Committee Members present: Vice Chair Andrew Polouski, George Abbott, Holly Eaves, Bill Felkner (left at 2:08 AM), Deborah Jennings (arrived at 5:45 PM), Bob Petit, Ron Preuhs and Terri Serra. Absent: Chair William Day, Giancarlo Cicchetti and Andrew McQuaide.

Administrators present: Superintendent Barry Ricci, Director of Administration and Finance Brian Stanley and Human Resource Administrator Susan Rogers. Also present: Mediator Leslie Williamson, Esquire and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

Superintendent Ricci informed the Committee that he received a directive from the Mediator that he, Brian Stanley, Carri Barr and Pete Gingras would meet at 2:30 PM to review and clarify possible items of agreement. The Mediator’s email was shared with Committee members and will be made part of the minutes. George Abbott felt it was unconstitutional to have the meeting without a School Committee representative.

Superintendent Ricci distributed a listing of the items that had been discussed but never TA’d. The Mediator would like to clean up and would like these off the table. Andrew Polouski stated he would not agree to anything unless the entire package was agreed to. Bob Petit felt that if the Committee agrees to TA these items, it takes away any power the Committee would have to use them. Superintendent Ricci stated you can tell the Mediator you agree but do not want to TA them at this time. George Abbott stated he wanted a ruling as to whether or not the meeting was even legal.

The Superintendent announced that he also received an email from Pete Gingras who stated he will not support Campus 2010. Pete’s email was shared with the Committee and will be made part of the minutes. Andrew Polouski would like a ruling from the Mediator as to whether or not the Union violated the gag order. Bill Felkner responded that the Mediator can’t tell us what to do; he can only suggest that we not talk. Terri Serra questioned what % co-pay is paid by the Union to which it was noted that they do not pay 20% as was reported. Terri felt the Committee should go public with the proposals. Holly Eaves added that she was called and several Committee members received letters after one of their meetings. Where’s the line?

The remaining articles and items that are still on the table were discussed. George Abbott, for the record, stated that it is not appropriate for administration to meet with the Mediator and Union without School Committee representation. He would like an inquiry. Deborah Jennings commented that she attended the training for new School Committee members and learned that there are multiple models for negotiations. This was not illegal. The Superintendent is our Negotiator and has the right to represent us. Holly Eaves questioned who would do the inquiry to which it was noted that would be the Department of Labor.

George Abbott made a motion, seconded by Bill Felkner and it was VOTED: That the School Committee conduct an inquiry as to whether or not the Mediator had the legal authority to have a meeting without School Committee representation. In favor: Abbott, Eaves, Felkner, Petit, Preuhs and Serra. Opposed: Polouski. Abstained: Jennings. The motion carried by a vote of 6 in favor with 1 opposed and 1 abstention.

The Mediator entered the room at 6:07 PM. Terri Serra apologized that she had to leave the meeting for a sporting event her daughter was participating in. She would return if the meeting is not adjourned prior to the event ending.
Andrew Polouski discussed the gag order and the fact that he was named in the newspaper. He felt he was being accused of keeping everything secret and the Union was being complimented for sharing information. He felt they should be reprimanded for not following orders. Unfortunately, the Mediator responded that he cannot do anything about it. He can only set the rules. He did not realize that the School Committee was required to take minutes and feels that all information should remain confidential.

George Abbott informed the Mediator that he felt the meeting he scheduled was inappropriate because a School Committee member was not present. He stated that the Committee will ask its attorney to review whether or not this was appropriate. The Mediator explained his reasons for calling the meeting and apologized if anyone was offended. Nothing was bargained or created to which George responded that “we are the elected body and we derive our power from the people. At a minimum we should have been notified.”

Bill Felkner felt that the purpose of the meeting was in opposition to what the Committee wanted. He felt at the last meeting the Committee had “drawn a line in the sand.” At this point the meeting was turned over to Deborah Jennings to Chair. Deborah stated that she did not agree. There are multiple ways of negotiating and this was not even considered negotiating. She was appreciative that the Mediator took a few hours to put this together. Bill Felkner felt it was the Committee’s decision to make, not the Mediator’s. Maybe their point would not have been to continue negotiating. Deb Jennings responded that the Committee can make a motion not to TA these items. George Abbott added that he felt this was done behind the Committee’s backs. Mediator Williamson replied that they just reviewed articles that have been discussed but not TA’d. Nothing is agreed to until a final contract is signed. We could have done that now and spent another few hours on it. It was done this way to expedite tonight’s meeting. Holly Eaves stated she appreciates the work that has been done. There are many lessons to be learned from these negotiations. We should just move on and settle the contract to which Bob Petit agreed.

The Mediator reviewed several articles needing clarification. Article 25.6 (regarding a shift differential) stated shifts begin at 3:00 PM. It was noted that some custodians (about 10) begin work at 2:00 PM.

Bob Petit made a motion, seconded by Ron Preuhs and it was
VOTED: To change Article 25.6 from 3:00 PM to 2:00 PM. In favor: Eaves, Jennings, Petit and Preuhs. Abstained: Abbott, Felkner and Polouski. The motion carried by a vote of 4 in favor with 3 abstained (Serra was not in attendance for the vote).

A great deal of discussion ensued on Article 10.1 regarding health insurance co-pay as it pertains to individuals who work 20 hours or less. There are currently 5 in this category. It was suggested that language be added which will require these individuals to take the first available posted position in their job classification or forfeit their benefits. If no job becomes available, they will have two years to bump into a new position before benefits are dropped.

All other articles were reviewed and clarified.

Bob Petit made a motion, seconded by Ron Preuhs and it was
VOTED: To tentatively agree to the articles as revised and rewritten. In favor: Eaves, Jennings, Petit and Preuhs. Opposed: Abbott and Felkner. Abstained: Polouski. The motion carried by a vote of 4 in favor with 2 opposed and 1 abstention (Serra was not in attendance for the vote).
The Mediator then reviewed his proposal which he feels is reasonable based on a review of the materials presented and conversations. He realizes that this will not satisfy everyone. It deals with four areas and may need some tweaking. He also reviewed a Memorandum of Understanding and stated that the language needs some work.

The Mediator left the room at 8:39 PM to speak with the Union and Sue Rogers and Brian Stanley left to run numbers. Sue and Brian returned at 9:45 PM and distributed a spreadsheet of the proposal. The Superintendent reviewed the spreadsheet and Andrew Polouski requested that this information remain confidential. Many expressed concern with the projected increase in year three. Several options were suggested and the Mediator returned at 10:26 PM. The Committee shared their concerns and reviewed the options they would like presented to the Union. Mediator Williamson was unsure that the Union would agree with this and he left to meet with the Union at 11:45 PM.

The Mediator returned at 12:30 AM and stated that the Union has not costed out the proposal. He informed the Committee of what it would take to seal the deal. The Committee reviewed available options. Bill Felkner questioned if the Committee could release numbers at this point to which the Mediator advised against it.

Mediator Williamson left at 1:35 AM to meet with the Union and returned at 2:00 AM. Some refinement and revision are needed but an agreement in principle has been reached. Absolutely no discussion should take place and he suggested that a group of three people sit down to refine the language. He stated that Carri Barr and Pete Gingras have agreed to come to the Administration Building to sign a joint press release.

Superintendent Ricci suggested that Deborah Jennings, Chair of the Subcommittee sit in as the language is written. The Mediator left with the Superintendent to prepare the press release and Bill Felkner excused himself from the remainder of the meeting. George Abbott felt that there should be at least three people from the School Committee (one from each town) sitting in as the language is refined. Andrew Polouski agreed.

Andrew Polouski made a motion, seconded by Ron Preuhs and it was VOTED: That Deborah Jennings (Richmond), Holly Eaves (Charlestown), and George Abbott (Hopkinton) represent the School Committee in the meetings to refine the contract language. In favor: Abbott, Eaves, Petit, Polouski, Preuhs and Serra. Abstained: Jennings. The motion carried by a vote of 6 in favor with 1 abstention (Felkner was not in attendance for the vote).

Andrew Polouski made a motion, seconded by Ron Preuhs and it was VOTED: To return to open session at 2:16 AM. In favor: Unanimous (Felkner was not in attendance for the vote).

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Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk