

TOWN MEETING – OCTOBER 20, 2005

The meeting was called to order by President Murphy at 7:00 pm in the high school alumni room. Present were Trustees Beyer, Brennan, Genovesi, Pombar, Vollmer and Webb. Also present were Dr. Melnick, Mr. Chlebicki and Ms. Buatsi.

Executive Session

At 7:30 pm, on motion of Trustee Brennan, seconded by Trustee Genovesi, and all in favor, the board went into Executive Session in the faculty room to discuss the collective negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law (the Taylor Law).

At 8:00 pm, on motion of President Murphy, seconded by Trustee Beyer, and all in favor, the board moved to come out of Executive Session and resumed the Town Meeting at 8:00 PM in the high school alumni room. There were approximately 50 people in the audience.

Pledge of Allegiance

President Murphy led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Regular Business

President Murphy asked for a motion to amend the agenda to add the appointment of Veronica Lalo, District Treasurer effective October 24, 2005.

On motion by Trustee Breenan, seconded by Trustee Beyer and all in favor it was,

Resolved: To approve the appointment of Veronica Lalo, District Treasurer, effective October 24, 2005.

Approval for RMS Engineering to Perform an Evaluation of Property Locations for the Long Island Studies Project from a Traffic Engineering Perspective

Resolved: To approve RMS Engineering to perform an evaluation of property locations for the Long Island Studies project from a traffic engineering perspective at a cost of \$1,500

Personnel

Approval of Deans of Students

Resolved: To approve Jennifer Imperiale as Dean of Students for the High School for the 2005-06 school year

Resolved : To approve Caitlin Kirmser as Dean of Students for the High School for the 2005-06 school year

Town Meeting

President Murphy opened the floor to questions from the audience.

Terry Glassman of Glen Head, said she had attended the recent PTA meeting at the high school where there was a discussion about the reports of drinking at the homecoming football game. At the meeting it was suggested that the football game be changed from 8:00 pm to 4:00 pm and she would like to see this happen.

President Murphy responded that the Board had received many such complaints and have already decided that next year the game would be played in the afternoon.

Ann Knehr, Glen Head, said she is unhappy with the new Mission Statement. She would like to know why it was changed, she feels the old statement is more concise and goal oriented. She also feels it better explains what our district is about. In her opinion the new statement is confusing and sugar coated.

President Murphy thanked her for sharing her thoughts and explained that the Board did have a lengthy discussion about the Mission Statement at the last meeting. There have been many rewrites with input from community members and the Board. The new Mission Statement is considered a document which will continue to evolve as needed.

Trustee Beyer explained why the Mission Statement was changed. She stated the old Mission Statement had been in place for a very long time, over ten years, and the Board felt it was time to review and update the statement.

Trustee Genovesi explained that approximately 250 people who volunteered to serve on a Long Range Planning Committee reviewed the old Mission Statement. There was much input from all of the members, after which a sub-committee was formed to update the statement. The new statement is the reflection of the entire community, not just the Board of Education.

Ann Knehr said she understands what went into the process of formulating a new Mission Statement, but feels it is difficult to get a sense of the goals. It needs to be re-read many times to understand. She felt the old statement was solid and the new statement's use of language is flowery, confusing and unclear. She wants to be sure there is opportunity for further involvement in updating the document.

President Murphy explained that with 250 people looking at the old statement, there were many different opinions of how to change it and many discussions took place. The new Mission Statement is the result of discussions such as they were having this evening.

Dr. Melnick welcomes the opportunity to sit with Ms. Knehr to listen to her concerns and discuss the changes she would like to see incorporated in the statement. He explained that the new Mission Statement was adopted with the intent that it would be an evolving document.

Susan Reilly, Glen Head, would like to know the status of the transportation facility.

Trustee Brennan explained that the district most recently looked at an unused piece of property at Glen Head School but after a proposal was drawn up it became clear the property could not be used to construct a transportation facility. The Board has been searching for a piece of property both within and outside of the district. She explained the cost effectiveness of utilizing a piece of property already owned by the district, and of the search that has already taken place, and feels it is worthwhile to exhaust all alternatives. The Board continues to seek new options and she expressed the importance of keeping the bus fleet in house to control costs as private contracting of buses is far too expensive.

Ms. Reilly asked if there was a timeline for finding and constructing a new facility.

Trustee Brennan responded it is a lengthy process and would require a public referendum.

Trustee Pombar expressed his frustration at how long this process has been going on, almost 20 years. Several Boards have been working on this problem, and he understands the frustration of the community.

Trustee Beyer explained the Board is committed to trying to find a resolution but it is hard to put a time frame on it. The Board continues to seek a viable piece of property.

President Murphy welcomes anyone who has ideas for available property to contact Dr. Melnick or a Board member. He reported there is a Real Estate Agent looking for property for us, but they have had no success.

Dr. Melnick reported that at the next few Board meetings additional discussions will take place on potential property and proposals for the Board to consider.

President Murphy reminded the audience the next scheduled meeting was changed from November 3 to November 10.

Ray Dooley, Sea Cliff, asked if the Board has considered the cost of fuel in their deliberations on the bus depot and increasing our fleet.

Dr. Melnick responded by maintaining our own fleet we can control the fuel costs, if we contract out to private carriers, we have no control over the costs they pass on to us. He also reported that the transportation coordinator will be presenting a study to project what the additional cost will be to fuel our own fleet compared to contracted costs.

Mr. Dooley, who is also a North Shore graduate, class of 1964, had a question about the transcripts sent to colleges. He has recently been told that North Shore includes failing grades in the transcript. He pointed out that other districts on Long Island send only the best grade the student earns. He does not feel a failing grade should be included on a college transcript.

Dr. Melnick responded he would check into this issue and get back to him.

Nicholas Vandoros, Old Brookville, spoke about transportation for his children. His residence is across Glen Cove Road and he was denied transportation due to the mileage limit and is very concerned about the safety of children crossing Glen Cove Road. He understands there must be a mileage limit but requests that the issue of safety be considered when determining whether or not busing is approved.

President Murphy expressed his understanding of the frustration that Mr. Vandoros is feeling and asked Dr. Melnick to address his concerns.

Dr. Melnick also expressed his understanding of Mr. Vandoros' frustration at being so close to the mileage cut off, but explained that New York State law does not give discretion to the Board in these cases. The only way to change the mileage for transportation benefits is by a referendum passed by the community. He explained that Mr. Vandoros can petition the Board for a referendum of this nature. He went on to explain that there is a regulation which allows the

Board to look at a site believed to be unsafe by using a point system established by the State to determine if it can be designated a Child Safety Zone, thereby allowing an exception to the mileage criteria. In the case of Glen Cove Road, a study was done and it was determined that it did not meet the 12 point minimum to be designated as a Child Safety Zone. Dr. Melnick offered to give Mr. Vadoros the process for petitioning for a referendum and the criteria for the point system.

Trustee Beyer asked Dr. Melnick if we are at the minimum mileage that the State sets for transportation, or if our district more generous.

Dr. Melnick responded, North Shore is more generous than the State mandate of 2 miles. Our mileage cut off is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile for grades K-6 and 1.5 miles for grade 7-12.

Trustee Beyer explained to Mr. Vadoros that a group of people did get together to put forth a referendum approximately 6 years ago and the community did not pass it.

Trustee Pombar expressed his feeling that there would always be a resident one or two houses away from the cut off no matter what the distance is changed to.

Trustee Genovesi said she was very sympathetic to Mr. Vadoros' concerns. She reported that many communities bus all children, but this community recently turned down an extension of the mileage requirement.

Terry Glassman reminded the Board that an adult was killed on Glen Cove Road to emphasize how dangerous a road it is. She asked if a referendum could be put forward not to adjust the mileage requirement but just to designate those houses across Glen Cove Road to be entitled to transportation.

Dr. Melnick explained that according to State regulations only if the area can be designated as a Child Safety Zone could those residents be entitled to transportation. After researching this possibility, it was discovered Glen Cove Road does not meet the criteria to be designated a Child Safety Zone.

President Murphy suggested that Mr. Vadoros consult with Paula Handler, the resident who recently petitioned the board for a transportation referendum.

Terry Cottell, Glen Head, said she comes before the Board as a frustrated parent. She feels the district addresses the gifted student with the REACH/ACE program, the special needs students with Special Education classification, but does not address students who struggle academically. She asks the administration and the Board of Education to find a way to challenge those students who are C or D students and feels there are more of these students than we admit. She is concerned about those struggling students who do not have parental support. She would like to see the district find a way of helping these students.

Alex Romano, SGO Rep, spoke about the busing issue. He reported that a fellow student told him a 6th grader who lives next to him cannot receive busing even though the bus stop is at his house. Alex asked why this student would not be able to get on the bus if there is room on the bus and the stop is at his house.

Dr. Melnick explained that according to the law the district has no latitude with the measurement. Even if there is room on the bus, a child cannot ride unless they qualify for transportation.

Terry Glassman, Glen Head, asked if the high school progress report can include grades similar to the middle school progress report. She does not find the phrases on the report helpful in determining if the student is doing well or needs to improve.

Dr. Melnick responded that the high school faculty and administrators need to hear these comments. He said the high school faculty has been instructed very clearly that if there is a difference in performance from the progress report and the report card, the parent must be notified. He agrees perhaps a better progress report would be helpful, but feels the faculty must be involved in the process.

Trustee Beyer asked Ms. Glassman to share her concerns with the high school principal, the teacher's union president and the PTSA and explain to each group why it would be helpful and beneficial to change the progress report.

Trustee Brennan shared her positive experience with the interactive web site that some of the middle school teachers use for posting assignments and grades. She finds this extremely helpful and encourages all teachers to utilize this resource.

Ann Knehr, Glen Head asked why the number of students in the middle school drops so drastically from the number of students in the elementary school.

Dr. Melnick explained there are 6 grades in the elementary schools and only 3 grades in the middle school. He further reported that in the demographic study done last year, it showed the average drop in Nassau County is 24% while North Shore had only a 10% drop in enrollment. He reported enrollment continues to grow and it is projected that the high school enrollment will increase by 53 students next year.

Ms. Knehr asked if the Board is discussing the issue of open campus.

Dr. Melnick explained that the open campus policy is now being reviewed. The high school Site Based Committee and Dr. Banta are reviewing other district's policies and asked Ms. Knehr to give him a call to voice her concerns.

Deborah Dumas, Sea Cliff, voiced her concern with Halloween approaching. She asked if the Board has heard of any dates for the "scavenger hunt."

Dr. Melnick explained that a letter was sent to all seniors specifically stating the consequences if the students engage in this activity. He also explained that there will be meetings with the seniors to again explain the consequences and the Board is committed in following through with the consequences if a student is caught. He asked Ms. Dumas to speak to Gil Torossian or Frank Banta about her concerns.

Rita Podaras, Glenwood Landing has a number of issues regarding the progress reports at Glenwood. She would like to see evening conferences so working parents can participate and she feels this would benefit the teacher as well as the parent and student. She would like to get the progress report a few days prior to the conference to allow time to review it with her child before meeting with the teacher. She is concerned that the first dialog with a teacher is through

the progress report and if a student is in need of improvement or is not attentive in class, it is important for a teacher to contact the parent and not wait for a report to go home. She cited an instance last year when 2 days before the end of school she received a music progress report stating her child needs to participate more in class. This information would have been helpful earlier in the year. Mrs. Podaras asked that teachers initiate the necessary partnership between parent and teacher and not the other way around.

Dr. Melnick responded that the Music, Art and Physical Education reports would be going home with the progress report this year. He agrees that getting a progress report at the end of the year does not make sense. The problem with sending the report a few days ahead of the conference is the teachers spend a lot of time completing the reports and want it to be specific. The issue of evening conferences is a contractual issue; evening conferences were removed from the teachers' current contract. The teachers did previously attempt evening conferences, however there was very little parent participation in those. This fall the conferences will be during the day, in the spring, there will be one full day of conferences and teachers will schedule conferences on an individual basis for those parents who want a different day or time. Although it is not the teacher's contractual obligation to have an evening conference, he said they are usually happy to honor a parental request for one. He recommended Mrs. Podaras email the teacher ahead of the conference to let the teacher know how she feels about getting information early.

Trustee Webb agreed there should be evening conferences and said he has been approached by many parents who would like to participate in evening conferences. He suggested parents speak to their child's teacher and stress the importance of both parents being able to attend a conference. His child's teacher has been willing to accommodate his request of a conference before school begins.

Trustee Brennan agreed that a parent should never hear of a problem for the first time in a written report. She suggested the teacher should send a note or an email to the parent. She has heard from parents that there is no communication from their child's teacher.

Dr. Melnick stated teachers are required to communicate with the parent if there is a problem. He suggested the parents notify the principal of their concerns if they feel this is not happening. He said this is the only way of offering support or assistance to teachers if they are unable to find the time for this type of communication. He feels this is a good topic for the Site Based and Principal Advisory Committee meetings.

Ellen Lucas, Glenwood Landing is concerned with communication as well. Her children do well in school and her conferences are always good, however, she found out at a conference that the REACH program might not be right for her daughter. This was the first time she had heard this information. She asked what type of communication she should expect from the REACH program. Mrs. Lucas wondered why it took until December to find out that her child was not speaking out in seminar and felt a conversation with the teacher would have been helpful. She would also like to know what type of enrichment would be available for students who are above average, but not in REACH and what type of articulation there is from year to year. Mrs. Lucas explained that in her first year in the district, it took the third week into a new school year for the teacher to know that her child was new to the district and felt there could have been a better transition. Also, she would have liked to have gone to the new parent meeting offered, but it was during the day and she could not attend.

Dr. Melnick explained that placement is done for the following year with a meeting of all teachers from the current grade and next year's grade to discuss styles of teacher and student. All this is taken into consideration when placing a student for the next year. At the beginning of the year, the teachers meet again to speak of each student's areas of strengths and concerns.

Terry Glassman spoke about her experience with the REACH program and feels the content of the program should not be repeated each year. With the small amount of students in the program she feels it should be more individualized and geared to what the students bring to the group.

Dr. Melnick explained that a copy of his report to the Board with recommendations for the future of the REACH program is available if she would like to review it and that it will be discussed again at the November 10 meeting.

Adjournment

At 9:30 pm on motion of Trustee Beyer and seconded by Trustee Webb and all in favor, the meeting was adjourned.

Elizabeth A. Ciampi
District Clerk