

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 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
Martha Otterbeck

HUNTINGTON
William Hathaway
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY
Anne Marie Buikus
Sandra Haas

RUSSELL
Ruth Kennedy

WORTHINGTON
Sue Levreault
Gretchen Eliason

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION
Dr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent
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
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer
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

- Peter Francis is recording the meeting for Westfield news.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT - None

IV. CONSENT ITEMS 1/22/14 (Enc.)

Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Crane to accept the minutes of 1/22/14

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays 4 Absent 2

V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Town Representative to Negotiations

- Mrs. Eliason thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for their interest in being a part of negotiations.
- Amy Burnham, the Huntington Selectmen Chair recommended Dan Jacques the Montgomery Selectmen Chair to be on the negotiations subcommittee.
- Mr. Jacques will accept as long as there is enough support from the other towns.
- Those in attendance: Huntington's Amy Burnham, Russell's Pandora Hague, Montgomery's Dan Jacques, and Blandford's Andy Montanaro. Mrs. Eliason said Worthington has declined to participate. There is no representative from Chester or Middlefield.

- Mrs. Kennedy said as a point of order they should be meeting between them. It could be in a different part of the room.
- Mrs. Eliason disagrees.
- Mr. Jacques said it does say the meeting has to indicate the time, place and date at a regional school district meeting.

Ms. Burnham made a motion seconded by Ms. Hague to appoint Dan Jacques to be part of the school committee negotiations subcommittee.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 4 Nays Abstain Absent

- Mrs. Eliason welcomed Mr. Jacques to the subcommittee.
- Mr. Jacques asked if he was going to be in negotiations.
- Mrs. Eliason said there is an at the table team, Anne-Marie, Dave, Steph, and the full subcommittee. He will be sitting on the full subcommittee meeting.
- Russell Dupere said the first piece, you have the right to be part of the school committee in executive session and have a vote. The second part is optional according to committee decision. It is any part of negotiati tons discussion no matter where they are in the negotiations.
- Mr. Jacques said the representative should have one vote according to the regulations. They serve as a member in the committee.
- Mrs. McVeigh said the problem is they have already started the negotiations.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the letter was supposed to go out within 21 days prior to the start of negotiations. The superintendent was supposed to send a letter.
- Mrs. Eliason apologized because it should have gone out in the fall, but we have never done this before.
- Mr. Montanaro asked the committee to consider asking Mr. Jacques to be on the negotiations at the table committee. The town representatives thought they would have a representative in the negotiations meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said you also have to have an agreement with the other half. The teachers do not want to have another person at the table. There would have to be a vote of the school committee and then the GTA would have to agree.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if it was presented as a member of the team.
- Dr. Hopson said it was brought up as is tonight, because we knew this was going to happen tonight.
- Mrs. Eliason is not opposed to having the vote reconsidered, but we do know how the teachers feel.
- Mr. Dunlevy said after the success of tonight, that someone should go back to the teachers and let them know what was voted, and ask them if they would consider it because the towns want to have someone on the committee.
- Mr. Jacques said the presence of a representative from the towns at negotiations works two ways. We can better understand and better relay the information to the towns.
- Mr. Jacques asked what information he can relay back to the towns.
- Mrs. Eliason said anything that is discussed in a public session but not executive.
- Mrs. Hague said as towns we have the right to be there, we shouldn't be giving them the option.
- Mrs. Eliason said it is a difference between the at the table team and the right to participate in the vote.
- Mrs. Hague said the towns don't have anyone involved in negotiations and the school is such a big part of our budget, we should have someone at the table.
- Mrs. Eliason would like to bring this up at the next meeting and discuss taking a vote to allow Mr. Jacques to sit on the at the table committee.
- Dr. Hopson said ground rules need to be set between parties. At some points in the past the Superintendent has not been on that committee.
- Mr. Montanaro asked is that part of the current contract.
- Attorney Dupere said when you start negotiations you come up with a set of ground rules and you are bound to the ground rules. The parties can both agree to change the ground rules. The subcommittee has discussions and then they bring it back to the full committee, and then the full committee takes a vote to accept. In traditional bargaining you can have as many. In collaborative you choose to have whoever you want to be there.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if this could be considered extraordinary circumstances.
- Attorney Dupere thinks it makes sense to have the committee take a vote and then go back. It is very rare that the letter goes out because most towns and schools don't know it exists. The notice should go out every time you are bargaining.

- Mr. Dunlevy said we don't need to blame anybody, but we can use it as an excuse to improve communication since the towns want to be more involved.
- Mrs. Winer asked what is going on when is the next meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said the 27th is the at the table committee. School committee will have a chance to vote at the next school committee meeting before the 27th.
- Mr. Jacques asked about the length of the term.
- Dr. Hopson said it is for 3 years.
- Amend the vote to 2017.

Ms. Burnham made a motion seconded by Mrs. Hague amend the motion to include a term ending in 2017.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 4 Nays Abstain Absent

B. FY "15 Budget Presentation – Principals

- Mrs. McVeigh said the numbers don't include the vocational students. Those expenses are going up. This doesn't tell the full educational value.
- Dr. Hopson agrees.
- Mrs. Eliason talked about the budget blog item. Is it true the reimbursement for vocational transportation reimbursement is 0%. This year for FY 14 the vocational transportation costs are expected to be reimbursed by 75% and next year it is 0%.
- Ms. Fisk said, yes that is true.
- Dr. Hopson said there is a blog, although he will have to fix it because you cannot post on it right now.
- Ms. Fisk said you are supposed to get 50% of your vocational costs in chapter 70
- A Man in the audience asked what is the difference between version 1 and 1.1 of the budget?
- Dr. Hopson said changes in state information, changes in insurance, etc. Any major changes would be voted on by school committee and would probably be 2.0. We will definitely want to redo it once the house and senate come out with their version.
- Mrs. Blocker, Director of Academics gave a presentation and distributed a handout.
- Mrs. Foley asked if the mentoring program impacts a teacher's ability for recertification.
- Mrs. Blocker said yes.
- Ms. Taverna, Special Education Director gave a presentation and distributed a handout.

C. Building Compliance Issue

- Ms. Fisk said the transfer switch for the generator failed. While that happened the fire inspector came and issued a violation. We are still waiting for clarification. In the meantime we have replaced the switch. 106.3 violation all exits, require everyone to a clear exit.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Student Representative

- Everyone is excited to be back on break again. They are excited about the snow too.

B. School Committee

- Mrs. Crane said she and Mr. Kronholm fulfilled one of the school committee goals and held a meeting at the town hall. They had a few people come.
- Mrs. Crane also said as the liaison in the middle school visited Mrs. Forcier's classroom. They made websites and did reports in groups. They had an end of session activity – bringing foods from the different countries. It was neat to see them using their 21st century skills.
- Mrs. Kennedy was under the understanding that they had to have one more meeting.
- Mrs. Eliason was sorry for not being clear.
- Mrs. Coburn said to just send her an email. She has a schedule of upcoming classroom activities.
- Mrs. Kennedy received an email from MASC regarding and upcoming workshop Making way for PARCC. She would love to have other people to go with her on March 15.
- Mrs. Levreault said it came in the mail from MASC as well.

C. Chairperson - None

D. Superintendent – Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson received a letter from Julie Case, one of our high school guidance counselors requesting to extend her leave of absence. Dave read her letter. Put on old business for next meeting to vote.

E. Business Manager

- Ms. Fisk said the information Mrs. Levreault requested about the Worthington withdrawal is on the website and the state also requested the information and they have received the same information as school committee. With regards to E & D money, DESE does not recommend using all of it. We are using \$550,000 to offset the FY 15 budget.

F. Administration

- Mrs. Long said the Alumni Band concert was this past Sunday. Five former band directors came back. About 100 people from the community attended the performance.
- Westfield evening news had an article about PVIAC ski individuals. Austin Herman, Katelyn Bodoh, Allie Fisk and Hanna Green are going to states.
- This Saturday is Gateway Day at Blandford. If you purchase a button for \$5.00, you ski \$20.
- Mrs. Blocker is working with the collaborative and four other districts for science for the elementary and Jr. High. Working with Science curriculum looking at DDM's integrating science, Math and the arts.

VII. AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation Subcommittee

- They met tonight. Every year they pick a focus group, this year town officials will be the focus group. They will receive a survey. You can write it out or send it in email. The state has new guidelines for the superintendent, administrators and teachers. This year we had 12 out of 15 people participate so far. Mrs. Levreault handed out the survey.
- Move to the next agenda for discussion.
- Mrs. Eliason thanked Mrs. Levreault for putting this information together for them.
- At their next meeting March 12, they will be holding a management meeting.

B. Finance Subcommittee

- Meeting on the 26th. Budget will be the main topic that night. Mrs. Kennedy would like to see as many towns' people come and look at it with them

C. Policy Subcommittee

- Field Trip policy is on the agenda

D. School Committee Goals Subcommittee

- Mrs. Eliason will look at these and distribute and update per the request of Mr. Kronholm

VIII. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Field Trip Policy

- Mrs. Coburn voiced her concern about inhibiting field trips. The 6th grade to Appalachian Trail, and the Camp Becket trip are two huge local resources she doesn't want to lose. She would allow it to be up to each parent. PTO's do a great job funding these local trips.
- Kate Fogue, Chester PTO, agrees with Mrs. Coburn. They work very hard to raise funds to send these kids on field trips. To put a blanket policy out there would impact it and have a negative effect. If it is a family thing, it is their prerogative, but for all students to lose out because of one or two. It is a slap in the face to all volunteers.
- Barbara Dowel, who has four kids in the district. They had a son in 6th grade. She doesn't want her children going somewhere where they are not prepared to meet the needs of her child.

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to approve the field trip policy.

- Mrs. Kennedy said this isn't to punish students. There are privacy laws. Health information is supposed to stay with the school. If there is a child that needs help, we are supposed to be taking care of it. There are a lot of parents that don't mind giving out the information. She has talked to several businesses who don't want this information. There are two sides.

- Mrs. Crane can't support the change in the policy. We should leave it the way it is. The folks who are concerned are a very small population. It is too broad. It would impact the types of trips they go on.
- Mrs. Foley has a concern when a parent loses the option to give that information. If a child has an allergy to bee sting, she wants people to be able to respond if that child gets stung.
- Mrs. Otterbeck doesn't want it to prevent kids from going on any field trip. She is not sure that the information they are filling out violates anything. She received emails regarding this issue.
- Mrs. Eliason said one of the concerns was that these organizations aren't covered by HIPAA laws. The Appalachian trail form was specific and asked for a lot of information. They were asking for things like blood pressure, last hospitalization, etc. It was information they requested that they didn't need.
- Ms. Coburn has spoken to the Appalachian office and it was not her understanding that they were no longer collecting that information. We don't always send a nurse.
- Mrs. Eliason said they were asking for a lot of information. It ends up being discriminatory when the parent doesn't want to fill out the form.
- Mrs. Levreault asked about the other organization was it Camp Becket. She doesn't ever remember as a parent having to fill out forms when she had kids in district. What types of information do they ask for; health insurance information.
- Wayne Procanico asked why doesn't the teacher or staff on the bus have that information with them. So if something happens we can give them the information.
- Dr. Hopson said the nurse has insurance information. The nurse goes over any information and it does on the field trip. If you are a chaperone and you have 10 kids and they are all doing different things, these businesses just want to have their own form.
- Mr. Wyand said perhaps we can work it so we can still go on these field trips by letting these places we go that we are responsible for these students. It is important we look at how this is worded.
- Mrs. Eliason suggested we have our policy committee work with legal counsel and approach these two groups.
- Mrs. Winer said isn't this a question of who is responsible.
- Mrs. Crane would like to know if an agency or company requests this information do they have responsibility to keep the information properly.
- Mrs. Otterbeck agrees we could rewrite this policy. She would hate to make a whole new policy when it is only one piece which could greatly affect a number of other field trips.
- Mrs. Levreault asked if these are the only two that are asking for this information.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the kids going to Washington DC, they are going to so many venues, you aren't going fill out a form for every place.
- Mr. Kronholm said he would hate to see a policy where we accept the responsibility in all cases. All of these places have insurance.

Mr. Wyand made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to return this to the policy subcommittee for further study.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent

B. School Committee Goals – Student Goals

- Mrs. Eliason sent out a brochure about school levels. Our goal is that we would strive to be a level II or above district. The descriptions were not that good.

Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to strive to be a level II or above District.

- Mr. Jacques asked why you wouldn't set it to be a level I District.
- Mrs. Eliason said that is ambitious and should be considered.
- Mrs. Winer it
- Mrs. Foley said one step in a year is a timeframe.
- Dr. Hopson said we were a level II district last year. It isn't that we didn't make progress it is that we didn't make enough progress. The goal is not to be in the bottom 20% in growth.
- Mr. Wyand said, without setting any ways to reach it, we are saying we want to do it, not how.
- Mrs. Eliason said the first part is to set the goal, and then during the budget process we will discuss how to get there. All it is is an overarching goal. One of the things we talked about was setting money aside for tutoring.
- Mrs. Levreault said we could probably be a level I school if we had more money.
- Mrs. Eliason said they met several times, and met with administrators.

- Mrs. Winer said part of it is to have a measurable goal. It won't change how we operate, but how we get there.
- Mrs. Blocker said it is an opportunity for the school committee and the administrators to work together.

Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to strive to be a level II or above District.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Unanimous Nays Abstain Absent

C. Negotiations

- Dr. Hopson said they met last week and are moving forward. The next meeting is the Thursday after vacation. The paraprofessional contract is the next one to negotiate.

IX. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Open Meeting Law Violation Complaint

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to go into executive session for the purpose of discussion the open meeting law violation complaint.

- Mr. Jacques asked what is the intent for going into executive session.
- Ms. Taverna said since it was an open meeting law violation wouldn't you want to handle it in open session.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to go into executive session for the purpose of discussion the open meeting law violation complaint.

Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 2 Nays 9 Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Shirley, Gretchen

Nays: Jeff, Sandra, Sue, Anne-Marie, Sarah, Michele, Martha, Bill, Ruth

Abstain: Jim

- Mrs. Eliason said we have a complaint from Tony van Werkhoven about the election of a chair and vice chair by ballot, as we understood was our policy. The question she proposed; is there a conflict between the section and the open meeting law. If there is a violation how do we address it?
- Attorney Dupere said there is not a conflict between the two statutes. Open meeting law says you cannot vote in open or executive session by secret ballot and the other says you can vote by ballot just not secret ballots. You would write down your name and then who you wanted for Chair. Then the chair would read the ballot. If you are going to do it by ballot, you have to do it the way he described. You can do it by ballot, just not secret. You have 30 days to file the complaint. He understands why the individual filed. The complaint has merit. The remedy is to redo the meeting vote and do it openly, but the difficulty is you don't have the same people (elk's decision) the second step would be that we indicate that we won't do it in the future. In reading the policy he understands why it was done, he doesn't think it was intentional.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the first thing about the complaint is it must first be filed with the body and then the attorney general. It must give the body a right to remedy the complaint and then the attorney general's. He send the complaint right to the attorney general's office. Looked up the legal definition of a ballot – a means of voting for candidate right from the encyclopedia of law.

Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mr. Wyand to extend the meeting to 10:10 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays 1 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Jeff, Shirley, Jim, Sandra, Sue, Anne-Marie, Sarah, Martha Bill, Ruth, Gretchen

- Attorney Dupere said all you have to do is state we won't do it again, and we will forward it to our policy committee for review.
- Mrs. Kennedy has a problem she thinks it should be thrown out because it wasn't filed properly.
- Mrs. Dunlevy said we have a citizen who had a concern and we shouldn't throw him out with the bath water. We should thank him for his concerns acknowledge we have a discrepancy in the policy and we are changing the procedures. We just want to solve the problem and make it better.

- Attorney Dupere would add that it is not timely because you want that on the record.
- Mrs. Wyand agrees with both of them.
- Mrs. Kennedy said it was already kicked up a level.
- Mr. Dunlevy suggested we cc the attorney general.
- Attorney Dupere's recommendation is to not do it by secret ballot.
- Mrs. Eliason agrees we won't do it by secret ballot, but we can do it by ballot

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to respond to Mr. van Werkhoven and the attorney general taking care of the complaint to the AG's office.

- Attorney Dupere said the public has the right to know the vote for the vice and chair. It is an important thing you vote on.
- Mr. Jacques said you might want to add, that a revote is not possible, thus our only option is to not do it again.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to respond to Mr. van Werkhoven and the attorney general taking care of the complaint to the AG's office.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays 2 Abstain Absent

B. Parking Fees for Walkers

- Dr. Hopson said we had a parent come in to pay his daughters parking fees. His daughter is a walker and doesn't have a seat on a bus. His concern was that if part of the fee is to offset the cost of a seat on the bus why does she have to pay the same since she doesn't have a seat on the bus.
- Dr. Hopson explained we also use the fees to maintain the parking lot, grounds etc. His recommendation is to set the fee at half of what we charge for students who ride the bus. Students have the opportunity for 25% off for honor roll, grades, not being tardy, etc. so if you are doing everything you are supposed to, you could park for free. This was put together working with the student council a couple of years ago.
- Mrs. Kennedy has a problem. Walkers are mandated to walk not mandated to ride. It is state mandated.
- Dr. Hopson said he is not going to charge those students until school committee makes a decision. We will send a copy of the current parking regulations to school committee.
- This will be moved to old business.

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XI. INFORMATION

Information

Superintendent's Corner January 17, 2014
 Elementary students lead Littleville recycling effort
 Superintendent's Corner January 27, 2014
 Tickets available for Estelle retirement
 Student ambassadors represent Gateway hill towns
 Elementary library volunteers needed
 "Gateway Day" at Blandford Ski Area
 Blandford School Committee reps hold office hours
 Model United Nations club underway
 Superintendent's Corner January 31, 2014
 Students send-off retiring teacher in style
 Foundation funds five new projects
 Schools, offices to close for winter vacation
 Winter Sports Senior Nights
 February School Committee Meetings
 Public invited to Alumni Band Concert

Warrants

AP# 1058 \$228,280.98

PR# 15 \$371,852.87

AP# 1063 \$136,444.74

AP# 1066 \$30.87

9:00-10 p.m. XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION
or earlier

XIII. ADJOURNMENT *Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to adjourn at 10:07 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary