

**A.R.E.A. Board for Grades 7 and 8, and Grades 9 through 12**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, April 28, 2008 – 7:00 PM**  
**Large Group Instruction Area**  
**Keene High School, 43 Arch Street**  
**Keene, NH**

Present:	<u>Chesterfield</u>	Rebecca Auger Deborah Clemente Ege Cordell Judy Idelkope
	<u>Harrisville</u>	Thomas E. Cassar Earl Horn
	<u>Keene</u>	Neil Donegan
	<u>Marlborough</u>	Michael Briggs Robert Hill Christopher Fowler Elaina Waibel
	<u>Marlow</u>	Stephanie Tickner
	<u>Nelson</u>	Michael Cornog Kelly French Betsy Street
	<u>Westmoreland</u>	Mike Acerno Tina Fletcher
	<u>Administration</u>	Alan Chmiel, Keene High School Principal William Gurney, Co-Supt., SAU 29 John Harper, Business Admin., SAU 29 Doug White, Stoddard Asst. Superintendent, SAU 24 Wayne Woolridge, Co-Supt., SAU 29
	<u>Others Present</u>	Linda McCracken, Stenographer Michael O'Donnell, KHS School Resource Officer Sarah Palermo, <i>Keene Sentinel</i> Reporter

**1. Introductions**

Wayne Woolridge called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. He stated that there are seven new Board members and everyone introduced themselves.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Woolridge said he would entertain a motion to approve the minutes of 10/29/07.

**Neil Donegan made a motion to approve the minutes of 10/29/07. Thomas Cassar seconded.** It was stated that Jim Carley's name was in the minutes, but not on the list of attendees. It was suggested that his name be added. **The vote was unanimous with the addition of James Carley to those who were present at the 10/29/07 meeting.**

**3. KHS School Resource Officer – Alan Chmiel**

The police department screened candidates first, then Mr. Chmiel hired from a pool like he would with a teacher. The first 30 days “make or break” a program. The officer wears a uniform in school. Although kids were leery at first, he was accepted. Students said it was a good move. Mr. Chmiel introduced the School Resource Officer, Michael O'Donnell.

Michael O'Donnell stated that the position is a good fit for him because he's worked with autistic kids, the Boys and Girls Club, Monadnock Family Services, etc. He enjoys the challenge of juvenile cases.

Since coming aboard on 8/29/07, there have been over 80 offenses including thefts, assaults, and drug offenses. Thirty-five of these led to arrests in juvenile court or a summons arrest, such as for underage smoking. Each case leads to talks with the school, student and parents. Other problems are uncovered such as marijuana and substance abuse help is obtained early.

Right before vacation, there were 5 fights. These used to be administrative issues, not criminal reports. It would take 2 weeks approximately for issues to reach the police. There has been 1 second degree assault needing surgery plus 21 other tumultuous behavior or disorderly conduct reports. Some of these were minor, but most are caused by bullying, especially on MySpace.com. There have been weapons reports: 1 dagger, 2 possible reports of guns (though none were found in school, one was part of a sale outside of school), and a throwing star. There are quite a few drug issues: possession with intent to distribute, under the influence of alcohol, etc.

The next step he wants to address is bus related issues. Students shouldn't have to dread the ride to and from home. Many bullied students don't speak to authorities or parents. The uniform is being discussed for next year. Currently it's full dark blue military, but students may talk easier if it's a soft uniform, like a polo shirt and dress pants.

Ms. Cordell asked if he had talked to D.A.R.E. people? Mr. O'Donnell stated that he has had training. Bullying is the worst problem and it starts in middle school. Of fights and disorderlies, 90% are about MySpace.com. It starts as young as 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He's had extra training and checks MySpace.com regularly.

Ms. Auger asked for a gender breakdown. Mr. O'Donnell stated that it's 50/50, but the female fights are the worst with threatening behavior. Guys fight mostly for show.

Mr. Cassar asked if fights break out in the cafeteria how they are handled if he is unavailable. Mr. O'Donnell stated that staff is used to dealing with issues. He is called as quickly as possible. Monitors also help. He has a radio and classes have phones so he can arrive quickly.

Mr. Hill asked about what weapons he carries. Mr. O'Donnell stated that he follows regulations: a sidearm, 8" baton, 2 pairs of handcuffs, OC Pepper spray, extra rounds of ammo plus a radio. He has used the handcuffs and threatened to use the pepper spray when a student was fighting with him. He does not carry a taser.

Mr. Horn asked about his general rapport with the school population. Mr. O'Donnell stated that it is positive although there are a few students who don't like him. Some of those he has encountered on law enforcement duties outside of school. His door is always open whether it's domestic relationship problems or basketball coaching. Mr. Chmiel stated that Mr. O'Donnell has been asked to speak in Social Studies and English classes. He helps with parental and relationship problems. Kids feel safer. He deals with things that weren't being reported earlier.

Ms. Cordell asked if they'd be adding another SRO. Mr. O'Donnell stated that this has been discussed. He would like the program to extend to the elementary and middle schools, including providing support to principals as backup when irate parents are in the building. Most school tragedies involve bullied kids. Forty-one reports are in the field for non-criminal activity. Mr. Chmiel praised the SRO's work, stating that now the assistant principals can be in the classrooms rather than handling these issues.

Ms. Auger asked about doing some parent education around MySpace.com. Mr. O'Donnell would like to do that next year and added that some parents already come in to talk with him, without their kids' knowledge, when they need extra help.

#### **4. New England Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges Report on Keene High School - Alan Chmiel**

The NEASSC Report covers all six New England states. The last 10 year accreditation was in 1995. There were 26 recommendations to address with 16 highlighted items. This is minor for a report of this nature. The Commission reviews in January and June. Reports are very detailed. Our accreditation has been continued to March 2010 when there will be a five year report as this is an ongoing process and is never complete. There were several commended items and other schools are calling to request information about our programs, especially our Reading Recovery Program and the Student Advisory Program with mentors. The acknowledgments are good as well. We've received calls on how we use students in the hiring process. There are no 30, 60 or 90 day reports. It is the first time that Mr. Chmiel has experienced this in any school. There are only 5 items to respond to.

Ms. Cordell asked about mentoring for the sophomores through seniors. Mr. Chmiel stated that they have homerooms with a different person each year. The mentors need

training and it was too much to do this program for everyone at once. Some upper classmen help with the advisory.

Mr. Woolridge thanked Mr. Chmiel for the favorable NEASSC Report.

##### **5. KHS Block Schedule Survey Results** – *Alan Chmiel*

Mr. Chmiel passed out the Block Survey Results. 211 parents took the survey using Survey Monkey plus 577 students. It was an in-depth study with 14 questions and the information remained constant according to the qualifiers, which asked questions in both a positive and a negative way to make sure they were answered properly.

Currently there are 4 periods that are 90 minutes long. NEASSC was pleased that we have the Virtual High School. There are 41 students taking classes including Nuclear Physics and Contemporary Issues of the United Nations.

Parents were surveyed first with Human Resources helping with the questions. Answers were reviewed with parents in January and February. Freshmen – Seniors had many questions that were identical and some that built upon previous years and questions. One problem that came up was the Math Sequence which is difficult. Students could do the survey online or on paper. 125 students used paper with someone else entering it on the computer. There were: 210 freshmen, 134 sophomores, 121 juniors and 112 seniors. The dark numbers are the highest frequency. Add across, not down. As they get older, students' satisfaction increases as they learn to use the 90 minutes. Question #8 is important as most students feel that the right amount of lecture and student application time is being spent, with only the sophomores being a little scattered. Math Sequencing is an exception to this. KHS received high marks from Survey Monkey on this survey and the way it was prepared.

Mr. Cornog asked if past graduates had been contacted to see if they felt they were well-prepared. Mr. Chmiel stated that they hadn't. It would be a challenge and they would need a shorter questionnaire to be sure they filled it out. Not everyone who started finished, because of the number and depth of the questions.

Mr. Chmiel said that 8 students qualified for the National Merit Scholarship which was the most he's had in 30 years!

Deborah Clemente asked about AP classes. Mr. Chmiel stated that quite a few students receive very high scores.

##### **6. Keene Middle School Update** – *William Gurney*

This is a Keene Middle School Issue Overview. At first there were many other priorities with the new high school, the Cheshire Career Center, building facility safety in the elementary schools, etc.

Thirty years ago land was purchased for a new Keene Middle School for 1,000 kids which would cost \$1.5 million. Plans were in place for years, but it turned into decades. We recently asked a Pre-K-8 Assessment Committee to make recommendations. They recommended that we keep 6-8 grades together. We thought we could move them down to the elementary schools while renovations were being done for 3-4 years. It's not feasible. Elementary schools now have a Pre-school with 97 students. Most schools have turned classrooms into offices for safety reasons. There are other programs and lower student/teacher ratios.

An Ad Hoc Keene Middle School Building Committee looked into the pros and cons of building vs. renovations. Renovation costs would exceed new building costs without counting unknown costs that might occur in an old building. The state wouldn't help as much with funding, plus with lack of parking, teachers would need to be bussed in due to construction. Time would be lost for the library and other areas. There is also no way to efficiently manage the building. A vote was taken with a decision to build. The Keene School Board put out an RFP for architects. The Keene Fire Department stated that with no bond, safety and code improvements need to be done immediately. There is also a Phase II and a Phase III depending on how long we are without a new school. We are planning on spending surplus monies this summer to help with the code issues using Banwell Architects. Mr. Donegan has put together a new Building Committee with a good mix of teachers, contractors and others to provide needed input. The search is narrowing to three architects with plans for a series of school visitations. We've put out a RFP and are looking at traffic studies at both the old school and the land for the new school. Teachers are developing plans for what they want to see in a new building. At the last bond vote, we lost by 22 votes. We are still working towards a new middle school because of the new Board vote.

## **7. AREA Tuition Review – John Harper**

Mr. Woolridge stated that a new agreement has been considered, but it's very rigid legally with 3 members from each town serving for a three-year term. Before we decide whether to do that, we need to check the numbers.

John Harper, Business Administrator, said he has a suggestion for an approach to tuition. It's a long process held over since October 29, 2007. There is a new contract between Keene and Winchester which added a historical adjustment factor outside of AREA. Everyone wants a rate that's fair to both Keene and the towns. Mr. Harper plans on doing some analysis this summer using current numbers of the past three years with actual student costs using only the Keene High School, since all towns send their students there, not the Middle School. Right now an estimate is being used. Data for one year is not conclusive. Tim Ruehr will review the data in a critical review with Actual vs. Estimated costs and by checking formulas used.

Stephanie Tickner asked about the feasibility of Marlow 6<sup>th</sup> graders coming to Keene. Mr. Harper stated it would be separate as AREA only goes down to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but

Stoddard sends 6<sup>th</sup> grade students separately. Mr. Donegan asked to have the Marlow School Board petition the Board. Ms. Tickner asked if the price is the same, but Mr. Harper stated that it would need to be looked at as a contract gives protection to both sides. Agreements are negotiated.

Judy Idelkope asked about anomalies in the past 3 years (Winchester, a different Business Administrator, etc.). Could 2 extra years be included? Mr. Harper stated that more years would flatten the peaks, but time is also important. Many years have anomalies. We're trying to keep current years. If there is a need for more data, we can do more years later. Currently there is a one year delay with no credit back on surplus. Mr. Harper will have the numbers by September.

Mr. Cassar stated that we want a rate that's fair with actual costs, so that Keene doesn't subsidize the towns or visa versa. Currently Keene gets better rates from the state and federal government. Towns should benefit as well. Mr. Harper said the towns need to feel comfortable in sharing costs.

## **8. Adjournment**

**Mike Acerno made a motion to adjourn. Judy Idelkope seconded. The vote was unanimous.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda McCracken  
Stenographer

**APPROVED: 10/28/08**