

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES: Wednesday, May 8, 2019**  
John Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant Street, Greenfield MA  
Approved 06.12.19

**Present:** Katie Caron (KC); Susan Eckstrom (SE); Jordana Harper, Superintendent (JH); Susan Hollins (SH); Glenn Johnson (GJ) joined at 8:20; William Martin (WM); Adrienne Nunez (AN); Cameron Ward (CW).

**Absent:** None

**Also present:**

Karen Cousland, GMS/MSA Principal; William Diehl, Executive Director, Collaborative for Educational Services; Donna Harlan, Director, and Christine Shea, Assistant Lead, DESE West-Central Region Statewide System of Support; Stephen Nembirkow, Business Manager; Edward Voudren, Transportation Coordinator; school staff (many from GMS/MSA); and citizens.

**I. Call to Order**

With a quorum present (KC, SE, SH, WM, AN, CW), Chair Nunez opened the meeting at 6:38 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**KC moved to approve minutes of April 10, 2019. SE 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

**III. Public Comment**

None

**IV. Reports**

CM moved to skip reports. WM 2nd. Motion passed 4-1-1.

**V. Business**

AN moved to next consider GMS/MSA Presentation. WM 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

**C. Greenfield Middle School / Math & Science Academy Presentation**

*Presentation slides included in meeting documents*

Supt. Harper and Karen Cousland, GMS/MSA Principal, opened the presentation.

Donna Harlan, DESE, praised GMS/MSA staff for their extraordinary work and turnaround plan ("one of the strongest I've ever seen").

Christine Shea, DESE, provided an overview of turnaround criteria (bottom 10% based on MCAS achievement, student growth, chronic absenteeism, English learners); DESE's support; grant funding (\$25K this year); turnaround components, process and timeline.

4 Turnaround Practices (TAP), presented by TAP team members

- Shared Leadership: Karen Cousland
- Effective Leadership: Brian Tucker
- Student Support: Barbara Unaitis
- School Climate & Culture: Anna Marchefka

Discussion: Benchmarks; charter schools; shared best practices; school culture re: LGTBQ; policies and contracts that hinder or support turnaround; benchmarks re: advanced students; strong praise for GMS/MSA leadership, staff, and Superintendent.

**A. Collaborative for Educational Services**

Bill Diehl, CES Executive Director, provided overview of CES, member-organization of school districts in Franklin and Hampshire Counties; funded by grants, contracts, tuitions; CES strategic goals; CES services used by Greenfield; focus on needs of small, rural districts; advocate for state funding and services.

Discussion: Exploring GCC program similar to Mt. Tom Academy at Holyoke; data services for enrollment projections; professional development opportunities and fees; developing in-district special programs; GPS current work with CES includes social justice/restorative justice, middle school special education services, training for instructional assistants; CES work with Pioneer to develop special programs – transition from out-of-district placements; intervention for early elementary students; need for financial support for Green River special program; satellite instruction; lack of state reimbursement to regional districts.

#### **B. Filling of Vacant School Committee Seat**

AN outlined process options and recommendation from Kathy Scott, Greenfield City Clerk, to use paper ballot. Charter says President of Council will vote if impasse.

**CW moved to accept recommendation of Clerk. KC 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Voting by paper ballot resulted in 3-3 tie.**

For Jean Wall: WM, CW, SH

For Glenn Johnson: SE, AN, KC

President Reno announced her prior decision to vote for whichever candidate was supported by the School Committee Chair, and cast the deciding vote for Glenn Johnson.

Mayor Martin provided swearing-in of Glenn Johnson as new School Committee member. AN and JH thanked all four candidates who applied and welcomed GJ.

#### **D. Special Education Transportation Purchase and Vote**

SH moved to approve the transportation proposal discussed at the May 8, 2019 meeting, which was reviewed and unanimously supported by the Budget & Finance Subcommittee and to refer new proposals, if presented, to the Budget Subcommittee. Motion failed for lack of second.

JH reviewed cost-saving proposal for special education transportation, pilot program to purchase 3 vans; acknowledged work of Ed Voudren, Transportation Coordinator and review by Budget Subcommittee.

**AN moved to approve purchase of 3 special education vans at a total cost of \$93,779 with \$70,000 to be paid from the transportation capital account and the remainder to be paid from Out of District Transportation. SH 2nd.**

Discussion: \$225K savings plus revenue generation; interest from surrounding districts to transport their students. Need to replace additional vans; concern re: aging fleet.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

AN referred discussion of additional vans and other transportation needs to Budget Subcommittee.

#### **E. Recommendation to the City Council to Raise FY20 School Budget**

AN explained that two-thirds vote of Council can raise School Committee budget above Mayor's recommended budget. Desire to have budget reflect additional Chapter 70 funds to come to Greenfield.

Discussion:

WM: Increasing school budget = increase in property taxes, decrease to other city departments. Wait for new revenue available in 6-8 months.

AN: Council would not have to take from other departments; use surplus from over-estimated health insurance costs, additional Chap. 70 \$.

SH: Use city stabilization funds (special education, contract, general), certified free cash, proceeds from sale of town-owned land, Chap. 70, anticipated increase in charter school reimbursement.

WM: 2 years' free cash not available until certified by Dept. of Revenue, can be included in supplemental budget. Using stabilization funds puts city in peril next year.

**CW moved to say that that vote [to approve \$19.9 million budget] was real and we really meant it and we recommend it to Council again, and we request the City Council fund the voted budget by whatever means available without cutting other departments. GJ 2nd.**

JH: She and Nembirkow are working on plan with specific ideas for new revenue.

WM: New hires cost city beyond salary (health insurance, etc.)

KC: Extra \$ would not be to hire new people; intent is to avoid laying off current staff, whose concurrent costs are already included in budget.

SH called the question. Motion to end debate failed 1-6.

WM: Laying off staff costs the city for unemployment insurance.

Members expressed concern re: informal wording of motion. CW, SH withdrew the motion.

**GJ moved to ask that the City Council fund the FY 20 School Department budget up to the amount of the School Committee budget of \$19,970,347, in accordance with Mass. General Law Chapter 44, Section 32, and the Greenfield City Charter. KC 2nd.**

WM called the question. Motion to end debate failed 2-5.

WM offered friendly amendment: Considering that the current balance of over \$2.5million of revolving funds and estimated revenue in next 12 months of Fiscal Year 20 of \$900K, that the School Committee allocate \$600K from existing funds to balance the budget. GJ did not accept amendment.

CJ called the question. Unanimous vote to end debate.

**Motion passed 6-1 (No: WM).**

#### **F. Select Two, Unit A Sick Bank Committee Representatives**

AN explained the Sick Leave Bank, as included in Unit A contract, which stipulates Sick Leave Bank Committee to include 2 members of School Committee. GJ and KC volunteered to serve.

WM questioned legality of Sick Leave Bank; state law prohibits.

Nembirkow questioned including School Committee members in Sick Leave Bank Committee.

**WM moved to request attorney review of Unit A Sick Leave Bank. CW 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

AN accepted appointment of GJ and KC to represent School Committee on Sick Leave Bank Committee.

#### **G. 2019-2020 School Choice Seats Review and Vote**

JH presented draft School Choice Seats. Students would need to provide own transportation.

Choi-ed-in students allowed to continue through graduation. Brings in student diversity, revenue.

To be selected by lottery when more applications than seats, as required by state law. Seats are available in existing classrooms. Availability set by principals.

Request by WM to add review of class sizes to upcoming meeting agenda.

**GJ moved to approve the school choice seats for 2019-2020 as presented. KC 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

#### **H. Review of Open Meeting Law Complaint**

AN introduced Open Meeting Law (OML) complaint from Paul Jablon and instructions for response. Complaint alleges deliberative emails, especially by SH, that violate Open Meeting Law.

SH: Complaint is correct. Evidence of all members except KC who have violated OML in emails. Corrective action: training. Attorney General's office advises that three-person subcommittees are problem because one subcommittee member contacting another constitutes a quorum. OML rules created before email existed.

**GJ moved that we take the action that he is requesting. KC 2nd.** Friendly amendment by KC, accepted: **and we release the emails of the full Committee.**

WM: Concern that one member targeted for public scolding.

JH: Emails from staff to set agenda, distribute materials not OML violation.

AN: Complaint calls to "investigate all emails." Time and energy to do this?

CW: No need for investigation. Emails are available to public. No conspiracy to sway votes.

CW called the question. Motion to end debate passed 4-2.

**Motion failed 2-4.**

**AN moved that the Committee stop deliberating on-line, request all emails from member Hollins, and invite the Attorney General to give us a training and simply include in our response that recognition that there are some open meeting law violations in this packet and we will continue with three items noted. KC 2nd.**

JH: OML training available next week in Amherst. Public deserves to know what's in the emails.

GJ: Content is benign but OML is serious.

CW called the question. Motion to end debate passed unanimously.

**Motion failed 1-5-1 (AN yes; SE abstain).**

**WM moved that we admit violation of the allegations as put forward by Mr. Jablon and that we publish the emails as presented by Mr. Jablon on the city website and that the Committee take an OML training. GJ 2nd.**

GJ called question. Motion to end debate passed unanimously.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

SH moved to request Hannah Rush from AG's office to offer training. WM 2nd. Motion withdrawn.

#### **I. Subcommittee Minutes and the Use of School Committee Secretary**

AN: concern that so much time used on reviewing subcommittee minutes.

SH: Minutes need more than action items to comply with open meeting law. Difficult for secretary to take complete minutes from audio-recordings. Requests minutes to be provided earlier to allow time to review.

**AN moved to table until next month. KC 2nd. Motion to table passed 5-1 (CW no).**

#### **VI. New Business – none**

#### **VIII. Executive Session**

**AN announced intent to move into Executive Session in accordance with MGL c 30A, §21, (3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may**

**have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares (Administrative Assistants).**

AN moved to enter Executive Session. KC 2nd. Roll call vote: Yes –WM, SH, KC, AN, SE, GJ, CW.  
Entered Executive Session at 10:30 p.m.

AN moved to leave Executive Session. SE 2nd . Roll call vote: Yes –WM, SH, KC, AN, SE, GJ, CW.  
Returned to public session at 10:36 p.m.

### **IX. Adjournment**

AN moved to adjourn, SE 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 10:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Farber  
Recording Secretary

### **Meeting Documents**

1. Agenda: May 8, 2019
2. Draft minutes: April 10, 2019
3. “My Experience at GMS,” from GMS student
4. Superintendent’s Report documents
  - a. School newsletters
  - b. Social media from Superintendent
5. Budget Reports from Steve Nembirkow, May 2, 2019
6. Subcommittee minutes
  - a. Budget & Finance, April 22, May 1, 2019
7. Memo (email) from Kathy Scott, Greenfield City Clerk, to Adrienne Nunez, “Update on New Member Selection, April 19, 2019
8. Memo (email) from Glenn Johnson to School Committee, “Checks and balances,” April 18, 2019
9. Memo (email) from Mark Berson to Adrienne Nunez, “Vacant Seat,” April 30, 2019
10. Memo (email) from Susan Hollins to Adrienne Nunez, “Individual Concern about Chairperson Comments,” April 15, 2019
11. Greenfield Middle School/Math & Science Academy School Committee Presentation, May 8, 2019
12. Memo from Steve Nembirkow to School Committee, “Van Purchase,” April 9, 2019
13. General Law Part I, Title VII, Chapter 44, Section 32, “Submission of City Budget to City Council; Procedure for Approval, Rejection or Alteration
14. Sick Leave Bank (contract excerpt)
15. School Choice Seats for 2019-2020 (draft), May 6, 2019
16. Open Meeting Law Complaint, Paul Jablon, FCCPR Education Task Force
17. Memo (email) from Atty. Gordon Quinn to Adrienne Nunez, “Responses to Questions Relating to Open Meeting Law and Other Topics,” April 11, 2019
18. Collaborative for Educational Services “Services Overview”