

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2006  
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. Board of Education members present were Keith Bishop, William Bloss, Cynthia Cartier, Louis Iorio, Kathleen Nolan, and Ted Zuse. Administrators present were Tom Forcella, Anne Keene, Merry Leventhal, and Anne Snurkowski. Also present were Accounting Manager Linda Trudeau, and GEA president Rose Dostert.

**Action on Minutes of:**

**1.1 February 13, 2006 (Regular Meeting)**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Mrs. Cartier, the Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the minutes of February 13, 2006, as presented.

**1.2 February 27, 2006 (BOE Policy Subcommittee Meeting)**

Chairman Bloss asked that action on these minutes be carried over to the April 10, 2006, Regular Meeting as there was not a quorum of members who attended that meeting present.

**1.3 February 27, 2006 (Working Committee)**

Upon a motion made by Dr. Meyers and seconded by Mr. Zuse, the Board voted six in favor of approving the minutes of February 27, 2006 (Working Committee Meeting). Mrs. Nolan abstained from the vote.

**2. Review and Approval of Expenditures for the Month of February  
Reviewer for the Month: Cynthia Cartier**

Mrs. Cartier reviewed the warrants dated February 1, 2006, February 8, 2006, and February 22, 2006.

On the warrant dated February 1, 2006, Mrs. Cartier noted a payment to Verizon Wireless for \$6.67 for final payment on the account for Barbara Truex.

On the warrant dated February 8, 2006, Mrs. Cartier noted the following payments: \$597.93 to TechDepot for software and licensing agreements; \$3,162.90 to Earth Technology for vacuuming and neutralizing limestone tanks; multiple payments to A & W Sanitation for septic pump outs; tuition payments for special education; \$2,673 to Delta Education, Inc. for science kits; and \$10,622.50 to J. DeVoe Trucking for snow removal.

On the warrant dated February 22, 2006, Mrs. Cartier noted the following payments: a prior year encumbrance to Chelsea House in the amount of \$706.89 for library books; a prior year encumbrance to Clinton Public School in the amount of \$200 for a workshop; \$3,344.00 to Ris Paper for copy paper; \$8,093.37 to CL&P for electricity for one month at Adams; \$2,336.40 to Follett Library Resources for language arts textbooks at Baldwin; \$3,050.85 to The Shelter for Women for tuition; \$951.00 to Sullivan, Schoen, Campana & Co. for legal expenses; \$12,382.50 to the Town of Guilford for an audit; and \$5,387.56 to the Town of Guilford for maintenance fuel.

Mrs. Cartier reported that year-to-date expenditures are 55.8% as compared with 56.44% at the same time last year.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Dr. Iorio, the Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the expenditures for the month of February as presented by Mrs. Cartier.

### **3. Public Forum for Topics on the Board Agenda Only (three minute limit)**

Bill Quirk addressed the Board regarding block scheduling. He stated that block scheduling involves the phasing out of teacher-centered knowledge transmission and the implementation of student-centered discovery learning. He expressed concern about the potential elimination of teaching core content to students. He cited findings from a report, The State of State Math Standards-2005, that suggests that many college freshman are unprepared for college math because of the lack of standard arithmetic taught in high school.

In response to Mr. Zuse's question about changes in standardized tests, Mr. Quirk responded that SAT tests have become significantly easier, and CMT tests are too simple.

Dr. Iorio asked how Connecticut tests compare to other states relative to level of difficulty and standards. Mr. Quirk responded that he has recently reviewed tests throughout the country and believes that only California, Indiana and Massachusetts have solid testing standards.

Chairman Bloss reminded the public and the Board that further opportunities to discuss block scheduling will occur in future meetings.

Ron Johnson noted the class plaques displayed on the GHS library walls. He suggested that earlier plaques focused more on work ethic than plaques in later years. He spoke on the evolution of teaching mathematics through several decades.

Lisa Rothstein addressed the Board regarding block scheduling. She expressed concerns about the financial aspects of implementing block scheduling including modifying the cafeteria and the layout of the high school to accommodate more students at one time. She also stated that money will need to be spent on additional staffing and workshops for block scheduling.

Mrs. Rothstein expressed concern that the financial information should be much clearer before any decisions can be made about implementing block scheduling. She also suggested that there are many other issues facing the public schools, including the increasing enrollments in the middle schools, that should be priorities.

She further expressed her concern about a lack of information about block scheduling. She also questioned whether students will be able to teach themselves in student-centered discovery centers and stated that college courses are not taught in this manner.

Paul Schmidt, Chairman of the Standing Fields Committee, summarized the budget proposal presented to the Board of Selectman to install synthetic turf at the Guilford High School Stadium Field. He reported that the Board of Finance is considering allocating design money for the project this year and will consider the balance of the \$780,000 total cost as a bond issue in 2007. He stated that the Standing Fields Committee has contacted legislators to seek funding support for this project at the state level.

Mr. Schmidt explained that the synthetic surface will allow the field to be used more as inclement weather and early season conditions will not adversely affect the surface the way they do natural turf. The surface will also help Guilford's interscholastic teams maintain their competitive positions by playing on the synthetic surface. The synthetic turf would preclude the need to construct two new natural turf fields at an estimated cost of \$500,000.

Mr. Schmidt asked the Board for their support for this project. Mrs. Cartier stated that she attended a Standing Fields Committee meeting and learned about this project. She believes that the benefits will outweigh the costs for this project.

Dr. Iorio asked Mr. Schmidt if any research has been done into the effect of synthetic surfaces on injuries. Mr. Schmidt responded that recent studies show no increase in injuries and, in some cases, decreases in the amount of injuries resulting from playing on synthetic surfaces. Dr. Iorio added that it is important to evaluate the occurrence of injuries relative to the time of year as weather and temperatures will affect the surface.

Mr. Schmidt explained that the life of the synthetic turf is between eight and ten years. The replacement cost is approximately one third to one half of the original cost. Maintenance of the surface is \$2,000 - \$3,000 per year as compared with \$25,000 per year to maintain the field currently.

Responding to Mr. Zuse's question, Mr. Schmidt explained that several different sports teams use the stadium field including soccer, lacrosse, football, track and field and other events including Relay for Life. These sports teams include both high school and youth programs.

#### **4. Communications**

Chairman Bloss acknowledged that several Board members received communications regarding block scheduling.

## **5. Student Representatives**

Jonathan Baker reported that CAPT testing is taking place at GHS during this month. He stated that the schedule for upper classman during this period is giving them exposure to the kind of longer class periods that a block schedule would provide. He also reported that the Banana Beach Party will take place at Baldwin on March 23, Wear Green Day will be held at Guilford Lakes on March 17, and the Guilford Lakes talent show will take place on March 29 and 30.

Erin Staff reported that there will be a volleyball tournament at GHS. She also reported that elementary school students are taking CMT tests this month. She also reported that a new organization has formed at GHS called Peace Jam. The students will focus on Nobel Prize winners with the goal of creating a new generation of peace leaders.

## **6. Superintendent's Report**

### **6.1 Insurance Bids**

Dr. Forcella reported that GPS and the Town of Guilford are meeting with five insurance companies to evaluate their plans to determine if there is a better option available for medical insurance that also meets all of the district's contractual obligations

### **6.2 Deregulation: Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Consortium**

Dr. Forcella explained that this consortium may offer the district cost savings through purchasing power. To date, Andy Potochney and he have participated in an initial conference call to begin learning about the consortium. They will continue to learn more about the possible benefits of participating in this group and will report back to the Board.

### **6.3 Strategic Plan Update**

Dr. Forcella reported that on April 3<sup>rd</sup> there will be a workshop for the members of the strategic plan's action teams and steering committee. One goal of the workshop is to share the work done on the specific action steps by Dr. Keene and him including who is responsible for implementation, success indicators, and projected costs to achieve each action step. A timeline will also be developed. Action steps that are already being implemented will also be identified. Dr. Forcella wants to make sure that the information meets the expectations of the action team and steering committee.

Another goal of the workshop is to determine a clear objective of where the plan will lead the district. Dr. Forcella wants to work with the actions teams and steering committee to incorporate the specific goals expressed during the development of the plan.

Dr. Iorio asked if there will be measurement standards implemented. Dr. Forcella stated that measurements standards will be implemented and specific people will be identified as accountable for each action step.

Mrs. Nolan asked if there will be a designated group to oversee the implementation of the plan. Dr. Forcella responded that there will be a diverse group of parents, staff, administrators and community members that will meet on an annual basis to develop an annual report for the community to identify the progress made and communicate plans for the following year.

#### **6.4 Block Scheduling Update**

Dr. Forcella encouraged the dialogue and input into the evaluation of block scheduling. He explained that time is needed to identify all of the financial implications of implementing a block schedule at GHS. There are also scheduling issues to address to meet the needs of all students' course loads.

Dr. Forcella stated that part of the process will be to evaluate program needs at GHS and determine if a block schedule will best meet those needs. He also explained that it is the responsibility of the school district to meet the needs of all students and the schedule needs to facilitate that goal.

Dr. Forcella suggested that the appropriate time be taken to fully evaluate all of the schedule options and all of the areas impacted by those options before the Board commits to implementing any one option.

Dr. Meyers applauded the recommendation by Dr. Forcella and the decision of the Board to wait to make a decision on block scheduling.

Mr. Zuse, referencing Dr. Quirk's earlier comments, asked if teaching philosophy will be a part of the discussion on scheduling options. Dr. Forcella responded that the curriculum will not change and the school system will determine the standards for curriculum, not state tests. He added that the content in state tests is considered when developing curriculum but the specific goals for the district, including those of the strategic plan, drive the development of the curriculum.

Dr. Forcella also stated that the District Leadership Team continues to define good instruction and it is important to implement the best instructional strategies to insure students are learning at optimum levels. He stated that it is important for teachers to have the time to collaborate with each other and create model lessons. The current schedule does not allow the time for this to take place.

Dr. Iorio asked Dr. Forcella if he has considered how to engage parents and community members in the process of evaluating block and other scheduling options. Dr. Forcella responded that he plans to continue forums including those provided by GHS Connection to be sure people are informed and to give them the opportunity to participate in the evaluation process.

Dr. Forcella, responding to Mr. Zuse, explained that the process moving forward will be communicated to the public so that interested parties can attend forums and voice their opinions and ask questions.

Mrs. Cartier suggested that opposition to block scheduling may be the fact it is misunderstood and the main reasons for considering a schedule change are based on decreasing incidents in the hallways between periods or other non-academic motives. She stated that it needs to be made clear to the parents and the community that the basis for any change in schedule will be to improve learning.

Mr. Bishop stated that potential expenses associated with the implementation of a block or other schedule should not be viewed as detrimental, providing the benefits to the students are clear.

Dr. Forcella added that included in the evaluation of a new schedule will be school start times and the general structure of the school day.

## **6.5 CTFSF Update**

Dr. Forcella met with the Community Task Force on School Facilities (CTFSF), Mary Jo Kestner and Mauro Rubbo. They expressed their enthusiasm over the Board's interest in the CTFSF continuing their work on a wider scope evaluating the long-term facilities needs for the district. Dr. Forcella will report on the CTFSF March 22 meeting in April.

## **7. Board Agenda**

### **7.1 ACT ON Personnel Items (exhibit)**

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Cartier and seconded by Dr. Iorio, the Board voted unanimously in favor of ratifying the appointment of Jody Sukowski, Guilford High School Social Studies Teacher, effective March 16, 2006.

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Cartier and seconded by Dr. Iorio, the Board voted unanimously in favor of ratifying the resignation of Bonnie Jean Connal, Baldwin Middle School World Language Teacher, effective August 31, 2006.

### **7.2 DISCUSSION of Amendment to Pension Plan (exhibit)**

Chairman Bloss, referencing a memo from Mr. Potochney, explained that a provision of the Pension Plan of the Board of Education and the Town requires a 3% annual contribution of the covered salaries. Since the Plan is 97% funded, it was recommended to the Board of Selectmen by the Board of Education in 2005 that this provision be eliminated from the Plan. Currently, Mr. Potochney states that he believes it is appropriate for the Board of Education to recommend that the Board of Selectmen amend the Plan.

The Board agreed to continue the Pension Plan discussion at the March 27 Working Committee Meeting.

**7.3 Executive Session: Personnel (Discuss non-renewal of non-tenured teachers)**

Upon a motion made by Dr. Meyers and seconded by Mr. Zuse, the Board voted unanimously in favor of moving the Executive Session for personnel to the end of the meeting. Chairman Bloss explained that no votes would be taken during this session.

**8. Unfinished Business**

None

**9. Reports of Committees**

Mrs. Cartier reported on the Policy Subcommittee meeting explaining they will be reviewing the Board's policies over the next several months and making recommendations for changes as needed. She stated that the Health Advisory Committee has been developing the required Wellness Policy to be complete for the 2006-07 school year. Mrs. Cartier stressed the importance of public input into the policy.

Mr. Bishop received confirmation from Mrs. Cartier that the date of any changes and updates made to the Board's policies will be noted at the bottom of each page.

Mr. Bishop would like the policies, once reviewed, to be put on the district website.

Mr. Zuse asked that the Board review, for the public, the Budget meeting schedule. Chairman Bloss noted that the Board of Finance was meeting that evening and would be making recommendations. The Board noted the Town Meeting on the Budget on April 4 and the Referendum on April 11.

Mr. Zuse asked that the Board include an agenda item on the synthetic turf for the GHS stadium to discuss offering the Board's support for the recommendation of the Standing Field Committee. Chairman Bloss suggested that the Board's representative to the committee, Ms. Migliacci, should provide monthly reports to the Board on the activity of the committee and the status of the synthetic turf proposal.

**10. Public Questions (four minute limit)**

None

**11. New Business**

None

Upon a motion made by Dr. Iorio and seconded by Mrs. Nolan, the Board voted unanimously in favor of adjourning to Executive Session at 9:15 p.m. The Board returned from executive session at 10:00 p.m. and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorri L. Hahn  
Clerk to the Board of Education

