

**SCITUATE SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7 2010
NORTH SCITUATE SCHOOL**

CALL TO ORDER

74-1

The Regular School Committee Meeting was called to order by Chair Umbriano at 6:15 PM.

Present were Marylou Umbriano, Patricia Archambault, Brian, LaPlante, June Guglielmi and Scott Klimaj. Also present were Paul Lescault, Superintendent, and Lawrence Filippelli, Assistant Superintendent.

**TOUR OF NORTH
SCITUATE SCHOOL**

74-2

Principal Byerlee and Steve Gormley, Director of Buildings and Grounds provided a tour of the North Scituate School which included an overview of recent improvements as well as deficiencies which should be addressed during the next budget cycle.

**PLEDGE OF
ALLEGIANCE**

74-3

Led by Chair Umbriano, the Committee and audience participated in a pledge of allegiance to the flag.

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES**

74-4

Mrs. Guglielmi moved, seconded by Mrs. Archambault, to approve the minutes of the Regular School Committee Meeting of November 9, 2010. The committee unanimously approved the motion.

**CAPITAL RESERVE
FUND**

74-5

Mrs. Guglielmi moved, seconded by Mrs. Archambault, to approve the Capital Reserve Funds-Middle School/High School for the month of December in the amount of \$599.12. The Committee unanimously agreed.

NEW BUDGET BILLS

74-6

Mrs. Guglielmi moved, seconded by Mrs. Archambault, to approve the New Budget Bills for the month of December in the amount of \$537,463.43. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.

GRANT BILLS

74-7

Mrs. Guglielmi moved, seconded by Mrs. Archambault, to approve the Grant Bills for the month of December in the amount of \$315,552.84. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.

CORRESPONDENCE

74-8

1. A letter to the Superintendent from Lisa Meyer, requesting the use of two personal days with reason, January 3 and January 4, to attend her daughter's soccer tournament in Florida.

Background:

The dates requested are contiguous with a holiday weekend. According to the STA contract, the school committee must vote to allow the dates requested.

2. A letter to Dr. Lescault from Nicole Mancini, requesting an extension to her current leave of absence until Monday, February 29, 2011 to complete necessary appointments and paperwork relative to a recent adoption.

1. Recommendation: Take whatever action the committee deems appropriate.

Dr. Lescault stated these are extenuating circumstances which could meet criteria for personal business not able to be done at another time. However, this is at the discretion of the committee due to request being contiguous with holiday.

Mrs. Archambault stated Ms. Meyer spoke with school nurse and made arrangements for school nurse to provide coverage for those days.

Mrs. Archambault moved, seconded by Mr. LaPlante, to approve the request of two personal

days. The committee unanimously approved motion.

2. Recommendation: Grant the request.

Chair Umbriano asked if a long-term substitute teacher was assigned or if there was a different substitute each day.

Principal Zajac stated a long-term substitute teacher who is a retired math teacher and doing a wonderful job.

Mrs. Archambault moved, seconded by Mr. LaPlante to approve the request of extended leave. The committee unanimously approved motion.

**RECOGNITION OF
RETIRING SCHOOL
COMMITTEE
MEMBER**

74-9

Dr. Lescault stated this is a time we all look forward to where we can step back and applaud and recognize accomplishments of one of our own. Mrs. Archambault has been a member of this committee for many years and during that time, Mrs. Archambault has contributed many hours to try to make this the best school system in Rhode Island. Tonight, we stop to recognize the fact that Mrs. Archambault is retiring and will be greatly missed.

Chair Umbriano presented Mrs. Archambault with an award for 16 years of service as a committee member and chairperson. Mrs. Archambault also received several gifts from the school committee members and administrators.

Mrs. Archambault stated the decision to retire was something she took a lot of time to consider. Mrs. Archambault thanked members of the public. Each month members of the public attend the monthly meetings and comment on the process. Mrs. Archambault and the late Ernie Marcure also began attending school committee meetings before becoming school committee members.

Mrs. Archambault thanked the teachers and administrators with whom she has worked over the years. The nice part of being on the school committee is that you see so many different angles, and what Mrs. Archambault enjoyed the most was that the teachers and administrators do not just teach your children, they help you raise your children. Mrs. Archambault will be eternally grateful for that. Mrs. Archambault sent special thanks to the Betty Angelottis, the Sheri Carlomustos, the Mitchells, the Tom Kings, the Joe Cliffords. Mrs. Archambault does not think teachers hear 'thank you' enough. Mrs. Archambault stated on behalf of all parents, 'thank you for helping us raise our children.' From the paraprofessionals, teachers and so on, it is a very united effort.

Mrs. Archambault thanked the school committee. Working with people for sixteen years, you really get to know them. Mrs. Archambault had the pleasure of working with Bob Watson, Ernie Marcure, Bob Capron, Jed Rounds. Education is very dynamic and very challenging. These people become your lifelong friends; you become a family. Mrs. Archambault thanked the committee for what the committee members have contributed to her life. Being a school committee member has been a great 'rocking chair' experience of which she will have many fond memories. Also a member of RIASC, Mrs. Archambault stated you are kept very active as a school committee member.

Mrs. Archambault added her favorite lifetime memory was provided by the school. Mrs. Archambault was able to hand her children their high school diplomas.

Mrs. Archambault is very thankful for the opportunity to serve on the school committee in own community; it has been a very worthwhile experience. Mrs. Archambault has met many wonderful people and it has helped her grow. This is a great school system and one of the greatest compliments to an organization is to be able to walk away knowing it is in good hands.

At this time, the committee and attendees adjourned for a small reception.

**PRESENTATION OF
SCHOOL BUDGETS**

74-10
(Committee members received copies of the school budgets.)

Chair Umbriano thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Though uncertain if changes can be made to existing budget, the committee wanted to take this opportunity to take time with each department within the school system. It means a lot to the committee to hear about the needs and concerns of the teachers and department heads. Open communication is a necessity in these hard times.

Dr. Lescault stated there are five budgets which will be reviewed. Principals, department chairs, content area supervisors, and the technology and facilities directors are present to answer any of the committee's questions.

Dr. Lescault stated the school budgets represent a small percentage (approximately 5%) of the total school budget as it does not take into account salaries, benefits, etc.

Dr. Lescault stated the school budgets include line item for "Improvements to Buildings and Grounds" to provide a snapshot of what is needed in that area. However, including these funds in the district budget will artificially inflate it, as no funds for "Improvements to Buildings and Grounds" were included in the current 2010-2011 budget. Rather, improvement projects have been funded out of a capital reserve account created for that purpose. Mr. Gormley was also present to address any questions or concerns. Dr. Lescault added the school has a five year asset protection plan which allows for repairs and maintenance over the next five years.

Given the economic environment, Dr. Lescault stated all have worked hard to minimize increases in the school budgets. Many items are level funded except for utilities where Mr. Gormley has made adjustments. Two big areas that will present a particular challenge in the district budget are certified pension costs and out of district tuition. The certified pension rate is scheduled to increase from 11.25% to 13.23%. This 17.6% increase will increase the district pension cost by about \$275,000. Regular education out of district tuition has doubled over the past year, creating a shortfall of approximately \$280,000 in the current budget for this item. These two items will add over \$550,000 to the 2011-2012 budget, in a year where overall revenues will drop.

Mrs. Archambault asked how the increase could go from 11.25% to 17.6%.

Dr. Lescault replied subtract 11.25 from 13.23 which will equal approximately 2% and then divide by 11.25% and multiply by 100% and you will arrive at the percentage increase.

Mrs. Archambault asked if this was same across state.

Dr. Lescault stated there may be a few communities whose rates may differ due to an early retirement program; however all remaining communities within state will follow same formula. It is a reflection also of the stock market going down so overall value of portfolio has decreased and federal requirements require fund to be at a minimum percentage of actuary value which needs to be paid out at any given time. There is the chance that the rate may change but that is the rate which must be used at this time. If there are changes within the pension system, whether benefits are decreased or retirement age is increased, that would also reduce assumptions on which that number was based and that could potentially reduce number. However, at this time the rate increase is 17.6%.

Dr. Lescault stated that in a year where at best items are level funded because from a revenue perspective, all were told to expect, even if the new funding formula is fully funded by legislature, it will probably be a 6% reduction from state. The other big stressor this year is the out-of district (regular education) tuitions. Many children are opting to attend the Cranston Career Tech Center or Construction Academy and some are attending charter schools. The numbers for Cranston Career Tech have doubled since last year which could be a product of environment in which we are operating. Students are recognizing academics are becoming increasingly more difficult and even if one graduates successfully, a job may not be available, whereas at Cranston Career Tech a student may obtain some skills which may offer better

opportunity of obtaining job upon graduation. At this point, Scituate School department is down \$300,000 in this area assuming nothing gets worse between this year and next year. Adding the pension system, it brings the deficit to approximately \$500,000-\$600,000. Dr. Lescault added all principals and department heads have been very realistic regarding budgets.

Regarding heating oil, Chair Umbriano asked Mr. Gormley why costs were remaining same at North Scituate and middle school but there was an increase at Clayville and Hope elementary schools. Is something different happening at those schools?

Mr. Gormley replied the budget for the middle school and high school is based on last year's actual cost and North Scituate was simply over budgeted.

Mrs. Archambault asked effect students transferring to Cranston Career Tech and other schools is having on high school.

Principal Sollitto replied enrollment is down to 513 students from 570 two years ago and 530 last year. Principal Sollitto stated graduation requirements become more challenging on state level and students who have a need for vocational training are finding that option more popular. Each year, the requirements continue to increase which may result in a further increase in students opting for Tech schools etc.

Mrs. Archambault stated sometimes it is to one's advantage as there are some students who may be better suited at a vocational school. However, one of the benefits of being a small community is to be able to provide more things for them. Mrs. Archambault would hate to see losing too many students to the point where Scituate is unable to service those who remain in regular school setting.

Principal Sollitto stated Scituate High School certainly can't compete with the larger Tech schools offering many courses at various levels.

Mrs. Archambault stated this seems to be a trend. Sometimes the school struggles to provide a fourth year of a foreign language for example.

Dr. Lescault and Principal Sollitto are concerned with the methods some other schools are using to retain students within their own high school. There are students who would benefit from being in a setting such as Cranston Career Tech or the Construction Academy. Dr. Lescault does not wish to discourage students from taking advantage of the option away from those students who would benefit from it.

Mrs. Archambault agreed no one wants to see it negatively impact the school system because there aren't enough numbers to run a big variety of courses.

Ms. Maureen Kennedy asked who sets the tuition.

Dr. Lescault replied if the school is in Cranston, then Cranston would set the tuition; it is based on per pupil cost. There are three to four tuition levels based on level of services received from regular education to most self-contained classes.

Ms. Kennedy asked if someone goes to Cranston, the cost is probably higher per pupil.

Dr. Lescault replied yes.

Dr. Ellen Kenner asked if there was anyone who would challenge the state law to see if the parents who want that option would pay some sort of surcharge for that option.

Dr. Lescault stated the Department of Education has had very liberal view of free and public education but it certainly has become a time where it is more difficult to follow that route.

Ms. Ruth Trainor asked to reconsider hiring the reading teacher whose position was cut several years ago. Ms. Trainor is very concerned, especially considering the graduation requirements and supports that will be necessitated by the state. Ms. Trainor stated the reading teacher at the

high school is full-time yet serves part-time at the high school. Those students only receive three days of reading per week. Ms. Trainor would like to use the reading teacher as triage for students who are one year below grade level. However, it is not possible to pull this teacher from classrooms because of current schedule. This is something which will hurt Scituate long-term and needs to be considered.

Mr. LaPlante asked how many reading teachers are in Scituate currently.

Ms. Trainor replied there is one reading teacher at the high school. District-wide, Ms. Trainor stated Scituate schools are somewhat fractured. Ms. Trainor agrees reading teacher is very beneficial at Hope School where there are students who really need the benefit of a reading teacher. However, increasing time at Hope fragmented reading teacher allocation at other schools. Ms. Trainor understands these are very difficult economic times; however, this is very detrimental long-term to students who continue to read grade level or more below. Ms. Trainor could do a lot with this program.

Mr. LaPlante asked if the teacher the committee was forced to cut was at the high school level.

Ms. Trainor replied it was at the elementary level; however, that required a change in scheduling.

Dr. Filippelli stated the reading teacher hours were allocated accordingly.

Mr. LaPlante asked if the committee were to hire full-time reading teacher, how the time of that teacher would be allocated.

Dr. Filippelli replied retain reading teacher full-time at the high school and then distribute the hours of the second reading teacher among the elementary schools and middle school.

Principal Mowry added a reading teacher will be lost next year due to the loss of the ARRA funds.

Dr. Filippelli stated the ARRA funds required a reading teacher at a Title I school. Without the ARRA funds, Scituate will revert back to what was in existence two years ago.

Mr. LaPlante stated reading teachers seem absolutely critical.

Ms. Trainor thanked Mr. LaPlante for recognition of issue. Ms. Trainor stated with obligations going forward and having to provide services for students not maintaining proficiency, what will be seen is real need for true tiered reading system. Currently, the reading system is somewhat tiered but it is the middle group that seems to be missed. It is this middle group which needs to be targeted moving forward. With BEP requirements and other plans, it will need to be demonstrated that these supports exist and Ms. Trainor fears that may not happen.

Mrs. Archambault stated it seems common that the higher end students excel, the lower end receive remedial help and the middle students that seem to get lost.

Ms. Trainor stated it is the year behind grade level that is most concerning. The reading teacher needs to go into the classroom to identify areas of need and pull students as necessary for triage. It is a necessary support and going forward this will continue to get worse.

Mr. LaPlante asked if Ms. Trainor has seen this manifest itself with a particular situation. Is there an example of how this has impacted Scituate?

Ms. Trainor inquired if Mr. LaPlante was referring to test scores.

Mr. LaPlante asked Ms. Trainor where she believed resources would be helpful.

Ms. Trainor stated there is not a reading teacher available to go into classrooms, especially content area classrooms. Students struggle with textbooks especially Grade 9 Science as this is

first time these students are being asked to read at a higher level.

Mr. LaPlante asked how the process would work.

Ms. Trainor stated if the reading teacher were available all five days, classroom time and classroom intervention would be incorporated into rotation schedule. The reading teacher would go into those classrooms that had students who were struggling and help both teacher and student to develop skills required for textbook reading, reading in English, mini lessons, etc. with not only one student, but also the entire class. Ms. Trainor stated Scituate has had a great success rate with this in the past. The current reading teacher has also had great success with individual students with whom she worked reading at grade level and scoring proficient on tests after receiving her assistance. Ms. Trainor stated the intent would be to continue and expand that program which cannot happen with a reading teacher only available four days per week. Mrs. Archambault asked the level of reading teacher.

Principal Sollitto replied the reading teacher is currently four days per week at the high school and services students who are two or three years behind grade level. Students only one level behind do not have reading classes.

Ms. Kennedy added it is similar in mathematics. It is the one year below grade level who are not always receiving remedial help.

Dr. Lescault stated no one disagrees that this is the number one priority as it is the basis for everything else. The situation right now is one of limited resources and new resources are very unlikely. This would require the committee to step back and determine how to reallocate resources to make another reading teacher possible. This is an area in which the administrators and committee can certainly use the help of the teachers and department chairs. Drs. Lescault and Filippelli are certainly open to bringing that to the school committee for consideration.

Regarding extracurricular positions such as Student Yearbook etc., Chair Umbriano stated all of those salaries seem to have remained the same.

Dr. Lescault replied those salaries will be increased by 1%. The assumption the school committee established for salaries for next year, was to increase by 1%. The average percentages may not look like 1% increase because numbers in 2010-2011 allocation did not reflect current actual but the current salaries were increased by 1%.

Chair Umbriano asked if the music stipend was being considered.

Dr. Lescault replied no individual positions were considered; it was a 1% increase across the board for budget purposes. The committee can determine, along with Dr. Lescault, specific increases for individual positions during negotiations if the committee chooses to do so.

Regarding improvement on elementary schools, Chair Umbriano stated cost went from \$20,000 to \$800.

Dr. Lescault stated Mr. Gormley establishes priorities for the five year asset protection plan and in doing so, it's possible one year one school may receive more funding than another and in the following year, another school will receive more funding and so on. The next big issue will be the parking lot at Hope School. Dr. Lescault added the detail of improvements for each school is included in each of the school budgets.

Mrs. Archambault asked if Dr. Lescault had discussions with Town Council.

Dr. Lescault replied yes on an informal basis. Ted Pryzbyla is now Finance Director for Coventry and both Mr. Pryzbyla and Dr. Lescault serve on the board of the WBHC. Both recognize that it is going to be a difficult year not only for the schools in town but statewide.

Mrs. Archambault asked if there was any guidance or discussion on capital improvement.

Dr. Lescault stated they aren't at that position in the budget at this time.

Mr. LaPlante stated the purpose of having everyone here is to obtain feedback and help to identify needs near and dear to each of your departments.

Dr. Ellen Kenner asked what other alternatives exist. As mentioned earlier, both a reading teacher and a math teacher are needed. There seems to be a bigger question of how to bring the students up to speed in the most cost efficient way. Dr. Kenner stated at URI, a study skills teacher was available to students as needed. Perhaps the counseling department could bring students up to speed by providing them with study skills strategies. There are also online courses which may be a valuable tool and would engage the parents as well. The burden shouldn't be fully placed on the school, rather there should be responsibility with the parent(s) as well. Beginning math and reading are critical skills but at the same time, students can't be force fed. It should become the norm for parents to assist their children. Perhaps one parent would volunteer to help several students.

Chair Umbriano stated years ago, former Principal DiMicco ran classes on study skills for students in addition to classes for parents on how to assist children with their assignments; however no one attended.

Ms. Trainor would be happy to work together to develop something for the parents.

Ms. Trainor stated it is important the mandates of the BEP be followed in the tiered literacy system especially for those students two to three years below. 2012 will be the next review at the high school and Scituate needs to be in compliance.

Principal Sollitto stated the BEP application calls for each student two to three years below reading level to have reading instruction as part of their curriculum with one year monitored by the reading teacher. Ultimately, the desire is to have a three tiered system with students one year behind are also receiving reading instruction to bring them up to reading level.

Chair Umbriano stated there is a new parent within the district who is an experienced grant writer who will be helping us.

Chair Umbriano added that a new 8-burner grill was purchased for school use with funds from fundraiser held last year.

Dr. Kenner stated it is puzzling the state is mandating something without concern for the cost. The question may be to go back to the state and request more autonomy.

At this time, all adjourned for a small break.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

74-11

Alex Cerullo Westcott Road

A member of the Boy Scouts in process of obtaining a Merit Badge, Mstr. Westcott suggested students assist Ms. Marsland fix the cabinets to obtain extra credit.

Chair Umbriano added that would also qualify for an Eagle badge.

Cindy Gould Walker Way

Ms. Gould thanked Mrs. Archambault for her years of service on the school committee and for being such a strong advocate for kids. Ms. Gould stated one of the things she liked best about Mrs. Archambault was that she would always ask the right question(s) and get you thinking in a different way.

NEW BUSINESS

74-12

RATIFY NWR COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT

As has been the practice each year, listed under New Business and attached for review is the Northwest Rhode Island Special Education Collaborative Agreement for 2011-2012. This agreement has been in place for many years and has served Scituate well.

Recommendation: Adopt the agreement.

Mrs. Archambault moved, seconded by Dr. Klimaj to adopt the Northwest Rhode Island Special Education Collaborative Agreement. The committee unanimously approved motion.

RESIGNATIONS/

74-13

Dr. Lescault recommended the following resignation for approval:

APPOINTMENTS/

Ian Fletcher, Jazz Band Director, Scituate High School, effective end of the 2010 calendar year

REAPPOINTMENTS/

Dr. Lescault recommended the following appointments for approval:

TRANSFERS/NON-

Anne Pedro, Homework Club, Scituate High School

RENEWALS/LAYOFFS

Mrs. Archambault moved, seconded by Mr. LaPlante to approve the resignation and appointment. The committee unanimously agreed.

**COMMITTEE
REMARKS**

Mrs. Archambault stated there is always the concern among school committee members of the students and education. One area in which Mrs. Archambault feels strongly is that of the type of employer one chooses to be. Mrs. Archambault stated the Scituate School Department is the biggest employer within the town and always felt it's one of the committee's primary responsibilities. As a school committee member, one of the things Mrs. Archambault has noticed over the years is that more things have been taken away from the committee due to state mandates. Years ago, committee members made many more decisions which directly impacted education, schools and students. One example is the loss of the town's own buses. The Scituate school department has always been confident in its bus drivers, the ability to take such care of the students and the personalization. At this point, the financial impact of the state taking over the bus transportation is unknown.

There is still a choice in the type of employer we hope to be. Mrs. Archambault stated it is important to maintain good relationship with its employees who are in the trenches each day. Working as a teacher's aide and volunteer for a number of years, Mrs. Archambault does not receive the same amount of feedback as did earlier. Mrs. Archambault encourages the committee and administrators to continue to be the best employer possible as the employees are an invaluable asset.

Mrs. Guglielmi stated the school department dedicated the new addition on November 22nd in the name of Ernie Marcure. Mr. Dwight Farrar presided over the ceremony and did a phenomenal job capturing Mr. Marcure and his dedication. It was a touching ceremony. Mrs. Guglielmi stated the plaque is on the left wall as you enter the new building.

Mrs. Guglielmi thanked Mrs. Archambault for her service on the committee and wished her well.

Dr. Klimaj stated everyone on the committee treated him well as a newcomer but Mrs. Archambault showed him how to look at things with a different perspective. Dr. Klimaj thanked Mrs. Archambault for her mentorship and would like to continue that mentorship going forward.

Dr. Klimaj also wished everyone a happy holiday season.

Mr. LaPlante stated it was remarkable Mrs. Archambault was the one thanking everyone. Mr. LaPlante agreed Mrs. Archambault taught him to look at things in a different way and appreciates all of the work she has done over the past sixteen years of service.

Chair Umbriano stated at the last Scituate Prevention Coalition (SPC) meeting, SADD students attended and requested a policy for a breathalyzer in the schools as many other RI

schools do already. Chair Umbriano suggested having an alcohol sensor versus a breathalyzer as the sensor can detect alcohol which may be contained in a purse, water bottle, etc.

Chair Umbriano noted this request did not come from the school department rather the students. The reason given by the SADD students was because it provides additional support for the students to use when pressured by peers to use a substance. Students feel by stating they do not wish to get caught using a substance and will have to face ramifications will deter students applying pressure.

Chair Umbriano added Principal Sollitto and Assistant Principal Sweet are looking into existing policies currently.

Chair Umbriano also thanked Mrs. Archambault for her mentorship and friendship.

Dr. Lescault wished Mrs. Archambault godspeed on the rest of her journey.

Dr. Filippelli thanked Mrs. Archambault for her support over the years.

ADJOURNMENT

74-15

Mr. LaPlante moved, seconded by Mrs. Archambault to adjourn meeting at 8:05. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Guglielmi, Clerk