

EPPING SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES
EPPING TOWN HALL
November 19, 2009
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Greg Dodge called the meeting of November 19, 2009 to order at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. In attendance were: School Board members Greg Dodge, Susan Kimball, Shawn Patton, Dave Mylott and Scott Booth, Superintendent Barbara Munsey and Business Administrator Martha Williamson.

Members of the public included: Middle School Principal Lyn Healy, Elementary School Principal Mark Vallone, Andrew Fersch, Deb Booth, Karen Page, Sandy Landis, Carol Bilodeau, Katherine Crosby, Robin Yergeau, Erin Milbury, Kerstin Rossel, Andrea Meyer, Maria Spinelli, Shayna McTague, Scott Gorman, Bruno Victal, George Kimball, and Jason Schreiber.

II. SCHEDULED GUESTS

A. EMS STUDENTS & STAFF: ART-WRITING EXHIBITION

Lyn Healy introduced Andrew Fersch (Language Arts Teacher) and Deb Booth (Art Teacher) who worked on a multimedia project showcasing work of eighth graders that was a mixture of language arts and art. There was a huge turnout by the district and school communities.

EMS student Maggie Weaver read her moving story entitled "Untitled".

Ms. Healy said that the collaboration of the arts was important. She reported that EMS just got a \$10,000 federal grant for Title 2D which will be used to buy equipment for musical projects.

Mr. Fersch explained the process, from Ms. Booth visiting language arts classrooms, to writing story lines/drafts, to recreating artwork in three different ways. Sixty-four students were involved and every student completed the art, writing and draft components.

Mr. Dodge said that it was a good exposition and that Ms. Booth will put works in the Town Hall.

Ms. Healy reviewed some of her principal report that was included with tonight's agenda.

Ms. Healy said that they were writing a grant called "Catalyst for Change" for \$50,000. The grant deals with personalizing education for students.

Ms. Healy reported that there is concern about the flu peaking in May or June and that this might impact the Washington, DC trip. Ms. Healy mentioned that there is an option of spending \$20 per student to cover the \$550/child cost of the trip if the trip needed to be canceled due to illness or other reason. She said if one student does not go on the trip, the cost would increase \$3/student and that the multiplier would increase per number of children not going on the trip.

Mr. Patton asked if the district had this insurance for trips in the past and Ms. Healy replied that there has not been this insurance in the past.

Mr. Patton was concerned that this might be another way for the company to make money. He said

that for some families the \$550/child cost for the trip is a burden as it is.

Mr. Booth asked how many students planned to go on the Washington D.C. trip and Ms. Healy replied that about 55 students planned to go. She explained that the \$20 ensured that if a child could not attend as planned, that family could get back their money. Mr. Booth reasoned that, if 7 students opted out, it would amount to the \$20 “break-even point”.

Mr. Mylott said that he went on a group trip as an adult and he decided to pay the insurance fee.

Mr. Booth asked if there were a minimum number of kids needed to run the trip and Ms. Healy said she was not sure but that there needed to be a given number of participants to be economically feasible (to fill the bus).

Ms. Kimball asked if it was possible for the district to fund the cost of half the insurance amount (\$10/student). Ms. Munsey said that it was up to the School Board. Ms. Healy thought that if the district was willing to pay for half of the cost, perhaps the other half could be raised via a school activity.

Mr. Patton suggested that the School Board make it optional and look at pursuing the insurance.

Ms. Healy reported that the Amherst School District students were at Nature’s Classroom two weeks after Epping Middle School students went and that some students got bed bugs. Epping students did not have this issue though a few students had bites and were told they were from fleas. Parents were sent a communication which included a link to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Mylott wished the Lego Team (coached by Scott Lister) well in the November 21 competition.

Regarding the amount of absenteeism due to illness, Ms. Healy said that teachers are picking out the learning essentials and then they are going back to re-teach things if necessary. She said that teachers want children to get well first then worry about school.

B. EES STAFF: KINDERGARTEN PRESENTATION

Mr. Dodge suggested accepting Mr. Vallone’s submitted report because he and others were providing information about the differentiation between full-day and half-day kindergarten tonight.

Mr. Vallone reviewed a PowerPoint presentation entitled “A Progress Report on Full-Day Kindergarten at Epping Elementary School” dated November 19, 2009.

Mr. Vallone noted that the number of kindergarten students decreased from 82 in 2008-09 to 72 in 2009-2010 because some families went elsewhere when they did not make the lottery for full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Vallone reported that 9 of 16 (56%) students were tuitioned in 2008 whereas there were 8 of 16 (50%) in 2009. In 2008, there were 12 requests for tuition placement and in 2009, there were 30 requests.

There were also 10 Special Education students in 2008-09 and 9 in 2009-10.

Reading Specialist Karen Page reported that one full-day kindergarten student and 7 half-day

kindergarten students were chosen for the Fall 2009 Reading Recovery program. This is an intensive 20-week program that is provided by Title I to tutor the neediest first grade students.

Math Specialist Sandy Landis reported that 81% of the full-day kindergarten class was at or above the benchmark in number identification whereas 63% of the half-day kindergarten class were at or above the benchmark. 56% of the full day kindergarten class (9 out of 16) was at or above the benchmark in all 6 categories in student achievement in math; 62% of the half-day kindergarten class (39 out of 63) was at or above benchmark.

Ms. Landis noted that there is an emphasis on reading in both full-day and half-day kindergarten but that in half-day kindergarten; there is not enough time to spend in math and writing.

Teacher Carol Bilodeau reviewed kindergarten's influence on first grade writing by presenting examples of writing from students in both full-day and half-day kindergarten. She noted that full-day kindergarteners were able to express what they would like to be when they grow up using both pictures and words or even sentences whereas most of the half-day kindergarteners used only pictures. She noted that one half-day kindergartener read at a third grade level but used no words when describing that she wanted to be an artist when she grew up. Ms. Bilodeau said that less time is spent in math in half-day kindergarten and more time is spent in reading. She said that the full-day kindergarteners respond better to math.

Ms. Bilodeau explained that full-day kindergarten prepares students better for school/teaching expectations. Dean of Students Erin Milbury said that full-day kindergarteners understand the rules and expectations of school better so that they transition better to first grade.

Kindergarten Teacher Robin Yergeau thanked the Board for the support of full-day kindergarten which she said is doing well. She noted that a lot of the students in full-day kindergarten are used to being away from home all day. She said that the full-day program helps meet curriculum demands. She said she believed in full-day kindergarten.

Special Education Building Coordinator Kathy McKay mentioned that full-day kindergarten increases time in inclusion and therefore there is an increase in social and academic skills. Due to the extra time during full-day kindergarten, there is a smoother transition to first grade. Some students with special needs are taught how to go to specials and they understand the schedule and rules going into first grade. Full-day kindergarten allows for the provision of services such as occupational therapy and interventions. She said that placement decisions are more effectively done in full-day kindergarten. She said that, with half-day kindergarten, if an identified child is pulled out of class 17% each day for related services, there is decreased access to academics.

Ms. Erin Milbury spoke as a parent about her child coming into full-day kindergarten and finishing at grade level. She reported a smooth transition into first grade.

Parent Kerstin Rossel's son attended full-day kindergarten last year and studied phonics, math, social studies, etc., while also having time for play. She said he met all the benchmarks and was a reader, writer and mathematician. She also reported a smooth transition into first grade. She felt he had an advantage over his half-day kindergarten peers.

Parent Andrea Meyer said that her son has an IEP and she asked to continue full-day kindergarten. As a taxpayer, she said she supported full-day kindergarten. She said that the short-term investment of full-day kindergarten is rewarded with long-term cost savings (fewer special education services as identified students go through grade levels). She said that her son might not have been as

prepared for first grade if he had attended half-day kindergarten.

Parent Maria Spinelli said that she had 3 children at Epping Elementary School and that her first grader had gone to full-day kindergarten and came home from school reading books. She said that she volunteered in the classroom and saw that the day was spent not just coloring. She said that children want to learn and are proud of what they do. She said that she was lucky to have her kindergartener in the full-day program this year and hopes her youngest child will also be able to do that.

Parent Shayna McTague said that she applied for full-day kindergarten for her son, but lost the lottery. She said that she will apply next year for her other son. She said that her current half-day kindergartener only gets writing or math, but not both and he wants to learn how to read. She said that time is limited in the half-day kindergarten program. She is a school psychologist and said that she appreciates the data, but mentioned that the sample size of full-day kindergarten is small. In a 2006 study, she learned that the United States ranks poorly in math and science because of decreased “time on task.” She felt that a small change can make a big difference. She hoped that the School Board would continue to support the full-day kindergarten program.

Mr. Vallone reviewed the West Ed Article: Summary of Research regarding the benefits of full-day kindergarten:

- Contributes to increased school readiness and leads to higher academic achievement
- Improves student attendance
- Supports literacy and language development
- Benefits children socially and emotionally
- Decreases costs by reducing retention and remediation

Mr. Vallone reviewed the article’s summary of concerns about full-day kindergarten:

- Demands on children/loss of informal education
- Accessibility: limited full-day programs may lead to complaints by those left out
- Potential of costs outweighing benefits
- Brain drain of pre-school staff to higher paying kindergarten positions

Mr. Vallone listed recommendations:

- Make full day universal with participation voluntary
- Identify cost savings
- Use pilot programs
- Develop a comprehensive plan for early education birth to age 8

Mr. Vallone thanked the kindergarten and first grade teams, as well as the Special Education and Data teams, Erin Milbury, Kathy Stanley Berting, Meaghan Beulieu and parents.

Ms. Kimball said that she had read the West End article and did not understand what the correlations were with improved attendance. Mr. Vallone said that this referred to the transition of children from kindergarten to first grade and their willingness to spend all day at school. Mr. Vallone said that school is more motivating in a full-day kindergarten program. He said that he could break out data on attendance from last year.

Ms. Kimball asked if the recommendation is to continue the tuitioned full-day kindergarten program. Mr. Vallone replied that it was in the best interest of the district to get students in the

Epping program, but he said that some people are willing to pay tuition for full-day kindergarten since they would be paying elsewhere for daycare or something else anyway.

Ms. Kimball said that she saw kindergarten as a transition from children being home full time and being in school full time. She wondered if there would be a push to have full-day preschool once there is full-day kindergarten. Mr. Vallone said that he did not believe in mandated full-day kindergarten; he said it should be a choice since evidence shows that some children need a full-day program or their needs surface in later years. He said that full-day kindergarten should be made available, but optional.

Mr. Mylott thanked the parents and teachers for attending. He asked about any issues with children who have not been to preschool going into half- or full-day kindergarten. Mr. Vallone said that it is a harder fit with half- or full-day kindergarten if a child has not had any preparation/experience before kindergarten. Robin Yergeau said that, in Epping's experience, it is rare to start kindergarten without having had prior daycare or other experience. She said even her youngest kindergarteners are happy to have kindergarten a full day (8:20 AM to 3:05 PM).

Mr. Dodge thanked Mr. Vallone, the staff and parents and he said that the Board would be discussing kindergarten during the budget process.

The Board accepted the written high school report from Dixie Tremblay who was absent tonight due to illness.

RECESS: 8:17 PM – 8:22 PM

C. SCOTT GORMAN, BRUNO VICTAL: SOCCER TRAINING/ FACILITIES USE

Scott Gorman, Girls Varsity Soccer Coach, introduced Bruno Victal who runs Brazilian Art Soccer Training. Mr. Victal was approved to use the high school gym on Saturday afternoons. There was a concern about the \$200 facility fee and the affordability of the program for families. If the fee were waived, families would be able to have a better price for the training program. The facilities use form has been filled out. Typically, an outside agency needs School Board approval to get a facility use fee waived.

Ms. Kimball asked if this training benefits both the boys and girls soccer teams and Mr. Gorman said at the high school level and possibly at the middle school.

Mr. Victal said that he knows Mr. Gorman from running soccer programs in the past. He said that cost for the winter training is \$150 for 7 weeks but most of that cost goes for the facility fee.

Mr. Patton asked how many sessions the program had and Mr. Victal responded that training lasted for 7 weeks, each Saturday.

Mr. Mylott asked about any provisions for Epping-resident students who participate. Mr. Victal figured that Epping students could pay half of the regular \$150 cost if the facility cost is waived. Mr. Patton asked if there was insurance and Mr. Victal replied that there was full insurance all year and that a certificate was faxed to the school.

Mr. Patton wondered if there needed to be a certain number of participants to get the reduced cost and Mr. Victal said that the cost would be the same no matter the number of participants.

Mr. Booth noted that wintertime usage by Epping students used to be high; therefore, he did not think there would be a problem getting participants for this soccer-training program.

Mr. Victal said that Epping students could pay \$70 for the 7-week training course and \$100 for outside students, if the facility use fee is waived.

Ms. Kimball clarified that Larry Averill gave his approval for this.

Mr. Patton asked if fingerprinting and checks would be done for those working with Epping students and Mr. Victal responded that all coaches go through Kids Safe and that the PCA sent him a form to fill out and background checks would be done.

George Kimball said that there is a need for this training since Crossroads is not there any more. He said that some children in Epping play only soccer so that there is a need to give them the opportunity to grow skills (in winter).

Scott Booth made a motion to waive the \$200 fee for Bruno Victal's Brazilian Art Soccer Training to use the Epping High School gym so that the cost per Epping resident student would be \$70, no matter the number of participants in the program. Susan Kimball seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. PUBLIC MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 1, 2009

Shawn Patton made a motion to table the public minutes for October 1, 2009. Dave Mylott seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0

B. PUBLIC MINUTES FOR November 5, 2009

Shawn Patton made a motion to table the public minutes for November 5, 2009. Dave Mylott seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

C. WORK SESSION MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 29, NOVEMBER 5, and NOVEMBER 12, 2009

Greg Dodge made a motion to approve the work session minutes for October 29, November 5, and November 12, 2009 as written. Shawn Patton seconded the motion. Motion passed: 10/29/09: 5:0; 11/5/09: 4:0:1 (abstention from Susan Kimball); 11/12/09: 4:0:1 (abstention from Scott Booth).

IV. MANIFEST

Susan Kimball made a motion to approve manifest P-10, dated 11/13/09, in the amount of \$359,831.22. Shawn Patton seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Susan Kimball made a motion to approve manifest #10, dated 11/19/09, in the amount of \$142,637.27. Dave Mylott seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

V. POLICY: N/A**VI. OTHER BUSINESS****A. 2010-2011 BUDGET APPROVAL: to be done in work session****B. RECREATION MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING**

Ms. Williamson said that counsel approved the Recreation Memo of Understanding.

Shawn Patton made a motion to approve the memorandum of Understanding Between Epping Elementary School, Epping School District and the Epping Recreation Department, Town of Epping 2009-2010 School Year. Dave Mylott seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

C. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dodge reported that he, Ms. Munsey, Ms. Williamson and Trisha Daley and Sandy Rowe of First Student met to discuss the issues with the length of bus routes and lack of communication. Ms. Munsey reported that the bus routes have been reconfigured and routes have been tested to ensure reduced times. Communication will go home to parents on Friday explaining the change and notifying parents that First Student will be available on Monday and Tuesday to answer questions. The revised routes will be implemented on the Monday following Thanksgiving. No bus stops will be eliminated. Ms. Munsey noted that bus drivers and students might need a little time to get used to the routes. Mr. Dodge said that Ms. Daley and Ms. Rowe were very receptive and are committed to getting this right. Information will be posted on the website and at the schools.

Mr. Dodge thanked Ms. Munsey and Ms. Williamson and their staff for the great amount of work they do in a timely manner.

VII. NEXT MEETING**A. DECEMBER 3, 2009: REGULAR MEETING****B. DECEMBER 5, 2009: BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING****VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The School Board moved into work session at 8:47 PM to be adjourned thereafter.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Perry,
Epping School Board Secretary