

Sutton School Committee
Sutton, Massachusetts 01590

The Sutton School Committee met in Room 1A of the Sutton Municipal Center on Monday, February 9th, 2009.

School Committee Members present at the meeting were Mr. Paul Brennan, Chair, Ms. Liisa Locurto, Vice-chair, Ms. Tracey Zuliani, Secretary and Ms. Wendy Mead.

Administrators present at the meeting were Dr. Cecilia Di Bella, Superintendent, Ms. Lucille DiLeo, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mr. Michael Breault, Elementary School Principal and Ms. Lynne Bannon, third grade teacher.

Others present – no others present.

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order

Mr. Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 2 – Citizen Forum

No one wished to speak.

Agenda Item 3 – Consent Agenda

Ms. Locurto moved and Ms. Zuliani seconded to approve the Minutes of January 5th, 12th, 22nd and 26th, 2009, the Executive Session Minutes of January 12th, 22nd and 26th, 2009, and the Bill Schedule of February 9th, 2009 as presented.

Carried 4/0

Ms. Locurto moved and Ms. Zuliani seconded to approve the Executive Session Minutes of December 8th, 2008 as presented.

Carried 3/0 with Ms. Mead abstaining

Agenda Item 4 – Student Update – no students were present to provide an update.

Agenda Item 5 – Update on Standards Based Report Card Project

Mr. Breault, Ms. Bannon and Ms. DiLeo provided a brief report on the Standards-based report card initiative in which teachers are able to report each student's progress toward a predetermined set of standards for a given grade level. In addition to providing a more accurate picture of a student's learning achievement; it provides a more unified program and offers an overall benefit of consistency as the child progresses from year to year. As the program moves forward, it is important for the parents of elementary students to understand its progress. It will be introduced to parents through the PTO beginning in March.

Agenda Item 6 – Curriculum Update

Ms. DiLeo highlighted key aspects of the district's curriculum. In Sutton's effort to enhance science and technology, several programs in the curriculum are focused in this area. These included:

- EIE program (Engineering Is Elementary); 13 story books on technical engineering in elementary school from the Boston Museum of Science, which is being piloted this year with hopes of rolling it out next year.
- The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Education Coalition, is hosting a conference on Saturday, March 28th at the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in Grafton. The intent of the conference is to interest young people in knowing more about STEM fields and bridge the STEM-career connection. There is space for 12 eighth graders to attend.
- Project E-Lite (Elementary Leaders in Technology Education) – the Sutton school district has partnered with Oxford, Grafton, Millbury and Auburn, which are the collective recipients of a competitive grant to provide professional development and technology integration support by strengthening the abilities and skills of a team of teachers from each district. The program ends in June; however, it appears that there will be enough grant money remaining to take it to other teachers over the summer.
- Smart boards.
- Virtual middle school; currently training a middle school teacher to be a ‘virtual middle school teacher’ of an online course in desktop publishing.
- RTI (Response to Intervention). An intervention system which addresses students in the entire classroom and identifies any student who may display a deficiency or lapse and cannot secure a standard or a skill, at which time, the teacher should be supplementing to meet the standard. The level of intervention continues to escalate through progress monitoring to keep from losing these kids through the cracks before the gap gets bigger. It is a very comprehensive, 3-tiered model.

Agenda Item 7 – Discuss 2009-2010 School Calendar

The Committee offered input and possible adjustments to the draft of the 2009-10 school year calendar. Dr. Di Bella will review the suggestions with the faculty, parent groups, and the administrators and this item will be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion.

Agenda Item 8 – Update on State and Local Budget

Dr. Di Bella noted that Mr. Smith, Town Manager, has frozen a number of accounts, and left open positions unfilled, as well as other measures in order to preserve funding for FY 2009 as much as possible. There have been no cuts to the school department’s FY ’09 budget so far and the expectation is that it will remain intact. In terms of the status of the FY 2010 state budget, the Governor has not cut Chapter 70 education funds but there are reductions in general aid to cities and towns. However, due to annual increases in employee expenses, utilities and other operating costs, there will effectively be a budget gap for both town and school. The Town Administrator will present the town budget on Tuesday, February 17th and will likely reflect a decrease of approximately 3% to 4% from FY 2009 due to declining state and local revenues. Mr. Brennan will follow up with the Finance Committee to determine if and when the next Joint meeting will occur. At the next scheduled meeting on February 23rd, Dr. Di Bella will present the town numbers.

Agenda Item 9 – Superintendent’s Update

Dr. Di Bella noted the following:

- Congratulations to Jill Reynolds, Sue Butot, Linda Sadowski, et al. on their work in developing the new school website at www.sutton.schoolfusion.us. It provides a much more robust environment with more capabilities, more information and more links. It is a work-in-progress, with teachers currently being trained. The old www.suttonschools.net automatically links to the new site.
- Verizon is now broadcasting on local channel 29 and on the local government channel (channel 31), which include school committee meetings.

- There have been 14 responses to a ‘Request for Qualifications’ for a roof design for the Simonian Center roof. The process is moving toward a May Town Meeting funding request for the replacement of the roof.
- The Middle School-High School building project with the MSBA is also moving along. Packages are due on March 11th for the Owners Project Manager (OPM) followed by selection by the committee. MSBA is expected to validate the selection on May 4th. This is now beginning to take structure, as dates can be put around the process.
- Very big CONGRATULATIONS to Julie Winn of the Varsity Girls Basketball team, who scored her 1,000th career point. She is only the 3rd young woman in Sutton High School history to achieve this feat!
- The high school is conducting a food drive in response to a request for help, as the senior center pantry is very low. The school will be having pajama days, sports days, and hat days.
- A recent report in the Telegram & Gazette newspaper incorrectly stated the high school dropout rate for Sutton at 5.7%, which is simply not true. The rate for the Class of ‘08 was 1.3%. For ‘07, it was 0.7%. She has asked the reporter to print a retraction and the correct numbers.
- Senator Moore’s office has extended an invitation to attend a local aid summit in Northbridge on Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. Dr. Di Bella plans to attend.
- Ms. Carol McMahon, Elementary School Guidance Counselor, is beginning a new ‘Parents Series’ beginning on February 12th in the Staff Lounge, from 9-10:00a.m. The first is on learning styles and how to work with your child’s strengths. The next one will be in March. Parents with questions about abilities or learning styles should feel free to attend.
- Concerns have been raised about potential intoxication; the type of dancing that took place and the dress code at a recent high school dance. Under current policy, any non-Sutton student attending a Sutton dance must sign up in advance and enter the event with the Sutton student they are accompanying. Faculty members check students in according to grade. One to two police officers are typically on duty with the Principal. All circulate among the crowd and around the building, both inside and out. At this particular event, the dancing was typical, though perhaps energetic. There was no evidence of drinking or intoxication found by those chaperones, faculty and police circulating. Other issues included the dress code for such events, which the school may wish to revisit.

Agenda Item 10 – New Business, Agenda Items, Action Items

Ms. Zuliani presented other school district’s policies on handling drinking before a school dance; some have moved to requiring Breathalyzer testing upon entry. As this is ultimately a student safety concern, it would be prudent to consider a more stringent policy in Sutton. This should go to the High School Council for discussion.

Agenda Item 11 – Adjournment to Executive Session

At 8:46 p.m., Ms. Locurto moved and Ms. Mead seconded to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contracts, with the intent to return.

Carried 4/0

Mr. Brennan clarified that the Committee will NOT return from Executive Session, thus, the meeting is adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Carol S. Colena,
 Recording Secretary