

## **MINUTES of PUBLIC MEETING**

### **Sanborn Regional School District Budget Committee**

*Thursday, June 23, 2016- 7:30PM*

*Newton Town Hall*

*Upper Meeting Room, 2 Town Hall Rd*

## **MINUTES**

Chairman Annie Collyer called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. Present were members: Ms. Collyer, Vice Chairman Charlton Swasey, Jim Doggett, Cheryl Gannon, Ami Faria, Jack Kozec, and Roberto Miller. In addition, applicant Sandra Rogers-Osterloh was present, as well as Patty Stephan, former BudCom member.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Ms. Collyer proposed some additions and changes to the proposed agenda.

**Jim Doggett made a motion to accept the minutes of May 26, 2016. Seconded by Mr. Swasey,** Ms. Gannon noted that she had a few amendments to propose. **It was decided to table the motion until the next meeting** when the recording secretary would presumably be present to make approved changes.

**Mr. Doggett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kozec, to accept with profound regret the resignation of Patty Stephan. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Ms. Faria made a motion, seconded by Mr. Doggett, to elect Ms. Osterloh to the Budget Committee as member-at-large to fill the seat vacated by Ms. Stephan. The motion passed unanimously.**

The election of a new secretary and volunteer for the School Board's public relations committee were tabled. Ms. Collyer said she will seek to find State Law descriptions of the Secretary position, and, per Ms. Faria's request, will get a description from Corey Masson, School Board Chairman, of the proposed parameters of serving on the Public Relations committee.

In addition, Ms. Collyer proposed that the Guidelines for the Department Head Meetings that begin in September be reviewed and discussed at the next BudCom Meeting.

Ms. Collyer then announced that the BudCom requests for information have stalled. After obtaining some of the financial data in May, no further communication or information has been forthcoming from the Administration. She obtained a copy of an email sent by Carol Coppola, Business Administrator, to the School Board members, stating that she does not have the time to give BudCom information with the other District priorities, thinks what she has already given is

sufficient, that all the requests are from Ms. Collyer alone, and that she thinks it is time to push back on BudCom requests. Ms. Collyer said she will be sending a document with all the emailed requests of information from BudCom to Dr. Blake and Ms. Coppola to BudCom members, and that she would appreciate fellow member input on how best to deal with this stall of information flow. She suggested that everyone take a few days to digest the information and come together prior to her scheduled meeting with Dr. Blake and Mr. Masson on July 7. The Committee decided to hold a meeting on Thursday, June 30 at 7:30 PM. Mr. Doggett stated that Newton Town Hall would be available for the meeting.

In Public Comment, Ms. Stephan said how much she will miss serving with us, and that she is very concerned and frustrated with the District. She said that she has shared her thoughts extensively with Mr. Masson a few weeks ago, and that he said he will be discussing it with School Board members. Her comments centered on 2 areas: the grading system and the lack of consequences for behavior in the High School.

On the grading system, Ms. Stephan said that there is a lot of frustration from parents, students and teachers from many of whom she has heard directly. She said the development of students is supposed to go from hand-holding in Elementary School, to backing off somewhat in Middle School, to helping students become responsible for their own stuff in High School, to prepare them for life and college. She said that is not happening at Sanborn High School. She said that the new competency system fights that. For the student who knocks themselves out and meets deadlines, they get the grade they earn. But there are students who can wait all year and finish all their work in the last three days of school and get the same grade as the first student. She asked what kind of model is this for life preparation for any student?

On the lack of consequences for behavior at the High School, she said most students are great. But there are some who make teachers cry, some who swear at teachers, and some who tear their teachers down, acting in complete disrespect. She hears this from students, teachers and parents. The teachers are not getting support from the Administration. They are also afraid to bend parents out of shape by complaining since they are afraid of retribution in lack of votes for a teacher contract. Some kids get removed from class and end up just wandering the hallways. She said that she brought this to the attention of the Administration in the fall and was told to leave it alone, that they would take care of it. But nothing was done. There is a problem with discipline and respect, so great that her daughter has elected to leave Sanborn for a school where there are grades and discipline and standards. Her daughter had planned to attend SST and learn culinary arts, graduating with an associate's degree. She gave up a lot, when she made her decision.

Ms. Stephan said that 12 teachers are leaving the High School and likely more this summer. Many are leaving not because of no contract or retiring or advancing opportunities, but because they do not get support from the Administration, they hate the grading system and they hate the unfairness of reward for student effort. She said that Honors students who are supposed to get advanced challenges and teacher attention are not getting what they are supposed to either.

She pointed out that exit interviews are needed for students who leave and that no one wants the feedback. She said any information on why they leave is buried by the Administration, that

they do not want to look bad. She said the grading system is in place to try to get the stats up, not to help kids.

Ms. Gannon asked what this has to do with BudCom. Ms. Stephan said there are costs in developing teachers, and the District is losing that investment when teachers are dissatisfied and leave. Ms. Collyer suggested that one reason small class sizes averaging 15 in the High School are needed is the lack of discipline, and Ms. Stephan agreed.

Mr. Miller said he has been told similar stories. When he asked the Superintendent last year why students left, he was told that they wanted to pursue studies different from what Sanborn offers. He now knows that is not a true statement.

Mr. Doggett confirmed that he has heard these stories for years, and is appreciative of Ms. Stephan coming forward. He hopes she will make a direct statement in public comment to the School Board rather than just speak with the Chairman.

Mr. Swasey said that Kingston police officers have told him many times that discipline is a problem at the school and that the Administration buries it and covers up. He has said they say there should be police involvement in some instances and that it has not been allowed by the Administration.

Ms. Gannon had four points. She welcomed Ms. Osterloh. She appreciated Ms. Stephan's comments and suggested she speak at the School Board so she can deliver unfiltered comments. She hopes the BudCom will not be angered and seek retribution, but will approve all that is needed for the District to educate the children. She was appreciative of Ms. Collyer's coming to the Committee for consultation on the challenges with getting information from the Administration. And she thinks that Ms. Collyer's recent email to the School Board under her signature as BudCom Chairman was an abuse of power, and disenfranchisement of the members. She made a motion, seconded by Ms. Faria, that we form a sub-committee to develop a document which will clearly define roles and responsibilities and process for operation of the Sanborn Regional School District Budget Committee. Mr. Doggett said he spent many hours reviewing and updating the old By-Laws, coming to the conclusion that they are unenforceable and so superfluous. Mr. Swasey said that there is nothing that will ever prevent him or should prevent any member from stating their private opinions. Ms. Collyer apologized for not removing the automatic signature from her emailed personal opinion, and will make sure not to send any other such communication from the SAU email address, so it is clear when she is speaking for herself and not for the BudCom as a whole. She also said that she understands that Ms. Gannon is concerned since different Chairs have different styles, and that is just the way it goes. She also said that in her opinion, the ground rules from last year could be summed up in the Golden Rule, and that as adults feels we do not need ground rules on decent behavior. Ms. Faria disagreed and found the ground rules helpful to her last year when discussions got heated over the budget proposals. Mr. Doggett said that the ground rules were not evenly enforced last year, but only when it suited the Chair, depending on who was speaking. Mr. Swasey said that terms such as 'respect' have varied interpretations and ground rules always do as well. Mr. Swasey called the motion, which failed by 2-5.

Mr. Doggett made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Miller. The motion passed unanimously and Ms. Collyer adjourned the meeting at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Annie Collyer,  
Acting Secretary