

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2015

**Gateway Library
7:00 P.M.**

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

I. OPENING OF MEETING

BLANDFORD

Anne Marie Buikus
Sandra Haas

CHESTER

Shirley Winer
Martha Otterbeck

Ruth Kennedy
Mary Ann Laurie

HUNTINGTON

Ron Damon
William Hathaway
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD

Sarah Foley
Noreen Suriner

MONTGOMERY

RUSSELL

WORTHINGTON

SECRETARY

Anne Marie Buikus
Sandra Haas

Ruth Kennedy
Mary Ann Laurie

Sue Levreault

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
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: _____

II.PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit)

- Mrs. Otterbeck will be chairing tonight’s meeting.
- Peter Francis and Mrs. Buikus will be recording the meeting.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said Model UN is going to NY this weekend. They will be going to the 911 Memorial and Conference Empire. Gateway is hosting its own conference in April. The junior class is planning a trip to Disney for next year. The Spanish classes are going to Boston to see Latin American dancing and traditions. Student council is not hosting a semi-formal this year. Winter sports are over. There is another blood drive in March. Sign-ups are going on now. Talent show auditions are tomorrow after school. AP students are registering for exams. Each exam costs \$91. NEAP testing took place today.
- Mr. Finnie said they were selected. This is used in Congress; they randomly select 50 students to take the test. Students are allowed to opt out. They tested a little over 20 students.

IV. CONSENT ITEMS 2/11/15

V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Budget Presentation by Schools/Departments

- Mrs. Coburn gave a Budget PowerPoint presentation. This will be on the website.
- Mr. Wyand asked if any of these items are on the budget reduction tier list.
- Mrs. Coburn said none of the additional afterschool services are on there.
- Ms. Laurie asked if we had an afterschool program in Chester.

- Mrs. Coburn said we did a couple of years ago, but there wasn't enough interest.
- Mrs. Winer asked how the social skills happen and for who.
- Mrs. Coburn said sometimes it is special education, sometimes it is Autism, and sometimes it is just a student going through a tough time. The adjustment counselors help with that. At the upper level Elizabeth McCormick works with peer issues.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if the grants she is talking about are listed in the budget.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, they are under federal grants.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked if the equipment, both computers and the wireless network, been working for PARCC.
- Mrs. Coburn said classrooms with access points seem to have no problems. 5th grade had a few glitches. It is hard to tell if it was on our end or Pearson's end. Ginny Lee's room had trouble. We will work out the bugs or move students.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how much time is being taken away from daily learning for this.
- Mrs. Coburn said each teacher does the practice test; the format is tricky. Test sessions are 75 minutes each. So, about seventy-five minutes on each for Math and ELA, plus the tutorial.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked what the students' response was.
- Mrs. Coburn thinks they were shocked, although they did think it was neat. She was shocked when she went to the PARCC training. She was concerned for the students, which is why she wanted them to practice. The PARCC test is also timed.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked how many classes are being tested this year.
- Mrs. Coburn said grades 3-8; all of the kids. 5th grade still has to take MCAS Math and technology.
- Mrs. Suriner will look forward to hearing how it goes before they make their decision.
- Mrs. Coburn said at first they were saying we were going to get the data right away and now we will not get it until November.
- Mrs. Kennedy said we are going to be holding a presentation for the public to come and learn about the PARCC test. It will so be a learning process for school committee. The testing is supposed to be done late March early April.
- Dr. Hopson has been in contact with DESE and they are looking at March or April for the presentation.
- Mr. McVeigh asked if the special education students taking PARCC are going to have enough accommodations.
- Mrs. Coburn said most of the accommodations we use are part of the new system. The computer reads the test for them if they need it. It will also scribe.
- Mr. McVeigh asked if we have to buy any assisted technology for PARCC.
- Mrs. Coburn said no, the only thing we had to order was headphones.
- Mrs. Levreault said we have diverse families and internet/computer options; there are challenges. What percentage of students is affected by this for the test.
- Mrs. Coburn said the biggest concern is the typing. We don't have classes that teach students how to type. Kids that would normally write a large paragraph are now typing a few lines.
- Mrs. Levreault asked if the typing is taking the place of writing. Should we be offering typing in Kindergarten?
- Mrs. McVeigh was also concerned that cursive is no longer in the curriculum.
- Mrs. Coburn said our third graders still touch upon cursive.
- Mrs. Suriner was surprised to learn that not everyone around the world can read cursive. In China it was nearly impossible for them.
- Ms. Laurie said the wrap around program is in the café and they do arts and crafts pack up for lunch and then bring it all back in the afternoon, because we are short of space for a program that brings in a ton of money.
- Mrs. Coburn said yes.
- Mr. McVeigh is concerned about the age difference from bullying to toilet sizes. Moving another 100 students in is not a good idea.
- Mrs. Harper said the one thing you didn't talk about is the limited space.
- Mrs. Coburn said they do have enough classroom space. Her concerns are for the other adults in the building who provide interventions. How do you services kids and provide interventions without enough room.
- Mrs. McVeigh said today without the 100 students she would assume the building isn't being used the way it was originally designed. You either had more students, tracks, etc.
- Mrs. Coburn said the needs are different; the outside services we now provide are different. Things are not as in the classroom as they used to be.

- Dr. Hopson said the MSBA has not kept up either. Even their model schools don't have all the space needed.
- Mrs. Harper said she remembers being in the hallway with special education students. Now having a place where they can have their privacy and receive their services with dignity is huge.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if this presentation is going to be online.
- Mrs. Coburn said it was sent it to you yesterday and it will go on the website.
- Mrs. Suriner thanked Mrs. Coburn for giving the balance between the positive and negative. This is about buildings, could we move students where we need to.
- Dr. Hopson said when you designate a school you choose the students in it.
- Mrs. McVeigh said when you are compared to other school districts you are compared to those with similar schools.
- Mrs. Coburn said you are compared by your Title I students, sped students, free and reduced, etc.
- Mr. McVeigh asked if you shut down the middle school will you save heat. She also suggested school committee members go and see how Littleville looks now and then imagine what it would be like with an additional 100 students.
- Linda Smith said it would cost less to have three buildings verses four.
- Dr. Hopson said the problem with going to a 6-8 would be teacher certification; less opportunity to share staff.

VI. BUDGET

A. FY '16 Budget

- Dr. Hopson gave a PowerPoint presentation (this will be on the website). He said there are no good answers.
- He said we are charged \$5,000 for each outgoing student, we take in \$9,000 in Chapter 70 and our per pupil cost is about \$13,000.
- Ms. Laurie doesn't see how we will save \$100,000 by moving students.
- Dr. Hopson said you are saving it in copy machine, utilities, custodial time, counselors, etc.
- Deb Jacques said if we are making this on a six-town budget what is the savings on bussing. These are big class sizes.
- Dr. Hopson and Ms. Fisk said the cost savings is already factored in there.
- Mrs. Winer asked if there will be empty classrooms in the middle school.
- Dr. Hopson said yes.
- Dr. Hopson said the cost savings is going from three tracks to two tracks and the \$100,000 comes from moving the middle school back.
- Mrs. Winer agrees with Mrs. Coburn it is good to stimulate 5th and 6th grade in their own area.
- Dr. Hopson agrees. The smaller classes are preferable.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said there is a big difference between a fifth grader and a sixth grader.
- Mrs. Levreault said we used to have it grades 5-8 if we change that do we jeopardize that the MSBA reimbursement.
- Ms. Fisk said no they funded it as a main complex.
- Dr. Hopson said Mrs. Coburn did a great job, only he is looking at this from a dollar size. There is no really excellent choice other than getting the state to give us \$630,000 per year. He said we can look at other configurations; we still need a budget for March. There are a lot of things to do over summer.
- Mr. Wyand asked if the numbers could be run 6-8.
- Mr. Finnie said he would have some concerns with that. Certification was a concern. If we have to move as one school we may be 6-12 and accountability becomes complicated for NEASC.
- Dr. Hopson said at some point you would change time and bussing.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we have thought of the family dynamics. It was a mess when we reconfigured a couple of years ago.
- Mrs. Winer asked how much is because of \$630,000 and how much is the 9C cuts.
- Dr. Hopson said we've taken care of the 9c. Worthington is a little more than 1/3.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked for a roll over visual of E & D. She'd like to understand.
- Ms. Fisk said on July 1 our certified E & D was certified for next year.
- Dr. Hopson said we certified at \$675,000,
- Mrs. McVeigh said if we spend E & D every year we will potentially have nothing in.
- Ms. Fisk said it is certified in FY 15 for FY16.

- Dr. Hopson said in some schools they don't give it back to the towns, they put it in stabilization. Ms. Fisk has been working on this for years. She always makes sure there is enough to roll over.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked what long-term capital projects are out there. What are we going to have to do in the next five years.
- Dr. Hopson said the long term plan is out there, they just haven't funded it.
- Mrs. Levreault said as you are looking at this, keep in mind we did a building project because we were looking for room to expand. If you down size you are negating the project. If you look at the school attending children statewide report, it tells you where each of your students is going. She chose Huntington as an example. You will see exactly where your money is going and you may want to reconsider reconfiguring. Where is the money going to be best spent? She asked how many students were in Littleville during the building project shift.
- Mrs. McVeigh said as chair of Huntington Finance, the impact on Huntington would be \$2.00 per thousand. We are trying to make hard decisions. Huntington is 1 out of 12 towns who don't provide retirement for our retirees. They have a full time police chief who spends 50% of his time here at Gateway and we have to have street lights on in town. School committee needs to consider the towns will be unhappy if the school committee sends a budget with 5 or 6 teacher cuts, without cutting at least an administrator or two. She is concerned about the special education chart Mrs. Coburn handed out.
- Ms. Laurie said cutting a track from Littleville would cut 4 teachers and maybe 1 more with 5th grade and two of them would be moved as intervention specialists.
- Ms. Laurie asked if the intervention specialist would help pick up the slack of the loss of teachers.
- Mrs. Coburn said no, it would be to service the kids who need help.
- Mrs. Winer said there have been a lot of administrator cuts over the years and jobs have been combined.
- Mrs. McVeigh understands that, but there doesn't seem to be a problem adding 8 more students in each classroom. She feels that certain positions are nice to have but what do you value most.
- Mr. McVeigh said you are talking about taking teachers away from students. We haven't even talked about the special needs kids in these classrooms. There are a lot of extra needs. There seems to be no consideration.
- Mrs. Suriner is concerned with the increase in students for teachers, but she is also concerned about the timeline.
- Dr. Hopson said we already have other classrooms that have 24 students.
- Linda Smith finds it tragic that instead of pooling what is good, we are fighting amongst ourselves. There is declining enrollment. You have towns who just cannot afford it. She is amazed by the building. She is going to stand up at town meeting and say they won't be able to pay the 1/3 imposed on us from the other end of the state. We can't tell our school committee we can't afford that, but we also can't tell them what they can and can't do.
- Dr. Hopson went over the options. 1) seven town budget 2) six town budget –the same 3) six-town budget reduce staff 4) six town tier 1 cuts 5) six town tier 2 6) develop another budget addressin shortfall 7) make no decision an let the state decide.
- Mrs. Buikus is concerned because you won't even know what you will say next week at the public hearing.
- Dr. Hopson said he will say school committee is taking information and will either come up with a budget for the next meeting or hold a special meeting on March 18.
- Mrs. Laurie said we are looking to the staff and community for suggestions. The website is updated with all our information. She would like everyone to work together.
- Dr. Hopson said should we get mitigation funds school committee needs to decide how to use those funds. Would you put some things back in and do some one-time items. He thinks the legislators will be looking for that. One of the one-time items might be to set money aside for actuarial services.
- Mr. Wyand said in years past people have said they think it is a good idea if we do not pass a budget and let the state set it at 1/12. He does not think this is a good idea.
- Mrs. Kennedy said they won't come in and gut us. We have to do it anyway with the withdrawal. The 1/12 is based on last year's budget.
- Ms. Fisk said the commissioner can approve at the same level of this year or above; it doesn't say below.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how would it be done on a 6 town budget.
- Dr. Hopson asked to vote on school choice because they need to survey Worthington parents.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer suspend the rules to vote on school choice at out of order.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Suriner to approve School Choice for the 15-16 school year subject to limitations of class size.

- Mrs. Kennedy objects to the limitations. She feels it should be up to the administration.
- Mrs. Levreault said historically that has been done.

Mrs. Suriner made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to call the question.

Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas Nays 12 Abstain Absent

- Mr. Wyand said he didn't see the offset for bussing the Worthington students.
- Ms. Fisk said we are not bussing the Worthington kids. School choice has to provide their own transportation.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Suriner to approve School Choice for the 15-16 school year subject to limitations of class size.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Abstain 1

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

B. Chairperson

C. Superintendent – Central Office Update

D. Business Manager

- Ms. Fisk said at GTAC we discussed the needs conference report and when we would be getting it back. The needs conference report should be here a week to 10 days from last Friday.
- We have been working on SBA payback. They have additional questions. It makes sense that we don't pay back on those two buildings that are turning into schools again. It would start in FY16.
- Mrs. Kennedy said Russell voted to accept Westfield to use the building; they just don't know when yet.
- Ms. Fisk said vocational applications are due on Monday, March 2. Her last count is 21.

E. Administration

- There will be a parent night on Monday evening so Jr. High parents can play with PARCC.
- Mrs. Coburn said she is doing the same thing at the elementary level.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - None

B. Finance Subcommittee - none

C. Legislative Liaison

- Mrs. Kennedy is following up with governor and the budget.

D. Policy Subcommittee - None

E. Building Liaisons

- Mr. Wyand met with Mr. Wing and talked about his budget items. He's doing a good job trying to get his budget down.

F. Community Curriculum Committee - None

7:45 - IX. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Worthington Withdrawal

Separation Agreement

- Mrs. Kennedy got a copy of the new amended lawsuit. She signed an extension through March 31.
- Mrs. Suriner asked if we have a steering committee in place or in process.
- Dr. Hopson said it is in process

B. 2015-2016 School Choice – voted under FY 16 Budget

C. Superintendent's Goals

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

Mrs. Suriner made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to accept the NSPRA resolution

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent

X. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**A. District Local Technical Assistance Project**

- Mrs. McVeigh said that PVPA has come to an agreement from MOPA, so there will be no need for an RFP. They would like to put together a 6 member team. There needs to be a mix of people to tell MOPC how to move forward with assisting us. After that there will be a much larger group.
- Mr. Mason said what they want to do is avoid having PVPC in the driving position.
- Ms. Fisk said OPEB is a big part of sustainability of the school, so you may want to look at 7 members.
- People interested in being on the team should contact Mrs. McVeigh or Josh Garcia.
- Mrs. Suriner would like to represent school committee as a member.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**Future Agenda Items****XII. INFORMATION****Information****Warrants**

AP#1061 \$170,439.07

PR# 16 \$349,802.97

AP#1062 \$37.86

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

- A. Union Negotiations
- B. Litigation

XIV. ADJOURNMENT: *Mrs. Buikus made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy adjourn at 9:58 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted

Stacy L Stewart

School Committee Secretary