



Board of Selectmen **Workshop Meeting Minutes** **October 27, 2015**

The regular meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Hearing Room by Chairman Erik Tolley. Selectmen present: Norm Holcomb, Jim Quirk, Tracy Post, and Michael Stone. Also attending: Town Administrator, William Hinchey. The Board of Selectmen gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Dennis-Yarmouth Charter School Presentation

Mr. Kelly Kevin Lydon gave a brief outline of his background as a real estate, probate, and criminal defense attorney in Barnstable. Additionally, he teaches on a part time basis in the D-Y School District. He went on to explain his initiative to establish a charter school, particularly at the D-Y High School level due to, in his opinion, the lower standards of education within the D-Y School District, the number of students he has represented in his criminal defense practice which he felt was a failure of the schools, and the level of bureaucracy within the School District and the School Committee. Further, Mr. Lydon expressed concern over the low test scores of lower-income and special needs students within the D-Y School District that would greatly benefit from a charter school. Mr. Lydon commented that he felt the curriculum within the D-Y School District was "watered down" compared to the challenging curriculum taught at charter schools. Additionally, Mr. Lydon discussed the level of administrative costs within the D-Y School District due to excessive levels of bureaucracy, leaving less funds for student education. He went on to outline the successes of charter schools, particularly the Sturgis charter school, which he attributes to the board of trustees and less levels of bureaucracy. Mr. Lydon was unable to provide specific figures or details to support his assertions.

The Board commented on Mr. Lydon's presentation and took exception to his characterization of D-Y High School students being excessively involved in the criminal justice system. The Board asked Mr. Lydon for specific data to support his claims of public school students in the D-Y school system. Selectman Stone explained that he has extensive experience interacting and representing D-Y high school students and does not believe that D-Y students are more involved with the criminal justice than any other high school students throughout the Cape.

Selectman Holcomb asked Mr. Lydon to describe what he envisions a charter high school in Yarmouth to be geographically. Mr. Lydon explained that he envisions a regional charter high school which would be open to all communities across the Cape. Mr. Holcomb asked about the administrative costs of a charter school versus the D-Y School District and the enrollment numbers. Mr. Lydon was unable to provide specific data on the administrative costs but felt the enrollment numbers would be in the neighborhood of 500 students.

Chairman Tolley thanked Mr. Lydon for his presentation.

2. D-Y School Committee Candidate Interviews

Chairman Tolley introduced the five candidates to be interviewed and asked each to provide their personal background and reasons for submitting letters of interest. The five candidates are:

Mr. Steve Edwards, Mr. Brian Sullivan, Ms. Michelle Conover, Ms. Mary-Beth Capobianco, and Mr. Joe Glynn.

Selectman Holcomb started the questioning, asking about choices and actions the candidates would make if the Superintendent submitted a budget that would require an override. The candidates provided their views on making cuts that would not affect the education of the students but would look to cutting administrative costs. The candidates also indicated that communication among the school board members is key to success of the board and the school system, as well as understanding the other fiscal requirements of the town.

Selectman Quirk asked the candidates to list their top five priorities in establishing a long-range plan for the school district. The candidates outlined what their priorities would be which included safety of the students, excellence in education, fiscal responsibility, communication among the committee and administration as well as with parents, and transparency of the school committee's actions to the public.

Selectman Post asked the candidates their ideas to increase the achievement level at Mattacheese Middle School. The candidates explained their views on focusing on the students and communicating with the parents as well as recognizing that middle school students are becoming young adults and need to be treated as such. Additional ideas were presented to specifically identify students in need who transfer into the district, the physical aspects of the structure which is in need of renovation, expanding parent involvement in the students' education, and improved communication between teachers and parents.

Selectman Stone asked the candidates to describe what they see their role as if selected as a school committee member and what in their background makes them qualified to fulfill that role. The candidates explained the role of a school committee member is to demonstrate leadership, ask the right questions, and provide direction to the school administration. Additional comments were made by the candidates that the role of a school committee member is to hire and fire the superintendent, negotiate contracts, formulate and approve a budget, and communication. Comments were also made that the school committee should have a business relationship with the administration, teachers, and students - they should not be friends.

Chairman Tolley asked the candidates their views of supporting the school board's decisions even if they are a dissenting vote on the school board in terms of voicing their opinions publicly. The candidates felt it would depend on the topic but in terms of student safety, the candidates felt they would publicly comment on their personal views and opinions on the issue, but would support and respect the board's decision. Some candidates expressed their views that leaders should fight to try to influence their peers on a matter they feel passionately about.

Selectman Holcomb commented on the need for a change in school policies with regard to teacher ethics as reported by various boards and in the media. He asked the candidates' views on whether they felt the current policies were adequate. The candidates commented that policies are not adequate or specific enough. A review of other school district policies indicated there are specific policies for fraternization that the D-Y School District should adopt. Additionally, student handbooks addressing the issue are also available in other districts. Comments were made regarding the need for a culture change on the school board to ensure the board is accountable to the towns and parents.

Selectman Quirk asked the candidates their opinions on how students are identified who may be in need of an individualized education program (IEP) and how the school committee is involved in the process. Candidates indicated that there are privacy issues involved in identifying students in need of an IEP; parents need to address their concerns with teachers so the best course of action is taken and a program is developed for that student. The school committee does not play a primary role in developing IEP's for students but could certainly serve as advocates for students.

Selectman Post asked the candidates' views on how the school budget is built and how would they balance the needs of the schools versus the other needs of the town. The candidates expressed their opinions that prioritizing school needs should be a vital point in developing a budget. They discussed a number of factors that are involved in building a budget and addressed some of the factors that are, at times, outside the school committee's control, such as unfunded mandates, additional EEL students, etc.

Selectman Stone asked the candidates if they were not selected for this position would they consider running for election to the school committee in the spring, and if not, why not; also, if they are not sure, what would have to happen to convince them to run. The candidates gave their individual views on running for election and wanting to serve on the committee. They expressed the importance of serving your community and giving back to your committee.

Chairman Tolley asked the candidates to give their closing statements.

3. Adjourn

MOTION: To move that the Board of Selectmen adjourn to executive session in Meeting Room B for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining for Police Department and Fire Department unions. The Board will not return to open session following the executive session.

Motion by: Tracy Post

Seconded by: Mike Stone

At 8:40 p.m., roll call vote taken: Aye: Holcomb, Quirk, Post, Stone, Tolley

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Dennehy

DISTRIBUTED MATERIAL AGENDA PACKET

- Email to BOS from Kelly Kevin Lydon dated October 18, 2015 re: Charter School for DY High School
- Letter to BOS from Mary-Beth Capobianco dated October 15, 2015 re: Letter of Interest
- Email to Board of Selectmen from Stephen L. Edwards dated October 13, 2015 re: D-Y School Committee Vacancy
- Email to Board of Selectmen from Brian Sullivan dated October 6, 2015 re: Letter of Interest
- Email to Board of Selectmen from Michelle LaRowe Conover dated October 9, 2015 re: D-Y School Committee Letter of Interest
- Email to Board of Selectmen from Joseph B. Glynn dated October 7, 2015 re: D-Y School Committee Vacancy