

Petersham Center School Committee  
Minutes  
September 10, 2012

In Attendance: Superintendent Baldassarre, Chuck Berube, Dana Kennan, Russell Fontaine, Pat Martin, Tari Thomas, Rebecca Phillips, Bridget Koetsch, Wendie LeBlanc and Ann Degnan

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chuck Berube at 6:00 pm. The minutes were approved as read and seconded with all in favor.

The warrant was signed by all the school committee members. Michael Baldassarre started the school choice class size discussion. He mentioned that at the last meeting it was discussed that there would be teacher input regarding this discussion. There was a three question survey sent to each of the teachers for them to fill out and return. The last question was regarding interest in raising the number for class sizes. There was no interest by any of the teachers in raising the class numbers. Michael recommended that there be further discussion on this subject as it will help alleviate any financial burdens on the town. He told the committee that Petersham Center School was at 150% net school spending as opposed to an average of 116% by other schools.

The option of pre-school at the Petersham Center School was brought up. There were two possibilities with this; one being that interested parents would fund the pre-school, as opposed to funding by the state. The other option is to raise the budget to fund this program. This was not a favored option. Michael Baldassarre told the committee that there are already 2 pre-school students from Petersham attending in Orange. Hiring should be self-funded and there may be some small grants available for this as well. Michael also stated that if there were more revenue from school choice, this could help defray the costs.

Michael Baldassarre told the committee that this would be up to them for deliberation. He told the committee that pre-school should be as self-funded as possible, but that as time goes on and teacher's salaries rise, it becomes more difficult to stay self-funded.

Chuck stated that last time we met Dana was opposed to raising the numbers in the classroom and asked if he still felt this way? Dana stated he has no interest in changing the class count. Russell is still not interested in changing the class sizes and agrees with the teachers' decision. Michael asked if he should send any correspondence to the Finance Committee as they were the ones who requested this during the public hearing meeting. Chuck offered to speak with them also as he knows them socially and all members agreed that Michael should send a letter as well.

There was more discussion regarding funding of the pre-school. At least 16 students would be needed, but 20 or more would make it self-funded. Michael said that this should not be considered until at least 2013. Wendie LeBlanc asked if we accept children from other towns into the pre-school classroom, does that mean they are automatically able to enter our kindergarten? The answer was no and the school choice option would be available. Michael asked if he should send a notice to the community to see if there is any interest for a pre-school. Russell asked if we would be in competition with the Petersham Montessori school? While the answer is yes, Rebecca noted that there are two different philosophies involved with the two different schools and that this might not cause Montessori any problems.

Chuck thought that we should still take Montessori into account when thinking of this. Michael told the committee that he would get a survey and needs assessment out and then go from there.

Under New Business Pat Martin informed the committee about the Requirements on Evaluation of Educators. She handed out a sheet which explained the regulations and an overview. She explained that this is now a regulation for all licensed, waived, etc. staff in the building. There is a rubric that must be followed for the evaluation; there are 4 standards for teachers; 16 indicators, and 33 elements. There is also a 5-step Evaluation Cycle which Pat summarized for the committee. Pat explained that they are meeting with the Teacher's Union to agree on the language and are in the process of finishing this so they can inform the committee. Pat went on to explain what an enormous task this would be and that they will be piloting this to see what adjustments need to be made. Reports need to go to the state as well.

Chuck told the committee that the staff did an amazing job with adjusting to this. The bottom line was there would be two valuable tools in which teacher's could use: one would be for teachers to evaluate themselves and the other would help in that if you had a slacker on your staff, you could use this tool to help get rid of them. Wendie added that the second tool would also be useful for teachers that might need extra help. Pat told the committee that there is another meeting next Monday at 3:15 p.m. on this.

Superintendent Baldassarre told the committee that the Superintendent's evaluation has also changed. He told the committee that this would be released next week. He asked if someone from the Petersham Committee would be interested in meeting with other committee members to help with the Superintendent's Evaluation. Russell Fontaine was asked if he would be that member and he agreed.

New Business: Items for the next meeting are Teacher Evaluation; Superintendent Evaluation; Needs Assessment on the Pre School; and Correspondence to Mr. Regan and Mr. Mandel of the Finance Committee.

The date of the next meeting will be October 23, 2012 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m. – All in favor