

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Marjorie Fisher on Monday, June 25, 2007 at 6:35 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

A. ROLL CALL: Present were, Marjorie Fisher, Dorothea Hooper, Audra Lurvey, Carolyn Mebert, Beth Setear, Brandon Foye, and Doris Grady.

Also present were Superintendent John O'Connor and Laurie Verville, Business Manager.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Beth Setear led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C: CITIZENS' FORUM: No one addressed the Board.

D: SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION: Board members shared their comments of the Superintendent's evaluation.

Chairperson Fisher read the following into the record: "A yearly evaluation of the Superintendent is one of the School Board's priorities. During the last two months, the Board has completed a comprehensive evaluation of Superintendent John O'Connor. This involved a detailed process by each Board member, rating several skills considered necessary to meet previously determined goals developed cooperatively between the Superintendent and the Board. After the individual ratings were completed, the Board met as a whole to discuss their findings and arrived at a common consensus. The four major educational areas that were evaluated involved the following educational concepts:

- Educational Leadership inclusive of goals, curriculum, professional development, and supervision.
- Fiscal Leadership (writing budgets and all infrastructures.)
- Human Resource Leadership relating to staff, personnel, community and labor relations.
- Ethics of Leadership and governance – setting policy, meeting preparation, participation, and accountability.

With all areas reviewed, we, as a Board, are pleased to report that Superintendent O'Connor has received a commendable evaluation with the Board more than satisfied with performance. New goals will be developed for the school year 2007/2008, with discussion and acceptance of these goals to take place. Evaluation of this new direction will take place at the conclusion of the upcoming school year."

The Board chair then opened discussion to the Board.

Audra Lurvey read the following into the record: "The Superintendent is a diligent and skilled manager of the administrative and support staff. He sets high expectations for himself and all district administrators and works to ensure all are living up to his, and our, expectations. Dr. O'Connor has been very supportive of two first time principals, and regularly meets with the

administrators to discuss issues and offer advice and support. His role as a mentor is appreciated by the Board.

This year we experienced the turn over of critical district leaders. Dr. O'Connor is cognizant of the loss these individuals represent and is striving to replace key staff with competent, skilled, and talented individuals who will work to improve the quality of education in the Dover School District.

Dr. O'Connor's leadership enabled the Board to develop a budget that met the parameters established by the Joint Fiscal Committee, an ad hoc group comprised of School Board and City Council members, whose primary goal was to slow down spending. Prior to the School Board receiving the Superintendent's budget, Dr. O'Connor and the administrative team eliminated over 1.5 million dollars in new staff and materials for the 2007/2008 budget. Although a difficult and professionally unsettling experience, the Superintendent established as a priority to safeguard our core business. Although we did not grow our core business, we did not suffer significant reductions of teachers and staff.

We have instructed the Superintendent to examine how the Dover School District can reduce the impact staffing has on the annual budget. He has come up with a number of plans that may or may not be approved by the School Board. He has pointed out to the School Board the significant increases in areas that have had an adverse effect on the formation of our budget. We have instructed him to continue to seek out ways for us to control costs without affecting the quality of education.

This year the Dover School District entered into a new five-year transportation agreement with First Student Transportation Services. Along with the Business Manager, the two were able to craft a contract that is fiscally sound and will greatly improve the safety and services of our student transportation network.

All district employees will soon have up-to-date job descriptions. This 36-month process is ongoing with many teaching categories undergoing review at this time. Coupled with the new professional staff evaluation plan, all employees of the Dover School District are now evaluated on a yearly basis using specific criteria designed to measure individual performance.

Over the course of the last 18-months, Dr. O'Connor has successfully negotiated three labor contracts and is currently working on a fourth. By having the Superintendent serve as the chief negotiator, the Dover School District has saved thousands of dollars in legal and negotiating expenses.

This past year, the Superintendent introduced a planning tool to all administrators designed to encourage staff at each school to examine student performance data to help them set improvement goals. This 10-Step School Improvement Process is modeled on the New Jersey Department of Education Plan and holds a great deal of promise if implemented well. This year, all schools will be setting improvement goals based on student performance data including the

NWEA testing data, the New Hampshire Comprehensive Assessment Program data, and local assessment data.”

Dorothea Hooper then stated she had worked with many other Superintendents over the years and that she had never seen a Superintendent so visible in the school and at community events as Dr. O’Connor. She added she is pleased with the Superintendent’s communication with the Board, keeping them apprised of every crisis and controversy, to enable board members to share the facts when contacted by constituents. Ms. Hooper added that she had never seen anyone “squeeze a budget” as much as Dr. O’Connor, and he did an incredible job of finding cuts that would have the least impact on the children. Lastly, she added that although Dr. O’Connor places demands on his staff, he is a “workaholic” working many hours, seeing the goal of doing the task, not clocking in hours.”

Ms. Grady added, “What’s left to say?”

Dr. Mebert mentioned her belief that one of Dr. O’Connor’s strengths is that he holds his building leaders accountable allowing them to have “ownership of their buildings.”

Ms. Lurvey then read the following into the record: “When Dr. O’Connor was employed by the Dover School Board, he and the Board agreed to enter into a two-year contract in which the salary and benefits were clearly articulated. This two-year contract is somewhat non-traditional, as most Boards extend Superintendent’s contracts ranging from a three to five years. Dr. O’Connor and the School Board mutually agreed on a two-year contract that has a provision which allows the School Board to add a year to the contract at the time of a successful performance review.

Because Dr. O’Connor’s performance rating was above average, the School Board added a year to the existing contract. Both parties recognize the benefits of this type of contract. First, the District is not saddled with a long-term commitment to a Superintendent. And, second, the contract provides Dr. O’Connor with safeguards that ensure he will have ample notice if the Board ever decided not to renew his contract. We believe this contract is a “win-win” for both District and Superintendent.

As a School Board, we believe that Dr. O’Connor’s performance for the past year warranted contract consideration. We felt that he’s done a fine job of providing leadership for the Dover School District. The Superintendent’s salary increase for this year is 5.9%. There were no additional provisions added to the contract, nor were any of the existing benefits expanded or redefined.

And finally, we believe that the contract we have with our Superintendent is an exceptional value for the community of Dover. We have retained the services of a dedicated, competent, and capable educator who is committed to ensuring all our students receive a quality education.” Chairperson Fisher added that the process of evaluation of the Superintendent had been very long, tedious, and abstract. She requested the Superintendent to schedule a workshop to decide

on a new evaluation tool to use next year. Ms. Mebert suggested it be scheduled “sooner than later.” Ms. Fisher agreed it should be done over the next few weeks. Ms. Hooper agreed, stating the current evaluative tool includes areas the Board cannot really evaluate. Dr. O’Connor stated the next Board meeting will be held on July 9, 2007 and that he will be out of town for the July 23rd workshop. He suggested the topic be added to the August 27th workshop agenda. He added his belief that the first place to begin the process is with goal setting. Working cooperatively with the Board, they need to articulate priorities they want to see accomplished over the next twelve months. Then, working cooperatively, they should prioritize 3 to 5 areas and give the Superintendent the opportunity to place them in the proper format to use to evaluate the Superintendent next year. They can then devise the available criteria and refine the document and begin the process in August.

Ms. Fisher noted, “It (the current process) is a challenge.”

Dr. O’Connor asked Board members to think about bringing 1 or 2 priorities each to come up with 3 to 5 concrete goals to serve as a basis for future Superintendent evaluation.

F. ADJOURNMENT: At 6:47 p.m., Audra Lurvey moved, Carolyn Mebert seconded, to adjourn to Special Session. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

Respectfully submitted,

BRANDON FOYE, SECRETARY
Dover School Board
BF/kgb
June 26, 2007