

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2015

**Gateway Library
7:00 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
Martha Otterbeck

HUNTINGTON
Ron Damon
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley
Noreen Suriner

MONTGOMERY
Anne Marie Buikus
Sandra Haas

RUSSELL
Mary Ann Laurie

WORTHINGTON
Sue Levreault

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

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

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
Joanne Blocker, Director of Academics
Megan Coburn, Chs, Lit, Ms Principal
Jason Finnie, High/Jr. High Principal
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: _____

7:05 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit) - None

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said the students will take a vote to decide if there is enough interest to hold the semi formal or not this year. They will be holding a spirit day for Valentine’s Day – students will wear red and white on February 13th Gateway safes more active for pennies. Students will receive spirit points for attending senior night events. Students have been discussing bringing back pep rallies. There is also discussion about participating in the presidential youth council.

IV. BUDGET

A. FY ’16 Budget

- Ms. Fisk said school committee received a budget with six towns. She said Dr. Hopson outlined the 7 town budget and the changes between FY15 and FY16. In the six town budget the changes are in green in the far right column. Some of the major changes are with the withdrawal, school choice and charter, transportation. We reduced two regular education busses and reduced special education transportation. There have been staffing changes since the 7 town working column-custodial and secretarial shifts. 9c cuts are in the six town budget (security upgrade, technology, professional development). The finance subcommittee decided to use it as a working budget. Other revenue questions; will cherry sheets reflect Worthington out of the budget.
- Mrs. Crane confirmed that in the six town budget in green are changes from 7 town budget.

- Ms. Fisk said not all of them are related to the withdrawal, some are just updated figures. One of the other changes is oil prices have decreased. Yesterday it was at \$1.76 and today its \$1.74. We have not locked in yet. It would be nice to lock in before we have a final budget. We are currently paying around \$3 something.
- Ms Fisk said the two biggest are choice, charter and transportation and 1 town you don't have a contribution except for what we settle on. Mrs. Stewart found a student that was coded incorrectly which will be changed on the March SIMS submission. It took us two days to tie out the numbers. They will be different from the state because students can choice anytime.
- Mrs. Winer said we are down about \$900,000 from the first budget.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked about MSBA payback. Will we know more as to what it will be.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, we know MSBA is working on it.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked about the 9c Reductions.
- Ms. Fisk said it says on the right if they are 9c reductions carried forward to FY '16. Examples are central office secretary, secretarial time, custodial time, etc.
- Ms. Laurie said compared to the first budget, we are still down \$400,000 even with the Worthington withdrawal.
- Ms. Fisk reminded everyone this is only the expenditure side. With approximately a million dollar assessment increase with Worthington, we have a budget gap. Finance will look at it closely next Tuesday.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked if the heating has one line item or they are separate.
- Ms. Fisk said about a quarter of the way up on the second to the last page, they are separate.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how many gallons?
- Ms. Fisk said it says right there. Littleville is actually tough to separate out as it is connected to this tank.
- Mr. Wyand asked if the oil numbers are based on the \$1.70?
- Ms. Fisk said they are based on \$1.80. There are separate charges we have to pay.

B. FY 15 9C Cuts

- Dr. Hopson said there is nothing more to share right now. He was hoping to get some additional information, but they cancelled the MASS conference, which is why he is here.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked to receive an updated schedule. There was a detailed time line on the budget blog and she was wondering if there was an update.
- Dr. Hopson said yes.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked for information on unemployment. There was an awful lot of information in the blog that talked about unemployment and if teachers voted against the furlough, they wouldn't get unemployment. She would like clarification.
- Dr. Hopson said we don't know what the unemployment board will do. The information came from our consultant. There is a federal law that says you need to share with the association, that if they vote against a furlough, they may not be able to collect. We are not sure if Massachusetts would follow through or not.
- Mrs. McVeigh said you are pretty much self-funded. The government is not on the hook for the money. You are always paying it back so intuitively it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.
- Mrs. Foley said if a teacher is laid off in June they might not be able to collect.
- Ms. Fisk said what they are trying to get away from is that teachers get pink slipped in June and collect over the summer knowing they are coming back year after year They are trying to get control over that. She had to call the consultant because we haven't had to lay off in years.
- Mr. Wyand asked if you are obligated to notify them.
- Ms. Fisk said you have a little more leeway with budget issues.
- Dr. Hopson said one reason for notifying staff is a non-renewal and the other is budgetary. We have worked with the association unless we know we are letting someone go, we don't' sent letters to everyone. That started in 2003-2004 school year.

V. CONSENT ITEMS 11/17/14, 12/17/14, 1/14/15 (3 Enc.'s)

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Suriner to approve the minutes of 11/17/14 with corrections.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstains 2 Absent

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the minutes of 12/17/14.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 2 Absent

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the minutes of 1/17/15 with corrections.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 3 Absent

VI. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. JHS/HS Schedule Update – Jason Finnie

- Mr. Finnie gave a brief PowerPoint presentation.
- Mrs. Winer asked what happens to kids who don't need the academic support.
- Mr. Finnie said they mainly focus is skills.
- Mrs. Winer said everyone has something to do, it is not necessarily remedial.
- Mr. Damon asked was there any negative feedback.
- Mr. Finnie said the only negative feedback from students was that when there was review they were bored. In the Jr. High the only problem was the kids wanted to try everything. We might have to have a cutoff date at the beginning of the year. There is some difficulty with the special education teachers and the regular education teachers having time to communicate.
- Mrs. Levreault asked if in Jr. High skills block they do research papers.
- Mr. Finnie said it is a little bit more check in and targeted support. Bill Brown works with them when they do research papers.
- Mrs. Suriner asked if welding is the only vocational offering.
- Mr. Finnie said yes. They would love to have more offerings, but it is linked to Chapter 74, and you have to put up a lot of up front overhead costs. We would have to double the size of the woodshop to convert it. We just don't have the money. We can't create a shop if there is one already at Westfield or Smith, so we are also limited there.
- Dr. Hopson said if you were outside a catchment area you might be able to. We have been sending students to Westfield and Smith Voke, so it comes into play as well.
- Mrs. Foley asked do we pull in some students for welding.
- Mr. Finnie said some, but transportation is a challenge. We received about \$5,000 this year from the grant. You can't use the grant on consumables. It has to be training, professional development or equipment.
- Mr. Damon said it would be non competing if either Westfield or Smith weren't offering a course but Springfield was. If we can locate other programs that people have had success with that Westfield and Smith don't we should try to get it here even if it costs money.
- Mr. Finnie said this is something we have been looking at and talking about but we haven't been able to implement.
- Mrs. McVeigh said those costs aren't in the budget. It is towns being held hostage by this non-compete clause. When you think about a town like Middlefield who is paying as much in transportation as they are in tuition. These things need to be explored. You also have to look at the transportation costs too. If there is a program that would keep 10 kids it would be worth working with the towns to write to the legislature. Maybe it is a win win. It is an issue we can't plan on realistically until later in the year. We need to look into it a little more.
- Mr. Finnie said they are still looking into it even though they haven't been able to do it yet.
- Mrs. Winer asked what are some of the reasons students are going to vocational.
- Mr. Finnie said carpentry, plumbing, etc.; the basics.
- Mr. Wyand said it seems like it would be easy to do an estimate based on how many students are going out.
- Dr. Hopson said if you have 30 going out in any given year, they are going out to many different shops. So it is not that easy. There might be twenty trades and sixty kids. For a one hundred student vocational program in CT where he worked it was a \$20 million facility.
- Mrs. Garfield said we need to look at increasing the population – increasing the appeal. The arts have more than doubled and are a lot less expensive.
- Mr. Finnie said this is why it was important to change the schedule. How can we take what we have, grow it and find other ways to integrate over time in areas like engineering?
- Mr. Wyand asked Mr. Finnie what his ideas are for vocational.
- Mr. Finnie said area with the most need was an early childcare program. It takes a lot of coordination.
- Mr. Damon said when a student goes to vocational as a freshman half is on vocational and half on academics. We should collaborate with the voke schools and explore keeping students here in their freshman and sophomore years and then send them to voke for their junior and senior years. Maybe this requires a third year of voke.

- Mrs. Suriner asked if the internships were inside or outside the building.
- Mr. Finnie said some are here and some are outside, some of them are worked out with a current employer.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked if biology, etc. has labs.
- Mr. Finnie said yes, it is two courses. One is the online and one is the lab.
- Mrs. Garfield asked how many teachers are teaching AP courses (list courses)
- Mr. Finnie said five; Mr. Shea teacher Physics I & II, Ms. Wright teaches Calculus, Mr. Kleber teaches English Language, Mr. Duggan teaches US History, and Mr. Brown supervises online Psychology and World History.
- Mrs. Winer asked if there is a way to tell if doing something online is as effective as taking a course in house.
- Mr. Finnie said there is interaction between the students and the teacher.
- Mr. Wyand asked is there a way to know how many students per advisor.
- Mr. Finnie yes, there are normal class sizes of 20-30.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Suriner apologized for not sending a copy of her notes about the thank you to the teachers about the 9c cuts to the whole committee. She asked if we could put the letter into their personnel files. Does it need to go to Mrs. Crane as the chair to put on an agenda for next time.
- Mrs. Crane started a rough draft today.
- Mrs. Suriner wants it to go to everyone who participated in givebacks. They deserve something of gratitude.
- Mrs. Crane asked if there is an objection to sending out a letter?
- Mrs. Winer said with the teachers it was contractual. Is it appropriate?
- Mrs. Crane's feeling was more of an appreciation for being able to answer the call to help. Their sacrifices were greatly appreciated.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if everyone's name would be on it.
- Mrs. Crane had it written on behalf of the committee, but either way would work.
- Mrs. Buikus had asked to have the bullying on the agenda.
- Mrs. Crane explained the school committee is not covered under the bullying policy. They are not included in the law.
- Dr. Hopson said it is not related for adult to adult.
- Mrs. Buikus will call Mrs. Crane with her other item.
- Mr. Wyand asked how we are going to handle it if we get reimbursed for 9c cuts. Can it be put on the agenda.
- Mrs. Crane explained to the attorney the specific comment that was made and he said it would not be covered under the bullying law. We are adults disagreeing. If someone wanted to put a complaint in writing it can go to her and we could discuss it. It would be a complaint process not bullying process.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked about harassment and creating a hostile work environment.
- Mrs. Crane said it was not considered harassment.
- Dr. Hopson said there are laws in place for employee and employer.
- Mrs. Buikus asked does the person have to write the complaint, or can another person write it.
- Mrs. Garfield doesn't understand why someone else is doing it for her.

B. Chairperson

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations and approval of minutes not to return to open session.

- Mr. Wyand asked if we could postpone the minutes.
- Mrs. McVeigh said these meeting minutes are stale; the public should have these. The public needs to know what is going on these minutes should be approved the next meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said if there are negotiation discussions, then they wouldn't be released until negotiations are complete.
- Ms. Laurie said executive session minutes are not specific to timing under open meeting law like they are for open session.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if there are personal issues, the person has the right to see the results.

- Dr. Hopson said that person would have to be there so they would know what happened at the meeting and would be able to appeal it.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations and approval of minutes not to return to open session.

Yeas: Noreen, Terri, Jeff, Shirley, Ron, Sarah, Martha, Sue, Anne-Marie, Sandra, Mary Ann, Michele

C. Superintendent – Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson said we have a plane we hope to give to Westfield Voke. We needed to have the plane appraised. We got the letter from DESE saying it was appraised at \$4,000, so we can move forward. We are going to notify Westfield Voke that they can come and get it.

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration - None

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- They are meeting next month before the next school committee meeting.

B. Finance Subcommittee

- Met last Tuesday at 5:30. They moved the time from 5:30 to 6:00 p.m. Meetings will be held in Superintendent's office. They reviewed the brainstorming list. Their priorities are budget first, mitigation and Worthington withdrawal second and school choice third. The finance subcommittee will ask the school committee to recommend that our members suggest to their towns postponing of the town vote on the FY '16 Budget until after June 1.
- Mrs. Levreault asked if you would wait to give the towns a budget until June.
- Dr. Hopson said it will be the similar to last year. At the town meetings in May there might not be anything other than the House budget; we won't know the income. The suggestion was to move the articles on school budget to a special meeting in June.
- Mr. Damon said if all towns are notified and agree, do we still have to meet within 45 days.
- Dr. Hopson said yes.
- Mrs. Buikus said her only problem is that for a special meeting Montgomery needs less; 5% for a quorum verses the 10% for a regular meeting.
- Mrs. Levreault said if you don't postpone and move it to a later date, doesn't it allow other things that have been voted on to come back up again.
- Dr. Hopson said yes it could. It depends on how the town operates.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if the towns don't vote the budget in June, the tax payers are going to want to understand what will happen. It goes to the 2015 budget.
- Dr. Hopson said the commissioner may set a 1/12th at or above, but it cannot be below. Last year 1/12 of the proposed budget.
- Dr. Hopson said with or without revenue figures you will have a budget and you have to pay bills.
- Ms. Fisk said you will have minimum figures; the rest is based on your enrollment on March 1.
- Mrs. McVeigh said what you pay is on net.
- Dr. Hopson said sometime in June you will have the House 1 and House 2 estimates, and may or may not have a combined signed state budget. You will have a version to estimate by.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if you ask your towns to do this you need to give the towns an estimate of what the 1/12 budget is.
- Dr. Hopson said you will have that in March.
- Mr. Wyand thinks there were 3 towns who voted the budget down until they had solid numbers. It just saves the back and forth if we vote in June.
- Mrs. Suriner said the finance subcommittee is also recommending to the school committee to form another subcommittee to deal with separation costs of the the Worthington withdrawal. Finance will have input after their next meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said part of what the subcommittee should create is a list of items that need to be discussed.

- Mr. Wyand said OBEB wasn't part of it originally because we were going to an actuarial study.
- Dr. Hopson said the subcommittee might do that as well.
- Mrs. Levreault said in the meeting minutes of February 27 it says Worthington is willing do whatever is required by law. The only thing not on there was what is unfunded. Worthington has always been willing to pay what they have been asked to. If you ask Worthington for OBEB funds you have to ask all the towns.
- Dr. Hopson said it is a calculated unfunded mandate. However, if Worthington is asked, you can't ask Worthington to pay until the others are asked to pay. There is an obligation to all seven towns.
- Mrs. Levreault said the district needs to figure out the percentage for each town.
- Mrs. McVeigh said that is one of the options; pay as you go. There is an obligation whether it is funded or not. The actuarial will calculate it and it will be included in the separation agreement. So you will fund it just like everyone else.
- Mrs. Suriner said their third recommendation is that the school committee continue the special education transportation contract for one more year and explore the possibility of funding our own vans the following year.
- Ms. Laurie wondered if we should be discussing the specific motions.

C. Legislative Liaison – None

D. Policy Subcommittee – None

E. School Committee Goals Subcommittee – None

F. Community Curriculum Committee - None

IX. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Second Semester Field Trip Approval

Model UN Field Trip (NYC)

Bodies Field Trip (NYC)

7th Grade Bronx Zoo Field Trip (NYC)

8th Grade High Meadows Field Trip (CT)

8th Grade Philadelphia/DC Trip

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Suriner to approve the above listed second semester field trips.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent

B. Worthington Withdrawal

- Dr. Hopson said that Attorney Lampke has not returned any of Attorney Dupere's calls.
- Mrs. Crane said we are still a defendant in Mrs. Kennedy's suit because we have asked for extensions so the two attorneys could work together.
- Mrs. McVeigh said she would contact Attorney Lampke.

C. Winter Bussing (Enc.)

- Mrs. Crane spoke with the attorney. He does not have any regional school districts that have students randomly picked up along a route. Our policy has a phrase in it, but MASC does not.
- Dr. Hopson said we could establish a stop in the center at the old Murrayfield School.
- Ms. Laurie said there is no cost.
- Mrs. Crane said we are not legally obligated to make that change.
- Ms. Fisk's only concern is the year we took that route out, there were a lot of parents here and it took over a year to get them to calm down.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if we could we make a distinction for the elementary 1-6.
- Mrs. Crane asked Ms. Fisk if there were complaints about that stop.
- Ms. Fisk said there were some complaints about damage to the library.
- Dr. Hopson said that we have not gotten any complaints, and a lot of those kids will be walking a ½ mile to the bus stop
- Ms. Fisk said the law is 2 miles, but regional's use 1 ½ miles because that is where we get reimbursement

D. Superintendent's Goals (Enc.)

XIV. ADJOURNMENT: *Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to adjourn at 9:44 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary