

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2015

**Blandford Elementary School Building
7:30 P.M.**

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

I. OPENING OF MEETING

BLANDFORD
Michele Crane
Terri Garfield

CHESTER
Martha Otterbeck
Diane Dunn

HUNTINGTON
Ron Damon
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY
Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL
Ruth Kennedy
Tara Balboni
Heather Morgan

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

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

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
Joanne Blocker, Director of Academics
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
Brennan Foley

OTHERS: _____

7:35 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit)

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.
- Mrs. Austin is recording the meeting
- James Duggan, President of the Teachers Union read a statement from the Union with regards to negotiations. This will be sent to all members.
- Tony van Werkhoven, Blandford Finance Committee was notified the school committee passed another budget that is the same as before; he is disappointed they have to go through this process again. The finance subcommittee comprised a list of cuts totaling \$400,000 and school committee has not cut any of them.
- Mr. John McVeigh said the Huntington select board is in agreement with the Blandford selectmen and would like to investigate the Worthington withdrawal as an unfunded mandate.
- Mrs. McVeigh has a copy of the DESE Needs Assessment Report from the state.
- Dr. Hopson said the last we heard there was a rough draft and we sent back changes. We have not heard back since.
- Mrs. McVeigh said all it took was one phone call and an email and she got a copy. Gateway is one of several rural towns with declining enrollment. The report says there is no evidence that school committee had seriously investigated regionalizing with other schools. The towns have been asking for that and school committee has not explored any of these opportunities. They are not recommending any funding and you should explore regionalization. The towns want school committee to take it seriously and explore all options. We are a year out of the Worthington Withdrawal.
- Tony Montanaro from Blandford would like to reinforce statements already made. Blandford voted down the budget in May and again in September. The select board asked their members to look at options and that has been rejected. The same assessment was sent again. He received a letter dated May 8 from DESE

outlining need to regionalize and/or look at other options. Something is broken and we are not making any attempts to fix it.

- Mrs. Crane introduced our new member. The rest of the committee introduced themselves.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said senior nights are coming up. Friday night is boys' soccer. There are nine seniors. The girls' is the following Friday. They only have one senior. Cross country boys' and girls' senior night is next Tuesday. Both boys' and girls' soccer made it to playoffs. If the boys win the rest of their games they will tie for the league championship. The senior pie funds are in and they made a lot of money. November 1 and 15 colleges are accepting early applications. The band is selling fruit. Grades 5-12 band students went to UMass for a multi-bands performance. Bandster Bash is next Friday. Student council said thirty-one students took the 2025 survey. Spirit days are coming up. Monday is Pink for breast cancer awareness and Friday is black, orange, and purple for Halloween. The Swamp (student store) is open.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. FY '17 Budget Information

- Mrs. McVeigh received emails about mitigation money from Downing's and Humason's office. The House has mitigation funds, but the Senate has passed a different supplemental budget. An amendment requesting mitigation funding was rejected. Rosenberg's aide expressed to her they remain positive they will get this through. There are ten days to recess and a committee has not been set up. The aide encouraged us to send emails to Senator Rosenberg expressing how important it is to and that we are half way through the year. Mrs. McVeigh encourages everyone to send a letter. She will send an email to Dr. Hopson with Senator Rosenberg's email in it. Send it to everyone you know. Cc Downing and Humason.
- Mrs. Kennedy verified what Darlene said. She was at a meeting with "Smitty" Pignatelli last week.
- Dr. Hopson said there is a 6 million dollar difference.
- Mrs. Garfield said there will be three from House and three from Senate forming a conference committee and Kulik will be on that.
- Dr. Hopson said the whole budget process depends on the \$630,000. Principals are working on it now. Dr. Hopson went over his PowerPoint.
- Mrs. Kennedy said we've also got to take into consideration the hearing tomorrow. She would like to see two budgets; one with Worthington in and one with them out.
- Dr. Hopson said we may better off deciding in November.

7:45 - V. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. 1st Semester Field Trips - Wrestling to Hudson Falls, NY

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve the Wrestling field trip to Hudson Falls NY.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Jeff, Michele

Abstain: Heather

B. OPEB Trust

- Mrs. Crane said we have been talking about this. What further questions do people have?
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if there was another option.
- Attorney Adam Dupere said PRIT was the other option, but there is a \$250,000 initial investment with a promise to invest 1 million within three years.
- Mrs. Crane asked how school districts generally decide on what level of risk they are going to take.
- Kate from PARS said Vanguard pool is the consideration conservative, balanced, and growth. School Districts are going with balanced. It is a 30 year investment plan. 1 or two have chosen growth and 1 conservative RI. Key we work with you directly – monthly, quarterly and annual reviews. Adjustments can be made, you are not held to a schedule.
- Mrs. Foley asked is there a pattern with demographics and solvency.
- Kate from PARS said it is across the board right now, there is no pattern.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we have to set a yearly amount,
- Kate from PARS said no, there is no minimum or funding schedule to establish or maintain.
- Mrs. Foley asked if they primarily have school districts in RI.

- Kate from PARS said no, they have districts nation- wide.
- Mrs. Foley asked what percent of school districts have this type of fund set up.
- Attorney Adam Dupere said a lot of school districts have not done this, they are always fighting to have money at the end of the year.
- Kate from PARS said if you look at the booklet if you put \$125,000 in the trust, your PARS fees would be based on 25 points. The monthly fee is \$26, holding fee is \$5.21 per month, investment with vanguard is \$7.29. The total would be \$38.50 per month or \$400 per year.
- Mrs. Smith said in principal and the ideal situation, she would say this is a great idea. However, to invest in the stock market, taking funding from the school where it is difficult to know from year to year. From where she sits, there is no extra money anywhere. She would like to say, this may not be the ideal time to implement this. Not reflecting well back to her as a town finance committee.
- Mrs. Crane asked Ms. Fisk to remind of the amount and where the money came from.
- Ms. Fisk said at the end of June school committee voted to establish trust fund. They also approved an amount of approximately \$107,000. It came from the balance in the active and retiree health insurance accounts. This can happen if someone doesn't take family, they waive health insurance, if the rates go down, when people switch to Medex, or if someone passes away.
- Linda Smith said if at the end of the year that the \$170,000 gets applied to a line item in the school and stops the students from losing something.
- Dr. Hopson said it is \$107,000. If, in fact there was a shortage in the budget next year, you could take it out to pay retiree health insurance. It is not like you can't get the money back for 30 years.
- Linda Smith is saying for this year, with the towns saying they don't have the money and if there is a greater chance of not getting mitigation. That could be applied somewhere in this budget.
- Mrs. Foley asked if it could be spend somewhere in the budget.
- Ms. Fisk said you could apply it to the retiree health insurance.
- Mr. Wyand said perhaps we should put this on hold, this money allocated are we obligated to do something with it or do we have to return it to E & D.
- Ms. Fisk said when we had E & D certified (it's on hold reserved for OPEB) DOR is fine with it there otherwise they would put it to E & D.
- Mrs. Dunn asked if we were tight this year, could we spend the money on teacher salaries.
- Ms. Fisk said you would use it to reduce the budget.
- Mrs. Dunn said it would be more fluid.
- Mrs. McVeigh said this is what she has been asking for; a budget with total sources of funds. She would see what you intend to spend in total funds, how much is coming out and what line item it hits. Right now it is only time you see total
- Ms. Fisk said it was given out at finance.
- Mrs. McVeigh wants to know how many teachers there are and what each teacher makes.
- Mrs. Kennedy said this is one of the reasons she wants to put this off. She wants to get more information.
- Dr. Hopson would recommend we put this off till next meeting, with hearing and with what Mr. Wyand.
- Mrs. Balboni said they showed us the return on investments.
- Mr. Damon asked what the money is earning now, and for guestimate as to what it would be earning if we put it in an investment.
- Move OPEB to the November meeting.
- Dr. Hopson asked if we could assure the PARs people we will email them with questions rather than have them come out again.

C. Worthington Withdrawal

Mrs. Kennedy said after today, (representing herself pro se) it is up to the chair to follow along and report to the school committee as far as what is going on.

D. Update on "Gateway 2025"

- Dr. Hopson said as of this afternoon, there are 185 survey results.
- Survey of committee, this is your reminder to do it if you haven't.

E. School Committee Team Building - Survey Update

- None

F. Update on "GTAC Sustainability Task Force"

- Mrs. Crane said there will be a meeting November 12 at 7 p.m. at Stanton Hall, Huntington.

- Mrs. McVeigh said they have sent out letters to select boards for nominations from towns and have asked for three from each town. They have completed their presentation. “Smitty” Pignatelli is going to be the guest speaker.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked what the other towns’ involvement is.
- Mrs. McVeigh said Blandford, Middlefield, Russell, Montgomery, and Huntington are on board. They have not heard from Chester. They sent out a draft of a job description.

G. Blandford Unfunded Mandates (11/18/15)

- Unfunded Mandate next meeting. Mrs. Kennedy will discuss it after her conference.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Heather, Martha, Jeff, Michele

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Acceptance of Grant Funds (Enc.)

- Mrs. Long is looking for a motion at the next meeting to accept these grants.

VII. CONSENT ITEMS 10/7/15 (Enc.)

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to accept the minutes of 10/7/15

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Jeff, Michele

Abstain: Heather

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee - None

B. Chairperson

- Mrs. Crane reminded everyone who hasn’t paid for yearbook ad, to do as soon as you can. Mrs. Long will take our picture at the next meeting.

C. Superintendent - None

Central Office Update (Enc.)

D. Business Manager

FY ’16 First Quarter Report (Enc.)

MSBA Letter (Enc.)

FY ’16 Line Item Budget Version 1.1 (Enc)

- Ms. Fisk said we still have staff to replace, so there will be transfers next quarter. Transportation may change depending on lawsuit. She included the SBA letter. This decreases while Worthington and Russell are open. Payments will be reduced.
- Darlene McVeigh asked about the savings.
- Ms. Fisk said \$242,555 is the difference.
- Mr. Wyand asked how is this going to be reflected in the budget.
- Ms. Fisk said it is going to fund transportation increases.
- Ms. Fisk said the transportation increase is about 17%, special education transportation is approximately \$40,000, homeless transportation is out of sight, last year it was approximately \$9,000 and we will have to increase it this year.

E. Administration - None

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- They met tonight and the first management meeting will be in February.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if the superintendent has met his goal of moving the schools to level 2
- Dr. Hopson said Chester has moved from a level 3 to a level 2 school.

B. Legislative Liaison - None**C. Policy Subcommittee**

- Meeting prior to the next meeting.

D. Building Liaisons – None**X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA****Future Agenda Items****XI. INFORMATION****Information**

Fall sports senior nights!

Britland, Margarites are 'Commended Students' in National Merit Scholarship Program

Bandster Bash concert October 23

Superintendent's Corner October 9, 2015

Two days off for Gateway students coming up

Gateway 2025 online survey students, staff, parents, alumni, and public invited to take part

Gateway celebrates 'Farm to School' week

Flag holds place of honor at Littleville Elementary School

Superintendent's Corner October 3, 2015

Chester Students enjoy farm visit

Warrant

AP#1026 \$57.23

PR# 008 \$365,111.42

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

or earlier

- A. Union Negotiations
- B. Litigation

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Heather, Martha, Jeff, Michele

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to adjourn at 9:20 p.m.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Heather, Martha, Jeff, Michele

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary