

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 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
William Hathaway

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley
Noreen Suriner

MONTGOMERY
Anne Marie Buikus

RUSSELL
Ruth Kennedy

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
Amy Fouracre, Chs,Lit, Ms Assistant 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)

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting.
- Jenna Kakimoto a middle school teacher and resident suggested looking at ideas that Hawaii has used. They eliminated vacations and only had six weeks off in the summer and three weeks off in the winter. She said we only have about 8 weeks in the summer anyway.
- Mrs. Buikus and Peter Francis will be recording the meeting.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked how many days of school there were in Hawaii.
- Jenna wasn't sure.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT - None

IV. CONSENT ITEMS 1/28/15 (Enc.)

Mrs. Suriner made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve the minutes of 1/28/15.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 1 Absent 1

V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. District Local Technical Assistance Project – Josh Garcia PVPC

- Mr. Garcia from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission said the legislature makes available DLTA money, to give local communities flexibility for planning. We have a regional school district and the last couple of years there has been discussion about the Worthington withdrawal. This money would help move forward with a reorganization plan. They received a letter from local municipalities along with GTAC. The idea is to dedicate \$20,000 at no cost to the district to hire some outside consultants to help with this reorganization process. They would establish some sort of review committee to follow the process; put together the RFP,

evaluate the proposals and make a choice. He wants to make sure there is buy-in from all involved. The review committee might include 1 select board member and 1 school committee member from each town. 9c cuts have affected the plan. They have the first half but the 2nd half will be released in April. If the payment goes to PVPC then they can move forward with this planning effort. He is trying to get the conversation going so we don't waste time later. He is suggesting starting to decide who will be on the committee between now and April.

- Mrs. Winer said this has been a difficult subject for us to talk about.
- Mr. Garcia said that Worthington would not be part of this.
- Mrs. Winer asked what would we be planning for.
- Mr. Garcia said coming up with sustainable options for the school district. Option 1 might be a 6 town school district with specific services; we could share with other schools. Option 2 might be a nearby town is looking to join the school district, or maybe the school district disburses.
- Mrs. Suriner asked if it was his hope this would be covered with \$20,000.
- Mr. Garcia said no, but he spoke with Tim Brennan and this is the most important right now.
- Mrs. Suriner said so there will have to be buy-in.
- Mr. Garcia said there are resources that PVPC has that they may not need a consultant for. They have also used retired school superintendents in the past.
- Mrs. Foley asked if PVPC has done this with other school districts and municipalities.
- Mr. Garcia said actually the opposite. This was done to regionalize Southwick-Tolland and Granville.
- Mrs. Suriner asked about MOPC.
- Mr. Garcia said he can give them a call and to talk to them. He also thinks that Dan Jacques has been in touch with them.
- Mrs. McVeigh said there have been numerous discussions at GTAC meetings, so people are very familiar with this. The thought was this is a huge task and they wanted to do it right and be able to come out with a sustainable plan for the GRSD. We should utilize resources that can help us and provide additional advice, through GTAC, and our select board members. In addition we should be collectively calling our Senators and Representatives. The Worthington legislation is supposed to hold the towns harmless. There has been Pothole money, DESE had some other money set aside. We we should continue to petition and do this effort justice to continue a quality education for our students as we move forward. We need to bring new and fresh ideas that will help us move forward. She is asking the school committee to send several representatives to this group.
- Mrs. Suriner feels it is unrealistic, to think it is going to cost \$20,000.
- Mrs. McVeigh would ask every school committee member to go to their towns and ask them to put money aside.
- Mrs. Suriner said we need something compelling to bring to the towns. How do we get started?
- Mrs. McVeigh asked Mr. Garcia to marshal the resources and get a framework so when April comes we have the language for an RFP.
- Mrs. Blocker said you talked about having school committee members and people from the town are you looking for people from the education field.
- Mr. Garcia said he is open to suggestions and listening.
- Ginny Lee said as teachers they really want to be involved.
- We will put this on the agenda for the next time.

B. Budget Presentation by Schools/Departments

- Mr. Finnie gave a junior high/high school budget PowerPoint.
- Mrs. Winer participated in the last NEASC study. They have always had something like this, but it is recent the schools are saying the same things in terms of the common core standards.
- Mrs. McVeigh said based on where we stand what would you predict we will have problems with.
- Mr. Finnie said at this time there is nothing blaring out at him. Skills is going to be a focus. Finding ways to build instruction and report out.
- Mr. McVeigh asked how the accreditation team feels they are in the process.
- Mrs. Blocker served on another one and chose the instruction and curriculum. She said we are a little ahead of the review she was on and we are probably ahead of other districts too. We have a long way to go; we need to work on group work.
- Mrs. McVeigh said in reference to accreditation, it is important to students going to college. She hopes they are evaluating these standards for more than just college bound students.
- Mr. Finnie said absolutely. He is looking to increase a half-time metals technology teacher. It is the only addition to a level services budget.

- Mrs. McVeigh said looking at the two year timeline when will be PARCC be initiated.
- Dr. Hopson said her guess is as good as his, he suspects it won't be for at least two years.
- Mrs. McVeigh's concern is resources with the new evaluation standards and common core standards. If DESE goes with PARCC, does this become a perfect storm with all the other issues we are facing? In 2017 is NEASC a done deal.
- Dr. Hopson said yes, there is no putting NEASC off.
- Mr. Finnie said with all of these things and common core, there has been a slow cross walk bringing PARCC closer to the common core. It is not a separate initiative.
- Mrs. Kennedy has been to many seminars and it is up to the school committee to accept PARCC or not. So it may not be that perfect storm.
- Mrs. Buikus thanked Mr. Finnie for putting it out on the web for them ahead of time.
- Dr. Hopson gave a short presentation – Overview of the present situation.

VI. BUDGET

A. FY '16 Budget

- Mrs. Foley asked if all students in Chester and Littleville PrK-2 and 3 and 4 will be taking the PARCC practice.
- Dr. Hopson said yes.
- Mrs. Winer asked why we don't teach more computer programming.
- Dr. Hopson said there is a lot of robotics going on.
- Mr. Finnie said there is a grant opportunity which provides training and software for free. The plan is to offer a robotics program.
- Dr. Hopson said there is one more meeting left before the public hearing. It is up in the air with what we are going to do with state aid.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked with the number of documents shared and ideas discussed on how we might start to close this million dollar gap, how much input does the regular staff have.
- Dr. Hopson said the staff has not been involved.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if she were a parent and some of the ideas that were coming out were to increase class sizes in level 3 schools she would be concerned. What do the teachers at these levels think? Do they think this is educationally sound? They are the ones who deal with the students every single day. If this is not presented to parents and taxpayers in an appropriate way, we may exasperate school choice. If we don't have enough educators, administrators, and school committee giving.
- Dr. Hopson said two months ago we sat here discussing the deficit. There have been plenty of opportunities.
- Mrs. McVeigh said we knew there was going to be this gap and we knew this a year ago. Ms. Fisk sent a document to DESE that at a minimum there would be a \$650,000 gap. There should have been a discussion by the community. It should be the school community – administrators, school committee, educators.
- Mrs. Kennedy said it's in the law and school documents. The teachers talk to principals and the principals talk to administrators and then the administrators come to school committee. School committee is the leader.
- Mrs. Suriner asked if we need to invite them.
- Mrs. Buikus said last year we decided each one of our school committee members would get together and have an open house with their towns. Montgomery and Blandford held them. Montgomery is scheduling another one for this year.
- Dr. Hopson said we have been talking about a shortfall for a long time, are we going to move forward 1 million dollars. We need to look at reductions.
- Mrs. Winer asked if we should we go through the exercise.
- Ginny Lee said she has not been asked anything about the restructuring. She feels like the teachers are being excluded from the discussion.
- Mrs. Suriner asked if we need to gather people to have these discussions.
- Dr. Hopson said we still don't have direction from the school committee. If you had every parent vote for the budget you would have a budget every year. If you wait till March there is not enough time. You've had two line item budgets. If you don't move forward 1 million dollars, there may be reorganization. If you want to talk about other reorganization options, it takes a long time to run through the options. It's nice to talk about 150 or 140 day school year, but the reality is it won't happen. It would be nice to have everyone pitch in.

- Mrs. Suriner said are you asking for direction?

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to ask the administration to put together two other levels of possibilities reducing town assessments.

- Ms. Fisk said on the revenue comparison the biggest unknown is chapter 70, it could go up or down. That million dollar gap could go up or down. The Governor's budget doesn't look like it will come out for March 4. Her concern is whether Worthington will be included in Charter, Choice and Chapter 70 components.
- Mrs. Buikus asked to get input from teachers, secretaries, maintenance, and the towns. We should take everyone into consideration. We need to figure out how to keep Gateway viable.
- Mrs. McVeigh said the finance subcommittee is meeting every Tuesday at 6:00. She would suggest school committee contact their town officials and email them the sheet with the expected increases based on the facts and circumstances we know today. Ask them to please come to the next couple of finance committee meetings. Ask them to bring what their towns could approve. We still need a 7 town budget because there are still legal questions.
- Mrs. Levreault said when you were looking at possibly closing Chester, how would it save money.
- Dr. Hopson said it wouldn't.
- Mrs. Levreault said Preschool was opened in Chester because there wasn't space in Littleville.
- Dr. Hopson said in broader senses what are your options moving forward. What does it look like-two options of reductions.
- Mrs. Levreault said when we talk about education and moving the district forward we have to go out and try to get more than we think we can get. She cautions us. We need to try and get what we educational need to keep level services before we cut the budget. We should try to go with the level services budget.
- Dr. Hopson said you are right, and he thinks Dr. Wagner's letter stating that Worthington's cost is correct.
- Jason Harris asked if Littleville is working and profitable or is the high school taking more resources and taking from something that is working.
- Dr. Hopson said the budgets are broken down by per pupil costs. We are a little out of the norm in that middle school is a little more than the high school. These changes will be made on how it impacts the district. We also try to provide some equity in the district without impacting per pupil services.
- Mr. Finnie said a level service is what he discussed tonight. There have been many opportunities for teacher input, especially with the seven block schedule. There have been many discussions. We shouldn't be starting from scratch.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to ask the administration to put together two other levels of possibilities reducing town assessments.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays 3 Abstain 1 Absent

- Mrs. Suriner asked if this is something they could have for next week.
- Dr. Hopson thinks it would be better to go with Mrs. McVeigh's suggestion to get the towns to discuss what they can afford.
- Jim Duggan commends those who spoke for a greater level of collaboration to keep this district viable and sustainable.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to go into executive session at 8:55 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations and legal action to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Sarah, Sue, Anne-Marie, Bill, Noreen, Michele
Absent: Terri

- Ian Brown would suggest we look at getting a waiver of the 180 days.

Went into executive session at 8:55 p.m.

Returned to open session 9:57 p.m.

B. FY '15 9C Cuts – None

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. School Committee - None
- B. Chairperson - None
- C. Superintendent – Central Office Update
- D. Business Manager - None
- E. Administration - None

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation
- B. Finance Subcommittee
- C. Legislative Liaison
- D. Policy Subcommittee
- E. Building Liaisons
- F. Community Curriculum Committee

7:45 - IX. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

- A. Worthington Withdrawal
Separation Agreement
- B. Superintendent's Goals
- C. PARCC Presentation Vote

Mrs. Suriner made a motion seconded by Mrs. Buikus to approve the Writer of PARCC to come out and give a presentation.

Motion Carried (VOTE) yeas 10 Nays Abstain Absent

- D. NSPRA – National “Public Schools That Work” Initiative and Resolution

X. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. 2015-2016 School Choice

- Dr. Hopson said the recommendation from the finance committee is to recommend school choice. Move to old business for next time.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XII. INFORMATION

Information

Gateway Choirs' pasta fundraiser
 Gateway students serve others in Boston area
 Superintendent's Corner January 23, 2015
 February School Committee meetings
 Reflections of an exchange student
 Incoming 9th Graders Information Session
 Superintendent's Corner January 30, 2015
 School Committee looks at 6-town budget
 Vocational Applications due March 2
 Schools, offices, close for winter vacation

Warrants

AP#1057 \$101,405.23

PR# 16 \$

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to go into executive session at 8:55 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations and legal action to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Sarah, Sue, Anne-Marie, Bill, Noreen, Michele

Absent: Terri

- A. Union Negotiations
- B. Litigation

XIV. ADJOURNMENT: Mrs. Suriner made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to adjourn at 9:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary