

Ludlow Elementary/Union #39 Joint School Board
Special Meeting
Wednesday, July 12, 2006
Multi-purpose Room – Ludlow Elementary School
7:30 p.m.

LES Board: Wayne Hammond, Gary Pollender, Doug Ficken, Angie Benson-Ciufo, Beth Merrill

Union #39 Board: Diana Chimbolo, Ralph Pace, Brent Karner, David Slivka, Allen Seiple, Randy Bixby

Staff: Frank Perotti, James Frail

Public: Duncan Love, Jerry Lindsley

Mr. Hammond called the meeting to order at 7:58 p.m.

Ms. Chimbolo introduced Mr. James Frail, the new Black River Middle and High School Principal.

II. Approval of minutes: May 9, 2006: Mr. Karner **moved** to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2006 regular meeting. Mr. Seiple seconded. Mr. Bixby stated that there were reasons that the Mt. Holly School District did not want to participate in the unified school district and those reasons were not reflected in the minutes but should have been.

Mr. Karner tabled his motion to approve the minutes so that the minutes may be amended and presented again at the next joint boards meeting.

III. Community survey:

Mr. Hammond introduced Mr. Jerry Lindsley. Mr. Lindsley was present to discuss the community survey. Mr. Lindsley discussed his company, the Center for Research and Public Policy, started in 1979 in Texas. The company moved to New England in 1984.

Mr. Lindsley stated that there were approximately 1,500 households between the two towns of Mt. Holly and Ludlow. He proposed a random sample of 300 completed telephone calls and suggested that some second homeowners also be included in this sample.

Mr. Lindsley outlined the process of the survey. There would first be a project initiation session to determine the boards' needs and then a draft survey would be created. The boards or appointed representatives would review and approve the draft survey. Mr. Lindsley stated that there was a +6% margin for error in a sample size of 300 results. Mr. Lindsley stated that the survey can include open and closed questions. His firm would complete the fielding, data analysis and then report their results back to the board.

Mr. Lindsley added that multiple presentations are free of charge and the fees are as proposed. Ms. Merrill asked if a mix of instruments, i.e. mail or phone, could be used or

if just phone would be used, and what about the no call ban. Mr. Lindsley stated that the no call ban does not affect the survey because nothing is being sold. Mr. Lindsley stated that mail survey results are not as reliable as phone results. The phone survey is more expensive but the results will be representative of the community and a phone survey will guarantee that 300 results are received. Phone surveys can also meet deadlines whereas mail survey deadlines sometimes have to be extended.

Ms. Merrill asked what time of day calls would be made. Mr. Lindsley stated that calls are made from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and then one weekend day from 10 a.m. to 4p.m.

Mr. Karner wondered about Mr. Lindsley's company working with a small group as they listed national organizations as references. Mr. Lindsley stated that his company works with 150 municipalities that are approximately the same size as Ludlow and Mt. Holly.

Mr. Hammond asked if and how questions would be tiered. Mr. Lindsley stated that tiered questions can be built into the survey, i.e. "if you support the school then are you willing to pay a little more, some more, a lot more", etc. Mr. Lindsley noted that question placement is important to ensure objectivity.

Mr. Pace asked if cell phones or land lines would be called. Mr. Lindsley stated that land lines are called.

It was discussed that a public relations campaign by the board about the survey was important. Ms. Merrill stated that the timeline for the survey should be considered because calls should be not be made during school vacation times.

Mr. Pace **moved** to approve hiring The Center for Research and Public Policy to complete the survey as presented, not to exceed \$8,400, with the option to include second homeowners' input, pending acceptance by Ludlow Elementary School. Mr. Karner seconded. Mr. Slivka questioned whether it was legal to make a motion and take action at a joint board meeting. It was discussed that each board was a separate board that could take action. The Union #39 voted on the motion. The motion passed with Mr. Bixby opposing it.

Ms. Benson-Ciufo **moved** to approve hiring The Center for Research and Public Policy to complete the survey as presented, not to exceed \$8,400, with the option to include second homeowners' input. Mr. Ficken stated that the contract needs to be changed to read the towns of Ludlow and Mt. Holly rather than Rutland and Mt. Holly. Mr. Ficken stated that he would not support the option to survey second homeowners as they are not present in Ludlow this time of the year. It was discussed that second homeowners will be contacted at their primary residences. Mr. Lindsley stated that the sample split between Mt. Holly and Ludlow will be based on population.

Mr. Seiple stated that it was important to talk with second homeowners to determine the potential level of support for donations towards the endowment of a private academy.

Mr. Perotti stated that Mr. Hammond, Mr. Frank Heald and Ms. Chimbolo met with a representative of Citizens' Bank to learn more about managing endowment funds. Mr. Perotti stated that it was important to know if there was a potential source of endowment funds.

The Ludlow School Board voted on the motion to hire The Center for Research and Public Policy to proceed with the survey. The vote was tied, with Mr. Pollender voting no, Ms. Benson-Ciufo voting yes, and Mr. Ficken and Ms. Merrill abstaining from voting. The motion passed when Mr. Hammond broke the tied vote with a yes vote.

Mr. Lindsley asked that one or two representatives from each board and Mr. Perotti meet with his firm for the project initiation session. Ms. Benson-Ciufo, Ms. Merrill, Mr. Seiple, Ms. Chimbolo, Mr. Slivka and possibly Mr. Hammond will form a committee to meet with the firm for the project initiation session. The committee was charged with presenting a draft survey at a joint boards' meeting for approval. The timeline of the survey will be determined by the committee.

IV. Armory Status: Tabled

V. Para-educators Highly Qualified Status: Mr. Hammond discussed the paraeducators' request to use testing to achieve highly qualified status to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act. Mr. Ficken noted that at the last joint board meeting the administration was asked to provide information about what tests other school districts are using. Mr. Hammond stated that there was a misunderstanding that the boards approved the use of a test to meet highly qualified status as part of the paraeducators' bargaining unit agreement.

Mr. Hammond reported that Dr. Joan Frangiose stated that many other districts require an associates' degree, in any subject. Mr. Hammond stated that in the paraeducators' master agreement, the amount of their professional development reimbursement was increased. Ms. Merrill stated that the real issue was about paraeducators that are currently employed by the district but do not have an associates degree. Mr. Perotti noted that the Rutland Windsor Supervisory Union is not a Title I school district so an associates' degree is not required. Ms. Merrill stated that paraeducators in other districts use the Para Ed Learning Network so that they receive additional training in their field in addition to the test. Mr. Seiple asked if paraeducators with an associates' degree will be required to enroll in the Para Ed Learning Network. Mr. Perotti stated that paraeducators are being encouraged to achieve an associates' degree and if they are not willing or able to, then they are encouraged to complete the Para Ed Learning Network.

Mr. Hammond stated that the question was what the boards will recognize as highly qualified status. It was discussed that new hires should have an associates' degree. Mr. Seiple and Mr. Slivka stated that it could be difficult for employees to achieve a degree while working and an alternative such as the Para Ed Learning Network should be offered.

It was discussed that the level of training gained through the Para Ed Learning Network would be less than the training received in an associates' degree program, however, the training received in the Para Ed Learning Network would be related to the education field. Ms. Merrill explained that employees with an associates' degree may want to complete the Para Ed Learning Network for professional development.

Mr. Hammond stated that the boards must decide whether or not to recognize the test as a determining factor for highly qualified status. Mr. Hammond stated that Dr. Frangiose would prefer that all paraeducators have an associates' degree. Mr. Perotti stated that a change in pay should be related to the achievement of an associates' degree due to an increased level of work to obtain that status, whereas the Para Ed Learning Network is not as much work.

It was consensus of the board to table the decision until the next regular meeting so that Dr. Frangiose could answer questions.

IV. Armory Status: Mr. Hammond reported that there was a meeting on Friday between Mr. Pat Valente and the General of Duty. Mr. Hammond stated that previously it was the consensus of both boards to gain ownership of the armory. He added that board members received feedback that it would be less expensive for taxpayers if the Town of Ludlow owned it.

Ms. Chimbolo stated that she completed a cost comparison to determine the cost difference if the school or town owned the armory. Ms. Chimbolo's summary assumed that the school or town would assume ownership with no repairs or upgrades.

At a size of 13,750 square feet, the cost of the building would be \$3.205 per square foot without any custodial charges. This cost would be split between Black River Middle and High School and Ludlow Elementary School based on a 64/36% split. When this amount is computed with the Act 68 formula, the cost to a residential taxpayer is 2 cents per \$100 for Ludlow taxpayers and 2 cents per \$100 for Mt. Holly. If the town owned the armory with the same expenses then the cost was .0067 per \$100 for Ludlow taxpayers.

Mr. Seiple asked how the Town of Ludlow felt about assuming ownership and what the town would have to do to gain ownership. Mr. Pace stated that the purchase would have to be voted upon. Ms. Benson-Ciufo asked if the schools could purchase the armory first and then transfer ownership to the town with conditions for use by the school. Mr. Hammond stated that town departments are also concerned about their department budgets.

It was clarified that only the Ludlow School Board could own property and the Union #39 could not. Mr. Slivka stated that before a decision about purchasing the armory was made the boards needed to know what the armory required for maintenance and upgrades. Mr. Hammond stated that there was a perception by taxpayers about Act 68 and the costs associated with the schools owning additional property.

Mr. Hammond stated that there seems to more movement about the possibility of the armory changing owners. The schools and town are clear about what they would like to use the armory for and both entities' needs are in harmony. Mr. Hammond stated that the town is interested in owning the property and allowing the school to use it. Mr. Seiple and Mr. Pace suggested that Mr. Hammond and Ms. Chimbolo meet with the Ludlow Selectboard.

It was noted that the minutes of the May 9, 2006 joint board meeting should be changed because they read that the armory has been listed as surplus property. Mr. Perotti clarified that the armory has not been listed yet as surplus property.

It was discussed that there was not enough information to make a decision about gaining ownership of the armory. Mr. Slivka stated that once it becomes surplus property there may be other non-profit organizations interested in purchasing the property.

Mr. Slivka noted that the armory was a tank unit and the ground may need to be checked for contaminated soil.

Mr. Karner asked if the schools were willing to assume ownership of the property if it has problems. Mr. Ficken asked if there was a first refusal clause in the contract that transferred property from the Ludlow School Board to the military. Ms. Chimbolo stated that no one has found a copy of the contract yet. Ms. Chimbolo and Mr. Hammond will meet with the Ludlow Select Board.

VII. Executive Session:

Mr. Ficken **moved** to enter executive session at 9:37 p.m. to discuss custodian negotiations. Mr. Perotti and Mr. Frail were invited to attend.

The boards returned from executive session at 9:51 p.m.

Ms. Benson-Ciufo **moved** to approve the custodial bargaining unit contact as presented pending approval by the custodians. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Slivka **moved** to approve the custodial bargaining unit contact as presented pending approval by the custodians. Mr. Pace seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Adjournment:

The project initiation session for the survey will be August 9, 2006 at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Ficken **moved** to adjourn at 9:52 p.m. and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Karner **moved** to adjourn at 9:52 p.m. Mr. Pace seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Balch
Board Recording Secretary