

Heather Vineault
2003-2004

Gary's Evaluation - Heather's input

June 6, 2004

Jeff,

I write this really not knowing where to begin. Gary's goals for 2003 - 2004 were Bargaining, Books, Buildings & Budgets. As I have mentioned in the past, I don't consider these broad goals to be measurable. I will, however, make comments based on each of these goals. I have also included the qualifications listed in our policy "Qualifications/Duties of School Superintendent" (CEA/CEB) and commented on them individually.

Below are my comments regarding Gary's goals for 2003-2004.

BARGAINING - Gary had two topics identified under bargaining - 1) labor contracts, and 2) nurses contract.

- 1) I am not sure how the labor negotiations are going. The reports have been up and down, as I would expect they would be, but never having been through this process and not having specific, measurable goals, I'm not sure what to say. It is June and we don't have a contract. We hear about other districts settling, so I suspect we could be, too. I also know some districts go through the summer or start school without contracts. I am also not even sure what role Gary really plays in negotiations - it appears to be more Wayne's job.

With regard to communication with the school committee, there have been a couple times when things have not been smooth - when we were supposed to have information that we did not have. For example in early February when Lori gave us an update regarding Gini's reply to WTA demands - we had no copy of the document, nor had we had much input or discussion with Gini at that point. We asked for documents and did not receive them in a timely fashion and Gini ended up having them delivered to us at the last minute. I don't know where the problem was (Gini or Gary). I also believe there was a delay in the negotiations process (though I did not hear this first hand) around one February vacation. Again, is this Gary's problem or not? I don't know. Overall, the negotiation team is doing its job and we are receiving reports. Whether or not the goal of "bargaining" has been met, without a contract, I don't know how to determine that.

- 2) With regard to the nurses contract, I do not believe that this has been handled in the most expeditious or professional manner. From watching meetings last year when Parmenter and the BOH first came to the school committee, throughout this last year, I think Gary did not want to take responsibility for the nurses until he was absolutely forced to and that we spent more than a year trying to come up with the MOU, leaving many people feeling very frustrated (some BOH, John Schenyan, the nurses and some school committee members).

BOOKS - Once again, I do not feel I have sufficient information to say how we are doing on our

curriculum. As Fred mentioned in a recent e-mail, we don't know a lot about curriculum. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I have no knowledge of that as a school committee member because these new administrators, along with their math counterpart, Chris Augusta-Scott, were never introduced to us. [REDACTED]

Some people would say that our test scores reflect a success in the area of curriculum. I hesitate in making this connection so quickly given that by definition (socio-economic status), our students should do well on standardized tests. Furthermore, many of our students receive tutoring outside school (beginning in the early elementary years and continuing through high school) and we also offer MCAS prep tutoring to a lot of our students. Having had a fourth grader this year, I would also add that much of fourth grade is spent teaching to the test and doing MCAS practices, despite what I have heard from the administration which is that we do not teach to the test.

All that being said, I do not know what progress has been made this year toward the goal of "books".

BUILDINGS: There are three areas that are mentioned in the goal of "buildings": CH, WMS & WHS.

CH - There were, and continue to be, two large issues at CH, the roof and the gym. In the goals, Gary states that "the replacement of the Claypit Hill gym.....should be completed by mid-year." It is now the end of the year and the project is not completed. From what I can see, that goal was not attained and other than hearing throughout the year that there was nothing to be done because we were dealing with an insurance company, I do not know what Gary did to expedite the project. I am at a loss to explain why it will have taken at least 15 months from the collapse of the roof to replace a gym.

CH - The roof. This is another area with which I have concerns. We went back and forth about whether or not we had to replace a portion of the roof. We finally agreed it should be replaced and Gary assured us this would happen over one of the vacations. It did not happen. The work continued to not happen and the project was finally done late in the year when there was very little chance we would get any snow that would pose a danger. Rather than telling the construction company that it was too late and we would be doing the entire roof this summer, we spent money to do this project. I realize we supposedly got a "good deal", but I have trouble believing that the good deal was less expensive, or done as well, than doing the repair when the entire roof was off this summer.

This leads me to the other part of the CH roof and the question of whether or not the roof replacement will occur this summer. This has been on the radar screen for a couple of years and part of the building goal for this year. However, I did not see any evidence of advance planning to ensure that this project would happen this summer, not to mention regarding the cost estimate is needed to have an accurate figure in advance of the budgeting process. I asked more than once before TM if the timetable was going to work to get this job completed this summer and I was

assured yes. At this point, it is June and we are just interviewing contractors next week. Is this project going to be completed this summer? I don't know.

WMS - The goal states that "remaining items from the MS construction project must be addressed and should not be left to linger indefinitely." From what I have seen, we have not made much, if any, progress on the boiler problems, in particular. I attended the METCO Awards night in a very hot and steamy auditorium because the boilers had failed again. The bulk of this project was completed well before my term on school committee, a year ago, and yet there are issues that are still open. I do not see the progress toward meeting this goal.

WHS - This has been a very contentious project. While Gary has been more involved this year and has encouraged administrators' involvement as well, I'm not sure the communication piece has improved. For example, the School Committee asked that the HSBC applicants receive personal notes of thanks for their interest and either saying they were appointed or not. The specific purpose of this was to reach out to these community members so show our appreciation and to encourage people to stay involved with the project. Rather than send individual notes, they received a generic e-mail that went to everyone and was impersonal.

Some members of the WSC (Lori and I) were very concerned about the space issue for this coming school year. [REDACTED] ☆

[REDACTED] In February, Gary told the PTO presidents that we would just have to live with the space and make it work. The WSC did not hear [REDACTED] presentation until February 23, after pressure from the FinCom, and a day before the FinCom budget hearing. This approach was not timely nor was it as proactive as it should have been - planned out and carefully considered in the Fall during the budgeting process rather than at the last minute when it was really too late to make any changes. ☆

Communication continues to be an area which has not worked as smoothly as I would have hoped. The WSC, for example, did not even meet the architects and project manager until a recent meeting after many requests that we have the opportunity to do so. In all fairness, maybe I was the only one on the WSC who felt we should at least meet with and hear the direction the project is going from the experts. Our reports from Gary at the WSC meetings have not had much detail. Our repeated requests for getting more information out to the public on a regular basis also fell on deaf ears until just recently.

Finally, in terms of educational leadership, I don't know how much leadership is being shown in terms of setting a vision for the HS and what it could be like in the future and what that would mean to our educational program. We have not heard much in this area. The only thing I have heard is repeated assurances (depending on your perspective) that our HS teachers are not asking for anything big, just working windows, planning space and such. I would rather have a report coming to us that our teachers are very excited and looking at the educational opportunities that are possible. Once again, this may be going on, but we have not received this information.

BUDGETS - Regarding the budget, Gary is certainly very fiscally conservative and has kept the district within the FinCom guidelines. One of his strengths is keeping the budget down and within

guidelines. The process, however, and communication throughout the building of the budget was not as open as I would like to see. As a School Committee member, for example, I would like to have had budget sessions/workshops at which Gary explained in more detail the process he was planning to use and how we going to survive such a nominal increase for FY05. I would have liked more communication early on, for example, about what it was going to mean to have fewer sections of 4th and 5th grade at CH. He mentioned reducing two classes in passing, without explaining he would be increasing class size by 20% to do so. Depending on the cohort at each grade level, the number of sections varies from year to year, so I had assumed we would have fewer sections at those levels because there were fewer sections in the current 3rd and 4th grades. I should have cross checked with other documents more carefully, but I also believe Gary should have addressed this with us directly. Another example is that during the budget process, because the principals were never given the option of building a budget from zero up this year, the School Committee was never aware of the items that were not being included in the budget in order to meet the Fin Com guidelines. I asked for this information and did not receive it until Gary recently distributed the list at the class size meeting with parents. We were never given the opportunity to say that we wanted to push back on the Fin Com and say we needed more money in specific areas.

Finally, I am concerned that Gary's fiscal conservatism has not allowed the growth of potentially important programs in the district - and we, the School Committee, has not had the opportunity to discuss whether or not to advocate for an increased budget because we have not had enough information to know where the cuts/or lack of growth have been.

With regard to the "four Bs", I don't have enough information about what Gary has done to meet them. I have responded based on the information I have, as a SC member, someone very involved in the PTO and a parent. If Gary has been doing things that the SC is unaware of, I would gladly listen and change my evaluation. In thinking about future evaluations, I think that measurable goals, as well as a portfolio from Gary to show us what he feels he has accomplished toward attaining each goal would be very helpful.

The following are my comments on the specific qualifications referred to in the policy, "Qualifications/Duties of School Superintendent" (CEA/CEB).

1. "Provide for the definition of goals and objectives within an overall strategic plan for school system development embracing School Committee policy."

Gary does not meet my expectations in this area because he does not believe in this style of management.

2. "Specify roles and responsibilities for the achievement of defined goals and objectives."

Because Gary does not do #1 above, he does not do this.

"Effectively delegate responsibility and authority and support subordinates in their performance of delegated tasks."

From what I understand, Gary does a pretty good job at this. He hires principals, for example, and then gives them the freedom to run their schools. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] I also believe that in terms of handing more responsibility to Wayne (as was mentioned in his review last year), that he has done so. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. "Communicate effectively with school system staff, the School Committee, the community, other resource agencies and the educational community at large."

As mentioned in the narrative above, I think that effective communication is not one of Gary's strengths. Another example is the incident with the Weston students recently when they arrived in cars at WHS. I heard about this event at a PTO president meeting at which Gary explained that the WHS students just poured out of the buildings to see what was going on and that our students were "provoked" (and therefore their actions were OK). For those of us who do not yet have HS students, the description of the event was shocking. The WSC has never heard about the event. I do not know about communication with the school staff, but I do not feel communication is open enough with the School Committee and I know many community members who are frustrated as well. One of his strengths is his availability to the parents and visibility in the community, but in terms of regular communication, he has not met my expectations.

5. "Provide for systematic evaluation of progress toward objectives and for appropriate dissemination of results."

I do not see this happening. And, as mentioned in the narrative, I believe this is tied to communication and follow through on gathering information (such as the space needs at WHS).

6. "Keep on top of important developing situations."

I don't know. If his follow through with the SBAB legislation is an indication, then it appears that he does stay on top of developing situations.

7. "Produce teamwork among school system personnel."

I don't know directly, though from what I have heard, it sounds like his Admin Council works very well together.

8. "Insure that the right mix of skills are brought to bear on key functions."

I don't know.

9. "Work effectively with a broad variety of people."

I don't know.

10. "Draw out the best from subordinates, stimulate their development, and capitalize upon their individual and collective capabilities."

Once again, I think he empowers and protects his administrators, which is a great strength if the principal, for example, is a good leader. I am not so sure that Gary capitalizes upon individual strengths if he thinks the outcome might differ from what he would like. From what I have seen, he likes to keep pretty tight control. For example, I think the WSC would benefit

tremendously from hearing directly from administrators about what is going on at the building levels. Gary has been very resistant to doing this, rather he just tells the WSC what he wants us to know. Having observed many meetings as PTO chair, I know that the information that is disseminated through Gary to the WSC is not always the most accurate. A specific example is that in the CH class size discussions, we were told repeatedly that we have veteran, very experienced teachers who can handle larger classes. It is my understanding is that this is not the case with all the 4th and 5th grade teachers and caused much frustration on the part of the parents to hear him say this.

11. "Obtain and effectively use needed competencies in specific business functions (e.g., purchasing, accounting, information system design, facilities design, etc.) although it is not required that the Superintendent possess a high level of operating skills in those functions."

I have not seen anything to indicate Gary has strengths in these areas.

12. "Use budgeting as a management tool in translating school system development plans and objectives into program budgets and in justifying those budgets to the School Committee, the Finance Committee, the community, and school system staff."

This year, in particular, I believe the budget was developed the other way around - take a fixed number (Fin Com guidelines) and make our program fit into it. Despite the difficult economic times, I would prefer we do budgeting in the manner mentioned above. We need to have plans and objectives in order to do so.

13. "Insure effective implementation of school facilities construction and remodeling programs, including provision for necessary equipment and also personnel training."

Gary's performance has not met my expectations in this area. We have a HS that is currently crowded and that will reach peak enrollment the Fall that an expansion project is currently scheduled (we hope) to be completed. I do not see this as the best planning. I still have not seen the plan for meeting the needs of the students who are currently at WHS and I would have hoped planning would ensure the completion of the project as the building was becoming overcrowded and not meeting educational needs, rather than several years later, in the year that enrollment peaks. (See "Buildings" above for more examples.)

14. "Articulate a well-developed educational philosophy."

Gary does not meet my expectation in this area. After lengthy conversations, it is clear that he does not believe in visions, mission statements, or revisiting the existing educational philosophy which dates back to 1972, with a revision in 1991.

15. "Provide credible professional leadership to the School Committee in recommending policy and in the determination of school system goals and objectives."

I do not feel a strong sense of leadership from Gary, professional or otherwise. He was not interested in revisiting the policy manual until after much pushing and as mentioned above, he does not believe in a management style of goals and objectives.

16. "Demonstrate thorough knowledgeability of the major new developments in education, including evidence as to their effectiveness and drawbacks."

While Gary is very well read, he is very leery of new developments in education and is reluctant to change. I do not feel like he is open to new ideas but rather explains the drawbacks and is good at explaining why things don't work or why we, in Wayland, don't need them (for example, smaller class sizes, interdisciplinary work at the HS v. our departmental segregation, foreign languages in the ES, etc.). He is very traditional and conservative in his view of education and not willing to take risks that might benefit students.

In closing, I believe that Gary's positive attributes are his commitment to his job as evidenced in his long work hours. He is also highly visible throughout the district. He visits the schools and attends events, both during the day and in the evening and on weekends. Finally, he makes himself available to the parents and community. If anybody wants to speak with him, he is easy to reach and open for people to come in and talk. Finally, this year, his prepared speech for Richard Schaye's retirement was very well done.

The biggest weaknesses that I see are his lack of a vision for the district which directly affects his leadership, his attention to details (errors in meeting minutes for almost every meeting, advanced planning, giving a new School Committee member an incomplete and not up-to-date policy manual, etc.) and his communication skills. Personally, I have concerns about his communication with other administrators, too, [REDACTED] I do not believe this is an appropriate way to handle concerns that have come from a School Committee member, speaking at times as a parent, as a PTO participant and as a School Committee member. [REDACTED]

Some ways in which I believe Gary could do a better job are the following:

- work with the School Committee to establish goals, objectives & a strategic plan for the district as is currently laid out in policy CEI, Evaluation of the Superintendent.
- pay closer attention to details, or have somebody else check work and think about the details for him. Some people are not detail oriented, but need to recognize that weakness and find support.
- provide better follow-up with information requested from the School Committee (part of this may relate to details)
- have the building administrators (and possibly teachers) give periodic, brief reports to the WSC about their buildings - what they are excited about, what they are working on, how we can support them, etc.

Respectfully submitted,

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