



School Committee

**Provincetown School Committee Meeting
Veterans Memorial Elementary School
Library Media Center – Room #73
2 Mayflower Lane
Provincetown, MA 02657**

**Tuesday
April 13, 2010
5:30 p.m.**

Members Present: Kerry Adams, Peter Grosso, Carrie Notaro,
Shannon Patrick, and Deb Trovato.

Members Absent: none

Staff: Dr. Beth Singer, Superintendent
Kim Pike, District Principal

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

AGENDA:

Public Comments

Polly Saunders and another woman each opined that they didn't want to see high school closed. Peter Grosso said that no one has voted on it yet and the report was merely a study which had yet to be voted on. Based on a few comments, the following motion was made:

Motion: Move to hear public comments after the Report of the Provincetown Regional School District Planning Committee.

Motion: Kerry Adams **Seconded:** Carrie Notaro **Vote:** 5-0-0.

PSC Student Rep Comments

There were no students available to comment.

Minutes: 3/23/2010

Motion: Move to accept the minutes of March 23rd as written.

Motion: Carrie Notaro **Seconded:** Kerry Adams **Vote:** 5-0-0.

Superintendent's Update:

- **Gathering of non-profit directors**

Dr. Beth Singer updated the PSC on her Community Leaders group meeting on April 1st at Napi's. It was a meeting to discuss common goals, common needs, and the group expressed an interest in continuing to meet. The next meeting will be scheduled in May and will take place at Seashore Point.

Basically the first meeting was to exchange contact information and getting to know one another. There will be different locations for future meetings.

- **Retirees**

Beth reported that we will have 5 retirements at the end of the school year.

- **Advertisement for jobs**

We will be doing some advertising for positions. Some position openings are for a district receptionist, a music theater director, and a Title 1 math teacher. The English position will not be replaced.

Unfinished Business:

Discussion – Report of the Provincetown Regional School District Planning Committee

Dr. Singer – in an attempt to clarify the report – said that the possible negligible savings of \$1K to \$2K are not guaranteed. We still may be hit with a debt service and all these figures - whenever they come in - may not mean any savings at all. The premise is that if we phase out grades 9 through 12 - say to Nauset or Cape Cod Tech - but we keep Provincetown as a K thru 8 district, then gradually phase out the high school next year, we would allow the existing high school classes (grades 9 thru 12) to finish high school at this facility.

Beth continued by saying that if Provincetown were to regionalize that requires a vote of 5 towns. If just one town voted no then we would not be regionalizing. We're only one out of 5 towns who have to approve the process and that will take a local vote of our town meeting.

Peter Grosso said that he had met with the Superintendent of Nauset and Peter said that the onus is on our townspeople. He, Barbara Rushmore, and Alex Brown merely did the exhaustive research and compiled the data for everyone so that all options could be evaluated.

Comments from the gathered group:

Polly Saunders had very many comments, i.e., “Why can’t we be a charter school?” Polly feels it would bring people into town. Then, “Why can’t we become a private school?” Concluding with, “Why can’t we become a college?”

Beth patiently explained that establishing a charter school is a rare and lengthy process and she’s not sure what the benefit would be and it’s usually an independent organization that opens a charter school. Also Polly had feared losing the High School building and Beth said that the plan – if it were to be implemented - would be to have K through 8 move into the High School because it’s the better educational facility.

A Wellfleet mother of two students who come to Provincetown under school choice said that their schooling has been a wonderful experience for them. It’s her hope that the school will continue since both she and her children love it so much.

A member of the Nauset Regional School Committee was in the audience and spoke to the group. He sincerely hopes that we make a decision to keep the school open; he further said that enrollment is a wave and right now enrollment is down for everyone. Peter G. said that the school committee has yet to vote on it and your committee also has to vote on it. Dr. Hoffman (Nauset’s Superintendent) has been on for six or eight months now. Peter met with both Bob Jones and Dr. Hoffman and although it was interesting, no final decision can be made at this time.

One mother’s comment: “It’s always been – it’s costing too much and she still hears that we can save money. She wants her children in neighborhood schools with neighborhood kids. Carrie N. said that it’s not about the money and you haven’t heard that from the PSC.

Beth said that she is trying to redefine Provincetown schools in a positive way. There are a lot of obstacles – mileage is one of them - and people down the road feel the same way about coming down to Provincetown. The bottom line is that every family has their personal reasons for any decisions made.

Peter G. said that even though Barbara Rushmore is currently in the hospital, she wanted to have her letter which was in last week's Banner read into the record. Everyone was also told that the report was certainly not a "done" deal.

Terese Nelson, the former chair of the PSC, said that in grades 9 to 12 – we have as many students who "choice in" and an even number who "choice out." She continued by saying that 40 miles is not going to keep children from choosing to "choice in." (Yet, many people objected to sending their children "way off" to Harwich.) Terese also said that she liked Polly's comments and maybe the word "charter" is a marketing tool. Her thought on "charter" then took off with the idea of having a grand opening, changing the name and starting to market all the ideas. She even said that it's more painful to put an end date on the school and the "per pupil cost" is the tag line. She then said that we just had a beautiful play and it was a great school function!

Peter said that he has a report on his desk about regionalizing in 1991. We have 14 kids currently in the 8th grade and 2/3 of them are going to leave. Beth said that they walk onto the Nauset campus and they see loads of kids and it probably looks appealing to them. Terese continued by saying that in a larger institution they might not be involved in a whole lot of people and I'm just saying that we need to come up with a group of volunteers.

Kerry Adams said that we talked about the numbers and asked what's the magic number for the high school? Beth said that we need a bare minimum of 80 kids in the high school – 20 per class to make it viable.

Terese is happy to help in any way and at this point her comments kept folding over on themselves.

Motion: Move to appoint an ad hoc committee for marketing the high school.

Motion: Kerry Adams Seconded: Carrie Notaro Vote: 5-0-0.

A student from the high school spoke and felt that some of the students who left did so during the Keith Bergman debacle. There were candlelight vigils and silent petitions before she even got into the high school. She went on to describe how valuable all her experiences at the high school have been citing among others her time with a Fine Arts Work Center (FAWC) mentor. She also said she had a classmate who left just last year due to all the turmoil.

Evelyn Gaudiano – in an attempt to assuage the anguished parents who felt so strongly for their children – said that in her experience children reflect their parent’s beliefs. She further felt that if the parents told their children, “Oh you poor things, Provincetown hates families and you’ll just have to go far, far away to a huge school where you’ll just be a number!” The children would reflect their parent’s distress and become fretful. The flip side would be if the parents said, “Oh, what a great opportunity going to Nauset will be! There will be many more choices of subjects, a greater group of friends to be made, and many more sports options.” The children would feel excited about the challenge being offered to them. She further said that children are like sponges and reflect their family’s values and thoughts.

Alex Brown, one of the people who did the study, said that his daughter graduated last year and he remembers sitting in on a ‘91 school committee meeting. It seems to him as though every 5 or 6 years the possibility of closing the high school keeps coming back. “It makes you feel like you’re on a losing team.” There was no need for all the vigils and that was a painful process.

A parent of an eighth grader said that her son wants to stay here but the only students who will be left in the class are 2 other children and himself. “How healthy is this.” she asked. Beth said that we still see a significant decline in numbers. It’s sort of like a buddy system – when your friends leave you may follow their lead.

Kim Pike said that she is very excited about the middle school and she’s going “gang busters” with it. It does take time to turn things around and we will be trending down before we go back up. We need kids to be here.

Terese came into the room again and said that her children are in real pain and they were out in the hall – and again – in real pain because of the threat of the high school closing. She insisted that the PSC should take a public vote not to close the school. “Let’s go all in. Why not say it publicly – we refuse to close the school.” She was told – once again - that no decision has been made so no vote is needed.

Donald Murphy said that he is hearing a lot of discussions about things that we have no control over. Things that the PSC has control over is the PSC and he asked, “What are the goals of the marketing committee? Is the goal to keep the high school or to present the best possible solution to the recommendations of the plan?” These questions hung in the air and Mr. Murphy sat down.

The mother who lives in Wellfleet and spoke before said that a marketing tool would be a great thing and the richness of having the students and the adults work together would be wonderful.

Beth explained that this is a very emotional topic and when we make decisions in an emotional state they're not always the best of decisions.

Deb Trovato said that if we only had a date certain - it's not about saving PHS – it's about saving the community. We have to go 5, 10, and 15 miles down the road..... and Deb's thoughts trailed off.....

Beth said that there are a lot of myths out there, i.e., if we joined a regional high school we'd lose our building – not true. The committee's job is a little harder – it's to decide what's good for the children. What can you do with what you have available - it's the quality that counts.

Theresa Lisbon said she's hearing that about the opportunity of a bigger school – she disagrees and the kids don't want a large facility. She continued by saying you can't tell me that 14 and 15 year olds don't know what they're doing. She likes all the direct attention they get and compared the high school to a private school paid for by the tax payers. **LET'S KEEP THE KIDS HERE.** If these kids are thinking about how terrible it will be to travel - marketing is a big word. Everybody is complementing the middle school. You seem to have a great rapport going and isn't it time to start marketing the high school? She's said what she needs to say and she will be chairing the ad hoc marketing committee.

Kerry said - is there a level in the high school – what am I going to do as a Dad and I don't want to be the only one left - there has to be a core group of kids and one of my daughters is playing tennis and there are only 6 kids on the tennis team. He wonders how long the town will allow the high school to be at a minimal level. He doesn't want to be a nay sayer but he's realistic and pragmatic. “How long can we maintain the school?” “How are we going to have a junior prom? – and other considerations.”

Beth – if this conversation has been going on since '01 – why is this just coming up now. The enrollment has been steadily declining. Kerry felt that we've just walked around with blinders on. Deb said we even hired a marketing expert and she had a hard time focusing on all the happenings.

Kerry said – it hadn't reached a critical point – but now we really have to face the issue. We have to make the choices. The students are leaving the high school faster than they're coming.

Pope John Paul high school turned around and Beth is hoping that having the International Baccalaureate program will start the turnaround. We have 14 8th graders and of our 9 students – 6 of them are leaving - the 8th graders are leaving for Nauset.

PSC Policy: AF District Dog Policy - 2nd Reading

Shannon Patrick says that the policy was not clearly written. Changes were suggested by Beth and agreed to and will be rewritten.

Motion: Move to accept the dog policy with changes contained in the rewrite.

Motion: Deb Trovato Seconded: Kerry Adams Vote: 5-0-0.

Old PHS Uniforms

Shannon, Deb, and David McGlothlin looked at them and they were mostly old soccer shirts and have to be declared surplus.

Motion: Move to declare all old PHS uniforms surplus and leave it up to the committee to decide on their disposition.

Motion: Kerry Adams Seconded: Shannon Patrick Vote: 5-0-0.

New Business:

June 22nd, 2010 PSC Meeting 5:00 p.m.

It was decided to hold the meeting despite the anticipated absences.

PSC Comments

Shannon said that she was disappointed that Peter presented the regional school planning recommendations at the Annual Town Meeting. She felt that it almost indicated that the report had the blessing of the PSC. Peter explained that it was mandated that a member of the PSC be on the fact finding committee and he had been chosen.

Carrie felt that more of these meetings on regionalization concerns should be held before the end of the year and she thinks that tonight was a healthy meeting.

Deb thought it was a healthy conversation and she'd like to hear from the teachers and receive their views.

Beth said she'd be surprised if any teachers were going to speak. She asked Deb what she thought she would hear from teachers? Deb felt that maybe teachers would shed more light on the numbers and their visions. They've got to have opinions.

Beth said that she called a faculty meeting once she found out what the report would contain. She shared it with the teachers prior to the town meeting and it led to a very somber meeting.

Adjournment for the regular PSC meeting happened at 8:00 p.m.

Executive Session:

- Discussion Non Union Contracts

Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn Rogers Gaudiano
(PHS Class of '48)

Approved by the School Committee on June 8, 2010

Peter Grosso, Chairperson