

**Scituate Friends of Music
Minutes of February 9, 2010 Meeting**

Attending: Paul Lemieux, Co-President
Debra Moxie, Co-President
Robin Hodgkins, Treasurer
Mary Ellen Schloss Robotham, Secretary
Bill Richter, Music Director
Susan Young, Parent
Ed Fiddler, Parent
Dave Moxie, Parent

Bill Richter provided his report. There were no new faculty requests for funds. The light board has come in from Lehigh (repairs funded by SFM) and is working well. Scituate Cultural Council has funded \$2,000 for the third-graders to attend the Barber of Seville being performed by the Boston Lyric Opera. Transportation for three of the four schools will be from a Yellow Bus grant. (Cushing did not receive the grant for this trip since they had already expended the funds on a second grade trip.). The grant from the Scituate Cultural Council did not completely fund the program, and an additional \$59.60 is needed.

The additional funds requested are \$135 for the Cushing transportation and \$59.60 for the budget shortfall. This \$194.60 is in addition to \$515 that Scituate Friends of Music has already funded for the program. Total funds provided by SFM would therefore be \$709.60

A motion was made to approve the expenditure of an additional \$194.60 for the 3rd grade field trip to Barber of Seville by the Boston Lyric Opera. Seconded and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

With regard to the \$1.5 million budget shortfall, Bill Richter stated that in the past, the school system has passed across-the-board cuts, but that this year proposals are NOT across-the-board. High on the list for cuts is the elementary-level, instrumental music program. The in-school program would be eliminated in its entirety and it would become a fee-based, after-school program. Bill stated that it is very hard to restore programs once they have been cut. He asked how we would be able to support a high school band in future years if there is no elementary music program?

He stated that what is proposed for the instrumental music program is akin to what is now done for the strings program. There are only about a dozen students in the program, and it does not grow over the years.

Bill stated that this is an opportune time for Scituate Friends of Music to step forward and discuss their concerns.

When asked whether cuts were being proposed for the general music program, Bill stated that the specialist music program is more protected since it takes the entire class out of the classroom and serves the function of providing classroom teachers with the break required in their contract.

The group discussed whether the issue could be put on a School Committee agenda. Friends of Music and interested parents could attend. There was some concern that the approach taken at a recent School Committee by parents in support of the Latin program may have backfired somewhat. Parents stayed for the presentation on the Latin program only, and then almost all of them left the meeting. The School Committee seemed to feel the parents were only interested in their special interest, not in the big picture.

Bill stated that he is very concerned about these cuts at the elementary level. He said the program could likely survive cuts at the high school level but would not survive cuts at the elementary school level. This has been seen time and again at districts facing these budget issues. He said that schools with after-school only programs are generally awful programs. There is all kinds of data showing these programs don't work. Cut the top, not the roots, he advised.

Discussed what other elements of the music program could be cut, as we will have to bear our fair share of cuts.

Would like to have data regarding after-school programs. Would like to discuss recommendations for cuts. Look at opportunities for cuts from elementary to high school level.

Is data showing that students that study music do better at math. And involvement in music is what keeps some kids coming to school and staying involved – it isn't just an elitist thing for bright, academically-oriented students.

The group also agreed that the instrumental music program is a vital part of the Scituate school system. There are parents who have kept their kids in the Scituate high school because of the music program. And there are parents who have chosen Scituate in part because of its strong music program.

Bill stated that we have several school committee members who are very strong supporters of the arts (particularly Hayes and Strobino). It may be useful to get some time on the School Committee agenda. Bill stated that the next School Committee meetings were set for February 22 and March 8. *[Note: School Committee and school system post only the March 8 meeting date.]*

Bill stated that he didn't see it being feasible to charge fees for lessons on top of fees required for parents to rent the instruments.

Department heads should be advising the principals and the school administration. Friends of Music can help convey the message. We need an “economy of expression” from the parents, so that the message is conveyed. SFM needs to reach out to the elementary school principals. A presentation to the School Committee could be useful.

There was discussion regarding the difficulties of principals having to make school-based cuts, especially because there is not a level playing field to begin with. There is a big differential in class sizes and school population, from school to school.

Bill stated that the proposed plan would be to begin the in-school instrumental music program in the 7th grade. He stated that experience shows that kids don’t start lessons at this age. Some systems start at 5th grade, rather than 4th. This would only constitute a minor savings, but it is a possibility.

It was agreed that SFM should send an email to parents once we have a date at which it will be discussed at a School Committee meeting. SFM members should make phone calls or emails to reach people that we know are affected or will want to be involved. SFM members should contact the elementary school principals and set up one-on-one meetings to discuss their concerns. We should focus on facts, not emotions, and be willing to offer ideas on what we are willing to give up.

The four elementary school principals will be making this decision together. Although they need to come up with cuts on their own, the elementary instrumental program is a program decision, so there is some coordination on this. Bill will be speaking at a meeting with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and school principals. He will convey the concerns discussed this evening.

The discussion then turned to the upcoming performance of Broadway in Love, and SFM’s sponsorship of Friday night’s performance. Susan Young is spearheading SFM’s efforts and discussed the details including ticket sales, set-up, and need for volunteers.

Robin Hodgkins provided the Treasurer’s report. There were no changes from last month’s budget except for the light repair.

Members working the basketball concession stand last month raised \$105. This money will be sent to SFM from Katy Falaro of SHORE.

Members approved the draft minutes for the January meeting, with one change on page 3.

It was suggested that Robin post the SFM agendas on the website.

The next meeting is scheduled for MARCH 9. It was agreed that we might need to meet earlier due to the budget issues.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 9th at 7:00 p.m. at High School.

*Minutes prepared by Mary Ellen Schloss Robotham
February 15, 2010*