

GARDNER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Special Meeting – July 25, 2016
City Council Chambers
95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, Massachusetts

Members present: Robert Swartz, Vice Chairman; Anne Hurst, Secretary; James Abare, Jennifer Pelavin, and Melody Phelps

Members absent: Mayor Mark Hawke, Chairman; and John LaFreniere

Others present: Superintendent Denise Clemons; Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary; Robert Detweiler, Business Administrator; Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer; Mrs. Susan Hui, Grants Administrator; Mark J. Pellegrino, Principal, Gardner High School; Ms. Laura Olson, Principal, Gardner Middle School; Bob O'Keefe, Technical Director

Call to Order

Mr. Swartz, Vice Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8 television.

Open Time for the General Public

No one wished to speak this evening.

Discussion Items

Item #2772 - Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Report

Superintendent Clemons presented a PowerPoint on the review conducted by the Center for District and School Accountability of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on January 11-14, 2016. The DESE published a report in June and it is on the District's website. Superintendent Clemons is also looking into putting the District Improvement Plan on the District website as well as the improvement plan for each school.

Superintendent Clemons presented the Strengths, Challenges and Areas of Growth, and the Recommendations contained in the DESE report. The report recognized Superintendent Clemons for bringing a sense of urgency to improving student achievement in the District since becoming Superintendent in 2014. Principals and coaches are also sharing information about instructional tools and resources used across the District. In addition, multiple venues for professional development (PD) are in place.

Dr. Goguen Chief Academic Officer, said that the District Improvement Plan is being worked on during the summer months and improvements should be ready for the upcoming school year. The report credited the District with a well-developed English and mathematics curriculum for grades 1-4. Alignment of curricula to the state frameworks for other grades are being worked on and are in various stages of completion.

Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, said that further professional development will include inclusive practices to better incorporate students with learning disabilities into regular classrooms.

Dr. Clemons spoke about the increase in students choosing School Choice and going to other districts. Administrators are creating an exit interview to obtain information from parents and students on why the students are leaving the District. This goal should be enacted this school year.

Mr. Abare would like to see more recruitment for students. He suggested a District wide mailing of the curriculum offered by the Gardner schools. Superintendent Clemons will highlight some of the new things happening in the District during the planned "Meet and Greet" night for families and students.

Comments

Mrs. Hurst said there is need to understand that improving the school is a collaborative effort. She hopes the School Committee members can work together to bring up the standards of the Gardner schools.

Mrs. Pelavin said that the presentation helped answer some of her questions. She mentioned the Summer Reading Program and what a good program is has been. Communication is important so that School Committee members know what is happening .

Mr. Abare spoke about education problems not just being Gardner's problems. Other school systems also have similar problems. The School Committee needs to keep pressuring the City Council, the State and the Federal Government for additional funds for the school system.

Mrs. Phelps will be very interested to learn results from the exit interviews for School Choice. It is important to know the reasons that students leave for another school system. She also mentioned the City Capital Improvement Project List and that no school project is in the top ten projects. She would like to see one School project squeezed in.

Mr. Swartz thanked Superintendent Clemons, Dr. Goguen, and Mrs. West for the presentation. They made it easy to understand problems and recommendations planned for the future. Hopefully through collaborative efforts, the District can move forward.

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ADJOURNMENT

**Mrs. Pelavin moved to adjourn.
Seconded by Mrs. Phelps.**

Vote – so voted.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Anne Hurst, Secretary

Terri Hillman
Recording Secretary