

## **Final**

**Dresden Finance Committee  
Hanover Town Hall**

**Monday March 19, 2007  
Hanover NH**

Present: Athos Rassias, Cheryl Lindberg, Thomas Blinkhorn, Henry Scheier, Irv Thomae, Kari Asmus, Al Converse, and John Hochreiter

Past Committee Member Paul Tierney; awaiting appointment from the Norwich Select Board for a new one year term was in attendance.

The Chairperson Cheryl Lindberg called the meeting to order at 4:13 PM. Her first order of business was to explain that both Bill Bender and Paul Tierney after numerous years of service had decided not to run for re-election, however, Paul Tierney had been persuaded to fill one of the vacancies for one year as a nominee of the Norwich Select Board. Mr. Tierney had not yet been sworn in to the post.

A Motion was made by Al Converse to approve the minutes of the last meeting and the motion was seconded by Irv Thomae. The motion was voted with all in favor and two abstentions from Athos and John in that they were not at the meeting in question.

The next order of business was a brief presentation of the Finance Committee Web site by Athos Rassias. The question was presented as "is this something that we should do?" and it was the general consensus that Athos had done a very good job in presenting a clear and clean vehicle to better information for the citizens of the Dresden School District. From the discussion there were a few action items that Athos agreed to take on.

- Get a better URL
- Register the new URL through perhaps godaddy.com.
- Establish a link to the District web page.

Henry asked; if the District's new Technology Position will be involved in web site development and maintenance? There was no one in attendance who knew the answer.

Kari reported that the Alternative Compensation Committee was in fact meeting but that discussions within the committee were treated as elements of negotiations and not available to the public at this time. She further reported that the Evaluation Committee had not yet met.

Henry voiced a concern that there might be an incorrect sense of those involved in those committees that there is no district in the country that is using a performance compensations system and therefore not willing to try something new. There are districts with performance based plans. There was no response at this time to his concern.

Regarding the Quality of Education Committee updates were given from three people involved in the Quantitative, Governance and Qualitative sub-committees. These three sub groups were established at the March 1 meeting. Kari reported that the Quantitative group was now engaged in establishing standards and looking to match criteria to those standards. Tom reported that the Governance group was looking to begin their work in May 2007. The work of Governance will be to see how responsibilities, accountability and communication are achieved. Paul reflected that the Qualitative group was being facilitated by Linda Addante but to date he described the actions of the sub-committee as unfocused. There was some discussion and concern that Bill Benders involvement in the Quality of Education Committee and his resignation might lead to a void in the Finance Committee's involvement and representation relative to the question of Quality. There was some sense that Bill might want to continue his involvement in the committee but the Chair was going to take the question under advisement.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion of the Audit Report. Irv asked the chair if she thought there were issues. Cheryl noted that Dick Podolec has asked if there were any comparatives available. Cheryl committed to recapping her thoughts relative to the report on paper for us at a later time.

Henry asked if there was a Management Letter attached to the Report. There is a copy of the Management Letter at the end of the Audit Report. A reportable condition addressed the availability of food service reporting. Paul expressed concern about the lack of meaningful information in Management Document Analysis. He also indicated that the school board can not rely on the audit to detect fraud; so don't rely on the audit for things that it does not do. Henry noted that the document was received very late in the budget process and asked if we could find out from John Aubin when the last Request for Proposals for auditors services was undertaken? After additional discussion the group felt that it should suggest to the Board that a policy should be established that called for regular review of the audit providers and procedures. The Dresden Finance Committee would also like to better understand the role of the District Audits and whether an Audit Committee would be advisable especially relative to the Board Budget Committee.

Noting that Al and Kari needed to leave, Henry asked that we look at the segregation of duties relative to the Dresden Investment Policy. Who opens statements? Would it be better to have the Auditors actually open the statements? Cheryl will research the Investment Policy. There was a similar Investment Policy distributed at the March 7 Norwich School Board Meeting and Cheryl suggested that she had questions on the Internal Controls Section. Tom asked that the entire committee receive a copy and have some time to understand the policy. Cheryl will request an updated version of the Dresden Investment Policy from Wayne Gersen and distribute it to DFC members.

Kari Asmus and Al Converse needed to leave the meeting at 5:15 PM.

Discussion continued relative to a question on clarifying the role of the Treasurer of each District. It was stated that Superintendent Gersen had submitted an investment policy to Dave Bradley for legal advice. Henry asked if it was possible for the DFC to receive the most recent draft. The DFC chair will communicate to the Dresden School Board that we are interested in reviewing the Policy.

Discussion followed regarding the Budget Process. Henry suggested that at least in Norwich that the Board Goal Setting Process be shifted back into the spring which would allow for more meaningful budget work in the fall.

Irv notified the DFC that the Vermont Legislature is contemplating drastic measures for dealing with school funding. We will try to keep abreast of any developments. There were additional concerns expressed by both Irv and Athos that Dresden might not be the place to deal with the variations in State reimbursement styles and programs and that it might be best accomplished at the Hanover and Norwich levels.

Relative to the Budget Process Irv suggested that we might consider suggesting a firm guideline for spending. Henry followed with the suggestion of a net expenditure cap. There seemed to be a consensus that a goal needed to be set and then program backed into the amount available rather than the current establish a program and figure out what it would cost.

Irv suggested that he was very uncomfortable in some of our discussions that we were focused on the salary of individual teachers. In that we may have stated that a teacher would receive an increase higher than a constituent of the Dresden District. He noted that our focus should be on overall and total expenses of the District not the pay of individual teachers.

The group agreed that total expenditure and tax impact needed to be defining elements of our oversight. The group also expressed interest in the efficiencies that the administration is involved in so as to keep expenses in check.

There was a motion made by John and seconded by Irv to adjourn. Voted unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.

The next meeting will be in Norwich on April 16 at 4:00 PM.