

Carlisle School Committee
Minutes
May 4, 2006
Ruth C. Wilkins Library, Robbins Building
7:00 PM

Present – School Committee: David Dockterman, Chair; Nicole Burkel, Vice-Chair; Christy Barbee; Michael Fitzgerald, Wendell Sykes.

Present – School Administration: Marie Doyle, Superintendent; Steven Moore, Business Manager; Stephen Goodwin, Principal; Linda Stapp, Director of Student Support Services; Claire Wilcox, Assistant to the Superintendent.

David Dockterman called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Public Hearing on School Choice

David Dockterman opened the public hearing. The School Choice law was reviewed and discussion followed regarding Carlisle's participation. Mr. Dockterman stated that Carlisle has not participated in the past. Ms. Doyle recommended going with past practice and not participating.

Lori Tucker asked if other towns nearby participate in this program. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that Acton and Westford participate. Ms. Burkel noted that towns often participate in school choice if they have extra space in their schools.

Mr. Sykes made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Barbee seconded the motion, and all members voted in favor. A vote on school choice participation will be taken at the next meeting

Review of minutes

Wendell Sykes made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of April 5, 2006. Christy Barbee seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the minutes.

Communications/Correspondence

- A. **Massachusetts Cultural Council award to Chiao Bin Huang.** The MCC selected the Carlisle Chinese New Year Celebration as a Gold Star Project, and the letter Ms. Huang received was included in the correspondence folder.
- B. **Video-taping SC Meetings.** We received an email from Kathy Coughlin Horvath offering to film School Committee meetings if other volunteers are found to share the work.

- C. **Flyer for Fine Arts Week and the CSA Book Fair.** Arts Week and the Book Fair are both next week, and the flyer describes the events that will take place.
- D. **The Bite.** Copies of the Middle School newspaper, The Bite, were distributed to members.
- E. **District Report Card.** This was distributed to members and will be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Marie Doyle reviewed the following school activities:

- A. Student – Faculty Basketball Game
- B. 8th Grade Eco Fair
- C. Kindergarten Parent Meeting and Kindergarten Screening
- D. 6th Grade Outdoor Education Program
- E. Volunteer Appreciation Tea
- F. The Bite, Middle School newspaper
- G. Band Trip to Gettysburg
- H. Baseball and softball seasons
- I. CSA Book Fair and the annual Arts Week
- J. Kindergarten Rainforest Play

Ms. Doyle then read a letter she is sending to the Mosquito regarding the changes that have taken place in the school administrative team. She thanked the departing administrators and addressed the changes she has brought to the school. She stressed her priorities and asked for the support of the community as we move forward.

Members'/Committee Reports

Michael Fitzgerald stated that all Concord town meeting articles relative to the school passed. Concord passed an accountability bylaw that requires a cost-benefit analysis for school programs. He noted that this is going to be very difficult to implement as it involves trying to apply a business model to the schools. It is unknown at this time how this is going to be done.

Ms. Barbee stated that the master plan for the school is complete, and that the hard work of deciding which plan options to follow now begins. She also stated that the wastewater treatment plant is on-line. The changeover took place about 10 days ago. The School Building Committee toured the plant yesterday.

Mr. Dockterman thanked Michael Fitzgerald for covering for him at town meeting and thanked Ms. Barbee for doing the School Building Committee report at town meeting.

Information/Discussion Items

A. Teachers' Report – China Trip. (This item was moved to the beginning of the agenda, following the school choice public hearing.) The teachers who attended the trip first thanked the CEF and Primary Source for their support of the trip. Sue LaPorte stated that this was a life changing trip, and it will strongly affect their teaching in the future. They then presented a slide show with the highlights of the trip. All four participants, Peter Darasz, Courtney Hadley, Susan LaPorte, and Jen Reinhard, took part in the presentation. They discussed their experiences as they showed the slides. They particularly emphasized their visits to different schools in China. They noted that the students are not that different from American children. They are extremely eager to learn and tried to speak English with the teachers.

Ms. Hadley noted that often on the trip the teachers were out of their comfort zone. They learned things that stretched their knowledge and experience, and they will bring those things back to the classrooms. She also stated that the program both in China and preparing for it was very rigorous. Ms. Laporte echoed this sentiment.

The teachers also presented the School Committee with letters from Cyd McCann and Carolyn Platt. The letter described the way the two educators used the experiences from their trip last year to enrich their teaching.

Ms. Burkel discussed the affects on the school of the Primary Source program. This has helped us to offer Chinese and reduce the size of the world language classes. It has added a great deal to the school district.

Ms. Doyle discussed the fact that Carlisle has received funds from the Freeman Foundation, and they have supported us because the community has contributed so much as well.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked how we can continue to offer these new things and still teach children about US history and culture. Ms. Doyle stated that we might need to extend the school day or the school year in the future. The committee continued to discuss the balance of curriculum offerings. Ms. Burkel asked the teachers who had visited China how long the school day was. They stated that it was very long and included classes on Saturdays.

Mary Storrs asked how the teachers share the information about how different children are in other parts of the world. Ms. Reinhard said that she has shown videos to her students. Ms. Doyle noted that 7th graders from Concord had visited China and that Carlisle students might be involved with this group in the future.

Ms. Burkel asked Ms. Doyle about new collaboration with Concord. Ten teachers will be attending a Columbia University writing workshop with Concord teachers this summer. A group of Concord and Carlisle administrators are also meeting to discuss the world language programs in both towns.

B. Superintendent's Evaluation. Mr. Dockterman first thanked the members of the School Committee for all the work they did gathering information for the review. He then explained the process followed for the evaluation. Each SC member provided Mr. Dockterman with an individual report, which Mr. Dockterman reviewed with Ms. Doyle. Mr. Dockterman then read a summary of the review, which is a public document. He noted Ms. Doyle's many accomplishments, which have deepened the academic program in Carlisle. He then listed 3 constructive recommendations drawn from the individual member evaluations:

- 1) Clarify directions, roles, and responsibilities and engage an outside facilitator for this process
- 2) Communicate clearly and consistently
- 3) Pace yourself, and take time to digest the positive initiatives introduced in the last 2 years. Let the new administrative team become members of the broader Carlisle educational team.

He concluded by thanking Ms. Doyle for the enormous commitment she has made to our children. He looks forward to her continued growth in the position and the benefits it will bring to our educational program.

Action Items

A. Vote to set June 22, 2006 as the last day of school.

The original date set as the last day of school was June 20, 2006. During the winter, two snow days were called. **Mr. Sykes made a motion to set June 22nd as the final day of school for the 2005 – 2006 school year. Ms. Barbee seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.**

Other Business

Ms. Burkel read a statement thanking David Dockterman for his 9 years of service on the School Committee. She noted his many contributions to the School Committee and the community over the years. She then presented him with a gift from School Committee members and school administrators.

Mr. Dockterman thanked members for their support. He also thanked parents for their support of the school as well as the faculty.

Ms. Doyle thanked Mr. Dockterman for his support and noted that she has learned much from him. It has been her honor to work with him for the past two years.

Citizens' Comments

Barbara Bjornson stated that she sees the changes in Carlisle as a crisis, rather than a transition and asked if the School Committee has looked into the reasons for the changes. Mr. Dockterman responded that the members have looked into this and a facilitator will be helping the new administrative team move forward. Ms. Bjornson then asked if possibly the town is not paying enough for administrators. Mr. Dockterman stated that we have two excellent principals coming in July, but it is true that we do not pay as well as some larger systems.

Lori Tucker asked who would be selecting the facilitator and where the funding would come from to hire the person. Mr. Dockterman responded that the School Committee and Ms. Doyle would jointly choose the facilitator. They are discussing the best way to fund this.

Wendy Solomon stated a concern that Carlisle students should be prepared for high school and college, not for careers at this point. She wants to make sure that the students learn the basics, rather than investing in new programs. She feels there is much distraction in school, has stated her concerns, and hasn't felt there has been an appropriate response. Ms. Doyle responded that the benchmarks will set the outline for what students should learn at each grade level. Ms. Solomon expressed a concern about the number of professional days teachers have. Mr. Sykes stated that individual classroom issues are not usually handled by the superintendent, but rather by the principal. Mr. Goodwin responded that he has met with Ms. Solomon during the year to discuss her issues.

Brenda Hicks asked how the School Committee could say that the transition is over, when the new administrators have not yet started. She also thanked Linda Stapp for her many years of service.

Ms. Tucker asked if it might be possible for the School Council to do a survey this year rather than waiting until the fall. Ms. Doyle stated that she would talk to School Council about this.

Kelly Driscoll asked about the details in the School Committee member evaluations. Mr. Dockterman stated that Ms. Doyle has received all the individual reports.

Lisa Harris asked about the contract renewal for the superintendent. Mr. Dockterman stated that Ms. Doyle has one more year on her contract.

Ms. Bjornson asked about whether specific goals are set and tied to the contract and asked about compensation. Mr. Dockterman stated that these discussions have not yet taken place and would be held in executive session.

Linda Clark stated that the school had a wonderful administration for many years and wanted to be sure that the School Committee doesn't lose sight of that fact as we go into the transition to a new team. Mr. Dockterman agreed and stated that the community is very committed to quality education and that all must work together.

Faculty member, Debbie Butts, thanked the administration and the School Committee for being so open to input from the teachers in the evaluation process.

Alex Krapf stated that he has been critical in the past of the administration. He has seen a positive trend in the past couple of months and is looking forward to seeing how the transition goes. Mr. Dockterman agreed that the next months will be critical in moving the school forward. He stated that his meetings with the teachers showed him that the faculty is fully invested in the school and in maintaining a very high quality education.

Kris Tocci thanked the School Committee and stated that she is very confident about the evaluation process and the results of the process.

Liz Gray stated that she is concerned about the addition of world language next year and the loss of instructional time in other areas.

Joan Hofman expressed concern about the loss of Linda Stapp.

Lisa Harris stated that she does not think the school should have 45 minutes of Spanish next year. Mr. Goodwin stated that he is continuing to work with the World Language Task Force on the scheduling of Spanish.

Ms. Tucker asked why the scheduling wasn't discussed from the beginning with the task force. Mr. Goodwin responded that this discussion is continuing and there will be a decision by the end of June.

Tom Bjornson stated a concern with the pace of change, particularly as a parent of a special needs child. He stated that Linda Stapp is right on top of all the special education needs in the community. He noted that it would be very difficult to fill her position. Ms. Doyle responded that she had met with CPAC parents earlier in the week and they will be involved on the committee to select a new director. Ms. Tocci stated that the meeting with Ms. Doyle had gone very well and that she's confident that CPAC will have a large role in selecting the new director and that they will find someone excellent.

Kevin Berquist asked if the detailed work in offering a new program showed that it couldn't be implemented, would it be decided not to offer it. Mr. Dockterman replied that a decision would have to be made by June 30th.

Tracy Luiselli stated that she thought curriculum discussions are important at School Committee. Mr. Dockterman stated that we are hearing old issues as well as new issues. Time is just one element in looking at what needs to be done.

Ms. Luiselli stated that she is concerned about the retirement of Mr. O'Halloran and wanted to be sure that the School Committee recognizes the loss of Mr. O'Halloran. Mr. Dockterman assured her that the Committee had celebrated and thanked Mr. O at the previous meeting.

Mr. Gushue asked if the world language decision might be reversed. Mr. Goodwin stated that he has been working on this all year and that we will make this work.

Claire Wilcox stated that she wishes her children had the opportunity to take Spanish from Kindergarten forward and commended Mr. Goodwin for the work done.

Teacher Gene Stamell said that he feels the pace of education has gotten too fast and that the classroom should be more relaxed. He stated that the pace of change has been too fast for him. He hopes that the new principals will not bring too many new ideas and changes to the school.

Linda Stapp thanked the community for the support she has gotten through the years.

Mr. Dockterman thanked the administrators who are leaving and particularly recognized Steve Moore for his service. He again thanked the public for their participation in the School Committee process.

Adjournment

There was no additional business, and **Mr. Sykes made a motion to adjourn the meeting and enter executive session to discuss a personnel issue. The meeting will not return to open session. Ms. Burkel seconded the motion. All members voted in favor: Ms. Barbee, yes; Mr. Fitzgerald, yes; Mr. Dockterman, yes; Mr. Sykes, yes; Ms. Burkel, yes.**

The public meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire M. Wilcox
Assistant to the Superintendent