

**TOWN OF GUILFORD  
EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2010  
7:00 P.M. – GUILFORD TOWN HALL**

**Present:**

Task Force Members: Marti Carlson, Michael Dowley, Chairman Gary Gilbert, Jim Galvin

BOE Officials:

William Bloss, Chairman, Board of Education; Dr. T. Forcella,  
Superintendent of Schools

Clerk Karen Quercia

Mr. Gilbert called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**1. Approval of minutes.**

**1.1 Approve minutes of the July 20, 2010 meeting**

*Motion: Upon a motion by Ms Carlson, and seconded by Mr. Dowley, the Efficiency Task Force voted to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2010 meeting.*

*Approve: Carlson, Dowley, Galvin, Gilbert*

*Oppose: None*

*Abstain: None*

**1.2 Approve minutes of the July 6, 2010 meeting**

*Motion: Upon a motion by Ms Carlson, and seconded by Mr. Galvin, the Efficiency Task Force voted to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2010 meeting.*

*Approve: Carlson, Dowley, Galvin, Gilbert*

*Oppose: None*

*Abstain: None*

**1.3 Approve minutes of the June 15, 2010 meeting**

*Motion: Upon a motion by Ms Carlson, and seconded by Mr. Galvin, the Efficiency Task Force voted to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2010 meeting.*

*Approve: Carlson, Dowley, Galvin, Gilbert*

*Oppose: None*

*Abstain: None*

**2. Discussion with Board of Education Representatives – Chairman Bloss and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Forcella**

Mr. Gilbert introduced the members of the ETF and provided a brief overview of their charge and findings to date. Ms Carlson reviewed some specific areas the Task Force has targeted, including grass cutting, snow plowing, facilities maintenance, and information technology. The Task Force understands that the autonomy of the Board of Education (BOE) is protected by State Statute.

Mr. Galvin explained that he recently met with representatives from CONNSERVE, which helps businesses and municipalities reduce their energy consumption. He was pleased to learn that the BOE has already met with Connsolve Representatives, but surprised to learn that no one from the Town had met with them yet.

Mr. Bloss explained that the BOE has a greater potential for cost savings than the Town. An energy retrofit at Guilford High School has just been completed, and retrofits are also being done at Adams Middle School and Melissa Jones School. Grants have paid for almost 100% of these projects.

The Task Force agreed that someone at the Town should be tasked with investigating energy conservation.

Mr. Bloss explained that the BOE is a creation of the State, is governed by the State, but ceded to the Towns. Statutorily the responsibility for building maintenance is the responsibility of the BOE. Collaborating with the Town would involve resolving command and control issues. He felt that in a town like Guilford, those types of issues could be resolved.

Dr. Forcella pointed out that the Major Lathrop House, which is where the administrative offices for the BOE are located, is maintained by the Town, but the BOE custodians are responsible for the daily cleaning. The Town does major repairs, and the system works well. He noted that union and supervisory issues would have to be taken into consideration if there were to be a combined facilities department.

Dr. Forcella explained that the BOE Technology Director, the Town Information Systems Specialist and the Police Department IT representative all recently met to collaborate and review all the IT systems in Town. They will be meeting again to review their findings and present them to the First Selectman, and will plan on how to move forward from there.

The BOE's Technology Director does an outstanding job. With the Superintendent's approval, he has assisted other town departments whenever possible. The Tech Director was hired for his expertise in technology; he was not hired as an educator. Since he has been on staff, the technological capabilities of the BOE have grown tremendously. This growth has also been the result of a major financial commitment to technological improvements on the part of the BOE.

Ms Carlson commented that the ETF would appreciate a 30,000' look at the platforms and versions of software. Through these interviews, the ETF has learned that computers in one office may have different software, making it difficult to share information, both within and between departments. The Department Heads make their own decisions for the platforms they need. A town wide technology manager could standardize platforms for all central functions. The Town's IT specialist works alone and spends much of his

time staging equipment, and does not have the time to help with software or program questions.

Dr. Forcella explained that after the Technology Director was hired, the BOE reviewed some positions and realized that in some instances, personnel were overpaid for the work they were doing. There were positions which were created years ago, now staff with more expertise can be hired for less money. Two positions were recently downgraded. The Director's position had to be created to be competitive with the private sector. The goal of the BOE is to become a paperless system

Mr. Bloss commented that the current MUNIS accounting software appears to be under utilized. Ms Carlson noted that there is no technology strategy on the town side. Dr. Forcella noted that a Tech Director should facilitate the move to a fully automated system, and be a leader in this area.

In regards to snow plowing, the BOE un-privatized five years ago. The success or failure of that decision is dependent upon the type of winter we experience, but ultimately it was decided that it made no sense for the BOE to do the plowing themselves. The cost of the trucks, the size of the lots, and the lack of a place to store sand all entered into this decision. Having the Town provide snowplowing service to the BOE has been discussed, but the issue has always been whether the town or school plowing needs should take priority.

Mr. Gilbert recognized that having the proper equipment and knowing how to plow without causing property damage are important factors, and there would also be union issues involved in combining plowing service. He also noted that the ETF discovered that some redundancies currently exist. There are departments which have a Polaris, departments with quads, and each of these departments clear various small areas. There are situations when outsourcing makes the best financial sense. The BOE outsources sanding.

Mr. Dowley commented that one of the goals of the ETF is to get everyone on the same page, currently everyone operates in silos. Dr. Forcella commented that it would be helpful to have one person coordinate services so that all sides could consider the same alternatives and each department would not have to provide their own service.

Mr. Bloss reported that food service part time employees currently receive benefits. This is a large expense. 20% of the BOE budget is related to health care costs. The BOE is considering out sourcing the food service.

Mr. Dowley commented that outsourcing lower skilled jobs often proves cost effective. Mr. Bloss responded that the BOE is comfortable that they cannot do better contracting out custodial services. Dr. Forcella stated that he has prior experience with outsourcing custodial services at another school district, and it was a disaster. If you have local people working for you, they will care about the school; the outsourced staff was not invested in the local system.

Mr. Galvin pointed out that Guilford's BOE has the worst Worker's Compensation rates in the State. Worker's Comp costs for claims were over \$1,000,000. If the claims go

down, the premiums go down. The BOE janitorial WC claims are the highest of all the towns in the State.

Dr. Forcella stated that just a few years ago, the opposite was the case. Due to the physical nature of their work, it would make sense that custodians would have a higher injury rate. The BOE is also considering other methods of saving health care costs.

Mr. Gilbert asked about mowing at the schools. Park & Rec does some of the grass cutting and the BOE does some. Dr. Forcella stated while P&R does the cutting at the fields, the BOE pays for the water. He would be amenable to looking at this issue to share services and provide the most cost efficient services to the taxpayers.

Mr. Gilbert noted that in the past there has been no synergy between the Town & BOE when purchasing goods and or services. Recently this has started to change. The BOE takes advantage of purchasing consortiums and the State bid list.

Mr. Bloss noted that the BOE recently went out to bid for special education transportation services, and saved approximately \$130,000 by bidding out each route individually. In addition, they worked with the Madison's BOE to provide bussing service to magnet schools. In exchange for providing the bussing service from Guilford to New Haven for the students from both towns, Guilford receives the state reimbursement for the all the students.

The BOE is also considering an in house program for students with autism. This would reduce the need for, and costs associated with, outplacement. This was not possible in the past because there were no classrooms available, but there are now two classrooms at Guilford Lakes where the program will be located. There will be some initial start up costs, but not having to provide outplacement should reap long term savings.

Mr. Gilbert asked if the Finance Director position could be shared. Mr. Bloss and Dr. Forcella stated that it might be difficult to find a person with the knowledge and expertise required to fill a shared position. They based this on past experience in trying to recruit a Finance Director. Theoretically, it could be done, but you would need to find a person with the right qualifications. Approximately 80% of the BOE budget is salaries and health insurance. The BOE Finance Director spends a lot of time in budget preparation.

Employee benefits are a big expense. Benefits are high vs. the benefits in the private sector. Mr. Bloss pointed out that during contract negotiations, an arbitrator will not accept an unreasonable offer.

Dr. Forcella stated that communications between the Town and BOE have made great strides. The Facilities Director is willing to assist the BOE at their invitation, and sharing of technology resources has improved.

He noted that the BOE has 600 employees but does not have a Human Resources Director. Several people perform various parts of the human resources function. It would be helpful to have a trained HR person with the proper knowledge base. Human Resources is too complex these days not to have a well qualified person to head off grievances, etc.

Evaluations are done yearly by the administration. There is a process for every department. Supervisors submit written evaluations. Evaluation systems are only as good as the training that goes with them. Dr. Forcella has instituted a professional learning community model. Employees are teamed within and across disciplines, including non-teaching staff. The Superintendent and Ass't Superintendent take "learning walks" and observe classrooms and provide written feedback. This imparts the sense that the administration values the staff, and has increased student learning and achievement, which are different types of efficiencies that are equally important.

The ETF thanked Dr. Forcella and Mr. Bloss for sharing their time and thoughts.

**3. New Business**

Mr. Dowley suggested that working groups within the town be formed. These groups would consist of the heads of each organization, and would meet regularly to exchange ideas, information, and cost saving measures. This would provide cohesiveness and facilitate working towards mutual goals and objectives

**4. Old Business**

Mr. Galvin discussed conducting an energy efficiency study. Mr. Gilbert stated that the Facilities Director had a meeting with consultants and is waiting for feedback from the energy audit.

**5. Adjournment**

The Efficiency Task Force meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Quercia  
Clerk

