

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2014

**Chester Elementary School
7:30 P.M.**

(A PORTION OF THIS MEETING MAY BE HELD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION)

I. OPENING OF MEETING

BLANDFORD
Michele Crane
Terri Garfield

CHESTER
Shirley Winer

HUNTINGTON
Ron Damon
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD

MONTGOMERY

RUSSELL
Ruth Kennedy
Mary Ann Laurie

WORTHINGTON
Sue Levreault
Gretchen Eliason

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION
Dr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Business & Finance

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
Megan Coburn, Chs,Lit,Ms Principal
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: _____

7:35 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit)

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said the freshman class is collecting class dues to pay for graduation expenses. Sophomores will collect theirs in January. Poinsettia sales will start in November. Class rings can be purchased in November and there will also be a food drive. The junior class is hosting zombie zumba. If you dress up you get a dollar off. The senior class is trying to figure out cost for graduation and the class trip. Schools match had match wits went against St. Joe's.
- Ms. Laurie asked if the \$3,000 line item for graduation was budgeted each year.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, but it doesn't cover everything, and it doesn't cover outside graduation, the stage, sound system, etc.

IV. CONSENT ITEMS 10/8/14(Enc.)

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to approve the minutes of 10/8/14.

Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 4 Nays Abstain 5 Absent

- Mrs. Winer asked what SIS is.
- Dr. Hopson said it stands for student information system. It's part of the DESE data collection process.

V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Title and Curriculum Update – Joanne

- Mrs. Blocker was unable to attend the meeting.
- Mrs. Long handed out packets with home school numbers, Title I and IIA information, tutoring /mentoring, and curriculum information. You can call her or she will take questions at the next meeting.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we could get all presentations in paper form like Joanne's handout.
- Mrs. Winer said she hates to print out all the paper, but sometimes there is a lot of information to take in.
- Mrs. Garfield said you can go to the outline portion of the PowerPoint and look at the outline instead of printing out the slides.
- Mrs. Kennedy's concern is they go on the website after the presentation. It would be nice to have the presentation before the meeting.

VI. BUDGET

A. FY '16 Budget

- Ms. Laurie's Budget Proposal
 - School Supply Cost Lists
 - High School Parking
- Both Ms. Laurie and Mrs. Coburn did some research.
 - Mrs. Laurie said she just wants to make sure the teachers have everything in the classroom that they need without having to ask for it. Perhaps we can increase the line item in the budget so they can ask for less and have more.
 - Mrs. Crane asked if the idea is to cut the out of pocket costs to the parents.
 - Mrs. Laurie thinks it would like to have general classroom supplies in the budget so parents can buy personal items like ear buds. All four classrooms asked for ear buds.
 - Mrs. Coburn said most of the lower levels have listening activities and need headphones.
 - Ms. Laurie said at the February 14 meeting, she and Mrs. Kennedy asked Mrs. Coburn if she needed more supplies, and she said yes they could, they always need supplies.
 - Mrs. Garfield appreciates supporting the teachers, but in all good conscious she doesn't know if she could pass this along to some of her senior neighbors. Part of what we do as a school committee is we need to go back to the mission. Teachers don't make responsible kids; this is the family's responsibility. Yes, some of the teachers will buy them. For this year we have to absorb the Worthington cost etc. Maybe this can be a town fundraiser or NHS fundraiser. But to say we are going to put an extra \$20-30,000 in the budget.
 - Mrs. Kennedy brought it up when they closed down Russell, she went over to the dumpster, and pulled out box after box of pencils, crayons, rulers, etc. In signing warrants she sees these things are bought during the year. She wants us to look into the process. A lot of families cannot afford this. When they bring them in they are shared.
 - Mrs. Winer asked if there is a rule of thumb as to what supplies the teachers buy and parents buy.
 - Mrs. Coburn said at the bottom is a per pupil expenditure. That \$55 doesn't just go to this; it goes to online subscriptions, band/ music materials and thinks like workbooks. It covers a wide range of what goes on during the day. We are using less workbooks and more online subscriptions. When she was pulling the class lists, the teachers asked what was going on. The number one reason they do the supply list is because parents get excited. Before the list, kids would bring in all kinds of things they didn't need. It makes it more unified.
 - Mrs. Crane thinks we can wrap this up and we should keep this in mind when creating the budget; how much do we want to be part of assessments.
 - Mrs. Coburn did a comparison of the local schools as something to think about.
 - Mrs. Garfield asked when the list goes out.
 - Mrs. Coburn said it goes on the website and home in red folders with reports cards. Wal-Mart in Westfield and Northampton have been donating composition books and notebooks. She has been putting them aside for next year.
 - Ms. Laurie originally brought this up last year, because a constituent brought up that it was a hardship to her. It is not a personal agenda item for her.

High School Parking

- Mrs. Laurie said Hampshire, Smith Voke, and Westfield Voke don't charge their kids to park. Westfield has a flat fee of \$20 for the kids to park for the year. How much is in the account now? We are charging the students and it's their school. We should treat all students the same, not based on if they are better than another.

- Dr. Hopson said school council put this together. Mrs. Kennedy was there. The students wanted the recognition for doing well.
- Mrs. Garfield feels a parking spot should never be tied to a grade. This is a lot of work and detail. She agrees with Mrs. Laurie. It should be on an on- time reduction; it shouldn't be a reduction for free or reduced lunch students either.
- Mrs. Kennedy said she was at the meeting, she didn't have our school policies; she read the policy and it doesn't say we can charge.
- Dr. Hopson disagrees. The policy does not say they can or cannot park, and the school committee opted to charge. In 2003 we opted to charge user fees and parking fees instead of losing a teacher. We are now 11 years past that. He wasn't in favor of charging then either, but we are looking at losing \$600,000 to Worthington leaving. If you choose to cut fees for parking, and supplies, and athletic fees, it increases the budget.
- Mrs. Winer said don't we pay for the bus seats for students who don't ride the bus.
- Mrs. Crane said we use the money we collect for parking to offset expenses.
- Ms. Fisk said in FY 11 and 12 it offset the budget as a revenue item.
- Mrs. Garfield asked about snow removal for the student parking lot.
- Ms. Fisk we remove it ourselves, it does not cost that much.
- Mrs. Eliason disclosed that her daughter is a student. She asked if there are restrictions on the revolving account that prevent it from going to the general fund.
- Ms. Fisk said you can use it for any kind of parking maintenance.
- Mrs. Eliason asked if it can go to the general fund.
- Ms. Fisk said it could go to E & D. You would reduce your general fund, and then spend it there.
- Mrs. Eliason said we seem to have a lot of money in that account, but we are limited to how we can use it.
- Mrs. Levreault asked what is the life expectancy on the parking lot, and how much would it cost to replace it as part of capital.
- Ms. Fisk said she has no idea but she could find out.
- Dr. Hopson said we crack seal every other year.

Ms. Laurie made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to reduce student parking to a flat fee of \$50 per year student.

- Dr. Hopson said is there no more daily pass for two dollars, and if they come in half way through the year is it still \$50.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if a student had to drive to school to bring a grandparent to the doctors they would have to pay Gateway \$2.00 for the day. She said you could go down to \$25.00 per semester.
- Dr. Hopson said we provide busing for 95% of students.
- Mr. Wyand said the staff is putting wear and tear on the parking lot.
- Dr. Hopson said we put it in 11 years ago, when we had to cut over a million dollars.
- Mrs. Levreault said this comes up every couple of years. It came in because of a financial crisis. Hiring teachers out here is tough; they pay a lot of gas money to come out here.
- Ms. Laurie wants to amend the motion to \$25 per semester effective date beginning of second semester.
- Dr. Hopson asked what she wanted to do about reimbursement, for those who have already paid. It would be better to start it the next school year.
- Mrs. Laurie was okay amending to say it will start next year.
- Mr. Damon said the most we took in was just over \$12,000. Is it worth it, we should just drop parking fees.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if you add up all the charges; \$225 to park \$132 for athletics that it is a lot of money for these parents to afford.
- Move to next meeting under new business with the amended vote.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Eliason sent out an updated version of the bench marks with updated MCAS results. If you need them in a different format let her know. She will also get copies to Mrs. McVeigh for GTAC, and if people are generally interested, we could make some time at a future meeting to present it.
- Mrs. Eliason said in the central office update under Worthington withdrawal it talks about negotiating in executive session and if the Worthington member should be there. She read the section Dr. Hopson's update. She thinks this is another example of bullying and abuse she and Mrs. Levreault have dealt with over the last 6 years. Violation of conflict of interest is using a public position for private gain, or if you

accept something of value of more than \$50. She believes that what is happening here is that Dr. Hopson is trying to bully them. She thinks there has been a pattern of this. It is why we are having trouble getting school committee members or a quorum here tonight. She has spoken to the Attorney General's office and they said she isn't violating any law. She filled out a disclosure form and will give it to Mrs. Stewart.

- Dr. Hopson said you saw in the Worthington withdrawal meeting there is an appearance that Worthington members are representing the town, he has had people come up to him with a concern about the fact that a spouse of a member is on the Worthington school committee.
- Mrs. Eliason said that perception was created years ago when the committee charged her with conflict of interest, it was to smear her.
- Dr. Hopson said that charge was not filed as a conflict of interest violation.
- Mrs. Kennedy said if there are people who are coming up to the superintendent or any of us; it should go into executive session. Then they can bring their charges and then they can answer. She has been intimidated, bullied, and everything else on this committee. They have a right to sit there. They still have kids here.
- Mrs. Levreault also filled out a disclosure statement. Two of our previous school committee members had husbands who were on finance, the school committee chair at the time, asked if the wives felt they could do their job as school committee. Mrs. Levreault feels it has been bullying; it was a brand new school committee member who was only asking questions.
- Mrs. Laurie liked Mrs. Crane's email about positive reinforcement in the budget; she is also taking her suggestion and she would like to be on the finance committee.
- Mrs. Kennedy said over the last several years she has been trying to get presentations regarding PARCC. She has been in contact with Mr. Stewart from DESE. They will come out if we can get other schools in our area to attend.
- Mrs. Garfield asked what it is that Mrs. Kennedy wants to know about PARCC.
- Mrs. Kennedy said we thought there was only one test, but it is one test in two parts, we vote on things we know nothing about it.
- Put on an agenda for the next meeting for a vote.
- Mrs. Kennedy read Policy EEAA – (Legal references are M.G.L. 40:5; 71:7A; 71:68; 71B:5) Students need to be picked up during the winter.
- Mrs. Kennedy and Ms. Laurie said the law specifically applies to main roads.
- There was discussion about whether the sidewalks were plowed.
- Mrs. McVeigh said that the snow blower the town of Huntington purchased was for the bridge.
- Ms. Laurie disclosed she is a bus driver. She asked if they can pick up the kids up in inclement weather.
- Ms. Fisk said it references the law. Regional school districts get reimbursement. We used to have a stop at the Library in Huntington.
- Dr. Hopson said if we are concerned about the kids who have to walk a mile and a half to school, what about those who walk that to a bus stop.
- Add winter bussing to the next agenda under new business for discussion

B. Chairperson

- Mrs. Crane said a full page yearbook ad is \$180. That's \$12 per person. Picture will be taken December 12.

C. Superintendent – Central Office Update

- Dr. Hopson asked to give Frank Pero a chance to speak. He emailed Dr. Hopson about hosting a debate between Dylan Korpita and Steve Kulik. Dylan Korpita is running against Steve Kulik He thinks it would be great he would like Dr. Hopson to be the moderator.
- Mrs. Crane has some concern about holding a political debate; it should be a neutral and this is not.
- Mrs. Eliason feels it is not a good idea to put the superintendent in that position. He needs to stay out of the political aspect and concentrate on student performance.
- Mrs. McVeigh said there is a legislative forum on the 27th.
- Dr. Hopson said we needed an executive session for the purpose of negotiations update.
- Mrs. Eliason said there is nothing in the statement in the superintendent's update that qualifies for executive session.
- Dr. Hopson said you are negotiating a settlement agreement with Worthington and that should be in executive session.
- Mrs. Eliason disagrees.
- Dr. Hopson said we are only discussing union negotiations tonight.

Mrs. Eliason made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations update not to return to open session.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Shirley, Terri, Ron, Gretchen, Sue, Jeff, Mary Ann, Ruth, Michele

D. Business Manager – First Quarter Report (Enc.)

- Ms Fisk said this is going to be a difficult budget year to start – special education transportation has a large increase. We have preschool and out of district placements that don't line up. In the first three months we are over by \$31,000 from last year. There was a major jump in School choice from Worthington. As of October 1 there are 53 compared last year's 36. The piece we don't know are the special education increments. We will see that on the December reports. We did have some employees waive health insurance, we are about down \$40,000 and open enrolment is in February, we will know more then. Cherry sheet numbers from July we are behind the ball.
- Mr. Wyand asked if we could get a brief description of MEDEX.
- Ms. Fisk said when a person turns 65 they automatically go to MEDEX. Some are on Tefra. We have around 73 people on it. When we do the budget information this year, she will give us the actual numbers.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if the committee members could get a copy of the bus contract.
- Dr. Hopson said that we've got a potential \$350,000 shortfall; we are waiting till we get hard numbers. We have pretty much put a soft freeze on the budget.
- Ms. Fisk said we also have people who have put in intent to retire, so we will have to wait to see if they actually do.
- Mrs. Eliason asked if we are sending articles to the Westfield.
- Mrs. Crane and Mrs. Long have been writing a general synopsis.
- Mrs. Kennedy would like to see the school committee writing the article
- Mrs. Garfield thinks it is great article.
- Mr. Wyand has enjoyed seeing the articles.

E. Administration

- None

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- They are having a management meeting prior to the next school committee meeting.

B. Finance Subcommittee

- Finance – Not set a date. Waiting for Mrs. Suriner to return.

C. Legislative Liaison

- No Report

D. Policy Subcommittee

- Has not met

E. School Committee Goals Subcommittee

- No Report

F. Community Curriculum Committee

- No Report

7:45 - IX. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Worthington Withdrawal

- Dr. Hopson said we have heard nothing more with DESE. We will try to set up another conference call. Looking through the regional agreement, there are changes that need to be discussed. There are about 15 policies we will need to change if Worthington leaves. Russell Dupere said we should start drafting an agreement; capital costs, MSBA payback, OPEB, Hampshire County, etc.

- Dr. Hopson said we should start amendments quickly withdrawal agreements need to go out sooner than later if towns are going to vote on them in the spring.
- Mrs. Levreault brought up minutes from February 27, 2013 regarding a vote on OPEB. We voted against it. We couldn't ask one town to do it unless they all did it. Until we have what the costs would be and when everyone comes up with the money Worthington will. Retiree money is not quantifiable. It is also not in the agreement.
- Mrs. McVeigh would suggest that regional agreement does not trump state law. You can calculate it. There are laws that cover it. Are you going to pay as you go or up front?
- Mrs. Eliason said there is not discussion of that in the regional agreement or the school committee's decision. And nothing in the withdrawal in the legislation, Chester did not pay it. There is no precedence. The town is just not going to approve payment
- Mrs. McVeigh said 32B9.5 state law allows towns to change other towns.
- Dr. Hopson said the decisions were for amendments for the regional agreement. Those very questions are what Silver Lake is still fighting. We are going to have to bring it up, for the school committee not to address the issue would be shortchanging the district.
- Mrs. Eliason said when GTAC was talking about it. Instead of going to Worthington, Huntington went to lawsuit. When Worthington joined the agreement it was a per pupil in the agreement and the state changed that and then over the years some towns didn't have to pay the minimum. You need to first consider what is owed to Worthington. Worthington is paying to leave the district. The terms laid out in 2013 were generous.

B. Superintendent's Goals

- Move to next agenda

C. School Committee Self-Evaluation

- Move to next agenda

D. Boys' and Girls' State Discussion

- Move to next agenda

X. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS - None

XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

November 12 - FY '14 Audit Report – Stan Kulas

XII. INFORMATION

Information

Gateway School Committee hears DESE decision
 Tickets going fast for heating oil raffle
 Gateway announces senior nights
 Superintendent's Corner October 10, 2014
 Commended student in 2015 National Merit ® Scholarship Program
 VHS to DVD-R conversion
 Superintendent's Corner October 6, 2014
 High school holds first 'Club Fair'
 Gateway promotes school safety

Warrants

AP#1029 \$49.78

PR# 7 \$382,507.83

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Union Negotiations

Mrs. Eliason made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations update not to return to open session.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

XIV. ADJOURNMENT: *Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Ms. Laurie to adjourn at 9:56 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary