

SOUTH SHORE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Board of Trustees Meeting

Minutes of the 169th meeting held October 19, 2006 at 100 Longwater Circle, Norwell, MA.

Notice of this meeting was sent to appropriate governmental agencies and press, and was published in the "South Shore Charter Public School Update".

Trustees:

In attendance: Robert Gass (Chair), Jeffrey Seglin (Vice Chair), Michael Nuesse (Treasurer), Bill Smyth (Clerk), David Fournier, Barbara Fournier, Elaine French, Dorothy Galo, Edmund Hagerty, Jack Kelly, Andre Kim (ex officio), Dominic Slowey, Charleen Tyson, Frank White

In absentia: Leslie Jubinville (ex officio)

Also in attendance:

Staff: Mike Munhall (Executive Director), Tom Gorsuch (Principal), Kristine Shipp (Business Manager), Dan Falkner, Shelley Laselva (FASA), Claire Overlee (FASA Rep), Angie Pepin (FASA)

Guests: Miriam Brownwall, Tim Coletti, Denise Demaggio, Kathy Falkner, Kerry Griffen, Eric Greene, Debbie Shepherd, James Walsh, David Whitemyer

Press: Andrew Lightman – Patriot Ledger

Robert Gass called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: B. Smyth moved to approve the minutes to the 168th meeting. Seconded D. Galo, motion carried unanimously.

Announcements and Calendar Events:

- The next Board meeting is scheduled for November 16th 7pm.
- Annual Auction is this Saturday, October 21st. Debbie Shepherd and Mike Munhall reported. List of items available on the School's website. Auction begins at 7pm with 3 silent auction areas with staggered closings. B. Fournier has agreed to play the piano. Food, Beverages will be available. Live Auction begins at 9:30pm
- Walk a thon has raised over \$10,000, The High School students will be walking soon.

Discussion: Website Information for Trustees. Discuss whether School can provide link to email for trustees. No display of personal phone numbers or addresses. Each member to be able to access email.

Open to the Audience: no report.

FASA: Claire Overlee reported that FASA held their 1st meeting. New officers will be elected at next meeting. The agenda will be set at the next full faculty meeting.

Parents Association: David Whitemyer Chair reported.

- As mentioned the Annual Auction is this Saturday. There will be a Chowder Festival and Contest as well.
- Walk-a-thon is ongoing and has raised over \$11,000 with 25% of community participation.
- New student representative to the PA is 10th grader Ryan Brenner.
- Health and Safety Committee is meeting to discuss concerns regarding the parking lot and drop-off/pickup.
- Security is on the minds of parents.
- Next PA meeting is November 7th. Board member Mike Nuesse will attend (J. Seglin as backup). December 5th meeting Bill Smyth will attend with F. White as backup.

Business Office: Michael Nuesse reported.

- Finance Committee discussed items from the audit.
- Purchasing CD's from Boston Private.
- Build out of Science Lab may be more expensive than anticipated.
- Enrollment numbers look good – budgeted for 488 students – currently at 494.
- Strategic Plan working on actions to take to reach goal.

MOTION: M. Nuesse to approve the audit as presented. Seconded J. Seglin, motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director Report: Mike Munhall reported.

- 10th Grade MCAS scores for 2nd time in 2 years School has earned most improvement in state.
- T. Gorsuch will prepare MCAS analysis for next meeting.
- Education Committee is working the School's science curriculum.
- The advisory group of the Torri Wightman Scholarship Fund has funded students to participate in a Defensive Driving course.
- Administration is taking steps to provide security for the building.
- M. Munhall thanked Debbie Shepherd and all the parents who have worked so hard to put together the annual auction. He also thanked Denise Demaggio and Debbie Cerilli for their work in raising \$11,000 so far through the Walk-A-Thon.
- Build out of the Science Lab – need to go out to bid.
- Enrollment is at 494 as of October 1st. There was some movement over the 1st month of school but seems stable now.
- T. Gorsuch and M. Munhall attended the Derby Secondary Fair.
- Attended Mass Charter School Association board meeting and the associations encourages all to look at the candidates in this year's election.

Committee Reports:

Ad Hoc Committee: Frank White and Ed Hagerty. Board Chair thanked both, Frank & Ed, for taking on this task regarding the controversy over Michael Munhall's website. The Executive Committee reached a consensus on the process and recommendation. There will be no Executive Session as this is an open process. The following statement has the approval and concurrence from F. White, E. Hagerty and R. Gass.

South Shore Charter Public School Board of Trustees Statement

October 19, 2006

Introduction:

As we are all aware, for the past two months there has been a great deal of controversy concerning Mr. Munhall and certain internet postings that he initiated in connection with his avocation as a photographer. Particularly because of the concerns raised by a number of parents, the Board of Trustees designated two of its members, Mr. Frank White and Mr. Ed Hagerty, to act as a subcommittee to investigate the matter and to report back to the full Board, hopefully with a recommended course of action. Over the past several weeks, Mr. White and Mr. Hagerty have viewed all of the internet material which is at issue, and they have spent a significant amount of time meeting with a number of parents and staff members, as well as with Mr. Munhall, receiving their input and reactions concerning this matter. After significant reflection, Mr. White and Mr. Hagerty have reached a consensus and have arrived at a recommendation for the Board. Additionally, I should note that, as Chair, I have met at length with Mr. White and Mr. Hagerty, and I concur with the conclusions that they have reached. Thus, the following should be viewed as a joint statement coming both from me and from the subcommittee.

Findings:

We note at the start that governing a school, as the Board of Trustees must do, and leading and managing a school as a Headmaster such as Mr. Munhall must do, are not easy or simple tasks. A big part of the reason that these tasks are not simple or easy is because there is a wide divergence of opinion concerning how this whole process of education is best carried out. Some parents passionately feel that certain things should occur, while others parents just as passionately feel otherwise. Some faculty members or students feel that certain approaches, curriculum, or methodology should be used, while others feel quite differently. Some people strongly feel that one leadership style is best, while others strongly feel that it is not. This divergence of opinion can be stimulating and constructive, but it also means that it is impossible to make everyone happy. This clearly is one of those moments.

Mr. Munhall has a life outside of this school. One of his life-long interests has been photography, and he is very good at it. He recently began to pursue this interest more seriously by starting a website on which he not only displayed some of his work, but also through which he began to correspond and network with other people in the photography field. Some of this correspondence took place on other websites. Some individuals in our school community, notably some parents and staff members, who have seen Mr. Munhall's website and the other websites on which Mr. Munhall communicated, have taken offense to the content and have registered serious concerns. A number of other parents and staff members, however, have seen the same material and have found it to be noncontroversial. We as Trustees have viewed this material, and we can understand both points of view.

While we believe that Mr. Munhall did nothing illegal, unethical, or immoral, it is our feeling that Mr. Munhall made an error of judgment in this matter. We feel this way not because we think that Mr. Munhall intended to offend anyone, which we are sure that he did not. However, we think that Mr. Munhall should have been much more aware of the likelihood that people involved in this school would see his website, much more aware of the fact that these people might have a wide range of sensibilities and reactions to his material, and much more aware of the fact that these differing reactions, some of

them likely to be negative, could lead to a controversy which would be a significant distraction within the school community. This is exactly what has happened.

We think it is important to note that at the first moment that Mr. Munhall realized that some people in this community had taken offense to his website, he removed it. Also, he has been candid and has not tried to deny anything or cover anything up. In fact, the first that most members of this community learned of this situation was from Mr. Munhall himself, who at the start of the school year chose to write a letter to parents explaining what had happened. We know that Mr. Munhall regrets this situation and the distraction it has become, but we are heartened that he has taken ownership of the situation.

Michael Munhall is a fine man, a fine educator, and a fine leader. He took over this school a number of years ago in the midst of great upheaval, and he has led it, and is continuing to lead it, on a path toward excellence. In this process he has necessarily stepped on some toes, and he has made a few mistakes. This situation with the website, for reasons we have explained, may be one of those mistakes. However, this does not mean that Mr. Munhall is not the right man for this job. Moreover, despite the fact that we as Trustees wish that this current controversy had never occurred, it does not mean that we should waiver in our support for, and our faith in, Mr. Munhall. He has earned that support, and he has earned that faith.

Recommendation:

We feel that it is essential for the good of this school to put this matter behind us. Thus, it is our recommendation that no further action be taken in regard to this matter, except that I as Chair meet with Mr. Munhall with a view toward ensuring that this type of situation not occur again. We urge further that all members of this school community reunite and refocus on the business of educating the children who are within our charge.

End of Statement

MOTION: F. White to accept the statement as presented by the Chair. Seconded E. French, motion carried unanimously.

Facilities Committee: Ed Hegarty

- The request from the Art Department to install a kiln is not in the current architectural plan. The request is tabled.
- The build out of another classroom or two for next school year to accommodate an additional 20 to 40 students would require an estimated \$150,000.

Development Committee: Dom Slowey

- Received 8 resumes for Development Director only 2 with the experience needed. Interviews will be scheduled in next week or so.
- Annual Auction this Saturday.
- Rough draft of fundraising policy needs to be discussed at next committee meeting and also discuss at PA meeting.
- Fundraising goal for this year is \$50,000.

Governance: Bill Smyth reported

- Working on roll of Board Faculty Rep and Student Trustee. Will discuss with Executive Director and Principal.
- Document destruction policy on hold.
- Whistleblower Policy will be discussed when a Code of Conduct for Staff/Faculty has been formulated.
- Committee is working on cleaning up the By Laws and then resending to DOE.
- Committee is working on a statement of diversity for the School.
- Follow up on the fees for the Automobile Parking Policy – sticker fees will go to the Senior Class fund.

MOTION: B. Smyth to accept the Automobile/Parking Policy as presented. Refer dismissal to administration. E. Hagerty seconded, motion carried unanimously.

It was Moved and Voted unanimously to adjourn the Open Meeting at 8:09pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Bill Smyth (Clerk)
Pam Algera