

**REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT #16 SCHOOL BOARD**

**Mechanic Falls – Minot - Poland**

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the RSU #16 School Board  
for 2009 – 2010 was held**

**Monday, March 29, 2010 at 6:30 P.M.**

**in the Poland Regional High School Auditorium**

When considering change, remember — there is an emotional connection necessary  
for people to commit to new ways. ~ Stacy Aaron

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Annette Annance, Carl Beckett, Sue Callahan, Norm Davis, Yvon Gilbert, Dave Griffiths,  
Steve Holbrook, Mary Ella Jones, Jeanne Manley, Yvette Murray, Scott Sawyer, Martha Stone,  
Jack Wiseman, Chris Woodford

**Absent:** Melissa Hodgkin

**1.0 CALL TO ORDER:** Dave Griffiths, Chair

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**2.0 ACT ON MINUTES:**

Approve 4<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting Minutes – 3-15-10

Motion: by Steve Holbrook to approve the minutes of the 3-15-10 meeting

Seconded: by Mary Ella Jones

Vote: Unanimous

**3.0 ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

**4.0 BUDGET UPDATE/PRESENTATION – Dennis:**

A young person's outlook on the world – motivational slide

➤ Recommendation from Middle School Exploration Committee - Colleen Quint

Dennis talked about the middle school structure in the district and how it has been a critical factor in the budget. Colleen Quint reviewed the work of the middle school exploration committee. She introduced the committee members and explained how the group debriefed after each one of the public meetings and listening sessions and reviewed all the questions raised. They also heard a lot of ideas, in addition to questions and they combined those with the ideas of the group. The committee met six times and participated in five public hearings. She reviewed all the issues they looked at and the guiding question, *What middle school structure allows RSU16 to provide the best possible education to middle school students that both reflects the current fiscal crisis and is sustainable over the long term?* The committee makes the recommendation that the district move to a Tri-Town Middle School model. She provided a handout citing the main reasons for the recommendation.

➤ What it would look like - Ayesha Farag-Davis, Cari Medd, Mary Martin and Margaret Pitts

The principals talked to the audience about what this Tri-Town Middle School would look like. How do we bring these kids together and do what's best for them? Programming would remain essentially the same as it is now and they would have Guidance and Advisory. The principals are 100% behind supporting the students in this transition.

➤ Big picture implications - Dennis Duquette

Dennis reviewed some of the questions and concerns that have been raised in terms of the budget. He talked about athletics, K-6 Music, which they will request be added back in the budget with a single teacher to work at all three schools. PE/Wellness – they are recommending the school board add an additional .5 teacher if they move forward with the Tri-Town Middle School. Art has not been eliminated at any buildings and the offerings will remain the same.

With regards to the Curriculum Coordinator, he manages \$500-600,000 per year in grants, along with all of his other duties. Dennis reviewed the budget implications and projected tax changes with the Tri-Town Middle School model. He also talked about the additional EPS funds received from the state and the income from the 4-year-old program. (\$212,000)

➤ School Committee discussion/approval

Motion: by Steve Holbrook to approve the Tri-Town Middle School as recommended by the Middle School Exploration Committee

Seconded: by Yvette Murray

Vote: Passes

In Favor: Yvon Gilbert, Carl Beckett, Yvette Murray, Chris Woodford, Steve Holbrook, Sue Callahan, Annette Annance, Norm Davis, Martha Stone, Mary Ella Jones, Jeanne Manley

Against: Jack Wiseman, Scott Sawyer

Abstain: Dave Griffiths

Absent: Melissa Hodgkin

- ➔ Dave Griffiths explained that he served on the exploration committee as an ex-officio member. He talked about the strong connection between the community of Mechanic Falls and the Elm Street School. He believes, with the help of Gary Chapin, Curriculum Coordinator, that the kids of Mechanic Falls will still be prepared for high school if they stay where they are. However, if the Tri-Town Middle School goes forward, the community shouldn't be concerned about the kid's education. They will be as well served and taken care of as they are now. Dave explained that if he had to vote, he would vote to keep the middle school at ESS, noting they would have to pay for it and he is willing to do that.
- ➔ Norm Davis talked about the importance of music for students and that research shows that their grades as a group are much better. One of the best investments we can make is to keep the arts going in the schools.
- ➔ Jack Wiseman – regarding the meeting with the municipal officers, what are the numbers for the additional mil rate data from the towns. Dennis did not have the town data tonight, but will provide it.
- ➔ Mary Ella Jones spoke in support of the middle school model. We have been through transitions in the past and having the kids all together for middle school would bring them so many benefits and opportunities. All staff members want the best for all of our kids. She has every confidence in our staff.
- ➔ Carol Ustach, middle school teacher from ESS, read a statement. The people of Mechanic Falls are going after what they feel is best for the kids of the community. She asked that they slow the process down and let the people decide what is best for their children and consider other alternatives.
- ➔ George Sanborn – the best example we could be teaching the kids is how to control our spending. What are they going to learn when they inherit this debt? This is something we have to do.
- ➔ A student from ESS read a letter to the RSU 16 school board. She referred to the statement published by the search committee and explained why she disagreed.
- ➔ Carol Lundberg – ESS employee, Poland resident. She has taught suicide prevention at all three junior high schools. She is looking for a guarantee that all students will have a seat in every classroom. Dennis said this was not an issue.
- ➔ Mary Wallace – Poland resident, Minot school nurse. We do care in Minot. She will miss her middle school students if this passes, but she believes it is the best option.
- ➔ Kelly Crockett – Poland resident, teaches at another middle school. She has seen kids transition into middle school and she hopes this passion is used to help the kids with this transition to the Tri-Town Middle School. She had a budget question about reinstating music and asked how one teacher could cover band, chorus and music in three schools? Denis said they do not have the exact structure broken down yet, but when that person is hired they would work out a schedule. Many other school districts do this. She also asked why three art teachers and one music teacher? Dennis said in this case it was a monetary decision.
- ➔ Jim M. – Mechanic Falls – asked about negotiations being opened on the contracts. Dennis said several school board members and himself met with representatives from the teachers association. They brought the issue to the teachers union and the members voted not to open the contract. Jim M. explained that he owns his own business and does his own budget. It has been stated that everything is on the table and he doesn't believe that. A business would have to look at the health insurance plan, the employee

contributions and deductibles. Because the teachers won't open these contracts, raises are going to happen for them. If the teachers take the raises, the budget will get voted down and that will lead to more layoffs.

- ➔ Pam Grondin – parent of a 10 year old and a 21 year old. She has made this transition before. No one is saying Mechanic Falls won't be supportive, we are just saying it's not our choice. She urged parents and community members to get involved and help the schools.
- ➔ Michelle Pinkham – Poland resident. PCS is adjusting to change, as well. We have open arms and are welcoming everybody. We are all in this together. This budget is a crisis and we don't know for how long. We need to deal with it aggressively and support it.
- ➔ Jack – Mechanic Falls resident cited an article about middle schools. He feels this is a fix-it move and requested the board not support this decision, as he does not believe this is what's best for our kids.
- ➔ Mary Jordan – Retired school teacher. Talked about the people on fixed incomes and all the increases they are dealing with. It is a difficult and scary time. Please consider these things when you think about raising taxes.
- ➔ Curt Becker- can the people of Mechanic Falls pay for the school that they want? Dennis said by law that can happen, but the school department is not recommending it. They don't want the students to be splintered. Mr. Becker asked if Dennis had asked the teachers for a pay freeze and have they refused it? Dennis said the teachers have representatives here that will speak to that.
- ➔ Mike Carter – Co-President of the Education Association read a statement from the Executive Committee of the RSU 16 EA. He talked about the 50 positions that have been cut over the last few years with more to come. The members of the EA are aware of the situation. The EA has voted not to enter into negotiations with the school board at this time. He explained the reasons for this decision in terms of increased revenues coming in from the state and other possible options. Agreeing to a pay freeze if all options have not been explored is premature. They are already working towards leveling the playing field of all the employees in the three towns. We took four furlough days this year, which is more than any other district in the state. Freezing teacher salaries will not restore the cuts to programs.
- ➔ A 7<sup>th</sup> grade student from ESS read a letter to the school board. She shared her reasons for not wanting to move the middle school to Poland.
- ➔ Sue Callahan thanked the students who came forward; it takes a lot of courage. She is a Minot parent and most of her constituents want the Minot students to have more opportunities. Other people in Minot on fixed incomes with no kids do not want to see a tax increase. No matter where the kids go to middle school they will be taken care of. She has listened to what everybody has had to say.

## **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

### **5.0 ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION – REPORTS TO THE SUPERINTENDENT:**

#### **6.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Discussion of personnel issue pursuant under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A)

Motion: by Steve Holbrook to enter into Executive Session at 8:48 PM

Seconded: by Jeanne Manley

Vote: Unanimous

Motion: by Steve Holbrook to come out of Executive Session at 9:19 PM

Seconded: by Jeanne Manley

Vote: Unanimous

### **7.0 REPORTS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD:**

Report of the Superintendent – Dennis Duquette

Budget Update continued

Athletics – Participation Fees

- ➔ Don King put forth a proposal for athletic participation fees. Don gave an overview of the benefits of co-curricular activities for students. In light of the budget situation, how do we continue with these activities? A study was done within the conference and many of the high schools are charging participation fees. Two of our teams are currently charging mandatory fees. It is \$75 for football and \$450 for ice hockey. A \$25 participation fee would generate about

\$10,000 7-12. This would include a waiver process for free/reduced lunch and also a hardship waiver. This money would go towards paying the athletic trainer, which all athletes have access to.

- ➔ Chris Woodford asked about the co-curricular clubs with regards to activity fees? Don explained that athletics is a much larger portion of the budget. With athletics, all the students would be getting something out of that fee (i.e. the trainer). One parent, Tammy English, suggested that \$25 was not enough and it could be more. Carol Coy worried about kids who may not be able to afford to pay the \$25. Sue Callahan asked if \$10,000 was really going to make a huge difference. It's about 3.4 % of the athletic budget. Jean Manley asked what would we be able to keep if we do this? What are we in danger of losing? Don said we are trying to maintain what we have now. It would supplement our athletic budget. Jeanne Manley asked if we could do without assistant coaches and Don said for safety reasons we need the supervision of our athletes.
- ➔ Terry Russell asked what the cost of maintaining all the fields was? Don did not have those figures tonight.
- ➔ Sue Goulet spoke in support of co-curricular clubs paying a fee to take a trip with their club.
- ➔ Jim from Mechanic Falls asked if there was any chance of bringing back freshmen sports. The cost was \$12,000? Sue Callahan agreed, saying we should bring that back.
- ➔ Wendy Russell asked about transportation costs for the teams and clubs. Can we do some sports as intramural sports instead of teams that travel? Don explained that they have shared bus trips with many other schools to save on transportation costs.
- ➔ Julie Bertrand, Minot – Participation fee slips could have a box to check where parents could pay an additional fee for someone else who can't afford it.
- ➔ Chris Woodford suggested that Don and the administrative team put together a price list for the participation fees for the fall sports.
- ➔ Don will come back to the board next month with a proposal.

April School Board Meetings:

\*April 12<sup>th</sup> – School Budget Approval @ PRHS @ 6:30 p.m.

\*April 22<sup>nd</sup> - Sign warrants and if needed, approve school budget

\*May 3<sup>rd</sup> - Three-Town Budget Meeting @ PRHS @ 6:30 p.m.

\*May 11<sup>th</sup> – School Budget Referendum Vote in each town

Articles:

\* RSU 14 budget cuts 46 jobs, 19 teachers

\* Cumberland-North Yarmouth school budget could cost up to 30 jobs

\* Staff slashed in Windham-Raymond school budget

\* Cape teachers offer salary cut to help balance budget

\* Even without voter approval, Sheepscot RSU has working budget

## **8.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

**9.0 AGENDA ADJUSTMENT: See 6.0**

**10.0 COMMUNICATIONS:**

Communications to the School Board

**11.0 REMINDER:**

**12.0 ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion: by Steve Holbrook to adjourn at 9:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis J. Duquette