



# TOWN OF ADAMS

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, August 10, 2016 – 6:00 PM  
ADAMS TOWN HALL, 1st FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220

On the above date the **Board of Selectmen** and held a workshop at the **Adams Town Hall** at 6:00 p.m. **Chairman Jeffrey Snoonian** presided the meeting. Present were **Vice Chairman Arthur Harrington** and **Members Richard Blanchard** and **Joseph Nowak**. *Member John Duval was absent.* Also in attendance were **Town Administrator, Tony Mazzucco** and **Interim Adams-Cheshire Regional School Superintendent, Robert Putnam**.

*The Select Board Workshop was called to order at 6:00 p.m.*

### OFFICIAL BUSINESS DISCUSSION

#### Discussion with Interim ACRSD Superintendent

**Interim Adams-Cheshire Regional School District Superintendent, Robert Putnam** re-introduced himself to the Board and gave his detailed professional background. He referenced an entry plan that he would review the 5 questions he was asking people he is interviewing so he could get information from the Board.

#### *The plan for the next year*

**Mr. Putnam** advised he intends to look at the two Level Three schools and assess the PARCC Performances from 2016 to make future plans. He said he would continue advancement of work already being done with several initiatives going on in both C.T. Plunkett and Cheshire. The *Baystate Reading Initiative* is supported by the Department of Education Group that works with districts to improve performance. Hoosac Valley High School and C.T. Plunkett are currently below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile. He is working with a local group to ensure progress continues with the focus on the use of data to find key information about student performance. PARCC Tests were taken at the end of the 2016 school year and scores are not out yet. A meeting will be held at Drury to get general scores, but the ranking will not be available and information cannot be shared because it is for diagnostic and planning purposes only, and statistics will be used to complete student success plans.

#### *What are the strengths of the school system?*

**Mr. Putnam** solicited input from the Board Members from his list of questions. Members individually responded that there is a huge divide but it is usually socio-economic. The school system was described as balanced well all levels, with a potential need to give lower scoring students more focus. The strength was highly motivated professional educators supported by community. The quality of instruction was discussed briefly, and it was noted that streamlining and getting an evaluation of the system will create less time on paperwork and more on instruction. Providing a teacher success plan for those not doing well was suggested, and it was explained that positive feedback is critical. He advised he intends to tour classrooms with the principals, and to speak to what good teaching and student response looks like.

#### *What are one or two challenges facing school system:*

Board Members advised challenges facing the school system are: cost of health care; transient families coming in to the system mid-stream which may be behind the curriculum being taught; the economics and poverty challenges faced in this area showing a number of kids have poor vocabulary and problems reading; students not eating well; getting kids more involved in their education and having self-confidence;

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and that the school system has been forced to parent the students. It was also noted that local colleges recognized that certain schools produced students with educational deficits in some areas so students would have to be put in remedial educational programs.

**Mr. Putnam** mentioned there will be breakfast in the classroom for C.T. Plunkett provided by a grant for students in low income families. McCann has a clear identity, and he touched on whether ACRSD has one or not. A brief discussion took place on how to explore ways to create a clear educational identity. He explained that BART was not invited to the information session with the Department of Education because it was not a Level 3 School, but he did meet with Julia Bowen and their new Superintendent to get more information. He shared that Waconah did a survey of graduated students to ask if they felt they were prepared when they went to college, the military, or employment.

*Are we heading in the right direction as a school system, and are we approaching it the right way?*

**Board Members** gave mixed responses and advised they felt the school system may be slowly heading in the right direction. Financial walls forced the school and the Town to communicate more, but few students are graduating high school and economic challenges change the direction. It was noted that "right direction" is that students in the classroom need to be integrated better so children with problems are able to enter regular classrooms. One member expressed concern that the school system has no clear direction so many students are opting to go to McCann to get a trade.

*What about the district must be maintained at all costs?*

The C.T. Plunkett School was noted as having been allowed to progress into disrepair and the Hoosac Valley High School needs to be preventatively maintained to last for decades. Creating a plan for building maintenance was stressed as paramount. As budgets get tighter it was emphasized that resisting the temptation to cut off music, drama and athletic programs and maintaining educational tools, books and other materials is important.

**Mr. Putnam** pointed out that in order to make the budget a number of positions were eliminated including the Technical Director and Education Director, and mowing is now handled by the current maintenance staff. He noted that Hoosac Valley High School is owned by the School District, but Cheshire Elementary School and C.T. Plunkett are leased by the towns so if either school decides to close the building reverts back to the Town. Both Cheshire Elementary School and C.T. Plunkett School leases have expired, and not been updated. A brief discussion about money being put into brand new schools, versus consolidation, took place. The Berkshire County Education Task Force has been looking at this, and the School Building Authority awards millions of dollars in grants. It was noted that approximately one billion dollars in grants have recently been issued from Pittsfield north in the county.

*What does the school district most need to work on?*

**Board Members** advised that special education, keeping students in the community, and the School Committee and School Administration doing a better job of communication with the Board of Selectmen to rebuild trust are the most pressing items that the School District needs to work on.

**Mr. Putnam** advised the law requires the school system to provide special education so there is no way to minimize the expense. The State has funding mechanisms for special education grants every year, and external placements could take care of a significant proportion. He advised that the district does keep students in the community, and will do their best to ensure this continues.



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*What didn't I ask that I should have asked?*

**Board Members** noted that this is a unique community with a public and charter school, a technical school and a parochial school which give students many different choices. Each school fights for opportunities for area students to go to their schools, which changes the financial structure.

**Mr. Putnam** advised he will make a public report on the input he receives, and outlined that he hopes to clearly define the challenges they are facing over the next year and plot the course that the Superintendent will continue to work on. He noted his intention to have a sound fiscal footing, setting and pursuing good educational goals and to provide good staff supervision and evaluation to get good feedback. The next school committee meeting is Monday at 5:30 p.m. with an executive session.

It was noted that a political argument can be made to make change regarding transportation and charter schools. Students in this area will not have the same educational opportunities the other part of the state, and poorer communities do not have the same quality of education as wealthier communities. The merits of aligning curriculum in the state and how to utilize financial resources effectively were debated. Utilizing resources wisely and designing it well makes a difference with student performance. Having one single school district instead of many was mentioned, so transient families do not get out of synchronization with the curriculum.

**Board Members** thanked Mr. Putnam for his open communication.

### ADJOURNMENT

*Motion made by Member Blanchard to adjourn*

*Second by Vice Chairman*

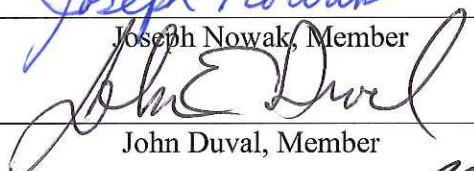
*Unanimous vote*


*Motion passed*

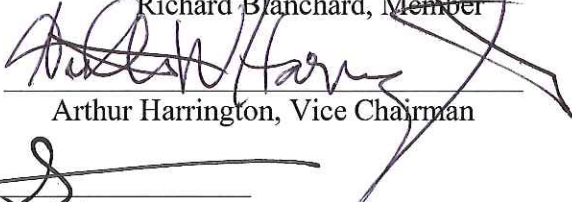
Meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary

  
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Joseph Nowak, Member

  
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John Duval, Member

  
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Richard Blanchard, Member

  
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Arthur Harrington, Vice Chairman

  
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Jeffrey Shoonian, Chairman