

REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, December 9, 2013

6:30 PM

Henry Lord Middle School

151 Amity Street

Fall River, MA 02721

AGENDA

1. Roll Call
2. Salute to the Flag
3. Citizens' Input
4. Sub-Committee Reports
5. Recognition Awards
6. Superintendent's Report
7. Approval of Minutes
8. Request for Executive Session
M.G.L. c30A Section 21 (a) (2) and (3)
 - To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with custodians, paraprofessionals, clerical, FREA, and FRAA and nonunion personnel.
9. Committee of the Whole
10. New Business: Topics for discussion that could not reasonably be anticipated by the Chairman forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting
11. Addendum

MINUTES

At 6:30 PM, Mayor Flanagan called to order the Regular Meeting of the Fall River School Committee for Monday, December 9, 2013.

A roll call for attendance showed 6 members were present and 1 was absent (Mr. Costa).

A salute to the Flag followed.

Mayor Flanagan announced before moving on with the agenda that this was the last meeting for School Committeeman Rick Pavao who decided not to seek re-election. He has had 42 years of distinguished service to the City of Fall River and it is with much regret that they see him go.

Mayor Flanagan presented Mr. Pavao with a citation in honor and recognition of his dedicated service to the City of Fall River.

Mr. Pavao expressed that it has been a pleasure, honor, and thrill to work in the School Department from starting as a third grade teacher to his role as Superintendent. He added that the past four years have been a learning experience while sitting on the other side of the table as a policy maker but was made easier for him by his colleagues who are a great group of people who have the best interest of every child, employee, and citizen. He could not have attained his success without his many supporters and friends. He thanked Atty. Assad personally and publicly for his friendship and help through some difficult situations. He asked that the community put their trust in the members that will be sworn in in January and assured that they will do all they can to make the School Department and City a successful one. He thanked everyone once again before concluding.

CITIZENS' INPUT

At 6:39 PM, Mayor Flanagan moved to citizens' input and explained that the rules that govern the Committee state that citizen' input be only on items listed on the agenda of the Fall River School Committee. He said that it looked as though the majority that had signed up that evening listed topics related to public safety at the Morton Middle School which is an item not on that evening's agenda.

As Mayor and Chair of the School Committee he noted that he had the ability to waive the rules and allow topic on whatever agenda items that he sees fit. "Educating the children of the City is a priority but above that is their safety. For any parent, teacher or citizen that wants to discuss the safety of the school system, I am going to sit and listen to you for as long as you want to talk to me on the topic. I ask that in return you be factual and clear on what you are telling us. Ensure statements are grounded in facts."

Rochelle Pettenati, Teacher

Discussion topic: Alternative, middle and elementary school education - Spoke at 00:07:50 of the dvd

Ms. Pettenati stated that according to the AMA, one of the most significant predictors of a child's academic success is their connectedness to school. A child must genuinely believe that their school is a safe, caring environment where teachers, administrators and staff are concerned about the whole child physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually. She commended the Superintendent and Committee on their attention to addressing the concerns at the middle school level but feels that those students did not start with these issues as they were entering middle school but that these problems were allowed to proliferate throughout their elementary years. She added that the ACESE program is a gem in the City and is often overlooked. She has taught at a variety of schools at almost all grade levels and can honestly say that the ACESE program runs like clockwork. Students who have not been successful in a traditional setting are flourishing and learning. She asked the Committee to consider expanding upon this very successful program in elementary school and perhaps they will not have the issues that they have in middle and high school.

Francesca Karam, Parent

Discussion topic: Morton Middle School – Spoke at 00:10:22 of the dvd

Mrs. Karam is the current treasurer of the Morton PTO and was accompanied by 3 members of that PTO as a show of support. She had spoken to the Committee at the prior School Committee meeting and stated her concerns regarding some of the students and behavior at Morton Middle School. At that time the Committee approved an alternative middle school and soon after, a lot of things started to surface publicly. They were there as representatives from the PTO to let the public know that they don't want anyone speaking for them. She understands that people are concerned but feels when things are written or the media is contacted stating that it is a dangerous place to go to school, it makes children afraid to go to school and parents nervous to drop their children off. They do not disagree that there are problems but feel they need to be respectful of children and their civil rights and not discuss topics that are not their business. They also need to be respectful of parents who are dealing with serious issues with their children and don't feel there needs to be more drama.

Mrs. Karam stated that she does not like to complain about things she cannot fix so they will be meeting as a PTO the following day to make suggestions that they think they can help with and maybe bridge the gap. They do think there are concerns and feel that the alternative school will be helpful as well as hiring a new vice-principal. She added that Ms. Crisafulli has already made a huge impact in the two weeks she has been there. She does think that they need to address teachers' concerns of students being unruly and disrespectful. She also thinks one of the big issues is that they have combined two schools and are not acting as a community which is something they can help with but not alone. If the principal is constantly dealing with curriculum and discipline issues, she does not have time to plan dances and field trips which would help build community.

Mrs. Karam noted that when her daughter went to Kuss, they had a parent advocate there who bridged the gap between the administration and parents. It was a part-time position which they received because they were a failing school but she thinks that that is something that would be helpful adding that the PTO cannot dedicate a lot of time during the school day because of work. She thought having an advocate that is bilingual would be helpful as well. She does not feel it is something that can wait until the following year and feels should be addressed now.

She concluded by saying that instead of complaining all the time, they need to come up with solutions. She is there to listen if they have suggestions of things that have worked in other middle schools and will be meeting with 25 more parents the following day who are willing to help in any way they can. They

are Morton and want it to succeed and do not want any more negativity and want it to be a positive experience.

Mayor Flanagan commended them for having a very active PTO because it is important to have parents involved inside the school. He asked if they discuss topics such as school safety within the PTO.

Mrs. Karam explained that they had just gotten up and running the past year and they have been bogged down with a lot of fundraisers and just started the month prior with the school council. They did not want to meld the two because they get off topic. The first meeting was last month but safety had not come up. She added that they had created a Facebook page that has seventy-five members and she also collects emails from parents that sign up for PTO and has come in contact with over a hundred people and most that she speaks to have said their children have no idea what is going on. She is getting to meet a lot of different parents from a lot of different backgrounds with all different experiences. She can only go by what her experience has been “which hasn’t been awful but there have been a lot growing pains.” She thinks people need to be patient and not so alarming all the time.

Mayor Flanagan asked how her access has been to the principal.

Mrs. Karam said the principal attends all the PTO meetings but thinks she is overwhelmed with a lot of different issues. They opened a new building, melded two schools together, etc. She is always available to her but she can only speak for herself.

Mr. Maynard said he has received a lot of calls from parents stating the school is not safe and asked from 1 to 10 how safe Mrs. Karam feels the school is.

Mrs. Karam hesitated and Mayor Flanagan asked if she could answer the question.

Mrs. Karam stated she did not feel she should answer the question because she does not know how she would answer it but added that she has two boys there who haven’t had any incidents where they have been threatened or anything out of the norm.

Mr. Martins asked if Morton has a School Improvement Committee.

Mrs. Karam said it is a School Council that they just started the month prior but they do not have a School Improvement Committee but she was not sure what the difference was.

Kristen Ford, Citizen

Discussion topic: Morton Middle School Safety – Spoke at 00:21:32 through 00:31:43 of the dvd

Ms. Ford stated that she is a former teacher of the Fall River Public Schools who left the district of her own accord. She stood before them after former students had reached out to her for help. She noted that some of the things she has heard that have happened at Morton Middle School were assault on personnel, an overdose, a knife, Percocet pills, vodka, a fight club, bullying and harassment, swearing, racial slurs, etc. and that something needs to be done. Morton Middle School sent home a letter in response to “rumors” that were circulating but in the same letter assured the parents/guardians that they were all isolated incidents that were handled with the appropriate consequences. She asked how the school department could issue a letter in response to her open letter to the Mayor by using the

word rumors and then say that the incidents were all handled. She asked how an administrator and parent could go on WSAR and speak about the 20 parent volunteers handing out fundraising orders at Morton without mentioning the fact that one of the 20 parent volunteers had to break up a fight between two female students while it took more than ten minutes for security to arrive. She asked why none of the issues facing these students were made public until after her letter surfaced. She asked if the administration did not care about the security and safety of students until the rug was lifted. She asked again why parents, guardians and citizens were not made aware of these issues. She feels they have a right to know what goes on behind the doors that their children spend 7+ hours a day in. She added that these problems are not just contained to Morton but many of the public schools in Fall River as well.

Ms. Ford noted that school violence is on the rise and the number of catastrophic events are increasing. She asked when administration would realize that something is wrong. She feels that Fall River is welcoming a horrific and violent act to take place within their schools. She quoted one of the Columbine attackers, Eric Harris's, suicide note. She added that while bullying is no excuse for the actions taken by individuals responsible for these horrific events, bullying has been identified as a contributing factor leading to these acts of violence. "Experts say bullying is a widespread problem that can lead to school shootings and suicides. At the same time, they say it is dangerously underrated as schools and adults are not taking the problem seriously." She feels that is evident in Fall River where bullying is a problem that is often handled with little to no consequences. She then quoted Glenn Stutzky, a school violence specialist. She continued that the time to address these issues is before a violent situation erupts and ensuring that schools are safe environments for all and everyone is treated equally. She realizes that not every violent situation can be prevented but that does not mean the City and administration do not have a responsibility to use every resource available to attempt to prevent it. She urged them to protect the children before a catastrophic event happens in Fall River rather than worrying about the data being sent to DESE. She noted that they are all well aware that school districts and administrators can be sued personally for money damages if they witness instances of bullying and various types of harassment and fail to take action. She added that she will help any student who feels they are the victims of bullying.

Ms. Ford addressed Mayor Flanagan by stating that he recently tried to bring landlord owner David Colville up on criminal charges of child endangerment but when the clerk magistrate would not issue the charges against him, the Mayor stated "the facts that were presented went above and beyond the legal standard that was necessary for a complaint to be filed." Ms. Ford continued that she wondered if criminal charges of child endangerment could be pursued on the administration because she is sure there are enough facts that go above and beyond the legal standards necessary for a complaint to be filed on that issue as well. She said that according to DESE the total enrollment for FRPS is currently 10,138. "The administration houses 10,138 vulnerable citizens and that is scary. If anyone is a slum lord it is the administration." Ms. Ford then went on to quote Nelson Mandela. She said that we owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear. She then quoted Mayor Flanagan "as Mayor, I will not let Magistrate O'Neil's decision deter me from protecting the health and safety of children." Ms. Ford stated "as Mayor, I hope you don't let the administration deter you from protecting the health and safety of our children."

Ms. Ford said she was also there to make public the fact that the administration is tied to many big businesses in Fall River that carry a tremendous amount of weight with swaying the public opinion and vote such as the Herald News and WSAR. She asked how the truth can be brought out against the City

and administration if the City outlets they trust to carry those stories are biased. She asked the Committee what was more important, the life and education of a child or maintaining a friendship. "As educators we take the unwritten vow to treat, care and educate each and every child who passes through our classroom doors like our own children."

She continued that the way to tackle these problems is not to "circle the wagons and hope for the best" to protect the image of the City but to acknowledge publicly that these problems exist and work together to meet them head on. "Whether you believe me or not, the facts I raised are supported and corroborated by many others. Look around this room and you can see that is the case. I will follow this meeting up with private meetings with the Mayor, Superintendent, or whoever else wishes to meet with me and many others that are concerned about the safety and security of our students. Those meetings aside, my time here and this speech are now part of public record. You can choose to take action or not but ask yourselves what is the right thing to do, not the political thing to do. What is truly important, not what is important to the next election. What really needs to be done and can we do it alone or do we need help. If it is hard for anyone in a position of power to separate what is right from what is politically smart then ask yourselves on what side of this issue you want to be standing if, God forbid, there is a major act of violence in one of our schools and will you think back to this day and wonder, could it have been prevented if only you had listened and took action."

"In closing, Mayor Flanagan and members of the School Committee, I know you probably feel that buying administrators out of their contract would be too expensive being that one salary might be around \$180K a year; but if you take the total enrollment of the Fall River Public Schools which is 10,138 students and divide that by the \$180K salary, that would equal \$17 per student. If you feel that spending an extra \$17 per student this year is too much to maintain their safety and security then please re-evaluate the position you are in. With the amount of parents who pull their children out of the Fall River Public Schools; the amount of parents who chose private schools in the first place because they felt the public schools were not good enough for their children, and the amount of parents who are on the verge of pulling their children out, I am sure you would have no problem having each of the 10,138 students parents give the \$17 themselves. It is a lot cheaper than the \$3K or more they are paying or willing to pay for private school. My daughter is not even in the Fall River Public Schools and I will be the first one to hand you \$17."

Mayor Flanagan said it takes a lot of courage for Ms. Ford to stand and to deliver the message that she did and to not be a teacher or have a child in the school system and she is obviously there because she cares about what she sees going on within the school system which is why he gave her the opportunity to speak. "I believe if you ask any parent in this auditorium, they would do anything to protect their child, even giving up their own life. So I would ask you what recommendations would you make to this Committee to improve school safety throughout the school district."

Ms. Ford said she believes the first thing the administration needs to do is answer the telephone. She had numerous parents email her stories of calling and getting no response. Bullying and the things going on are serious concerns and parents need to have that sit down and be heard. She feels that it is a problem when a parent cannot sit down with the Superintendent of schools. She added that they should also listen to the students. She is there because she has many of her former students there supporting her. She feels they are being heard from by their teachers but that the teachers don't take it to the next level because they are bullied as well. She added that as a former teacher, she saw bullying first hand although was not a victim of it.

Mayor Flanagan asked if she reported it.

Ms. Ford's response was "Why, so I could lose my job? I have a mortgage. I have a child. I am here today because I have job security somewhere else. Teachers are fearful for their jobs." She added that she has had teachers email her thanking her for speaking out as well.

Mr. Pavao said one of the things that concerns him is that she and others are not able to get in to meet with principals or the Superintendent. He asked if she met with the principal of Morton Middle School.

Ms. Ford said she had not.

Mr. Pavao asked her if she tried to meet with her.

Ms. Ford said she had not. She does not have a child there. She has students there and figures if the principal is not giving parents the time of day, why would she attempt it, so she is making it public.

Mr. Pavao said she has got to try first before making a statement like that. If she is the advocate for these parents, she should have addressed that to the principal and then if she refused to see her, they could address that.

Ms. Ford said she thinks that is just hiding it more by having her address it and say it is going to change and it keeps going on.

Mr. Pavao said the reason he said that is because Ms. Ford had said she received a number of complaints from parents and students and it would probably serve them best if they had specifics instead of blanket statements. He encouraged Ms. Ford to make an appointment with the principal and give her specifics. He has also been told that she refused to meet with the Superintendent and asked if this was true.

Ms. Ford said she had sent the Superintendent an email asking about citizens' input and her secretary sent an email back asking about a meeting. Ms. Ford said she would get back because the Superintendent wanted to meet with relevant people on her staff, so she wants to meet with relevant people too and has to get them together. "I did not decline the meeting, I said I would get back to the secretary. One, I am not going there without legal counsel. I need legal counsel, I need parents, I need students. If she is going to meet with me, I want to meet with relevant people on my end as well."

Mr. Pavao asked why she would need legal counsel.

Ms. Ford said she is sure the Superintendent would have legal counsel.

Mr. Pavao said he could assure her that if she made an appointment with the sitting Superintendent, she would not have legal counsel. He added that it is the Superintendent's job, not the job of the School Committee, to deal with concerned parents and citizens. He encouraged Ms. Ford to meet with the

Superintendent as soon as possible because they have to give her an opportunity as well as the principal to come back with a plan that will address these concerns.

Ms. Ford said she will absolutely do that and will bring with her a parent that has waited two years now for her to respond.

Mr. Pavao said it is a matter of her coming up the chain of command. The School Committee is a policy making body. They can listen to her concerns but the arrow goes right back around to the principal and the Superintendent to address the issues. He added that he had met with the Superintendent and principal that afternoon and got a picture of “yes, we have many problems in the school.” He asked the principal of the 686 kids enrolled, how many will she be recommending to go into an alternative program and her number was 15-20. She felt those were the troublemakers in her building that were giving the most concern. “This Committee has agreed to start off the alternative school with 50 kids and grow as the years go on. If we alleviate the most troublesome kids from that school with the assistance of the parent group, the job can be done. We have to give an opportunity for everyone to roll up their sleeves and work for the common good. The way to address the issues is through communication and I know that when you get reasonable and intelligent people at a table, you will come out with reasonable and intelligent solutions to your problems. If that hasn’t started, it needs to start immediately.” Mr. Pavao added that they also need to address not just the safety of the students but the staff as well. He felt this was the icebreaker and they should go away from this in a positive way with an idea that they are going to meet and resolve this as a unit.

There were numerous audience members shouting out and raising hands and Mr. Pavao apologized and said he could not recognize them under Robert’s Rules of Order. Only the Chairman can recognize them. He urged them to use all of the communication lines and give the principal and Superintendent an opportunity to address the issues.

Audience members continued to stand up and shout out of order.

Mayor Flanagan said he is going to go through the list of people who signed up and then take a two minute recess and anyone wishing to speak to the Superintendent can come up and do so. He instructed her to stay up on stage and take the names and numbers of parents who wished to speak with her personally then he would follow up with her the next day to make sure she returned all of those phone calls.

Parents continued to shout out of order.

Mayor Flanagan said he was going to go through the list of those that signed up to speak and then take a two minute recess and speak with them.

Ms. Ford asked that the Mayor call each parent that signs up to make sure the Superintendent returned their calls.

Melissa St. Laurent, Citizen

Discussion topic: Morton Middle School Safety – Spoke at 00:50:47 of the dvd

Ms. St. Laurent asked parents to raise their hand if they were still waiting for a call from the Superintendent. After a show of hands she stated that it is not just one. She explained that she created the Facebook page to keep their kids safe and knows Kristen personally. Because of the bullying and violence in the Fall River Schools she moved to Dighton in 2009 as her daughter was entering middle school and she feared for her safety. She owns property in Fall River and pays taxes in the City. She has relatives and friends in the school system and fears for them. One of the major concerns she is seeing is the lack of communication with the administration. She personally emailed School Committee members who are on Facebook to make them aware of Ms. Ford's letter and concerns. They did not respond but it showed that they saw the message. A week had gone by and some Committee members were contacted by the public who were shocked they had no idea what was going on. Her sister also created a group, Keep Our Kids Safe, a couple of years ago. She tried to stop the bullying and the violence in the schools; however, she was pushed away by the administration. She eventually left the district because no one would help her. She continued that the PTO from Morton today stated that they shouldn't make the children panic at Morton but she is extremely glad it went public because it made parents aware of the major safety issues. She added that now parents can be at home discussing these topics with their children and teaching them how to handle these situations. She said Mr. Maynard asked if the school is safe. She said he should tell them with 122 suspensions in 2 months. She lived in the City for 30 years, born and raised, and went to Diman with the Mayor and Mr. Martins as her administrator. They did not have those problems at Diman because the school did not have to keep them there and they had dogs come in if there were any signs of drugs. She has not seen that in the FRPS. No one put up with what they are putting up with now.

Mark Dozois, Parent

Discussion topic: Morton Middle School Safety – Spoke at 00:54:00 of the dvd

He is a concerned parent of a child that is at Morton and is a victim of bullying. He is accompanied in the audience by parents who had to move their child who has Asperger's and was bullied and threatened to be killed in Morton and recently moved. They let him know that in the month that he has been in his new school, he has felt safer. Mr. Dozois's son was assaulted while waiting 45 minutes for the YMCA bus unsupervised. This is unacceptable to him. If they have to wait that long he thinks there should be someone watching them or they should wait inside. Mr. Dozois added that his son came home with a black eye, scrapes on his arms and legs "from a kid that had him on the ground pounding his head in. If kids are beating up the security officer and there is none there now, there needs to be one in place." He does not feel safe sending his son into school every day. He has a daughter at Durfee who feels 100% safe. He feels something needs to be done at Morton.

Kendra Neto signed up to speak but did not approach the podium when called.

Kellie Mello, Parent

Discussion topic: Safety – Spoke at 00:56:10 of the dvd

Ms. Mello said she had intended to speak but is too emotional. Her incident happened five years ago. Attorney Assad and others are well aware of it.

Mayor Flanagan asked if she had contacted him about this and she stated she had.

Ms. Mello continued by saying she personally would like to speak to Meg Mayo-Brown. It is not a new issue and has been ongoing. Five years ago she begged for help and it took her son testifying against his

fifth grade teacher for her to get any kind of acknowledgement from the school system that there was a problem in the classroom.

Mayor Flanagan asked how her son was doing today.

Ms. Mello said he is fifteen and is a sophomore at Durfee and doing very well. Sh added that she was not going to stand there and bad mouth anyone but stated again that she would really like to speak to the Superintendent personally.

Lionel Kydd, Parent

Discussion topic: Morton Middle School – Spoke at 00:57:51 of the dvd

Mr. Kydd expressed concern for his son who is a very young, eleven-year-old sixth grader and he is in classes with eighth graders. He feels they are setting themselves up for kids to get bullied when mixing large age differences, especially if kids have stayed back once or twice. His son made the honor roll but it is concerning and he would like to see something done in that area.

At the conclusion of citizens’ input, Mayor Flanagan explained that he does not have all the answers and is not going to kid them that he does but made the suggestion that if they feel there is something going wrong with the school system no matter what it may be, that they contact their student’s teacher. If they feel they are not getting anywhere, contact the principal. If they feel they are not getting anywhere with them, contact the Superintendent. And if they feel they are not getting anywhere with her, then they have the Committee. “You are here tonight because you are frustrated and upset and feel you don’t have anywhere else to turn and that is why I am here listening to you. “

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Andrade: To instruct the Superintendent to stay on stage with the secretary to take the phone numbers of the parents that want to meet with her.
No Discussion
6 in favor 1 absent (Mr. Costa) Motion passed

At 7:35 PM Mayor Flanagan called a two minute recess and said he would be available to anyone who wanted to speak to him as well.

At 8:00 PM, Mayor Flanagan called the meeting back to order.

A roll call for attendance showed 6 members were present and 1 was absent (Mr. Costa).

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent: She explained that as part of the Superintendent’s Report she wanted to show the Committee a video that the FRED-TV students put together. It is a public service announcement that the students wrote and produced to highlight the importance of attendance. She added that the Mayor’s task force has met on a number of occasions and continues to meet to monitor attendance. As they monitor attendance, the chronic attendance rate is beginning to improve.

After the 30 second video was shown, the Superintendent said that there were two other items to report on.

Superintendent: Rebecca Cusick, President of FREA, and she have launched a teachers cabinet. This offers an opportunity for them to meet monthly with teachers from across the district – representatives are currently from 14 of the schools. It is an opportunity for teachers to bring forward issues in a different type of setting. At the first meeting the prior week they were able to come up with agenda topics that teachers would like to talk about over the course of the year ranging from curriculum issues to student behavior to recruitment and retention of educators and other matters. They will keep the Committee updated with the initiative.

She continued that the other initiative is the District Capacity Project which the Committee is very aware of. They are in their second year of that. Mr. Andrade was able to join them at the Professional Learning Communities summit where they brought together educators from all of their schools to talk and learn more about what a professional learning community is. She then asked Mr. Andrade to comment.

Mr. Andrade: He explained that it was a good sized crowd with a good number of teachers present. He feels if both sides are committed to the principles that are involved it will have a tremendous amount of potential for the betterment of the system. The purpose is cooperation between the union and the administration in order to benefit children.

MINUTES

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Pavao: To approve the minutes as listed.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

DONATIONS

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Andrade: To accept all donations as listed.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

TRAVEL

MOTION: Mr. Pavao – Mr. Maynard: To accept all travel requests as listed

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

CONTRACTS

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Andrade: To accept all contracts as listed.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

GRANTS

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Andrade: To accept all grants as listed.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Martins commended Mr. Procaccini on a well written grant that is easy to follow and has a lot of merit.

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mayor Flanagan recognized Melissa Karam Panchley, the newly elected School Committee member, who joined them on stage noting that she cannot take part in the meeting until sworn in at the inaugural in January.

1. **Discussion:** Status Update for Alternative Middle School, *as presented by Ms. Ivone Medeiros.*

Ms. Medeiros let the Committee know that since their approval of the Alternative Middle School at the prior meeting, a Design Team was put in place and she introduced those members. They have met twice and will be meeting on a weekly basis to put the program together. Some of the things they have worked on so far:

- They needed and came up with a definition of what a middle school alternative student was.
- This led them into the intake process in which they came up with a form which they are going to finalize and get out to principals.
- Once those forms have gone out, they plan to have a meeting with principals around the process once they make a referral.
- They have identified staff needed and have posted anticipated positions contingent on School Committee approval. They have also set up an interview team for that process.
- Diane Parent is working on a staff and student handbook that aligns with the district handbook and School Committee policies.
- They have started to identify community partners.
- They are moving ahead with the lease and transportation which Tom Coogan can explain further.
- They have started to look at the structure of the day.
- They have set a tentative start date for students for February 3, 2014. The week prior will be three days of staff professional development/orientation and two days for student orientation.

Ms. Medeiros noted that their challenges are staffing and hiring mid-year with an alternative program which is always difficult to staff. Also, the student/family transition process.

Mayor Flanagan asked if it is voluntary placement.

Ms. Medeiros explained that it will be a referral process through the school and then they would have individual meetings with parents and students around the process.

Mayor Flanagan asked if the parent will have to sign off on their child going.

Ms. Medeiros said that is a discussion they have started to have. She thinks most parents are just as frustrated and want to help their child. The experience with RPS has been that parents are open to the suggestion.

Mr. Hart asked Ms. Medeiros to explain what the intake form is going to look like.

Ms. Medeiros described that it will consist of a questions to get a history of the student to get a clear picture and be sure they have the right students that fit the criteria for the school.

Mr. Hart asked who they are looking at as community partners.

Ms. Medeiros said they are looking at a variety of community partners that they always work with – Child and Family Services, Boys and Girls Club, DCF – as well as some other possibilities such as having partners coming in and doing trainings with the students such as FRPD coming in and doing some work around gang initiation and violence.

Mr. Hart asked if there would be some type of point system for the students.

Ms. Medeiros said they are in the process of developing that and that the behavior specialist and psychologist will be instrumental in doing that work.

Mr. Hart said he was going to ask what the Mayor had asked regarding voluntary placement and that Ms. Medeiros sounded hesitant in her response.

Ms. Medeiros explained that the team is still trying to figure it out but thinks they are going to go based on their experience with RPS where they have the discussion with the parent and student.

Mr. Hart responded that if it works out as they are planning it then that is fine; however, in his opinion, he does not believe the students who are acting out should not have a choice. He added that it is the only strong recommendation that he would make to her.

Mr. Pavao asked if they have considered transportation.

Ms. Medeiros said that principals have done an initial identification of students and they are going to get that list over to transportation so that they can start plotting to have a general idea of what transportation will cost.

Mr. Pavao asked if it would be through SRTA or a bus company.

Mr. Coogan replied that they are middle school students which are usually put on contracted bus transportation, not public.

Mr. Pavao asked if food services has been brought into the discussion.

Mr. Coogan explained that they have a number of departments online waiting for the framework of the school to be established.

Mr. Pavao asked if Ms. Medeiros's department would be ready to modify IEPs of students who would be changing settings.

Ms. Medeiros explained that the IEP would not change as far as services but the team would probably be brought back in to have a discussion. They do not envision the students in the sub-separates as candidates for this program because they are already receiving intensive services for their needs. It possibly could include students who have a learning or health disability. Those students are typically in inclusive settings and would be candidates and would have to have services provided through a special education teacher.

Mr. Pavao asked if they have given consideration as to how the grading is going to be split up or if they are waiting for the referrals to come in.

Ms. Medeiros said that most of the students that are being identified are in seventh and eighth grades.

Mr. Pavao asked if that would mean that an eighth grade student would go automatically to RPS the following school year.

Ms. Medeiros said it would be decided on a case by case basis. They have set up some initial benchmarks and time lines from January to June for the program. In May they would start the process of meeting with the high school to see if they are the right fit for the school and transitioning the students to the program. They have learned from Stone that they have to have a strong transition process for students going from eighth grade to a high school setting.

Mr. Pavao asked if the administrative structure of the school has been discussed such as a teacher-in-charge and who will be doing the interviews for the teachers necessary for the facility.

Superintendent: She explained they have posted anticipated openings on the website and are looking at four teachers, two classroom paraprofessionals, one office paraprofessional, a program director (SNON contract), an assistant program director, a school psychologist and a safety officer. In terms of the interviews, they would like to see the design team take charge of those.

Mr. Pavao: His last question was if they were taking the necessary steps to get a school code and approved by DESE and online by February 1st.

Superintendent: She responded yes and explained that the process has been simpler than with other schools.

Mr. Andrade asked if they had identified a specific curriculum or approach they plan to use.

Ms. Medeiros: They have talked a little about that process but right now are just in the process of getting the intake, identifying students for transportation purposes, and getting students transitioned in. Their next meeting will tackle some of the curriculum/approach.

Mr. Andrade questioned the need for the assistant program administrator for a small program.

The Superintendent explained that they see it starting with 50 students and potentially growing up to 75 in the first year. They are addressing the school with two sets of priorities, academic and therapeutic. The responsibilities between the program director and assistant program director handles both of those and the assistant director would be more in the roll of managing the therapeutic setting for students. The director will oversee the whole thing. They have to think thoughtfully about how those two roles are divided to handle both settings.

Mr. Andrade said that person would have to have some experience in a therapeutic setting.

The Superintendent agreed.

Mr. Martins felt the school seemed to be taking a different path. They have the Stone School as a therapeutic school and now the alternative middle school. He asked what the relationship between the two was.

Ms. Medeiros said the Stone is a special education program. They apply every year to be accepted to run the Stone School which is a lengthy process. Only special education students can attend the Stone. The alternative middle school is not just for special education students. Also, students at the Stone are considered out-of-district because it is a public day school.

Mr. Martins said he understood and also mentioned in the alternative middle school there was talk of special education students.

Ms. Medeiros said it was for inclusion purposes. Stone students are not inclusion students.

Mr. Martins said he was under the impression that the purpose of the alternative school was to take students that are legally entitled to an education but are disruptive and put them into this alternative middle school where they will be provided with an education." You mentioned that it was selective?"

Ms. Medeiros responded yes, it is an intake process/referral through the school similar to what happens at RPS.

Mr. Martins: He felt that being selective gives students the opportunity to decide they do not want to attend. They are entitled to an education but it is not selective and felt the students should not have a choice if a referral is made. He then asked the Chair for a ruling on this. He does not want it to be looked at as a special education school but a school for students who have disruptive behavior until such time that they can change.

Mr. Martins continued by saying if the curriculum is going to be traditional then it is doomed to failure because those students who are disruptive want something different/to see relevance to what they are doing. He feels that CVTE will play a big part in the success of the school.

Ms. Medeiros said the design team is aware of that and it is a large part of their work in what the curriculum and day look like for the students.

Mayor Flanagan said Mr. Martins raised an important issue that he would like to put to a vote. He is hearing that he would like placement to be mandatory based upon a principal's referral.

Mr. Martins said that is correct.

**MOTION: Mr. Martins – Mr. Andrade: That principal's referral is mandatory on placement.
A roll call showed:**

Mr. Andrade: Yes	Mr. Maynard: Yes
Mr. Costa: Absent	Mr. Pavao: Yes
Mr. Hart: Yes	Mayor Flanagan: Yes
Mr. Martins: Yes	

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

Mr. Hart requested that they move to item nine of the agenda and the Mayor honored that request.

9. **Discussion:** Status of Class of 2012 – One Year Follow-up Survey (Durfee and RPS).

The Superintendent said that they typically deliver the follow-up survey to the Committee in January or February to give the high school an opportunity to touch base with students who are visiting home for the holidays. The CVTE portion has been completed as required but the non-CVTE portion should be delivered upon it's completion at either the January or February meeting.

2. **Vote to Approve:** Cost center for Alternative Middle School, *as presented by Mr. Michael Saunders.*

Mayor Flanagan explained that this item offers them the opportunity to create a cost center for the new alternative middle school. By creating the cost center the Fall River Public Schools finance department can begin to create the necessary budget and accompanying line items in order to establish the school. The Superintendent has recommended four teacher positions, three paraprofessional positions, one program director, one assistant program director, one school psychologist as well as a safety officer and security staff for the school.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mr. Pavao: To approve a cost center for the new alternative middle school.

Discussion:

Mr. Martins questioned the need for an assistant program director and felt that they didn't really need to have one until the program grew. He recommended that that be amended.

Mr. Martins continued that his second concern was having an office paraprofessional. He asked the difference between a clerk and an office paraprofessional and asked if there was a conflict of collective bargaining.

Superintendent: She explained that in terms of the assistant program director, they are talking about taking 50-75 highly disruptive students and putting them together in one setting. The design team believes that warrants an assistant program director. She strongly urged the Committee to open the school with that support for fear that the four academic teachers will not be successful due to student behaviors.

Mr. Martins asked if the assistant program director would be similar to a dean of students being the primary disciplinarian.

Superintendent: She responded "it could be, yes."

Mr. Martins: He likes the idea of a dean of students because he was concerned what the cost of an assistant program director would be.

Superintendent: She explained that the Committee would get to determine how much it would cost which was the rationale of having it as a SNON contract.

Mr. Martins asked for explanation on the secretarial position.

Superintendent: She explained that schools have had office paraprofessionals and the larger schools have had clerks. Over the past year or so, the Committee has converted the office paraprofessionals to clerks with the exception of Watson and Tansey. It could go either way and she left it to whatever the Committee desired.

Mr. Martins questioned if it was an issue with the clerical bargaining unit.

Superintendent: She explained that the difference was the hours worked. A clerk works year round and an office paraprofessional does not unless they are provided additional compensation. The hours of the day are also different with a clerk working longer. She added that principals prefer clerks but thought the design team was trying to be sensitive to the budget. She said again that it could be whatever the Committee preferred.

Mr. Martins: He just didn't want it to be an issue with unions if they are doing basically the same work. He added that he would prefer to amend the motion and have a clerk.

Mr. Andrade, the maker of the motion, said he would prefer to keep it as is with an office paraprofessional and re-evaluate it down the road.

Mayor Flanagan clarified that the motion made was for four teachers, three paraprofessionals, one program director, one assistant program director, one school psychologist as well as a security/safety team.

6 in favor	1 absent (Mr. Costa)	Motion passed
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3. **Discussion:** Enrollment update and trends, *as presented by Superintendent Meg Mayo-Brown.*

The Superintendent explained that this item was just to provide the School Committee with some information regarding the growing enrollment. The district is currently at 10,500 students. She was contacted by Representative Carole Fiola in terms of the increasing enrollments and how she could best advocate for the Fall River Public Schools in her new role. As part of that conversation, they spoke about where new students were coming in from. The report provided to the Committee details that information. She noted that the vast majority of the students are coming from other urban areas such as Brockton, New Bedford, Taunton as well as from other states such as Florida, Puerto Rico, and Rhode Island. The report included students who entered the system from July 1 until present.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown pointed out to the Committee that as part of the new enrollments, the ELL population continues to grow . The district grows about 1% per year and they are now up to 8% of students being English language learners. The Committee has been very responsive to ensuring that the schools are staffed appropriately to provide the services for these students. ELL teachers are in high demand and tough to find/recruit/maintain but they continue to do that and she appreciates the Committee’s ongoing support in that area.

The Superintendent added that the enrollment data speaks to the transience rates that educators have to deal with. Although they are getting new students in, the back up material also shows a number of students who leave FRPS for another community and then re-enroll at some point in the future. What the data doesn’t provide, which they can put together, is the number of students who transfer in-district, from school to school. She noted that in some schools it is at 30% as families move around the city for housing. “It speaks to the quality of our educators, that despite that movement in and out of our classrooms, that they achieve the results that they do.” She said she just wanted to raise it as an awareness to the Committee as to the transience. The Committee’s policy is that students go to their neighborhood school and transportation is provided only to a certain number of students. They would like to provide transportation to keep them at their school if the family moves within the city, it is just not economically feasible as this time.

Mr. Andrade said usually they would like to rely on historical data in terms of planning for the enrollments the following year but the impression he is getting is that the historical data does not give them an accurate picture of what to expect.

Superintendent: She agreed and said that their enrollment flat lined for a little while but for the past couple of years they have seen a few more hundred students come in. What is remarkable about the data they have seen is the increase in the number of English language learners which is happening to a number of gateway cities. She also noticed there is an increase in students who move in with special

needs requirements as well. She asked the Committee to be aware of that especially as they start to think about the budget for the next school year.

Mr. Maynard asked if the district receives a report on the students behavior, etc. when they transfer in.

The Superintendent said that they usually do and will get some conduct information. She added that she and Mr. Maynard had spoken earlier in the day and that he would like them to disaggregate their data in the future to see if there are any trends in there in terms of the new students coming in. She said they can certainly do that.

4. **Vote to Approve:** FY 2013 End of Year Report, First Quarter Revolving Funds, and November monthly report, *as presented by Mr. Michael Saunders.*

Mayor Flanagan said the next item (4) is a request for a vote to approve the **FY 2013 End of Year Report.**

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Pavao: To approve.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

5. **Discussion:** FY 2015 Budget Calendar for notification purposes, *as presented by Mr. Michael Saunders.*

Mr. Saunders explained that they were getting to the time of year where they start the budget process. The proposed calendar lays out the plan to develop the budget to adequately get the participation of the public, principals, and parents involved. They will have an administrative budget proposed for the subcommittee in February. They will start the subcommittee hearings March through April. It is statutory by law when they get into the month of May that the School Committee has the proposed budget and it moves on to the City Council in the June 1st period.

Mayor Flanagan requested that as the school department's financial team meets they will also update him and the City Treasurer so they can work in partnership to ensure they are all up to speed on it when the budget is presented to the Council.

6. **Vote to Approve:** First Quarter operating fund transfers, *as presented by Mr. Michael Saunders.*

MOTION: Mr. Pavao – Mr. Maynard: To approve the First Quarter operating fund transfers as listed.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

7. **Discussion:** Student Activity accounts, *as presented by Mr. Michael Saunders.*

Mr. Saunders explained that the memo they have includes a list of student activity accounts. The school board policy is to set the limits that would be within the checking accounts. Monies are in a savings account earning interest. Generally there are approximately 90-120 days of monies that would be expended so they could replace the money. This is setting the limits of how much money is available inside of each student activity account.

Mr. Martins asked if this was the revolving fund page that they are on. Mayor Flanagan said they are on item number 7 of the agenda.

Mr. Saunders said there is a student activity revolving fund which is monies that are raised by students for designated purposes for their clubs and it is under the jurisdiction of the School Committee. Principals have the authority to spend the money. The treasurer signs all checks. The policy is that it is set at a limit at each of the schools.

Mr. Martins said that there is a revolving fund that has a FY13 June balance and a FY14 September balance and then he has one of the student activities account where the City Treasurer wants to have it where there is a maximum that can be put into the checkbook that is controlled by each individual school.

Mr. Saunders said they are talking about the student activity accounts, separate from the revolving.

Mr. Martins asked if they have accepted the revolving account.

Mr. Saunders said yes, in item number four.

Mr. Martins said that one got by him and yielded.

8. **Discussion:** Status of the application for Department of Labor, Youth CareerConnect Grant.

The Superintendent explained that she and Mr. Martins had the opportunity to meet and she provided him an update which she will do for the Committee. They have every intention of applying for the grant. She noted that it is a very large and competitive grant. The Department of Labor is making \$100 million available and anticipate funding 25-40 proposals. It requires four agencies to collaborate together – a local school district, the Workforce Investment Board (WIB), higher ed and a group of employers. Principal Marshall is taking the lead in putting the grant together along with the City grant writer. There is a meeting scheduled for mid-week to start the process and the grant is due at the end of January. In conversations with Principal Marshall, he had indicated that in his very preliminary conversation with WIB, they want to submit something regionally for Fall River, North Attleboro and Taunton. She thinks the question is whether or not two grants get submitted for the region or do they do a regional grant. Those details need to be worked out.

Mr. Martins said this grant will have up to 40 awards to it and at \$100 million dollars would equal about \$2.5 million dollars or more. It is a sizeable amount of money and has a short turnaround time. January 27th is the deadline for submission. He hopes that Principal Marshall, the grant writers and others involved understand that it will have to have a lot of activity due to the short turnaround time.

The Superintendent explained that they are working off of two documents already. They have submitted the Career Academies Grant which is a State grant and then a few years ago they had a Multiple Pathways grant from the Department of Labor that was successfully funded so they anticipate

that they are going to use those two as building blocks to the larger grant. She is very aware of the tight timeframe.

Mr. Martins asked that they just keep the Committee informed of the progress.

The Superintendent agreed.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

MOTION: Mr. Maynard – Mr. Andrade: To place the For Your Information portion of the agenda on file.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Motion passed

Mayor Flanagan asked Madame Secretary to send letters of condolence to the bereavements listed.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Martins said he is not clear as to if there is or is not a School Improvement Council at Morton Middle School and asked the Superintendent to clarify.

The Superintendent said there is a School Council at Morton and Principal Rabbitt confirmed.

Mr. Martins said it is an excellent way for parents to get involved. There are two different purposes between the PTO and School Council. He feels that some of the issues brought up that evening could be addressed by having an active School Improvement Council. He is glad that it is operational and thinks it should be expanded.

REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session this evening.

Mayor Flanagan asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Maynard - : To adjourn.

No Discussion

6 in favor

1 absent (Mr. Costa)

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:57 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Interim Administrative Assistant for
School Committee Services

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Interim Administrative Assistant for School Committee Services