

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES****WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 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 KronholmCHESTER
Shirley Winer
Martha OtterbeckHUNTINGTON
Ron Damon
William Hathaway
Jeff WyandMIDDLEFIELD
Sarah FoleyMONTGOMERY
Anne Marie Buikus
Sandra HaasRUSSELL
Ellen Hirtle
Ruth Kennedy
Mary Ann LaurieWORTHINGTON
Sue Levreault
Gretchen EliasonSECRETARY
Stacy StewartCENTRAL ADMINISTRATION
Dr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Business & FinanceADMINISTRATIVE 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 DirectorSTUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: _____

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

- Peter Francis from the Westfield News is recording the meeting.
- John McVeigh said he called the Littleville Elementary two weeks ago about Kindergarten Curriculum. He called a second time finally received a call on Monday. In the mean time he reached out to three schools and spoke to principals. As a tax payer he is not happy about not receiving a phone call within a reasonable amount of time. What are we paying for? Maybe we need to start with the basics. How many other parents have had this happen? As of right now Westfield is his first choice. They are a level one school and are working with the YMCA. There is nothing about curriculum on the Littleville website or the teachers' pages. There is something on GRSD Website, about math curriculum. Other websites have information. What are we spending our money on? He doesn't want to hear administrators are underpaid. Central office staff is almost \$300,000 to \$400,000 more than other schools. The one true asset is Stephanie. The school seems to be outsourcing window washing. Why are we copying textbooks and telling teachers who come to tutor they can't turn on the lights. As a town official is it wrong to send his kids out of district. School committee needs to come together and work together. Tough decisions need to be made. School committee needs to make the choices, and stick to their guns.
- Mrs. Eliason appreciates his concerns. If we are doing our job as parents our students trump anything else. She has been very happy with Mrs. Coburn and others have said she is a wonderful principal. We will take it up. Her daughter was at Littleville for a half of a year and she was very pleased. Those are valid concerns. She is especially concerned with the fact that when we got to a level three school the committee hadn't heard from any parents. We have a goal to be a level 2 school or higher. If there are action items we will talk about them and come up with a resolution.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked for a copy of his letter.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked when the preschool screenings are held.
- Mrs. Coburn said Chester is May 30 and Littleville is June 3.

- Megan the same staff is doing both schools, Southwick is the same day as us, and Northampton does it in September. They also screen 50 to 60 percent of the Kindergarten. We gage the numbers by the census the towns give us and some of them haven't responded yet. Kids also move in over the summer. We've also done a press release it is the first of two.
- Mr. Ouimette from Chester was here with his son Koby. They looked at trying to get Koby into Smith. The state and the school have deadlines they didn't know about. They missed the state deadline by one day. He talked to Dr. Hopson.
- Mrs. Eliason said we have had parents come in the past. She is proud that we haven't had any missed deadlines in the past couple of years. She hates to see a deadline come between the student and education. She is not sure that the school committee has the power to wave the state deadlines. She asked Dr. Hopson to talk about the deadlines.
- Dr. Hopson the state deadline is by the statute. It is interesting because we set an earlier deadline. Ms. Fisk brought up a good point. Maybe we should have it the same as the state, because the towns have enough time to budget. That is something the school committee might want to consider as soon as we hear back from DESE as to if there is an appeal process. In the past school committee has not waived deadline.
- Mr. Kronholm said if we voted to waive the deadline, does it matter if we vote to suspend the rules. We could vote to waive our deadline.
- Mrs. Crane said it won't help him.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we can vote to support it, and send our vote to the DESE to see if it would help.
- Mrs. Eliason said if we waive ours we remove our impediment.
- Mrs. Levreault said things have changed. In the past we haven't waived it. If the state were to waive it maybe could discuss it.
- Dr. Hopson said in the past couple of years, when we've had them come forward. We've sent them to the town to see if they would waive it.
- Dr. Hopson said if the town were to waive the deadline, then it might help with the state's approval and he can pass it along to the DESE.
- Mrs. Levreault said in the past, they have asked how the parents missed it.
- Mr. Ouimette said they talked about it last year as a family and kind of tabled it and as he matured and they started talking about it again is when they realized the missed deadline.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said this week they have an 80's theme sprit day. The play Much Ado About Nothing is going on this week.

IV. CONSENT ITEMS 3/26/14 (Enc.)

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to approve the minutes of 3/26/14.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 7 Nays Abstain 4 Absent

V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

- A. Trip to Costa Rica – April Vacation 2015 – Cynthia Jensen, Desiree Rivera
- Cynthia Jensen, Biology, and Desire Rivera who teaches Spanish, 2,3, 4.
 - They started looking at companies, and came up with this company called Eco Teach. Both Spanish and Science students will be able to attend. They are looking to go during spring break 2015. The cost will be between \$2,400 and \$2,600 due to the air fare which can't be set this early. There will be between 14 and 21 students. There will be one to seven or one to five chaperone student ratio.
 - Mrs. Winer asked how they raise money to help offset the cost of the trip.
 - Mrs. Jensen said they will have to put down a deposit, and the students will raise their own money. The money goes directly to the company.
 - Mrs. Kennedy asked if the company keeps in touch accounting wise.
 - Mrs. Otterbeck asked if other classes at Gateway have taken trips like this over the years.
 - Mrs. Jensen said other years have gone to Spain and England.
 - The students have to have taken up to Spanish 2 to go.
 - Mrs. Rivera wants to make it clear that this is not a leisure trip, they are doing research.

- Mrs. Eliason feels it is a great trip, and she likes that there is a home stay.
- Mrs. Rivera stated there will be 3 to 4 kids in the home stay to make it safe.
- Move to old business for a vote at the next meeting.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Student Representative - None

B. School Committee

- Mrs. Crane said a former school committee member Fran Jensen passed away on Monday. She and her husband were very active in Blandford and Fran was a big supporter of education.
- Mrs. Kennedy thanked everyone for the support in the loss of her husband. The flowers and card were beautiful.

C. Chairperson

- Mrs. Eliason reminded everyone the ethics tests are good for two years. The ethics commission will come in and do one in house if we want to. We could think about that for next year.
- She asked Russell for an update on legal changes for the next meeting. She asked subcommittee chairs if they would prepare a packet of information for new people coming on. She would like to have it for June. Also, one of our goals was that members would have drop in hours in each town. It is a good time of year to do that before the town meetings. May 3 is the next MASC charting the course Ludlow.

D. Superintendent – Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson said Ms. Fisk put together an assessment comparison from FY 14 to 15 that was given to school committee and it is on the website. Teachers put off their vote till Monday. The PARCC test went well. The last students who missed it finished it today. It was a success.
- Mr. Finnie said it was hard. They will need to learn how to type things. It was harder to navigate. They did have a training session prior to the test. This was just a learning experience.
- Mrs. Crane couldn't get the assessment comparison.
- Mrs. Levreault asked if the students all use the same computers.
- Dr. Hopson and Mr. Finnie said they all used the same apple laptops. They are not allowed to use their own laptops because everything needs to be wiped out. Mr. Parker and Mrs. Paiva were a huge help and worked very hard.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked when PARRC vote will be taken.

D. Business Manager

- Ms. Fisk said the quarterly report will be ready shortly. Assessments are still trickling in.
- Ms. Fisk told a funny Fran Jensen negotiations story.
- Mrs. Eliason agreed with Mr. McVeigh that we are fortunate to have Ms. Fisk.

E. Administration - None

VII. AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation Subcommittee

- We need to check on a couple more things and she will have the official survey ready shortly. Mrs. Levreault handed out an updated copy of the information.

B. Finance Subcommittee

- Mrs. Kennedy will update us after the next meeting.

C. Legislative Liaison

- Mrs. Kennedy said there may be some amendments to the Worthington withdrawal. She is going to look into going back down to Boston next week to get some answers. She will go down for the amendments. Senators are looking at changing the unfunded mandates making them easier to get.

D. Policy Subcommittee – None

E. School Committee Goals Subcommittee - None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Worthington Withdrawal

- Mrs. Eliason said there is a vote scheduled for next week.
- She didn't think we could discuss
- Mrs. Buikus pulled out the minutes and she read the vote. She was wondering where the wording came from for the closing vote.
- Dr. Hopson said he believes the language came from SBA. It had to be voted that way for it to work. You could also submit a reorganization plan.
- Mrs. Buikus asked what would have been the reorganization plan.
- Dr. Hopson said it may have been to move all kindergarten to Russell Elementary or central office to Chester.
- Mrs. Buikus asked how the committee could make the decision and why weren't the towns allowed.
- Dr. Hopson said because we were the first to do this, we worked closely with DESE and SBA. Our regional agreement does not require the towns to vote.
- Mrs. Buikus said the school committee had the right to put the number on the backs of the towns.
- Mrs. Levreault said when we started the building project everyone was told it would take all seven to close schools. It was a lie of omission so the people who believed .
- Dr. Hopson thinks you give a lot of credit to someone when it took DESE and DOR a year to figure it out.
- Mrs. Levreault said how can you trust when your district has you paying back money they didn't vote to pay back. She didn't vote to for it.
- Dr. Hopson doesn't want to argue with her.
- Mrs. Kennedy said she has been doing some research and the contract was a binding contract that was signed through the MSBA, that the schools couldn't be closed for 50 years. She would like a copy of the contract. Who signed it and when was it signed?
- Mrs. Otterbeck sat on the committee to talk about the process. For her it wasn't about money but it was about what was in the best interest of her students. She still comes for that reason. She applauds Worthington for being so diligent for keeping their school open. She gets in this quandary. She is concerned that we are missing on why they want to leave, do they really want to just leave, or do they just want their school. She doesn't think that Worthington wants to damage the rest of the kids in the district but they are advocating for theirs. Where is that dialog at this committee. Mr. Jacques brought it up earlier. She feels frustrated.
- Mr. Jacques said the select boards have put forth a number of amendments that would make the bill a little more thorough in this process. It just talks about an education plan for Worthington, What about a thorough accounting look, what about population. This way it keeps it moving forward, but fills in all the gaps so everyone has a full plan. We need to go through this process so it does due diligence. We need a plan for Worthington and the remaining six towns. 603 cmr 41 02. Worthington is not de regionalizing, but re regionalizing. The best way would be to have an independent mediator. There is probably more fear than anger in this process. The school committee should consider writing a letter that would encourage a thorough review of all aspects.
- Mrs. Eliason has enjoyed meeting with GTAC and working with them. Some people have tried really hard to bring people together and find a common ground. She is disappointed we couldn't move further along we've never been able to get to the brass tax. These are the issues that need to be addressed. That process has been going on a year and the school committee is aware Worthington has been pursuing this for five years. So it certainly isn't any surprise we are at this point right now. She doesn't see how forcing Worthington to the table will do any good.
- Mrs. Levreault came to the meeting with Mr. Wulfson and the one thing he said was talking to Worthington sooner rather than later would be better for the 6 other towns. Worthington and the school committee have to come to the table to try to solve it locally. That is not suggesting solving locally, your suggesting it on a state level. We made a motion against Worthington leaving in January. She has tried to include in the superintendent's evaluation documentation that Worthington is still not happy, and nothing has been done. There are so many people who have worked hard, and some people who weren't here.
- What was the one education thing on all the EAC sheets they wanted -foreign language at the elementary level. It didn't happen. What would happen if the town of Worthington just disappeared from the district. There were people who asked for that information and it didn't happen.
- Mr. Kronholm said part of the history of this 30 years ago we closed Middlefield. It was traumatic, people from Middlefield came down and complained. Jerry Belheumer pushed to get Blandford closed. The school committee voted to close Blandford. They managed to keep it open for while, but they didn't have the population. Blandford and Worthington had just about the same population. There was finally a

campaign to sell closing the schools to the towns. Worthington has one second grader. He won't vote to open a school with that population.

- Mrs. Winer was on the building committee. One of the things we had to do was to justify redoing all of the schools. Closing elementary schools has been a question this district has been asking for a long time even before the building project. The state agreed we could build a school large enough for x amount of students. It became clear we could get a building project as long as we didn't close schools. Eventually school populations were dropping and that is what led us to this decision.
- Mr. Jacques is not advocating to having the state come in. He would like to get someone to shepard MOPC . Some of the things that have led us here are beyond our influence. This may help us to move forward on other fronts. Maybe the DESE would pay for it. This is not an attempt to delay or force Worthington to reconsider. Are you sure you have looked everything. He apologized for taking so long to figure this out.
- Mrs. Hague thanked Worthington for where we are today. We knew Worthington was unhappy, but we had a contract and per our contract all six towns had to vote and we voted not to allow them to leave. Shame on us for not paying attention. We have to come to the table for the good of our kids, even if Worthington is allowed to leave. Some of the reasons why Worthington wants to leave are important to the other towns. The problems we are having as a school system can be worked on. She is waiting for the town administrator in Worthington to get back to here when the six other towns can meet with Worthington. We need to work out the issues work out the issues as parents and community members.
- Mrs. McVeigh said GTAC has been talking about these things. We have openly discussed Worthington's withdrawal. The one organization that has not been in these meetings has voted themselves out of this process. The school committee voted down having school committee or Dr. Hopson meeting with Worthington . If we expect this to move forward we need the school committee to say yes to reopen discussion. She is sick of school committee revisiting why we didn't things happen five years ago. That's history and old business. For the school committee to vote not to participate is unacceptable. They should help write a letter.
- Mrs. Hague said what has happened in the past is in the past and we need to discuss what is going on right now and talk about the future.
- Mrs. Levreault is pretty sure that they didn't have funding for it. There are other districts out there with six.
- Mr. Jacques agrees, there is an opportunity to get the state to help us too.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if she could have the document no later than the first meeting in May.
- Mr. Jacques said any letter the school committee may consider would best be submitted before the vote.
- Ms. Winer understands what Mr. Jacques is saying, she thinks if we go by on doing it, we'd it may be able to be funded by us.

B. Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee – Public Request

- Mrs. Eliason said Mr. White has sent us an overview of the vocational timeline.
- Mr. Mason is an advocate for improving the relevance of education that we do offer. It is not just about students focusing on academics. He is looking to help those looking for a career path out of high school or for those who can't lean in a strictly academic setting,. Looking for motivators to learn life skills to be successful later on in life. He believes there should be more education for the adults. We need to do a better job engaging our tax payers.. There is a common perception that there is a divide between their needs and the school. They don't see the school committee supporting their needs. He thinks overall school committee is doing a good job. He need this community approach Review and development through an advisory committee. It would release a lot of the burden from their shoulders. Half of the committee should be from parents and two people from school committee to act as liaisons, at least two gateway staff member. There are a number of very good models. There is a lot of information on Google. DESE has a rubric they call it 21st century skills.
- Mrs. Eliason likes this idea a lot. It is good when we draw in the community. There are concerns that this committee could help us with. They can gather information about what people are looking for. What is it at the vocational schools that is attracting them and is there something better we could offer. This may help with some of Mr. McVeigh's concerns
- Mrs. Levreault said we could select two members when we reorganization..
- Mrs. Eliason said one of the ideas we talked about was surveying those kids who leave. The time table is up for discussion.
- Mr. Finnie said in education a couple of issues is perception and there is a lot of information and we can't always have all of it.
- Mr. Damon said there is a higher cost going to vocational. When a student goes to a Voke school it is part time in academics and part vocational. If students stayed in public education through their sophomore year. We could advocate for a third academic year. This would encourage students to stay in public education.

- Dr. Hopson wouldn't wait until reorganization, some of what Mr. Mason is talking about is adult education and you could get started over the summer.
- Mrs. Eliason asked if Mr. Sabonis could describe the
- Mr. Sabonis said 60 % were there for the vocational program and it was identified as a high priority. 40% are there for the change. They are running away from something. Many of those kids return to their home schools or shop hop. In his nine year of experience, Voke has been shoehorning kids out that weren't great students. There are ways for Voke schools to skew the scores.
- Mr. Finnie said there are a lot of students can be served without vocational education being the solution. It would limit us.
- Mrs. Eliason wouldn't want to have anything in place to discourage those 60% of students who truly want to go to Voke.
- Mr. Sabonis said the 7th graders will start thinking about Voke.
- Mrs. McVeigh said we aren't trying to replace vocational, but to add to it. This committee needs to embrace it. We are not asking for a lesser education.

Mrs. Levreault made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve a curriculum ad hoc committee with Mr. Mason helping us set it up as chair.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to extend the meeting to 10:15 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays 1 Abstain Absent

C. Superintendent's Request to Attend ASBO Meeting

- Mrs. Eliason supports the professional development
- Mrs. Kennedy asked for a report when Dr. Hopson returns.

Mrs. Buikus made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to approve the Superintendent attend the ASBO Conference.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent

D. Maintenance/Capital Improvement Plan

- If people have specific questions send them to Dr. Hopson and he will respond for the next meeting.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to go into executive session at or before 10:00 for preparing for union and non-union negotiations not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Jim, Michele, Sarah, Sandy, Shirley, Anne-Marie, Ron, Sue, Martha, Bill, Ruth, Gretchen

IX. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of School Choice for the 2014-2015 School Year

- Dr. Hopson said this is strictly for allowing students in. We can't stop them from going out.
- Move to old business for a vote at the next meeting
- Mrs. Winer asked for information on Model UN
- Dr. Hopson gave a brief overview.
- Mrs. Winer asked for a presentation from the Technology department and mass 1 to 1.

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

Field Trip Policy
 School Committee Reorganization

XI. INFORMATION

Information

April Vacation Shortened for Gateway
 Baseball season opener
 Gateway Cabaret April 3
 Superintendent's Corner March 21, 2014

Warrants

AP# 1074 \$285,542.37 PR#

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Levreault to go into executive session at or before 10:00 for preparing for union and non-union negotiations not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Jim, Michele, Sarah, Sandy, Shirley, Anne-Marie, Ron, Sue, Martha, Bill, Ruth, Gretchen

XIII. ADJOURNMENT *Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Crane to adjourn at 10:06 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,
 Stacy L Stewart,
 School Committee Secretary