

**GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014**

**Library  
7:30 P.M.**

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

**I. OPENING OF MEETING**

BLANDFORD  
Michele Crane  
Jim Kronholm

CHESTER  
Shirley Winer

HUNTINGTON  
Ron Damon  
William Hathaway  
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD  
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY  
Anne Marie Buikus

RUSSELL  
Ruth Kennedy  
Mary Ann Laurie

WORTHINGTON  
Sue Levreault  
Gretchen Eliason

SECRETARY  
Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION  
Stephanie Fisk, Business & Finance

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL  
Amy Fouracre, Chs, Lit, MS Assistant Principal  
Joanne Blocker, Director of Academics  
Megan Coburn, Chs, Lit, MS Principal  
Jason Finnie, High, Jr. High School Principal  
Anthony Sabonis, High/Jr. High Assistant Principal  
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: \_\_\_\_\_

**7:35 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA**

- Mrs. Eliason spoke about Joe Lahue a custodian who recently passed.
- Ms. Fisk said some nice words about Joe also stating his services would be Saturday from 10 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Joanne Frappier a coworker spoke about how staff and students will miss him.
- Mrs. Elaison held a moment of silence.
- Mrs. Eliason is recording the meeting.
- Mr. Langmore asked if the audience could speak on an agenda item.
- Mrs. Eliason said yes.

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**III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT - None**

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**IV. CONSENT ITEMS 1/8/14 (Enc.)**

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to approve the minutes of 1/8/14 with corrections.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 3 Absent*

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**V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS**

**A. Curriculum Update/PD**

- Mrs. Blocker gave a handout containing this year's Professional Development. Staff members are here to talk about different aspects of professional development. Darlene Grady and Laura Fisk will be talking about curriculum, Heather Cabral about technology, and Jean Garriepy about the October 15th Professional Development day.

- Laura Fisk a middle school teacher and Math curriculum facilitator spoke about her service to the district and the support and stability Mrs. Blocker has brought to the district. It has been very helpful in opening up new things. Teachers have been collaborating together to create curriculum maps for the last 4 years. They have moved on to creating unit plans from the new GoMath program. This has really helped in using the common core standards. The hope at the end of the teaching unit is that they will make any necessary changes needed. Having the time to collaborate has been essential in this very daunting task. They also felt like they were prepared when DSAC came in.
- Darlene Grady a teacher and ELA facilitator said they have done things like this before, but the collaboration approach has been successful in communicating among staff. They have been given the time to provide ongoing collaboration amongst staff and it is important to the success of our students. She is hopeful they will be able to continue this process by editing and changing things to make things better for our students.
- Heather Cabral, teacher and part of the technology committee teaches fourth grade in Chester and is the only one. This approach allows her to collaborate with other staff. We are far above other districts. There are members from every level on the committee. A survey was sent out asking what teachers wanted to see for professional development. Some of the top requests were websites, iPads in the classroom, and online education in the classroom. They run sessions to help people who want to drop in and work on a website. Staff can email them with their questions. Questions range from setting up projectors to running their laptops.
- Jean Garripey, a retired teacher who works part-time spoke about the full October 15th professional development day. She really values professional development. It is so key to what we do as teachers. The day was a success on three levels, workshop diversity, quality of presenters, (from all over the country, utilized our staff, and students facilitated a workshop for the teachers), and last the sense of community –it brought grades K-12 together.
- Mrs. Blocker thanked Jean publically for helping with that day. She wouldn't have been able to do it without her.
- Mrs. Winer asked how many days can we have in a year.
- Mrs. Blocker said contractually two days.
- Mrs. Eliason talked about the importance of working on these teams, curriculum mapping and asked when do you find the time.
- Mrs. Blocker said these are different days. It is not always a full day or a half day.
- Laura Fisk said you don't mind being out of the classroom when you are productive.
- Heather Cabral said having the input about when you collaborate is so helpful.
- Darlene Grady said we feel like we have the opportunity and the time to work together.
- Mrs. Eliason asked them to talk a little more about the unit plans. Are you working with the teachers in 3, 4, 5, and 6.
- Darlene Grady said the guidelines come from Mrs. Blocker and then she would go over the rough guidelines. Her job was to communicate to the teachers; they would work as a group and then in individual grades.
- Mrs. Blocker said they are mainly working on Math. They will look at ELA later on.

## **B. FY 15 Budget Presentation**

- This is the first budget. The revenue piece will come in at the February 12 meeting. It looks like the state has a total overall resolution at 24.3 billion throughout the state. As they divvy that up we will see it play out. Chapter 70 aide will be out on March 15. But it will not be July 3 like last year. We will see a minimum of \$25.00 per student for Chapter 70. Minimum contribution numbers came out today. The decrease is by 15 % in the minimum contribution numbers. Regional transportation is not broken down by school year. Looks like there is about a 2 % increase. Hoping it will be on the DOR website tomorrow. FY 15 has no major increase. A 1.9 % increase reflects a \$300,000 increase. A large one is out of district special education. 2<sup>nd</sup> piece is there is a reduction in our circuit breaker money. This is because we have fewer claims. There is a new line item required by the state; employee separation. This covers severance pay for anyone leaving, retiring etc, There is \$51,000 in there for intent to retire staff. Insurance costs have gone up. Not because our premiums went up, but because people are jumping on. Two major bargaining units this year; teachers and paraprofessionals. There are extra pages in this year's budget; a report from curriculum, grants, special education, and the business office. There will be follow-up presentations over the next couple of weeks.
- Mrs. Eliason thanked Ms Fisk for putting together the budget. Whether we like the numbers or not is it a huge undertaking.

**C. Chapter 70 Presentation (Enc's)**

- Mrs. Eliason did the presentation a couple of years ago because she was interested in finding out more. She has updated it and is giving a new PowerPoint presentation tonight.
- Mr. Wyand asked about how much the reimbursement has been over the years.
- Mrs. Eliason said it varies by towns. You will see it on the spreadsheet. The left side covers town foundation, their budget and their ability to pay. Then the right side is the growth factor or what you gave us last year.
- Mrs. Winer said awhile ago the state was paying a little over 60% of education, and now it is in the 30's.
- Mrs. Eliason said it has gone to 42% for Gateway.
- Mrs. Wyand said line one on the previous table any town equalized property evaluation, is that a problem with this whole calculation like Chester and the state property.
- Mrs. Eliason said it may skew it down a bit.
- Ms. Fisk said if anyone is ever looking at the spreadsheet the required contribution is different than your minimum contribution because they subtract half of the vocational part. The second half comes in when the vocational piece is paid to the town.

**VI. COMMUNICATIONS****A. Student Representative - None****B. School Committee**

- Mrs. Kennedy said she approached a couple of people about filming and John Wyand was one of them. She is hoping to start this process.

**C. Chairperson**

- Mrs. Eliason was at GTAC on Saturday and there was discussion about select board chairmen selecting a representative. They are eager to do that and we are eager to have them. As soon as that is done, they will have a 16% vote because we have 15 members. Members of GTAC met with people from Worthington and had discussion about mediation.

**D. Superintendent – Central Office Update (Enc.) - None****E. Business Manager - Quarterly Report (Enc.) – None****F. Administration - None****VII. AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTING****A. Superintendent's Evaluation Subcommittee**

- They will be meeting at the first meeting in February.

**B. Finance Subcommittee**

- The budget process has started. They are starting to come up with questions. They are getting there thanks to Ms. Fisk. The next meeting will be February 22.

**C. Policy Subcommittee – On Agenda****D. School Committee Goals Subcommittee**

- Mrs. Eliason said they've met twice and have come up with liaisons: Mrs. Buikus for Littleville, Mrs. Crane for middle school, Mrs. Kennedy for Chester, and Mrs. Eliason for the high school. The hope is for School Committee members to start to participate in what is going on in the schools.

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

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

Yeas: Ruth, Jim, Shirley, Sue, Anne-Marie, Ron, Sarah, Michele, Jeff, Bill, MaryAnn, Gretchen

**VIII. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS****A. Approval of Second Semester Out of State Field Trips: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Bronx Zoo, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade High Meadows, Washington DC/Philadelphia Trip.**

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Crane to approve the out of state field trips: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Bronx Zoo, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade High Meadows, Washington DC/Philadelphia.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent*

### **B. Worthington Withdrawal**

- Mrs. Eliason said there is no official action required to be taken by the school committee.
- Mrs. Eliason made personal remarks. She feels that with regards to having MASC and MASS support the school committee that Dr. Hopson has a lot of other things to do. We are talking about this because of what happened 5 years ago. This problem has not been solved since. The school committee needs to ask Worthington what it would take to gain their trust back.
- Mrs. Levreault said over the last 4 years this Worthington withdrawal has been difficult. 70 % of their students were coming here and now almost 70% go somewhere else. When you think about what that does to the district it is very difficult. The first thing that needs to happen is to have Dr. Hopson to go to Worthington apologize, figure out how to repair things with the towns and figure out how to get the kids back. There needs to be a reconciliation. We have 28 incoming school choice.

*Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to direct Dr. Hopson to go to the Worthington select board and ask how the Gateway Regional school district can gain the trust of the town and how we can get the students back.*

- Mr. Kronholm said Worthington's withdrawal is a mitigative disaster to the towns. A five person member put this through the house. He doesn't know what is going to happen. It has blindsided us.
- Mrs. Winer said this is an important discussion. Can the school committee take a stand one way or another. There have been feelings from Worthington about the school for a long time. We fought hard for Worthington's school to get renovated and then school population started to drop. We could have put every elementary student we had in two schools. We decided to close Worthington, running the school was costing a million dollars a year.
- Ms. Fisk said we have we have 48 kids at Gateway. 34 school choice, 3 charter and 13 vocational students from Worthington.
- Mrs. Crane can't support this motion. She resents that the motion is asking the superintendent to go to one town to find out how to fix things. Her town no longer has a school. We have been distracted from educating our students. It would be important for this board to take a stand. We should vote this motion down, and we should support a vote to not to let Worthington out.
- Mrs. Laurie said she was not here when this was decided. Our budget has not gone down 3 million. Where is the savings? There wasn't a 3 million dollar savings.
- Mrs. Kennedy, this motion was requested by the public not a school committee member. Worthington is not the only town losing to school choice. We have not saved money like we promised and the schools weren't closed properly. The towns voted it down, and Worthington has the right to submit the home rule petition. It was well worth going to the meeting in Worthington last Tuesday. They talked and there was back and forth discussion. Fences need to be mended whether they leave or stay.
- Tony van Werkhoven was one of the folks who spoke at the last meeting. Members of the committee had tried to raise the issue and there wasn't complete discussion at a prior meeting. When the building project started the intent was to close schools, then there was a rethinking of elementary schools not to close them but rehab local schools. That was how the building package was approved. After that a proposal was made to close three elementary schools and there was an overall cost to run them. This committee voted to do that. I don't think anyone was happy doing it, I don't know if Worthington voted for it. You don't see the towns of Russell and Blandford running out. If this committee does not speak up for the withdrawal then this district is heading for a small death.
- Dale Miller, Blandford Finance. The public voted not to allow Worthington to leave the district and as representatives of the public and our district you need to follow the vote of the people. Take a vote tonight in favor of your constituents. The people in Boston need to know what is going on. When there are only five people voting it is unfair. It is only for one town and leaves six towns upset. It is going to be a financial disaster.
- Mrs. Eliason disagrees. Originally we had figures from Ms. Fisk of a \$360,400 loss if Worthington left. Then it went to \$700,000 and the last number with a net loss, \$780,000. She disagrees because there is no premises with the cost. The predictions of financial disaster are overblown. She disagrees with Ms. Fisk's numbers. Each year we have extra money left over to help offset the subsequent year's budget. There have been missed opportunities. Worthington asked what they can do to stay in the district. Worthington felt

they were not listened to. The motion is about making sure the school committee makes sure it is responsive to the people's needs. Mrs. Long has never asked the town of Worthington's people why they don't come here.

***Mrs. Laurie said maybe we amend the motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to have school committee go to Worthington with the superintendent.***

- Mrs. Crane called the question – there was no second.

***Mrs. Laurie said maybe we amend the motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to have school committee go to Worthington with the superintendent.***

***Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays 6 Abstain Absent***

- Mr. Damon is opposed to the motion. To ask the superintendent to go and do that without him even being here to would be an insult to the superintendent. The days of small schools with 40 to 50 students with limited staff is over. A school that small does not foster the education it needs to. We couldn't afford to staff the schools with full-time teachers such as P.E. We should vote the motion down.
- Mrs. Eliason said there was never discussion about turning Worthington into a union school, charter school.
- Mrs. Winer said that Dr. Hopson worked with the consultant for Worthington about a charter school.
- Mrs. Eliason said they didn't talk about charter schools.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the school committee is not a legislative body. If we took a vote it wouldn't mean anything to the legislature. They do know the six towns are upset. The reason it was voted on is that there was an assumption that it was approved. We have no authority to pull it back. The only town that can pull it is Worthington. She was apologized to for putting it forward because they thought it was approved. Representative Pish apologized to her. It is now in the Senate hands, it doesn't have a number yet. They are deciding whether to put it in a committee, or approve it. The earliest it can happen is 2016.
- TJ Cousino said he has a list of the people who voted. Three of the five people who voted for it work under Mr. Kulik. We all have to take an ethics test. He knows bias when he sees it. The House and Kulik deceived us. He misrepresented us and the town of Worthington. The people you represent took a vote and it is your duty to take a vote. These people have to represent the vote of the towns.
- Mrs. Eliason disagrees there was anything dishonest done. The joint education committee held a hearing. They have looked at the facts of the case. There were people were there from the towns.
- Mrs. Buikus said when this was discussed at the last meeting she asked everyone to talk to their select boards and Montgomery's board said not to bother because the towns already took a vote. They said to table the motion and let it go away.
- Mr. Kronholm said when the schools regionalized in order for a town to withdrawal all the other towns had to vote for it.
- Mr. Damon spoke to a point of order; we are not discussing the motion on the floor. We need to go back to the motion.
- Pandora Hague feels they should ask Dr. Hopson to go to Worthington, we employ him.
- Ms. Taverna is speaking as a resident. It was the school committee that voted to consolidate not Dr. Hopson. It was on the school committee's watch not Dr. Hopson's. Blandford and Worthington were the two towns who actually had a lot of people at their hearings. School Committee made a legitimate vote.
- Mrs. Levreault said the school committee voted to close schools without a vote of all seven towns. That vote never happened because the school committee voted to close the schools not the towns. Their school was closed without their approval. What are we going to do about education here?

***Mrs. Crane made a motion seconded by Mrs. Wyand to extend the meeting to 10:00 p.m.***

***Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays 2 Abstain Absent***

***Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to direct Dr. Hopson to go to the Worthington select board and ask how the Gateway Regional school district can gain the trust of the town and how we can get the students back.***

***Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays 6 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote Requested)***

Yeas: Ruth, Sue, Anne-Marie, Bill, Mary Ann, Gretchen

Nays: Jim, Shirley, Ron, Sarah, Michele, Jeff

***Mrs. Crane made a motion seconded by Mr. Damon that the committee takes a stand against Worthington leaving the district.***

- Mrs. Levreault asked how as school committee we can take this vote. How do you have the authority?
- Peter Langmore said six of the towns by an overwhelming majority did not want Worthington to leave. As representatives of the six towns, any vote on this subject needs to vote positively and an abstention or a negative vote means you are not supporting your towns.
- Tony van Werkhoven said the members of this committee represent this district, but they should speak what is best for the towns too. What is best is if Worthington does not leave.
- Mr. Kronholm said as Dr. Hopson pointed out we have limited our support.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the original reason Dr. Hopson brought that up was before the hearing, so he could speak one way or another at the hearing. He could have spoken how he felt like everyone else. This is out of our hands.
- Mrs. Winer said there is always some debate to if we are representing the town or the children. She feels we should take a position.
- Mrs. Laure doesn't feel it is right for people from our town to tell us how to vote.
- Mrs. Levreault said if your child came home to you and asked your advice. Would you tell them it was best to force someone to do something or talk to someone about what is the best thing for the kids in this district. If you want Worthington to stay we need come to an understanding.
- Ms. Fisk said the initial thought process was \$400,000. There could possibly be a tuition agreement at that point. That was part of the cost. The numbers are changing all the time. She changed them three times today. Looking at the regular assessments the towns can't afford them, never mind with an increase.
- John Wyand said losing money or a town is going to affect the things we have now. One is the new broadcast class. How are we going to be able to afford the things we do if we lose a town. Students in Worthington had no idea they would have to go to Hampshire Regional or school choice into Gateway, providing their own transportation.
- Mrs. Mc Veigh said the only town that can change the direction that has been put in motion is Worthington. The legislature can vote and grant the petition. The first suggestion that was voted down was possibly the best position. Taking a stand feels terribly negative. A group of people have been meeting with Worthington to see how to get them back. In six months we are going to have six towns who pay more or we are going to have one who is extremely unhappy. At the meeting in Huntington a couple of weeks ago the Worthington people said there was nothing that could be done. And it was different at the meeting in Worthington on Tuesday.
- Mr. Cousineau said if we go up and beg, barter, arbitrate then the next town is going to be Russell, and then Blandford. He gives Worthington credit for starting their own school. The parents are the ones that are ticked off not the students. Blandford didn't have the money to go to a charter school. Look at what is happening in your district
- Mr. Wyand asked why is there such reluctance to take a stand or why it can't be addressed. The towns' people have asked us to discuss this and take a stand and he doesn't understand the reluctance.
- Mr. Damon said our concern is the welfare of the district and the good education of the students. Our position should be for the good of the district.
- Mrs. Eliason said when she first started in the district, she saw the situation between the towns and the district as a marriage. At this point one party is asking for a divorce but they are not doing anything to mend the relationship. Children in Worthington have been pushed out of public education.

***Mrs. Crane made a motion seconded by Mr. Damon that the committee takes a stand against Worthington leaving the district.***

***Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 7 Nays 5 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote Requested)***

Yeas: Jim, shirely, Ron, Sarah, Michele, Jeff, Mary Anne

Nays: Ruth, Sue, Anne-Marie, Bill, Gretchen

- Mr. Kronholm asked if Mrs. Eliason has a conflict of interest working with Dr. Hopson. He would like to see Dr. Hopson and the chairperson work together to implement the best education for all students in the district.
- Mrs. Eliason doesn't see a conflict and feels the committee has been misusing the term.

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**C. Negotiations – In Executive Session**


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**IX. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**
**A. Field Trip Policy (Enc.)**

- Mrs. Foley asked if the parent can volunteer the information.
- Mrs. Kennedy said they wouldn't be going on a field trip that requests that type of information.
- This will be moved to old business for the next meeting.

**B. School Committee Goals-Student Goals (Enc.)**

- Mrs. Eliason discussed her handout. we are a level 3 district and we want to be a level 2 school district.
  - Vote at the next meeting.
  - Mrs. McVeigh asked if improving the MCAS scores in the district is one of school Dr. Hopson's school goals.
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**X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**
Future Agenda Items


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**XI. INFORMATION**
Information

Alumni Band reminder  
 Gateway Garden Project funded  
 Superintendent's Corner January 10, 2014  
 Superintendent's Corner January 6, 2014  
 Gateway January Calendar

Warrants

AP# 1060 \$21.75                      PR# 14 \$318,126.38  
 AP# 1056 \$93,537.51

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**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

Yeas: Ruth, Jim, Shirley, Sue, Anne-Marie, Ron, Sarah, Michele, Jeff, Bill, MaryAnn, Gretchen

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**XIII. ADJOURNMENT – Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Crane to adjourn at 10:00**


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Respectfully Submitted,  
 Stacy L Stewart,  
 School Committee Secretary