

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2007  
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Board of Education members present were Bill Bloss, Keith Bishop, Cynthia Cartier, Barbara Dudley, Alan Meyers, Kathleen Nolan, Louis Iorio and Ted Zuse. Administrators present were Tom Forcella, Anne Keene, Rick Misenti, Anne Snurkowski, Catherine Walker, Ian Neviasser and Nancy Bishop. Also present was Director of Facilities Clifford Gurnham.

**Action on Minutes of:**

- 1.1 September 10, 2007 (Executive Session)**
- 1.2 September 10, 2007 (Regular Meeting)**
- 1.3 September 24, 2007 (Policy Subcommittee Meeting)**
- 1.4 September 24, 2007 (Workshop Meeting)**

Upon a motion made by Dr. Iorio and seconded by Mr. Zuse, the Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the minutes from September 10, 2007, (Executive Session), September 10, 2007, (Regular Meeting), September 24, 2007, (Policy Subcommittee) and September 24, 2007 (Workshop Meeting) with one correction. The September 24, 2007, Workshop Meeting took place at Melissa Jones, not A.W. Cox School.

**2. Review and Approval of Expenditures for the Month of September  
Reviewer for Month: Ted Zuse**

Mr. Zuse reviewed the expenditures for the month of September which totaled \$2,844,863.80. The following warrants were reviewed: warrant #S091907 in the amount of \$369,208.15 and warrant #S090507 in the amount of \$904,658.

Mr. Zuse noted that there were three payrolls in the month of September. He noted the payment made for the Harkness Table at the high school. Chairman Bloss reminded the Board that the Finance Subcommittee reviewed the expenditures in detail at their meeting earlier in the evening.

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

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

Margaret Murray requested that the Board reject the resignation of Nathan Fisher.

#### **4. Communications**

Chairman Bloss reported that he and other Board members had received communications regarding the resignation of Mr. Fisher and suggested that this issue be addressed during the Board Agenda.

Mr. Bishop reported that the Robotics Club will be actively competing again this year beginning with an event in Old Lyme.

#### **5. Student Representatives**

Marcus Passay reported on the construction progress at Calvin Leete School stating that the new windows have been installed. He stated that the fourth grade classes are team teaching in Social Studies and Science in preparation for the transition to Baldwin. He also reported that every Wednesday the school participates in a DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) program from 2:45 to 3:15 p.m.

Mr. Passay reported that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Adams Middle School would be taking a field trip to Lowell, MA to visit 19<sup>th</sup> century mills. This trip is a part of the class's studies of the Industrial Revolution. Mr. Passay also reported that "Team Day" has begun again this year emphasizing character development and positive attributes.

Jeffrey Cash reported on news at GHS. He stated that the AP Physics Class will be competing again in the Yale Physics Olympics. He also reported that the new Harkness Table at the high school is a great catalyst for conversation and has been received very favorably by students and staff.

Mr. Cash addressed some of the confusion surrounding issues at the high school related to the possible cancellation of Unity Week and other activities. He explained that GHS principal Rick Misenti has clarified that this is not the case. Mr. Cash suggested that improved communications between the administration and the student body would be beneficial.

Mr. Cash, responding to a question from Dr. Forcella, stated that he believes the renewed enforcement of policies at GHS has been positive.

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

##### **6.2 Air Quality Report - Adams**

Dr. Forcella reported that mold was detected in the basement of Adams as a result of spring flooding. Once the mold was found, the basement was evacuated and classes normally held in this section of the building were relocated. Mystic Air Quality inspected and sampled the area and subsequently recommended cleaning procedures. Dr. Forcella reported that as a result of the cleaning done in accordance with Mystic Air Quality recommendations, the basement is now safe for normal use and occupancy. Classes have resumed in this area.

Dr. Forcella added that the district will follow the company's recommendation that this area continue to be monitored and dehumidifiers are being used.

Dr. Forcella reported that the district will meet with the Town engineer to work on a more permanent solution to the problem.

### **6.3 CTFSF Report**

Dr. Forcella reported that the task force will provide a report to the Board in November. The CTFSF is currently working on a telephone survey to obtain more feedback from community members who do not have children in the schools. The CTFSF is also evaluating ways to reach out into the community to educate the community and invite their feedback.

Mr. Zuse added that various options being examined by the task force will be shared with the community and not just one solution.

Dr. Iorio stated the importance of community feedback and education during this process.

### **6.4 Report on TEAMGuilford (exhibit)**

Dr. Forcella explained that TEAMGuilford is a community initiative involving the Town and the Schools to create a healthy community. He explained that a cross section of the community is represented on this committee including the First Selectman, school principals, social workers, members of the clergy and other concerned citizens. Dr. Forcella stated that the group believes that it is important for the youth of Guilford to receive a consistent message from all community members who work with them from coaches to teachers and others.

Dr. Forcella stated that on October 10 there will be kick-off to explain the initiative at the Women and Family Life facility. He noted that a workshop event is planned for the spring of 2008 to evaluate the data collected from community forums that will be conducted during the fall and winter months.

### **6.1 Facilities Annual Report (exhibit)**

Mr. Gurnham reported that carpet and floor tile was replaced at the high school, Adams, and Baldwin during the summer. He stated that new cooling water fountains were installed at these three schools as well.

Mr. Gurnham stated that the windows will be installed in the gym at Calvin Leete by the end of the week and installation of the ventilation ducts will also be concluded within the next two weeks. He reported that inspections are ongoing with Town officials and are proceeding on schedule.

Mr. Gurnham reported that the Adams Middle School window project will be initiated in 2008. He also stated that roof replacement work at the high school and Adams is scheduled for 2008. He noted that the window replacement work is a higher priority as it presents safety concerns.

Mr. Gurnham noted the need to address safety issues regarding the bus loops at Baldwin and GHS. He also noted the need to replace windows at Melissa Jones.

### **6.5 Project Blueprint Report**

Dr. Forcella explained that he, Dr. Keene and Mr. Misenti joined representatives from six other high performing districts around the country in Cape Elizabeth, Maine to collaborate on important issues in school districts. The current focus of the group is on the importance of evaluating and utilizing data to improve student performance. The group meets annually to discuss education and share their ideas on how to create high achieving school districts.

### **6.6 Dress Code Update**

Dr. Forcella reported that Mr. Misenti has been enforcing the policies that have been in place regarding appropriate dress. He noted that any suspensions that were issued as a result of dress code violations have since been revoked.

### **6.7 GHS 2007 Student Achievement Report**

Mr. Misenti and Mr. Neviasser shared trend data on the performance by GHS students on standardized tests. They also shared benchmark data with other schools in our DRG. Over 90% of GHS students achieved proficiency in all areas of the CAPT tests. Mr. Neviasser also shared SAT and AP test scores for Guilford students.

Mr. Misenti discussed the high school's and the district's commitment to Professional Learning Communities. He explained that PLCs are data driven and include proper analysis of standardized testing and common assessments developed at the school level. He further explained that professional staff share knowledge and best practices with each other across disciplines becoming interdependent. Mr. Misenti also stated that PLCs are results oriented. He explained that the focus is on learning not teaching.

Mr. Misenti shared teacher feedback from PLC meetings noting the enthusiasm shared by professional staff and how productive the initial PLCs have been at the high school.

Discussion followed from the Board including NCLB requirements and the need for Guilford's performance expectations to be higher than the basic proficiency requirements.

Board members asked questions about Professional Learning Communities including time commitments by staff, professional development for staff on PLCs, and questions related to implementation.

**6.8 Proposed 2008-09 Budget Timeline and Announcement of Public Input Session on the Budget (exhibit)**

Chairman Bloss stated that the Board members will communicate with each other via email to review and confirm dates on the Budget Timeline and will make this information available to the community.

Dr. Forcella noted that the first public input session will be at the end of October before Budget decisions have been made. He stresses the importance of hearing from the public at this early stage.

**6.9 October 1 Enrollment Report**

Dr. Forcella reported that there has been an overall increase in the district of 35 students. He noted that over the past five years the enrollment in the district has remained stable. He also noted that actual enrollments have been below state projections. Dr. Forcella stated that the newly completed Town demographic study will be a helpful tool when making enrollment projections.

**6.10 Elementary Bus Issues**

Dr. Forcella explained that currently elementary school students have to wait for up to 20 minutes for their buses to arrive at the end of the school day. This is due to the time it takes to complete the bus runs that occur before them for the middle schools. Dr. Forcella stated that he is working with the elementary school principals to make this “down time” more productive and possibly increasing the length of the school day. He stated that he will be bringing a proposal to the Board in the near future.

Mr. Bishop requested that Dr. Forcella include information on how other school districts address similar issues.

**7. BOARD AGENDA**

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

Chairman Bloss stated that the Board of Education was not involved in the process leading to Nathan Fisher’s resignation. He explained that had there been any disciplinary action involved in this process, the Board had to remain neutral in the event that it need to act as an adjudicatory body.

Chairman Bloss explained that Dr. Forcella placed Mr. Fisher on administrative leave and approximately one week later Mr. Fisher, in a meeting where he was represented by counsel, tendered his resignation. Dr. Forcella took no further action.

Chairman Bloss read a letter from Mr. Fisher's attorney dated October 4, 2007, which stated Mr. Fisher's request that the Board accept his resignation. The letter further stated that Mr. Fisher does not intend to seek to return to teaching in the Guilford Public Schools.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Bishop and seconded by Mr. Zuse, the Board voted unanimously in favor of accepting the resignation of Nathan Fisher, Guilford High School, effective September 18, 2007.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Iorio and seconded by Mrs. Dudley, the Board voted unanimously in favor of ratifying the appointment of the following teachers: Alberto Martinez, Guilford Lakes Spanish teacher, effective September 4, 2007; Rita Burkhardt, Guilford Lakes special education teacher, effective October 1, 2007; William Wallach, Baldwin Middle School physical education teacher, effective September 27, 2007; Patricia Morico, Melissa Jones speech and language pathologist, effective October 4, 2007; and Robert Garofalo, Baldwin Middle School Spanish teacher, effective September 1, 2007.

### **7.3 Report on Superintendent's Contract**

Chairman Bloss reported that the Board took action on Dr. Forcella's contract at their September 24, 2007, Workshop Meeting. He stated that the Board extended the superintendent's contract through the 2009-2010 school year. Chairman Bloss explained that Dr. Forcella's contract does not include a specific salary increase, but is performance-based. The Board voted to increase Dr. Forcella's salary by 4.9% out of a possible 6% based on several factors including feedback from teachers and administrators. Chairman Bloss noted that the increase is intended to reflect the outstanding job Dr. Forcella is doing in his role as superintendent.

### **7.4 ACT ON Submission of Consolidated Grants Application (exhibit)**

Dr. Keene explained that these entitlement grants represent the annual allocations the district receives from the federal government. The Consolidated Grants Application represents the following grants and allocations: Title I, \$141,107; Title II, Part A, \$83,861; Title II, Part D, 853; Title III, \$5,425; Title IV, \$8,665; and Title V, \$3,007. The total for the application is \$242,918.

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Dudley and seconded by Mrs. Nolan, the Board voted unanimously in favor of the submission of the Consolidated Grants Application.

### **7.5 RECEIVE Recommendations from Policy Subcommittee**

- 7.5.1 Removal of Policy 5610: Student Insurance Program (exhibit)
- 7.5.2 Removal of Policy 5818: Surrogate Parent Program (exhibit)
- 7.5.3 Revisions to Regulation 5622: Student Driving/Parking (exhibit)
- 7.5.4 Revisions to Policy 5718: Police in Schools (exhibit)

Chairman Bloss briefly explained the recommendations from the Policy Subcommittee. No action was taken.

## **8. Unfinished Business**

Mr. Zuse asked if any further action has been taken by the Policy Subcommittee on the Truancy Policy. Chairman Bloss responded that the subcommittee has not completed its work on this policy.

## **9. Reports of Committees**

Mr. Bishop reported that negotiations with the administrators are nearing completion.

Mrs. Cartier reported that the Health Advisory Committee will be meeting on October 30. She also reported that the A.W. Cox PTO will sponsor their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Turkey Trot for Wellness on Sunday, November 4, 2007.

Dr. Forcella stated, in response to question from Mr. Zuse, that the first game to be played on the new turf field at the high school will be on November 1, 2007.

Dr. Meyers reported that negotiations are nearing completion with the custodian union.

## **10. Public Questions**

Margaret Murray asked the Board who told the student body about the complaint against Mr. Fisher that lead to the harassment of the student. Chairman Bloss responded that the information was in the newspapers. Dr. Forcella stated that no one from the school system told the students who had registered the complaint.

Ms. Murray asked if Mr. Fisher had union representation at his first meeting on this issue. Dr. Forcella responded that he did.

Ms. Murray asked on what date the police became involved. Dr. Forcella responded that the school did not involve the police. Chairman Bloss suggested that Ms. Murray contact the police department directly for this information.

Ms. Murray asked at one point the Town of Guilford or the Board of Education decided that the police would have oversight of texts in Guilford High School. Dr. Forcella responded that the police were not involved in the decision.

Ms. Murray asked Dr. Forcella if he wished to stand by, amend or retract his statement in the paper that no particular student or parent complaint was the cause of this action. Dr. Forcella responded that the action taken by the school system was the result of the material itself and not because of who brought it forward.

Ms. Murray asked if it is the policy of the Board of Education and the Administration to seek the resignation of educators who fail to meet the community standards of Guilford when they make small, easily remedied mistakes. Chairman Bloss responded that Mr. Fisher resigned.

Dr. Forcella responded that he would not discuss the details of a personnel matter in public. He suggested that Ms. Murray contact him directly if she had further questions.

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Cartier and seconded by Dr. Iorio, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session at 10:05 p.m. Chairman Bloss stated that the Board would not return to public session and no votes would be taken during the Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorri L. Hahn  
Clerk to the Board of Education