

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL MEETING
AND THE GLOUCESTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 – 7:00 p.m.

Kyrouz Auditorium – City Hall

-MINUTES-

Present – Gloucester City Council: Chair, Councilor Paul McGeary; Vice Chair, Councilor Sefatia Theken; Councilor Melissa Cox; Councilor Steve LeBlanc, Jr.; Councilor Paul McGeary; Councilor Greg Verga; Councilor Robert Whynott; Councilor Paul Lundberg; Councilor William Fonvielle
Absent: Councilor Jacqueline Hardy

Present- Gloucester School Committee: Chair Jonathan Pope; Vice Chair Melissa Teixeira; Mayor Carolyn Kirk; Kathleen Clancy; Anthony Gross; John “Jack” O’Maley; Michelle Sweet

Also Present: Dr. Richard Safier; Michael Hale

After introducing the members of the City Council, the joint meeting of the City Council was called to order by **Council President Paul McGeary** at 7:00 p.m. The School Committee was called to order by the **Chair of the School Committee, Jonathan Pope** at 7:00 p.m. who reminded the Council and the School Committee that the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools is for all students to be successfully engaged as life-long learners.

Flag Salute & Moment of Silence:

- **Update of the West Parish School project, including a discussion of how the School Department is planning to ease the transition from West Parish to the interim school sites for students, teachers and parents**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent of Schools, said that the city is working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) on the project scope and budget agreements. Simultaneously, the department is working on the transition arrangements for current West Parish students during the building of the new school. The transition will require that grades Kindergarten through 4 be moved to the former St. Ann’s School and grade 5 to the O’Maley School for two years. He related the following information:

There are a number of issues that the transition team is working on. Jim Duggan, the city’s chief administrative officer, has been the point person with the leasing agreements with the Archdiocese of Boston. The transition team, consisting of the principal of the West Parish, Telen Immel; School Committee member Kathy Clancy, and Dr. Safier are working with the community, reaching out to them to develop answers to frequently asked questions to determine community needs for the start of the 2014 school year.

Dr. Safier noted specific areas of concern that are being addressed:

- Start and dismissal times;
- Procedures and locations for drop-off and pick-up of students by buses and private automobiles. This is problematic in a congested downtown neighborhood.
- Food service. Lunches will not be prepared at St. Ann’s but will be transported to St. Ann’s. This will necessitate some changes at O’Maley School, where the meals are prepared. Breakfast may be cold to start but lunches will be warm.
- Play space indoors and outdoors for recess and physical education. Burnham’s Field will be incorporated for use during good weather.
- Library facilities. Book carts will be used as well as the Sawyer Free Library.
- Improvements to the St. Ann’s physical plant including a new fire alarm system, emergency lighting, internet access, improved handicapped accessibility, security cameras and hardware for doors, creation of teacher workrooms and office space; soundproof classrooms in the gymnasium area, technology access points for wireless connections, parking for the St. Ann’s Parish.
- Physical education will take place in the gym or at Burnham’s Field. Art and music will be held in the classrooms, possibly in the library. Special Education services remain the same at St. Ann’s as they were at West Parish.

- The O'Maley School fifth grades will have physical education in the gym. Nursing hours will be staggered to provide coverage for the fifth grade as the fifth grade's school day starts and ends later than the O'Maley middle school students' day. The special education staff will be available at O'Maley. Grade 5 students will go to the before school program to St. Ann's then be bused to O'Maley. Fifth grade students will be included in special events, assemblies and community days. There will still be the YMCA after school program in place, and students at the O'Maley will go to the YMCA by bus after school.
- There will be modulars at Beeman, for a part of the West Parish population.
- Bus fees – free service will be offered to all in the catchment area and there will be some loss of revenue.
- Transportation and parking for teachers is still to be worked out. Arrangements must be made for days when there are funerals and the school yard is used for funeral parking.
- The West Parish principal is the principal for all grades. All parent interactions, teacher supervision, and events are still under the auspices of West Parish. Access to stage, full gym and library at O'Maley will be available to the fifth graders (120 students).

Councilor Cox cautioned that it may be difficult to find parking in the downtown area and suggested that it might be better to bus teachers to Fuller School and bus them from there. **Councilor Cox** also noted that the Burnham's Field Committee is offering gardening space to the school students in the spring.

Councilor Fonvielle asked if there will be a written communications plan to deal with issues of the transition. **Dr. Safier** said communications with parents has been and will be extensive. **Councilor Fonvielle** reiterated he would still like to see written communication plan to inform parents of certain aspects of the transition.

Councilor Fonvielle pointed out that the Blynman Bridge can be an issue in the morning hours for vehicular travel, and there is additional work expected on the A. Piatt Andrew Bridge, which could also inhibit timely arrival of students to St. Ann's and the O'Maley School. **Dr. Safier** responded the transportation director has been working to develop an overall plan and would take those issues under advisement.

Council President McGeary asked about the timeline for the remaining steps required to get construction under way and ensure state funding. **Mayor Kirk** said that the municipality has 120 days to secure its funding. Loan Authorizations have gone to the Council for approval, and a public hearing will take place at the Feb. 25 Council meeting. She explained that the City then has to enter into a funding agreement; the documents to be signed are the acceptance of the contribution from the State and the City's commitment to fund the project. Once the Council, as the authorizing body, votes to forward the loan authorization, then the City will enter into that contract agreement with the MSBA. **Council President McGeary** asked about the MSBA reimbursement of the cost of the project. **Mayor Kirk** said the reimbursement is now at 59 percent of "allowable expenses." She noted there are caps on reimbursement for things such as site preparation work. She noted that the site at West Parish is challenging and won't likely get 59 percent on that line item. She said the City Auditor and CFO will track the expenses to identify what is eligible by line item. **Council President McGeary** and **Mayor Kirk** noted aspects of the project such as utilizing environmentally friendly design and adopting the so-called construction manager at risk methodology added to the City's MSBA reimbursement. The city, she said, is comfortable they have maximized the MSBA reimbursement.

- **Review of maintenance at the schools and how the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is working for both sides: the DPW and the School Department**

Mike Hale, DPW Director, reviewed progress under the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2010 between the School Department and the Gloucester Public Works Department. Upon taking over the maintenance of the school facilities, he discovered the depth of the need for repairs in some of the school buildings. He noted that the DPW has tried to do a good job communicating with the Superintendent of Schools and the school principals. He said priorities have been mechanical systems in all the buildings. He conceded there are aesthetic issues still to be dealt with.

His department, he pointed out, has lost staff from the public service division to fill holes in the public facilities division. There is a full compliment of tradespeople in the facilities division now, he said. He noted personnel are being cross-trained where possible to be able to multi-task and enhance their service talents in plumbing and HVAC work, and carpentry, for instance, and not just in maintenance. He spoke of other positions within his department that are being filled to aid in the maintenance of the schools.

There is still the issue of the work order system to be fully put in place, **Mr. Hale** noted. He said there is a ticketing system set up but it is not fully functioning yet, of which has to do with the urgency of some of the needs. The department still hasn't gotten past some of the critical issues that need resolution, he noted. There are some very

old heating and plumbing systems in the school buildings; and that takes priority over everything else. Issues such as blinds being replaced are not a top priority. **Mr. Hale** said it is hoped that the next wave of capital investment by the city will address a lot of these outstanding issues.

Mr. Hale said the Superintendent's office and his Facilities office meets regularly; the Facilities Manager meets with the principals on a regular basis whether by phone, in person or by email. He said he believes Public Works has responded the best they can with the situation before them doing what they can with what they have. The facilities budget has grown since the MOU was drafted, but is short of where it needs to be, he said. **Mr. Hale** concluded his remarks by saying if his department is allowed to prioritize the work in a way that makes the most sense, the buildings will be made whole eventually.

Dr. Safier acknowledged there are many large projects such as HVAC (Heat/Ventilation/Air-Conditioning) systems and air quality systems and many other similar matters is work that was not getting done prior to the MOU. He said at the macro-level, there has been a great deal of progress. The challenges of daily maintenance remain, he noted, and that the DPW is doing all that it can with the resources available to their department.

As to the work order system, with the efforts of the district's IT department, Grant Harris, and the City's IT Director, James Pope, have the work order system ready to go on line next Monday. It is hoped, he said, this will be a good work order system to allow identification of priorities more readily. **Dr. Safier** pointed out there is an issue of what the MOU says is the schools' responsibility and what is the DPW's responsibility; it is the job of his office to determine between what request goes where – who is responsible for what for certain items. There is a stipulation in the MOU about advance notice, and this all continues to be a work in progress, he said.

Mayor Kirk said that the infrastructure investments of the city have all been made “underground” (water and sewer, for example) reflecting a focus on maintaining and upgrading the city's core infrastructure. The schools, she said, are no different. The Mayor noted that the DPW has done a thorough cleaning of every air duct in the O'Maley School, which hadn't been done in 20 years. There are no more air quality complaints. Prioritizing health, safety, air-quality issues, heating remains important, **Mayor Kirk** said. The schools are now at the point of prioritizing those things people can actually see, she said.

- **Efforts to integrate technology into the classroom, including the purchase of Chromebooks for certain grade levels**

Program Overview:

Dr. Safier said that the Chromebooks—inexpensive computers that run on Google's “Chrome” operating system—are the “digital plumbing” for the schools' technology initiative. The department's goal is a one-to-one (one computer per student) environment. The integration of technology will mean a transformation of the learning model, shifting it from the teacher presentation to students learning on the devices, with the teacher as guide. Students will be required to have kinds of skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving to be successful in the future job market. He said the district has received an offer to enable the district to move forward on the one-to-one learning environment over time. The district wants to be able to develop and adopt learning resources that exploit the flexibility and power of technology; establish clear goals across the curriculum; provide professional development and technical training and designing assignments that are more empowering for students, he said. **Dr. Safier** pointed out that the new Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing system will replace the current MCAS system, and it requires that the children have facility in working with computers. A one-to-one environment provides equity to all students, he said. It promotes student centered instruction to provide instruction to prepare students for college and a career, he said.

Computer integration into the schools and funding/purchase of computers:

Dr. Safier noted the plan requires flexibility in order to be gradually integrated with the students and teaching staff. The purchase of computers is a multi-year plan. Initially it will be implemented in the middle school. Plans are being developed to integrate the plan at the high school level. The purchase of the computers has to be sustained over multiple years. A flexible funding plan will be in place so funds can be spent in a timely fashion. Chromebooks are being ordered for the middle school staff with a software program how to incorporate technology into classrooms (Lynda.com). There will be a new IT position required in light of the introduction of 500 new computers into the district's system.

Mayor Kirk said that the funding will come from Free Cash to go into the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund account rather than putting the funds directly to the School Department annual budget. This will give the schools some scheduling flexibility but requires an additional vote by the Council to approve the funding, the Mayor noted.

School Committee member **Kathy Clancy** said the School Committee is excited about this project and lauded the effort that allows the schools to compete with the surrounding school districts.

Councilor Fonvielle asked how this program will work, and asked if the Chromebooks stay with the student for the next year. **Dr. Safier** said that students should have access to the Chromebooks over the summer; and if they are going to the 9th grade they would take it with them to the High School.

Councilor Cox asked about insuring the devices and if there would be a contract signed between the parents and the school district for the computers. **Dr. Safier** said that will be discussed with legal counsel but there would be a contract.

Councilor Lundberg acknowledging the concern for the number of students who opt to go to other school districts, he asked if this program would assist in the Gloucester school district's competitiveness. **Jonathan Pope**, School Committee Chair said it would, that the program would place Gloucester in the forefront of the one-to-one technology initiative. The technology program, combined with the new school at West Parish, positions the district as an attractive educational option, he pointed out.

Melissa Teixeira, Vice Chair of the School Committee, thanked the Mayor and the Council for their commitment to the program and the funding mechanism and added her support of the new computer program for the district.

Anthony Gross, School Committee member said this program will make the district's students more competitive in the outside world. He said students will be able to work at home with other students on line, and a teacher can then log in to gauge and assess her students' progress. This is an important tool, he said.

On inquiry by **Council President McGeary**, **Mayor Kirk** said the free cash amounts will go directly into a General Capital Projects Stabilization Fund and not a specific School Department account, but it could be discussed with the City Auditor to see if another special stabilization account should be set up. **Council President McGeary** noted this choice of Chromebooks provides a window into the "cloud computing" environment and said this is a good choice.

- Sneak peek at the School Department Proposed FY15 Budget

Dr. Safier noted the budget process began in November, with budgets were submitted by principals and department managers submitting initial budgets in December. He said the FY15 draft budget will be presented at the Feb. 26 School Committee meeting. He pointed out the goals of this year's new budget is to preserve the great strides made last year; to present a level service budget and also other needs of the district which came forward recently. He listed some of these initiatives to be preserved:

- Bay State Reading Institute Literacy Program at the elementary level.
- MCAS math intervention particularly at the middle school.
- Essential curriculum mapping and common core initiatives.
- Preparation for the PARCC exam replacement of MCAS.
- Development of an evaluation system, and the development of district determined measures.
- Moving to a standard space report card.
- Purchase computing devices and Chromebooks for elementary level.

Dr. Safier spoke noted that some parts of the school budget that were funded last year with free cash are now part of the core services required. He cited:

- Increased Special Education staffing
- Increased medical deductible costs associated with the conversion to the Government Insurance Commission (GIC) health insurance (\$150,000).

He also pointed to the moving expenses for West Parish to St. Ann's and O'Maley Schools. Cost of Living Adjustment increases are an issue, he said.

Dr. Safier also noted the department's income is decreasing. Grants associated with the Race to the Top programs will be finishing, the Tower Grant in particular. There will also be reductions in Title I reimbursement.

The district is looking at a new math program and there appears to be a great need for changing math programs. It is hoped most of the cost of a new math system will be offset by the change from the existing program, he said. **Dr. Safier** also touched upon the new report card program, the MCAS intervention program and the STEM science program funding at the Middle School. He spoke of a core teaching as several funding programmatic needs, and funding for the transition costs from West Parish to St. Ann's School.

Dr. Safier then noted positions the district wishes to retain as part of a level-service budget include:

- The district math coordinator. It is a full time position this year, but could be reduced to half time for FY15
- Math coaching positions
- District information technology technician

- MCAS intervention teacher
- A writing consultant.
- He noted that Beeman Elementary School has and continues to experience a surge in enrollment, and there will be a need for another teacher there.
- An attendance officer who is an extension to the district's attendance policies in the elementary and middle school level; a pre-school nurse is a must to be retained as well.
- A school resource officer from the Police Department at the High School is working well, **Dr. Safier** noted
- A new pre-school teacher and paraprofessional because the school enrollment has expanded.

At **Ms. Teixeira's** request, **Dr. Safier** explained to the Council the regulations going into affect that would make the district responsible for educating students who are suspended or excluded from school. He noted that beginning July 1, a new state law goes into effect. He said previously if there was a long-term suspension of a special education student it was required some sort of education services had to be given, even if the student were expelled from school. Under this new law, any students under long-term suspension, not just special educational students, must be educated. He estimated the cost at approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 per student. **Councilor Cox** asked how many students are in this situation. **Dr. Safier** said there aren't that many students. He noted some go out on suspension 10 days or more and pointed out that those students who are charged with a felony could remain in suspension while that whole process is on-going.

Council President McGeary asked about the Bay State Reading Institute Literacy Program in place for several years and attendant academic results. **Dr. Safier** said that there is data that could be shared which was presented at the last School Committee meeting. There is testing that looks at fluency and reading comprehension which is showing upward movement; that progress is being made, he said. **Council President McGeary** asked whether the Beeman population increase is a long-term trend, which was confirmed by **Dr. Safier**. He also responded to **Council President McGeary's** inquiry about the teacher evaluation system and its budget impact by saying that it has more to do with the work that needs to be done such as the development of district determined measures and assessments. In order determine the progress across all the subjects, district determined measures for each class and subject area have to be developed, and that development could have impact on the FY15 budget.

Mayor Kirk said guidance given to all department heads in preparing their budgets is to provide level service. Last year the city was fortunate to see growth in the educational programs as noted by **Dr. Safier**, and the district wants to hold on to that. The goal from the Administration's standpoint is level service because this year the budget growth is primarily directed to the cost for opening the Magnolia Fire Station. She said it is known what that opening will cost and require from the resources that the city has available.

The Mayor pointed out that the Administration will break from its long-standing policy of not bringing in one-time money into the budget, but for FY15 it will be necessary to balance the budget. Her hope is that within two years, the city will be able to absorb those expenses and not use one-time money anymore.

Mr. Gross pointed out that the new requirements for teacher evaluations will require large amounts of time by the evaluators, who are the school administrators. **Dr. Safier** said there are unannounced and announced visits, contractual feedback to classroom visits and dialog about classroom observations; and eventually there will be student data. He added that it is an extraordinary amount of commitment that will impact top end staff flexibility to have people in place to write evaluations on every single facet of the educational program. He agreed it will have major impact. **Council President McGeary** asked if this will have an impact on administrator's ability to do their jobs. **Dr. Safier** said there would be some impact but said the primary roll of an administrator should be instructional leadership. Finding the time to carry out the new evaluation system will be a stretch, he said. The new evaluation system, he said, is an exceptional commitment to figure out what is working educationally.

Ms. Teixeira added that in addition to some of the stated budgetary issues, there are seven school district union contracts yet to be negotiated, and it is still uncertain what these contract expenses will be.

- **Issues with school lunch collections**

Dr. Safier said that the outstanding balances for food service debt are a chronic issue. Last March the amount of debt (not owed by those students on free or reduced fee lunch) was \$55,000; in August it was reduced to \$44,000 by bringing some families to small claims court. By October, he said, the food service debt was back to \$55,000, and as of January 21st it is at \$78,020. He noted that the Food Service Account has to be in balance by the end of the year and funds required to balance the fund must come out of the operating budget. On Jan. 22 the School Committee authorized \$5,000 to go towards potential legal action, a process used successfully last year to recoup funds. Some partial payments have already been received, he noted.

Approximately 90 letters were sent out between Jan. 8 and 22, **Dr. Safier** said. Seventy-nine of those letters have not been responded to. The 90 families owe \$21,700 in outstanding debt.

Mr. Pope added with the new point of sale payment system in the cafeterias there is an exact accounting by the district of what is owed by whom. In addition to taking these 90 families to court, he noted that on the main office window at the High School the names of those who owe obligations for food service have been added. At the high school if there is an unpaid financial obligation the students cannot attend social events; but there is no such mechanism, he noted, at the lower levels. The policy is that the schools feed the children but that it is the parents' responsibility to pay for this service. The School district is always looking for tools to assist the district in recouping the money owed, he said.

Dr. Safier said the letters that went out were those who owed the largest debt. He then noted the following statistics:

- Those owing more than \$250 consist of 54 families;
- Those owing \$100 - \$250 consists of 196 families;
- Those owing \$50 - \$100 consists of 200 families;
- Those owing \$25 - \$50 consists of 190 families;
- Those owing \$10 - \$25 consists of 302 families.

Councilor Cox said she understood going after those who owed the most first, but asked why not send letters to all the families who owe Food Service money. **Dr. Safier** said there is a dollar threshold that must be met before letters go out, as well as a system of reminders. At some point in time worst offenders receive a notification that if payment is not received within 10 days there is legal recourse by the district. **Councilor Cox** asked about students being banned from sports activities if money is owed. **Dr. Safier** said it is not done at this time. **Councilor Cox** then asked about the lower grades and what kind of leverage the district has with those parents and students concerning overdue payments. **Mr. Pope** said the policy is aimed at the parents. This is the only tool they have to keep asking parents for payment or take them to court. The point is to not punish the children but to hold the parents accountable, he said. **Councilor Cox** said the students are not being punished. Sports and dances are extra curricular activities, she pointed out, and said she didn't feel by excluding students from those optional activities they were depriving students. **Dr. Safier** said if the athletes were punished and those who are not athletes are not, it would be a two-tiered system. He noted partial payments have been honored.

Councilor Verga said he assumed there is an escalation of language in the letters; and asked whether the 300 families owing money had been ruled out for free or reduced fee lunches. **Dr. Safier** said that they are; if it was discovered the students needed that service, they were offered it. **Mr. Pope** said that the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch in the district has increased to 44 percent.

Councilor Theken said she would appreciate a copy of the letters that go out to the families and discussed issues with the letters getting to the families and as to why the letters may not be reaching their intended destination. She pointed out there were PTO meetings to communicate this matter to parents; through teacher meetings; and through report cards to encourage families to step forward with their payments. **Councilor Theken** suggested some families have issues that may make them reluctant to come forward and suggested that there could be a way to encourage parents by saying that they could make a consultation in confidence to lower any possible stigma.

Ms. Clancy said that in the elementary schools notices go home in students' backpacks but in the Middle and High School notices are sent via mail. Danvers, it was noted has a threshold of \$10 in debt, then an alternative lunch is offered to the student for 10 days. If no payment comes forward, thereafter the student receives no school lunch. Other North Shore communities have a similar system, she noted, but Gloucester has decided to keep feeding its students. However, the food service payment system is not a float system for parents, she said. There is, **Ms. Clancy** said, a need for a mind-set change. **Councilor Theken** said there needed to be a cap in view of a \$78,000 debt which comes out of the school budget for some children that are not paying. She urged that over the summer a system should be worked on.

Mr. Gross reiterated information that Mr. Pope and Dr. Safier had put forward statistically regarding free and reduced lunches and concerning the letters out to those families who had no free or reduced lunch support but owned large sums of money and the intended legal action.

The School Committee agreed it will report back to the Council on this issue.

- **Report on the status of the construction of the new North Shore Regional Vocational Technical School in Middleton**

This matter was not presented as Superintendent, Daniel O'Connell, of the North Shore Regional Vocational Technical School in Middleton lives in New Hampshire. Given this evening's snowy weather, **Council President McGeary** announced he would ask Superintendent O'Connell to make a presentation to the City Council at another mutually agreeable date.

- **Discussion of use or disposition of surplus furniture and equipment at the Fuller School site**

Councilor Cox asked what was going on with Fuller School; the school is shut down and funds for maintenance of it have been shifted. She asked if there are plans to dispose of it, and distributing the equipment and any supplies to other schools. **Dr. Safier** responded that along with West Parish and its inventory plan, the intent is to comb through Fuller as well to find what can be gleaned to find furniture for the elementary schools and is the district's intent. **Mayor Kirk** added that when grades K-5 were relocated from the Fuller School, each of the elementary schools received the best furnishings from Fuller to the modulars at that time. There isn't as much as may be believed remaining, she noted. She also said that the transportation director is no longer at Fuller. The DPW facilities people are still using the workshop areas and will be relocated to the DPW Yard. There is no heat or lights at Fuller now, she noted. **Councilor Cox** asked for another tour of the facility in the spring. **Mr. Pope** said school district archives are still at Fuller and is something that will have to be dealt with as the City disposes of the building.

Councilor Verga said within the old school committee chambers at Fuller there are cornerstones from old school buildings that need to be preserved. Additionally, the busts of Lincoln and Longfellow need to be removed or a confirmation that they have been relocated will be appreciated. **Mayor Kirk** noted that the busts had been removed to City Hall and that the Committee for the Arts will be seeking an appropriate spot to display the busts for display. She added in response to an inquiry by **Councilor Cox**, that a handful of paintings from Fuller will be assessed by the Committee for the Arts, as well, and moved to a more appropriate place.

Councilor LeBlanc said he spoke with Mr. Duggan as he had an inquiry from the food service department at the High School asking if some equipment from the Fuller kitchen could be brought over for their program and asked if that could be done.

Council President McGeary asked if there is a mechanism in place for city departments to be able to obtain surplus equipment from the Fuller School. **Mayor Kirk** said there is not. She noted the request by the food service program and for furnishings should come through the Superintendent. She said from a City staff standpoint, there have been no requests.

Council President McGeary commented about the idea of preserving the auditorium in some fashion and asked if the auditorium itself being is preserved. **Mayor Kirk** explained the following as to the disposition of the Fuller property: The YMCA has made a request to the city for information concerning the possible purchase of the entire site, and the administrative process is on-going in response to that request. There is a move to register the land through the land court which was filed Friday. There has to be a complete survey and legal description of the property. Sam Park, developer of Gloucester Crossing, still has some rights to parts of the Fuller property; the YMCA is able to have access to the building to determine whether they believe the building is suitable for their program. The YMCA will present a more detailed proposal to the Administration and at this time it is an unknown.

Mayor Kirk reviewed the status of the process for a combined Public Safety Building at the Fuller site. The owner's project manager is hired for the public safety building and will undertake a response time analysis for the relocation of Central Fire Station and the Police Station to that site. There are four tracks going at once, she noted, with 8 to 12 weeks where all tracks will come together for answers to have a master plan in sight. **Council President McGeary** said that during the walk-through with the architects for the West Parish project it was noted that the auditorium is the most salvageable. He asked that something be done so as not to allow it to deteriorate further.

- **Discussion of implementing Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail (MBCR) training for students into the Schools' curriculum**

Councilor Cox said she has been working with the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail (MBCR) on ward issues, and noted there is an outreach program offered by the MBCR which provide railroad safety classes to public schools. With the many railroad crossings in the City, she suggested, this program would be a good fit for the Gloucester public schools and encouraged the district to consider this program.

Councilor Lundberg said this is a nationwide safety program in which all railroads, both freight and passenger, participate. It is called Operation Lifesaver. Employees of the railroad companies are trained to give a one-hour

class to public schools to raise awareness of exercising caution at railroad crossings. The program is free to the schools.

As to the quiet zones, federal regulations require that trains blow the whistles at crossings. Municipalities can request a quiet zone at certain crossings so that whistles are not sounded. However, he pointed out, there are costs for additional crossing protection that must be borne by the municipality. **Councilor Lundberg** said that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) makes the final decision and want to see the safety data, and willingness of the community to bear the costs. He said there may be some ways to get some help with the cost of additional safety features at crossings which he noted he would work with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the FRA and will report back on that.

The City Council adjourned their meeting at 8:56 p.m. and the School Committee recessed from the Special Joint meeting to reconvene immediately a singular School Committee meeting thereafter.

Respectfully submitted,

**Dana C. Jorgenson
Clerk of Committees of the Gloucester City Council**

DOCUMENTS/ITEMS RECEIVED AT MEETING: None.