

**DRAFT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM
Monday, January 28, 2008**

Members attending: Will Verbits, Virginia Justicz, Stu Sklar, Brian Stevens, and Thomas W. Jefferson

Members absent: Willie Wickman

Call to Order - Will Verbits, Vice Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Minutes – No minutes were submitted for approval.

Open Meeting

B.J. Pessia addressed the committee with two concerns. She first questioned why the committee had not gone into executive session to discuss the pending CORI investigation. She then asked the committee why an employee had been dismissed from the system without relinquishing keys to the school's facilities.

SmartBoard Presentation

Peggy Harvey, the Harvard Elementary School Librarian, gave a presentation on SmartBoards. She explained that it was like an interactive whiteboard. She demonstrated many capabilities including notetaking, creating curriculum, interfacing with the internet, projection screen, etc. The committee discussed the benefits of this instruction to all students. Peggy stated that in her opinion it provided for differentiated learning and that students of all learning abilities benefit from it. They also discussed training time necessary for teachers to learn the technology. She stated that it was easy to learn and that the students also assist in this process. There is also on-line and on-site training available. Discussed the costs associated with acquiring the hardware as well as the possibility of using Harvard Schools Trust funds. Keith Cheveralls questioned if there had been any studies conducted on the benefit of using this instruction. Peggy said not that she was aware of, but there is positive feedback from students and parents.

Student Report

Emma O'Rourke-Friel reported that the Snowflake and Snowball Dances were successful fundraisers. Sports are off to a good start. Drama is working on State's. Academic Bowl went to National Team Tryouts. Music is getting ready for Central District and New England Music Festivals. She also added that at her regional School Council Meeting they recently discussed SmartBoards with the conclusion that they were interesting and good if the teachers are knowledgeable.

Superintendent Report

Dr. Jefferson presented the Lincoln Class Size Report to the Committee. It encompasses grades K through 8. He stated that based upon the report, Harvard is in line with like communities. He told the Committee that the report is available to them for further review.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

Virginia Justicz gave an update on the Strategic Planning Committee. She stated that the committee had collected a substantial amount of data and then prepared goal statements along with action plans which she then read to the Committee. It is intended to be a “living” document with a 3 to 5 year outlook. Each goal has been broken down with action steps. Dr. Jefferson stated that it will become the arbitrator of future decisions down the road pertaining to budget, curriculum, etc. The committee will submit a final document to the School Committee for formal acceptance.

Special Education Task Force

Will Verbits gave an update on the Special Education Task Force. He stated that the committee is developing a summary of findings based upon its analysis for financial/program data, surveys and state reports. The Committee agreed that it needed to be discussed how to best use the information to educate the public about special education. The committee will finalize an executive summary to provide highlights to School Committee for its approval prior to Town Meeting.

Special Education Presentation by Director of Special Education

Charles Horn, Director of Special Education, gave a verbal overview of the Coordinated Program Review conducted by the Department of Education. He explained that the review covered special education, ELL, and civil rights programs. He stated that Harvard did well overall based upon the exit interview, but he wanted to wait to see their report in writing. Harvard then has one year to address the corrective action plan. Discussed adding vocational programs. Mr. Horn also explained that this process involved developing programs and policies which may not currently be used but must be developed in the event the situation occurs. Will Verbits pointed out that Charles had done a lot of work since the last CPR six years ago, which received a very poor rating. Discussed possible programs and trends in special education. Virginia Justicz stated that a lot of the current information involving the CPR, Special Education Task Force and audit seemed to be dovetailing. The Committee discussed presenting the information from the final CPR report to the Town along with the help of FinCom to build understanding and trust within the community. Charles ended by stating that to decrease special education costs you must increase/strengthen regular education.

MassDevelopment RFP

Dr. Jefferson informed the Committee that he attended a Pre-Bid Conference this morning regarding the Devens RFP to educate Grades K-6. He explained data he had analyzed regarding birth statistics, etc. The Committee discussed the impact of real estate sales and the possible effects on class size. Dr. Jefferson stated that the resources Harvard would gain are greater than the responsibility. And in the short term, Harvard could handle the additional enrollment. The RFP is due by February 16, 2008.

Stu Sklar made the motion and Brian Stevens seconded to direct the Superintendent to develop a draft RFP for the Devens Contract.

VOTED (4/0) to accept the motion. (Will Verbits(Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes).

DOE Intake Letter

Dr. Jefferson and Lorraine Leonard, Finance Director, discussed the DOE Intake Letter and the state's response letter regarding confidentiality. The laws are in direct conflict and the state refuses to give guidance. The Committee directed the Superintendent to begin to implement the required corrective action plan. He will check into scheduling the training, and ask FinCom and the Board of Selectmen to join the school. Stu Sklar recommended that the Intake Letter be posted on the school's website as clarification for the public, and the Committee agreed.

MOA of Mass Dispensing Site

Dr. Jefferson informed the Committee that he had signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Harvard Public Schools and the Harvard Board of Health allowing the Bromfield School to service as a Mass Emergency Dispensing Site.

Gifts

Harvard Schools Trust submitted a letter to the Committee in which it voted to fund three grant requests:

1. Grant No. 08-02, \$229.00, 3rd Grade Star Party
2. Grant No. 08-03, \$6,629.50, Project Adventure
3. Grant No. 08-04, \$10,069.00, SmartBoards

Stu Sklar made the motion and Will Verbits seconded to accept all three funding proposals from the Trust.

VOTED (4/0) to accept the motion. (Will Verbits(Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes).

The Committee asked that a thank you letter be sent to the Trust. They further asked the public to support the Gala which is coming up soon.

FY09 Budget

Dr. Jefferson updated the Committee of Saturday's Tri-Board Meeting. The Board asked all departments to provide a revised level service budget which he is working on.

FY08 Budget

Dr. Jefferson and Lorraine Leonard presented an updated FY08 Budget report to the Committee showing a balance of \$3,347 which included a proposed transfer of \$20,000.00 from the Devens account to cover overages in the special education learning assistants line.

VOTED Stu Sklar made the motion and Virginia Justicz seconded to transfer \$20,000.00 for the Devens account to the special education learning assistants line.
(4/0) to accept the motion. (Will Verbits(Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes).

VOTED Stu Sklar made the motion and Virginia Justicz seconded for the Committee to adjourn into Executive Session for the purposes of discussing negotiation and to seek information on pending topics and not to return to regular session.
(4/0) to accept the motion. (Will Verbits(Yes), Virginia Justicz (Yes), Stu Sklar (Yes) Brian Stevens (Yes).

Executive Session

No votes taken.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 with roll call.

Minutes submitted,

Jackie Smith
Recording Secretary