

Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2018
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 6:30 pm

Present: Walter F. Alterisio, chair, Leah D. Basbanes, vice chair, Ronald J. Mikol, member; Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator; Dr. Laura Chesson, GDRSD Superintendent; Michael Knight, GDRSD Business & Finance Director; Marlena Gilbert, chair, Jennifer McKenzie, Ryan McLane, Brian LeBlanc, GDRSD School Committee

Discussion Regarding Florence Roach, the MSBA Application for Remodel/Rebuild, and Possibility for one Elementary School

The Board started by noting that Dunstable's participation would be a major step and should be done for educational reasons not financial ones. Ms. Gilbert responded that both the interim superintendent Dr. Ryan and the interim business and finance director Frank Antonelli reviewed the MSBA submittal and determined there would be a better success rate if one school (one community) was on the application. They could then try to include Dunstable once approved. But that decision is ultimately the MSBA's. Dr. Chesson then took the opportunity to go through a PowerPoint of enrollment numbers, feasibility study costs, and potential building costs. It was iterated that it is not a requirement that all of the Groton students be brought back to a Groton school. If Dunstable wishes to participate all additional costs over that which is required for Groton would be borne by the town will not split or see MSBA reimbursement. In 2023 Swallow-Union will need a new roof which will cost about \$1.2 million and in 2025 new windows costing around \$1 million. If there are no Groton students in Swallow-Union that whole cost would be borne by Dunstable alone.

Discussion briefly shifted to the consequences of any closing of the Boutwell. Doing so, Dr. Chesson explained, would result in a savings that would be placed in the Capital Stabilization funds and could be used to offset some of these costs. There are really only three choices; leave the MSBA application as is, withdraw the MSBA application and resubmit with Dunstable, or proceed with the one site and only be reimbursed for the Groton portion of the costs. The Feasibility Study is projected to cost \$750,000; if Dunstable participates 22% of that cost would be borne by the Dunstable. Ms. Gilbert, noting she was only speaking as an individual and not for the whole committee, suggested that if both communities participate the study cost could come out of E&D. If one school is proposed it would make sense to put it on district property perhaps by the High School. At that point, the Swallow-Union would return to Dunstable, GDRSD is considering giving the Union part of the complex back anyways. Participation in the project would require a town meeting vote, and therefore is a decision of the voters. However, it was noted by those present that town meetings are not always a true public forum and do not always capture the whole opinion in the sense that not all eligible voters participate.

The Board then took a moment to suggest that parents and children from both communities like and value the Swallow-Union. It seems that this is what people are happy with now and it may be questionable if they would flock to a new alternative. The question of whether or not there are long-term district projections of student population then arose. This included the question of sufficient cost information and school location information to make an informed decision on the topic at hand. Ms. Gilbert did agree that a hometown school in downtown is important. The Board finished by stating that if a vision is articulated, which includes the entire student population as well as being the best decision for the district as a whole, both communities will have incentives to find a way to pay for it.

Both boards Adjourned at 8:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted by

Tracey Hutton

Town Administrator

Approved and adopted on 3/6/18