet, who gave an update on his meeting at DES with Collis Adams and Jocelyn Degler. Mr. Fluet also plans to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers in March. The committee will meet again on March 19.

One Book One School

Sandy McGonagle outlined this event, which distributed copies of the book Bunnica by James Howe to all elementary school students, teachers, staff, and parents. She described it as a family literacy event, promoting opportunities for families to discuss the book at home. The board members also received copies of the book.

Student Representative

Taylor Morrison reported that all students returned from vacation "safe and sound." She noted that finals are coming, and expressed relief that they had been delayed, giving students more study time between vacation and finals. Basketball season is over and that training for spring sports is underway. The National Honor Society has indicated that its ceremonies will occur the last week of school, and that banquet information will be forthcoming.

**Visit to Sturgis Charter International Baccalaureate (IB) School, Hyannis
Massachusetts**

Paul DeMinico related that he, Ken Wiswell, Derek Tomlinson, teachers Mike Zulauf, Scott Hutchison, Gene Duquette, Polly Rouhan, and Lynn Makepeace had today visited this school, a public high school exclusively devoted to teaching students in the IB program. The 350-student school is headed by Arthur Pontes, who visited Gilford last year and addressed the board and staff about the IB program.

Ken Wiswell remarked that what struck him was the wide variety of students (all selected by lottery) representing an equally wide range of abilities, yet who all participated in the IB program. The school displays a tremendous amount of success with students who one might otherwise think would not thrive in such a rigorous program. He also remarked on the impressive level of participation in the classrooms.

Derek Tomlinson noted that the school did an excellent job of organizing the visit, making GHS representatives feel quite welcome. The team was able to meet with various groups of students and instructors, often without the instructors present so that the students could speak freely. He remarked that the students

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REPORTS

were quite open, engaged, enthusiastic, and articulate. "One of the things that sets IB apart is preparing students for public speaking, and being confident and self-assured."

Paul related that he has been affiliated with two other IB schools, both private, wherein the expectation was that students would matriculate to top-tier four-year universities. His previous conception was that IB was a somewhat elitist program for high-achieving students. However, the trip to Sturgis changed that opinion. He was struck by the fact that this public school's students, who were chosen by lottery, represents a wide variety of abilities, from special ed, general ed, to honors students; yet all students at all levels rose to the challenge of a rigorous program of study. He noted that the school exhibited a "culture of achievement" at all levels. He related that Mr. Pontes and IB Coordinator Karen Welch will be at Gilford High School on March 5, 2008 to address the faculty during the day and at 6:30 to address interested parents.

Kurt Webber inquired about feedback from AP teachers who visited. Derek reported that he heard extremely positive feedback.

Paul related that the debriefing will take quite some time. It bears emphasizing that AP is a set of courses, while IB is a program. He noted that June is the benchmark month when he will ask the board whether to start the application process, or continue with another year of investigation. He recommended proceeding deliberately and systematically.

Paul Blandford inquired about the availability of statistics on the percentage of students matriculating to two- or four-year institutions, and how those figures relate to other schools.

Paul DeMinico stated that if such statistics are available, he would seek to obtain them. He related Mr. Ponte's view that while IB may help students to gain entry into college, it more importantly equips students with the skills necessary to remain in college. Ken concurred, pointing out that the dropout rate in college is roughly 50 percent. IB's claim is that because students are better prepared by doing so much independent thinking and writing, they are more resilient when they reach the rigors of college.

Margo Weeks inquired about test results; Paul indicated he could obtain them. He noted that they are among the highest in Massachusetts.

Paul Blandford inquired whether there were other IB schools nearby. Paul DeMinico indicated that Bedford will begin IB implementation in September; Bow is involved in the application process.

Dr. DeMinico advised that if the district decided to adopt the IB program, a committee from IB would visit and assess GHS's readiness, to determine whether the student body, staff, and community is ready and has sufficient support. It is a program that cannot be mandated without the will of the community.

CORRESPONDENCE

Rep. Paul Ingbretson, Sen. Joseph Kenny Re: CACR-21 School Funding/Adequacy

Sue Allen acknowledged receipt of these letters concerning a proposed constitutional amendment to govern school funding. She also provided a copy of a resolution brought to the floor of the NHSBA delegates' assembly that passed in opposition to the proposed amendment.

Sue passed out a recently-received letter from Gilmanton representative Walter Mitchell relating that this would be his last meeting. He has elected not to renew his candidacy for Gilmanton School Board. Sue thanked Walter on behalf of the Gilford School Board for all he has given to the board and his local community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Randy Cook inquired whether IB courses would be offered in parallel with AP

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PUBLIC COMMENT

courses. Paul DeMinico replied that in his experience both courses ran “hand in hand,” and fostered a healthy kind of competition, resulting in an effort to determine which is more rigorous, which offered greater college credit for students. The schools he had been associated with let the students’ preferences guide the approach: if students preferred IB to AP, that was the route that the school adopted. He related that some schools that removed AP courses in place of IB programs developed a completely different set of issues.

Mr. Cook inquired about the lottery approach, and whether that was inherent in the IB process. Paul indicated that the Sturgis school used the lottery to choose students from all throughout the region, attempting to achieve a proper mix of special education, general education, and honors students.

Mr. Cook asked if the increased engagement of students in class under the IB program was a driving factor in the board’s investigation of the program. Paul related his opinion that the school presently does not have enough students undertaking AP studies, or the topmost rigorous courses. He related that IB is different from AP, in that IB is not a series of courses, but rather a full program with a particular philosophical base.

Sue encouraged Mr. Cook to attend the informational meeting on March 5.

Joe Wernig inquired how many AP courses were being offered at present. Ken Wiswell replied that there are six.

OLD BUSINESS

NH Municipal and NH School Boards Association

Sue Allen described correspondence from the New Hampshire Municipal Association, distributed by the Local Government Center regarding Article 28-a litigation about potential effects to local municipalities from difficulties with the New Hampshire Retirement System. She reminded the board that at the last meeting the consensus was to defer decision to this meeting as to whether Gilford School District should join the litigation.

Derek Tomlinson moved that the board elect to join the litigation. Paul Blandford seconded the motion.

Derek indicated that his rationale for joining the action was to see that the action was allowed to run its course. He likened the situation to Social Security and other benefits that lack funding. The retirement program was not well-funded during a critical time, and is now asking that an unfunded mandate be levied on taxpayers to help make up the shortfall. His view is that not to support the action would be doing the taxpayers a disservice.

Kurt Webber opined that if the local governments do not contribute to the funding, then the state government will: the result is that the taxpayer still pays.

Paul Blandford voiced his view that the district needs to join the suit. He disagreed that local entities should be required to pay for possible mismanagement of a larger entity.

Sue related that the town of Gilford, the City of Laconia, and Pembroke and Kearsarge school districts have elected to join the action.

Kurt asked Paul DeMinico for his opinions on the potential downsides to joining the action.

Paul related that in his view the action sets school boards against public employees. He discussed differences between public and private employment: public employees typically work for lower wages, in exchange for security and benefits not offered in the private sector. Public employees are not permitted 401(k) plans, and are somewhat at the mercy of the Retirement System. He declined to make a recommendation, as he is a public employee.

Scott Isabelle related that until recently most revenue generated was from investments, which became the source of many of the shortfalls. Another major factor was that until two years ago, the employee paid a larger contribution than

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the employer. As the stock investments portfolio has declined, employer contributions have increased, which brought the matter to a peak. Many public pools have suffered just as the stock market has suffered. Finally, as the increases in the stock market began to level off, there was an increase of retirees entering the situation.

Kurt inquired, since contribution rates are set by statute, is there a possibility of changing the statute to change the contribution rate. Paul DeMinico replied that such changes could indeed be effective; there are also discussions about potential loss of some benefits for retirees such as health insurance. Any legislation could have an impact on the lawsuit. Walter Mitchell concurred, adding that there would be less pressure for a resolution to the situation if it weren't for the lawsuit. After some further discussion, Derek's motion passed by a majority, with Kurt Webber abstaining.

GES Room Usage/Relocation Drafts

Paul DeMinico related that he, Sandy McGonagle, Esther Kennedy, and Scott Isabelle had worked through several iterations of room reallocations relative to the move of the SAU office to the elementary school. He advised that no action was being requested of the board, as ultimately such allocations are the responsibility of the building principals. The focus of this presentation was to advise the board of the options being considered.

Sandy described two options, both which would result in SAU occupying what are now rooms 658, 659, and 660, which presently houses two Grade 4 classes and Learning Lab II. In the first option, Room 635 (Grade 3) would move to 680; 659 and 660 would move to 634 and 635 (room 634 being available due to class reduction in Grade 2); and Room 658 would move to 656 and 675, a shared space with speech. This option would result in keeping Grade 3 classes in closer proximity to each other.

The second option involves Rooms 659 and 660 would move to 675 and 680; 675 (Speech) would move to 616; 616 (Reading Recovery) would move to 656; and 658 (Learning Lab II) would move to 634. The advantage to this option is that it keeps more Grade 4 classes together.

Sandy noted that both options are viable given the projected population trends. The preference of the administration team is the first option.

Sue Allen inquired whether either option would result in a negative impact on instruction. Sandy replied that a negative impact would not result.

Derek inquired why Room 681, a studio used for the morning telecast, is needed to perform a function that could be done just as well in a smaller space. Sandy replied that prior to this year 681 was used as a studio and for small group instruction, but this year the small group instruction was put into the newly-vacant Room 680. Upon that explanation, Derek remarked that the first option was most appealing, as it maintained more small group instruction space.

Sandy added that both Learning Lab II staff and the speech department have indicated that it would be perfectly acceptable to share space. One priority is to keep speech services near the front of the building, as there are presently 12 preschool students who receive these services, and having the services available at the front of the building is preferable.

Paul DeMinico reminded the board that these options are works in progress, and that further fine-tuning could yield more or more flexible use of existing space. He emphasized that neither option would have a negative impact on student instruction.

PUBLIC COMMENT

By prior consent of the board, Sue opened the floor to public comment on the topic.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jolene Wernig commented that she sees the benefit to the SAU but not to the students. She noted a degree of frustration, having served on bond-raising committees to establish enough space for all classes, to see some classes moved into smaller quarters. Having at last reached a point where there is enough space for all classes, "I feel we're taking a step backwards."

Sandy replied that the quarters are instructional spaces. For example, Room 655, a former teacher's room now used for special ed conferences, has been used for student instruction, and is properly equipped. Taylor Morrison recalled having a class in that room: "It's a nice room." Sandy added that there are other such instructional spaces that have not been pressed into instructional service for some time.

Joe Wernig asked whether staff input had been sought, and what would happen in the event of a population increase.

Sandy replied that staff input had indeed been sought. In fact one of the meetings with the staff yielded the first option, which had not previously occurred to the administrative team.

Paul DeMinico added that enrollment studies show a steady and constant decrease over the next 10 year period. If, however, the town were to change its policies, for example in terms of affordable housing and mobile home parks, that would likely cause a population increase. At that point, the SAU would be forced to seek quarters elsewhere, such as in a local professional office park. Sandy and Margo briefly discussed declining population, both actual and projected.

Randy Cook also recalled the bonding process, and commented that the proposed move would be a "hard sell" to those involved in that process. He inquired whether other options, such as the Meadows, had been considered.

Sue related that the Meadows, renting professional office space, purchasing and renovating an existing in-town structure, the town library, and the like were all examined critically. Margo Weeks added that even the Rowe House was carefully considered.

Sue elaborated that each of those options was rejected for different reasons, including the cost of building at the Meadows; asbestos contamination and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) considerations at the Rowe house; the expense of commercial rental property; and the difficulty and uncertainty of contacting and receiving permission from all heirs of the town library grantors. Other driving factors include the impending expiration of the SAU's current lease and the comparative investment of using existing space at a much lower renovation cost. Sue assured Mr. Cook that the board had carefully examined and weighed all available options.

NEW BUSINESS

Alcohol Sensor Proposal

Ken Wiswell showed the board a device called the P.A.S. Vr that passively detects the presence of alcohol, either in a person or in a container. The device, slightly larger than two decks of cards, requires only that a person speak into it or that it be held over a container (glass, bottle, cup) and it will detect the presence of alcohol. The non-invasive device removes doubt about the presence of alcohol, with far more confidence than present methods (smelling the breath, flashlight in the eye). If a second test, performed on a different PAS unit, results in a positive showing, then the school's procedure for the internal possession of alcohol is followed. He asked the board's permission to begin using the device whenever the administration receives a referral. Ken distributed a protocol that would ensure that a reasonable suspicion exists, and that students' due process rights are protected. He further indicated that the device would be useful at dances or other events: it could, for example, determine whether one or all students in a group had ingested alcohol or it could be used to detect alcohol in

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beverage containers.

Kurt Webber moved that the board approve the use of the device. Walter Mitchell seconded the motion.

Paul DeMinico informed the board that “we are on solid legal footing,” and that legal counsel has advised that parents and students be notified of its presence before its first use. Next year it will appear in the student handbook.

Derek inquired about accuracy issues. Ken replied that there is a \$50 charge to have the devices recalibrated every summer. With three units on hand, an alternate device will always be used to re-test.

Margo Weeks inquired whether other present methods would continue to be used, particularly since the device only detects the presence of alcohol. Ken replied that if a student is giving other indications of impairment, the school nurse would be brought in for consultation and evaluation.

Sue Allen inquired whether other districts are using the device. Ken related that he first saw the device at a Principals’ convention, and noted that it was garnering much attention.

Zannah Richards inquired whether students were yet aware of the equipment. Ken replied that the school would make everyone aware, including posting signs at events.

Kurt’s motion passed unanimously.

Field Trip Request

Ken Wiswell brought to the board a request from the Bagel and Book reading club for permission to travel to Washington DC on Saturday, April 5 to tour the buildings and see the monuments. He indicated that the trip would be self-funded, and would result in no missed school days.

Kurt Webber moved that the board approve the request. Derek Tomlinson seconded the motion.

Paul Blandford inquired whether the board needed to give its approval, as the event occurred outside of school hours. Ken indicated that an out-of-state trip would require approval.

Walter Mitchell inquired as to the size of the group. Ken replied that the club counted 20 members; approximately 12 would be traveling with two adults.

The motion passed unanimously.

Gilford Police Radios to Gilford School District

Paul DeMinico introduced Captain Kevin Keenan of the Gilford Police Department, with whom he attended the Inter-Agency Safety Meeting in Florida. At that meeting, the topic of the need for communication arose.

Captain Keenan announced that the Police Department was donating over 20 high-end portable two-way radios to the school. The department preferred to keep the assets in the community rather than send them away to auction. He and Paul DeMinico will confer with the department’s radio expert to determine which channels should be programmed: one will be a direct means of communication with the police department, particularly critical in emergency situations. Detective Keenan noted that the gift came with the approval of Gilford’s Board of Selectmen.

Paul Blandford moved that the board accept the gift of the radios. Margo Weeks seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Paul DeMinico commented that this was a mark of the exemplary communication that the school and public safety departments have achieved and enjoy.

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

At 8:29 p.m., Margo Weeks made the motion to enter non-public session pursuant to the provisions of RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Kurt Webber seconded the motion, which

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passed by unanimous roll call vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

**Kurt Webber
School Board Secretary**