

TOWN OF FOXBOROUGH
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
October 21, 2009

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FOXBOROUGH, MA 02035

Committee Members Present: Christina Belanger, Lauren Bitar, Ellizabeth Blair, Jim DeVellis, Kevin Donase, Michael Fitzmaurice, Thom Freeman, Bob Garber, John Gray, Cynthia Khalifa, Jeff Rudd, Jenna Strickland, Steve Udden, Gary Whitehouse.

Members Absent: Brian Walton

Others Present: Mark F. Logan, Executive Director, Foxborough Regional Charter School
Ron Griffin, Director Teaching & Learning
Lesa Denis Mahamed, FRCS Parent

The meeting was brought to order at 7:30 p.m. by Jim DeVellis, Chairman.

7:30 – Mark Logan, Executive Director, distributed a packet of material for review and discussion on the Foxborough Regional Charter School including a power point presentation, a Vision and Mission Statement as well as a copy of 2007-2008 Annual Report. Mr. Logan first highlighted the areas of the power point presentation that he felt would be most helpful and informative for the Committee members. He said the Charter Schools are held to very high levels of scrutiny by the State and are highly regulated having to renew the charter every five years. Foxborough Regional Charter School has a present enrollment of 1,144 students from twenty-five communities and a waiting list of about 1300. Students are chosen by a lottery system. Mark Logan said that after two years of evaluation, a change in the organizational structure has been made, a more functional assignment of responsibility is the end result. He pointed out that this came about after many meetings with parents, community representatives, teachers and the Board of Trustees. Each academic area has its own mini principal. He explained that there are workshops held for parents that help improve learning conditions in the home with activities and games to support students in their homework. He added that the Charter School has the flexibility and staff to make modifications in the curriculum and they can look at the needs of the students.

Ron Griffin, Director of Teaching and Learning, said that because the school is a single structure he has the ability to streamline what the students learn from K – 12. He pointed out that teachers have the opportunity for professional development; staff also meets on a weekly basis to discuss observations and feedback to help students meet the academic goals. Ron Griffin added that in addition to academic goals, the students are exposed to achieving high standards of moral and civic conduct and an understanding of people of diverse ethnic background. Students are also encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities and community work.

Mark Logan addressed the issues regarding common misconceptions. He said all students have to take the MCAS tests under the same guidelines as are required of all public schools. The Charter School is required to provide services for special needs children. He took a moment to explain how the blind lottery is used for enrollment purposes. He said there is no intention to select any specific group of students. He said families that have a child enrolled and wish to enroll another child, are given preference. The funding formula was discussed. Mark Logan pointed out that the formula is flawed and needs to be addressed. The per pupil cost is different in each school district; the district receives 100% of that cost for the first year the child is enrolled in the Charter School, the second year the district receives 60% and 40% for the third year. He talked about having certified teachers. He said currently 97% of the staff are certified, licensed and highly qualified teachers. The Charter School does provide extracurricular activities such as sports, music, art and drama. Mark listed the athletic opportunities and said the school participates in the state wide charter school athletic association.

Lesla Denis Mahamed, FRCS, a parent, spoke of her experience at Foxborough Regional Charter School and highlighted her background as a health care professional. Two of her children were at the Taylor School and one child in the Charter School. She said academics alone are not what makes an individual. The thing she likes best about the Charters School is the diversity she see there. She feels this gives students an opportunity to learn how to interact with people from all cultures and backgrounds.

A general discussion ensued. Questions and comments from the Committee included an inquiry as to how the budget for the Charter School comes into the overall Town budget, is there a special line item, a request for further clarification of the State funding process and how the waiting list is used in conjunction with the lottery. It was noted that the regional school bus system is through a five-year grant. The number of Foxborough children enrolled is about 150 or 160. Another inquiry made was whether any provisions are made for gifted students. All these issues were addressed by Mark Logan and Ron Griffin. Mark invited the Committee members to visit the school at any time and to even hold a future meeting there.

8:30 – Jim DeVellis distributed the latest copy of the liaison assignments for review and changes.

8:35 – Review and Discussion of Zoning Articles for Special Town Meeting – A lengthy discussion was held. Jim DeVellis led the discussion on each of the articles by referring to the questions and comments on the proposed zoning articles as submitted by Committee members. After discussions on each article, the Committee members were comfortable with all but Article 5, proposed changes for the S-1 district. The major question on Article 5 was - Is this in the best interest of the Town? Jenna Strickland suggested that the Committee should be provided with a current map of the district including the Economic Overlay district, total acreage and the number of parcels that would be affected if this article passes. Jim DeVellis pointed out that this does not meet the original goals and objectives of the S-1 district and would passage of the article really make it easier for development. He questioned the purpose of bringing this forward for a STM. He said there are many questions still to be answered and that it would make more sense to bring this before the Annual Town Meeting in May. It was suggested that the "AdCom Questions/Comments..." be sent to Planning Board with the comment that the Committee is against Article 5 and that it should be moved to the ATM.

Minutes – The Minutes for the Advisory Committee Meeting of September 30, 2009 were reviewed.

Motion by Thom Freeman to approve the Minutes of September 30, 2009 as amended.
Seconded by Gary Whitehouse.

Vote: 14-0-0.

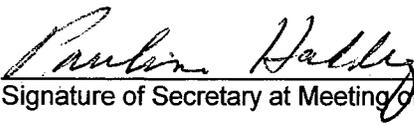
Motion to adjourn by Lauren Bitar. Seconded by Bob Garber.

Vote: 14-0-0 Meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Minutes Approved by Vote of the Advisory Committee.

Date of Meeting *11/04/09* Vote: *12-0-0*


Signature of Chairperson at Meeting of Vote:


Signature of Secretary at Meeting of October 21, 2009