

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2015

**Chester Elementary School
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
Shirley Winer
Martha Otterbeck
Diane Dunn

HUNTINGTON
Ron Damon
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY
Anne Marie Buikus
Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL
Ruth Kennedy
Tara Balboni

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

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

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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: _____

7:35 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit)- None

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.
- Mrs. Buikus is recording the meeting.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said school climate met today for first time this year. Their first question for student is: do you think you have a voice in your own education and if not how do you think it could change. Answers are put on a board. They are teaching healthy relationships to 7th and 8th graders. The band went to the Big E and it went well. The student store is opening next week. Last week they had a club fair. The senior class is selling pies and cookie dough. Seniors are looking for a way to have a stage for graduation. There is no GatorRoo this year to share the cost of the stage. Students are taking the 2025 survey during lunch if they want to. If they take it they receive spirit points. Every student council member can elect members for the Regional Student Council. Jenna Margarites and Brennan were selected this year. They are discussing PARCC verses MCAS. Their decision goes from regional to state then to the board of education. Jenna gave a presentation. They voted to keep MCAS at school.
- Mrs. Winer asked what were the main reasons for voting to keep MCAS.
- Brennan Foley said not every student is good on a computer. Not every student takes a timed test well. It was supposed to cost less, but there are fewer schools taking it now and the state doesn't have an answer as to the cost. The PARCC text can't be fixed as easy. Also because Massachusetts is a leader in education, and other states are waiting to see what Massachusetts does before they vote.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. FY '17 Budget Information

- Dr. Hopson gave a brief PowerPoint budget presentation.
- Mrs. Kennedy would like it sent to every school committee member.

7:45 - V. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

1st Semester Field Trips

- Chorus to NY City-Phantom or Wicked
- 8th Grade D.C. Trip
- Wrestling to Albany, NY

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the chorus trip to New York.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded Mrs. Kennedy to approve the 8th grade D.C. Trip.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the wrestling trip to Albany NY.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

- Mr. Finnie said Coach Forand has been looking for more opportunities. He is requesting another trip to Hudson Falls NY in December.
- Mr. Wyand would like to know how the trip would be funded.
- Mr. Finnie said they are providing their own transportation, so all they would have are entry fees.
- Ms. Fisk said there is an Athletic revolving. Athletic trips have come from there in the past.
- Jeff was there discussion students transporting themselves.
- Ms. Fisk said there is a policy that covers transportation.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said that is her old stomping grounds and knows a coach in the area, so if there is anything she can do to help facilitate the trip, please let her know.
- Move Hudson NY trip to old business next meeting.

B. Budget Transfers

- Ms. Fisk said she is still waiting for 4 bank statements. She went over all of the transfers last meeting.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to approve the Budget Transfers.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Abstain: Madelyn

C. OPEB Trust

- Mrs. Crane said Attorney Adam Dupere is here for questions, we were all sent the paperwork.
- Attorney Adam Dupere said 32 B section 20 covers growing health insurance obligations. A vote was taken to approve the OPEB trust fund. The money is designated to go somewhere. You need to decide where and how it will be administered. There are three options; 1) PRIT is run by state pension reserve interest trust. Starting investment needs to be \$250,000 with a commitment of 1 million over a three-year period. 2) is having a trust built from scratch, and then designate how it is invested. The costs are thousands of dollars. 3) PARS a private investing group that does this on an everyday basis. PARS has a large body of assets. They presented to MMA and really are the most viable option for the district. They made many changes to

the paperwork for us. In PRIT you don't have as much control over the money. Mrs. Fisk spoke to other districts.

- Ms. Fisk said Southern Worcester County Regional School District uses PARS. There were no additional costs unforeseen or audit costs. They were very happy with level of service. Whitman Hansen and Dennis Yarmouth should be wrapped up by the end of October. There were a lot of people at her state meeting last week who use PARS, but it's done by the town. Amherst Pelham is hoping to go with PARS.
- Attorney Adam Dupere was happy with the documentation.
- Mrs. Winer asked where is the money we are going to put into this.
- Ms. Fisk said the excess money from health insurance both active and retiree is in reserve. The money has been reserved for the OPEB since June when school committee took the vote. DOR was fine with what we were doing. The vote was to put \$107,000 in from the FY '15 budget. There is nothing in the 2016 budget for OPEB.
- Mr. Wyand said we are paying as we go, does it look like there is surplus again this year.
- Ms. Fisk said it doesn't look that way. It looks like MEDEX rates are going to go up in January. Although, one retiree dropped their spouse.
- Mrs. Kennedy was concerned about being pushed into a vote. She wants to make sure the towns know what we are doing.
- Attorney Adam Dupere said the money has to go somewhere. A decision has to be made and you have to feel comfortable with what you choose.
- Mrs. Balboni said it is certainly in our best interest to invest it sooner rather than later.
- Darlene McVeigh said because you are restricting your funds, it is important for all town officials see the documents. She feels it is rushed; a vote tonight is too soon.
- Ms. Fisk send the OPEB documents to school committee and Darlene McVeigh on September 24. She emailed OPEB documents to the towns on September 25.
- Mrs. Buikus requested school committee members to get in touch with their select board and finance members and asked if anyone did.
- Mrs. Kennedy said Nancy Boersig got it, but our finance hasn't even received it yet.
- Dr. Hopson asked Mrs. Kennedy if she wants to put it off for a two week period.
- Mrs. Kennedy said she is uncomfortable and there are a couple things going on. We have a \$630,000 mitigation question, Worthington Withdrawal hearing on the 22 and we don't know what is going on. She would like to see it in November or maybe December. She is not comfortable until she finds out everything.
- Mrs. Crane said we would move it to old business and see what the discussion is.
- Attorney Adam Dupere asked if we wanted someone from PARS to be at the next meeting.
- Mr. Damon said if we have someone come we should plan to have that early in the meeting.
- Ms. Fisk questioned Mrs. Kennedy about picking up her packet of information from Mrs. Stewart yesterday.
- Mrs. Kennedy said yes, but she's been reading it online.

D. Worthington Withdrawal – None

E. FY '16 Budget

- Dr. Hopson did get a call from Steve Kulik after the House passed a budget with the \$630,000. He anticipates the Senate will vote this week. Representative Kulik said there is no need for a conference committee, so after the Senate it should go to the Governor, and we should have it by the end of October.
- Mrs. Kennedy said she saw Representative Kulik Monday night, and he said the same thing, but he couldn't guarantee the Senate would do anything this week. We are still in a pickle.
- Ms. Fisk said she is waiting for the seven days because it is a timing issue for assessment letters. School committee voted to give back any extra.
- Mr. Wyand said asked if we got the \$630,000 everything is a go.
- Dr. Hopson said the towns of Blandford, Chester, and Russell have to vote again. Huntington does not. They have 45 days after we choose another budget to move forward. Whatever we decide tonight, it is in the best interest to push off the town meetings as long as we can.
- Mrs. Winer asked what if it's decided Worthington can't do what they are doing, then what do we do.
- Mrs. Kennedy said we would be back to a seven- town budget.
- Dr. Hopson said the \$630,000 is the difference. Worthington would pick up their portion of the budget (for x number of students)
- Mrs. Buikus said we would have to vote a seven- town budget and put in transportation, etc.
- Mrs. Foley asked how we develop a seven-town budget if there are no Worthington representatives.

- Dr. Hopson said if the court rules with an injunction, the state will change the cherry sheet figures. They have to approve the tax rate, budget etc.
- Mrs. Balboni asked how many Worthington students stayed in Gateway.
- Mrs. Fisk and Mrs. Stewart believe 11.
- Mrs. Coburn has heard that some of the students that went to Worthington will be back.

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to send back the same budget with assessment changes made since March and line item transfers approved tonight making it version 1.1.

- Ms. Fisk said she is going to try to wait the seven days hoping the mitigation money goes through.
- Mrs. Buikus said the towns have 45 days from the day school committee votes.
- Mr. Wyand asked if we can make the line item transfers an amendment correct the budget to reflect the line item transfers and amend the budget to 1.1
- Dr. Hopson explained it is a lot of extra work to put out another complete budget document.
- Mrs. Buikus said to take out the verbiage in the front make it like last year. So we have a complete 1.1 budget.
- John McVeigh said if a town official has requested a line item budget, the law states you have to.
- Darlene McVeigh said your 150 page budget document includes additional information. The heart of the budget is at the end where there is a schedule of revenues, expenses, assessments to towns, non-foundation budgets, etc. Those are the numbers the towns would be looking at. She is not asking for another 150 page document; just the meat of the budget, five or six pages. She would hope the line item transfers voted tonight would be adjusted in the budget. She is asking for an update of six or seven pages.
- Ms. Fisk will send the line item budget includes and the three pages of assessments, revenue, and non-foundation.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to move the question.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays 2 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

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

Nays: Anne-Marie, Ruth

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to send back the same budget with assessment changes made since March and line item transfers approved tonight making it version 1.1.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

F. Update on “Gateway 2025”

- Dr. Hopson said there are currently 56 responses to the survey. Students are included and we are leaving it open for an additional week.
- Brennan Foley said students that have taken it said it isn’t that bad.
- Darlene McVeigh asked how many do you anticipate in order to have a valid enough sample from the community.
- Dr. Hopson statistically you have a valid number of staff, if you look at number of students 7-12 you would need almost that many surveys again. When we look at them and categorize them we will have a better idea. He thinks 31 surveys out of 56 are staff
- Mrs. Crane said Mrs. Long is working hard to get people to take the survey. School committee should take it and put the word out.

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

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

G. School Committee Team Building – Survey Update

- Mrs. Crane is handing out a hard copy so it is more anonymous. The deadline is 21st. Mrs. Stewart will send it out to Mr. Hathaway.

H. Update on “GTAC Sustainability Task Force”

- Derrick Mason just came from the Berkshire County Task Force. They will be facing the same things we are economically. Looking at a public forum November 5th. Letters will go to towns and school committee next week hopefully. They are requesting that the towns and school committee name delegates to represent the constituents to serve on the committee. They will have a projected job description. Anticipating 20 to 30 members to get a broad representation.
- Mrs. Winer said this is not GTAC.
- Derrick Mason said no it is an evolution of GTAC.
- Mrs. Winer asked who will lead the group and where do we draw leadership from.
- Derrick Mason said from the group. Hoping each town will have three representatives.

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Blandford Letter/Unfunded Mandates

- Mrs. Crane said everyone was sent a copy. The letter is calling the shortfall in the budget an unfunded mandate due to the Worthington withdrawal. She asked Mrs. Kennedy if she brought her paperwork.
- Mrs. Kennedy noticed her paperwork is outdated. She would like to wait till after she comes back from the November Conference with new documents.
- Mrs. Crane said we would put this on new business for the November 18 meeting if there are objections
- Mrs. Winer asked how would they argue it is an unfunded mandate.
- Mrs. Crane said it was something that was put on us, not something we chose.
- Mrs. Kennedy said because we didn't decide to have extra bills to pay. When she was at the conference, they were excited about her lawsuit, because they wanted to piggyback it for unfunded mandates.
- Mrs. Winer we haven't even got work if we will see the \$630,000 mitigation money for this year.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked are you applying as if fiscal 16 is an unfunded mandate. Smitty Pignatelli clearly stated if they fund us the \$630,000 we are not unfunded. We may want to wait and see if we get the mitigation money for this year, and then apply for next year.

VII. CONSENT ITEMS 9/23/15(Enc.)

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 9/23/15.

- Mrs. Buikus would like to receive a copy of the minutes after corrections have been made. She suggested making the corrections in italics.
- Mrs. Garfield said then Mrs. Stewart would have to make two versions; one for us and one for the website.
- Mrs. Balboni feels we should be responsible for our requests. She doesn't think we should have Stacy make two versions.
- Mrs. Buikus said Mrs. Stewart is our secretary. She would like to have the minutes send to everyone after.
- Mrs. Kennedy will bring in the guidelines for open meeting and minutes.
- Mr. Wyand suggested putting a star instead of a circle where corrections were made.
- Mrs. Crane said we would have Mrs. Stewart send out corrected minutes and see how it goes.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 9/23/15.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Abstain: Ron

Absent: Diane

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Kennedy said the show choir is doing a fundraiser on the 24th to surprise Mrs. Beauregard. It will be similar to Huntington's fall festival.

- Mrs. Winer asked when the show choir gets invited to something, don't the people inviting them help pay for things?

B. Chairperson

- Mrs. Crane said we received the request for purchasing a yearbook ad. She asked for a volunteer to collect money. The cost is \$12.00 per person. We will schedule a meeting for Mrs. Long to take our picture.

C. Superintendent – on agenda.

D. Business Manager – on Agenda

E. Administration

- Mrs. Long said open house at the middle, Jr. High and High is tomorrow night from 6-7:30 p.m. She needs a new business item on next agenda to receive grant money.
- Mrs. Kennedy is requesting questions for DESE for November Meeting. Email her or MASC.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- Supt Evaluation will meet on October 21.

B. Legislative Liaison - None

C. Policy Subcommittee

- Dr. Hopson will send dates for the meeting and they can respond.
- Mrs. Winer will not be here the 21st.
- Mr. Damon is not present for executive session

D. Building Liaisons - None

E. Community Curriculum Committee - None

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XI. INFORMATION

Information

Keep warm through annual Heating Oil raffle
 Gateway open house on October 8
 Education Foundation funds 7 new projects at Gateway
 Pumpkin math's 'circle of education' at Littleville
 October Calendar
 October school committee meetings
 Superintendent's Corner September 25, 2015

Warrant

AP#1010	\$81,392.70	PR# 007	\$364,848.77
AP#1013	\$12,672.37		
AP#1014	\$90,208.02		
AP#1015	\$368.69		
AP#1017	\$54,541.33		
AP#1018	\$167,410.49		
AP#1021	\$26,599.50		

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

or earlier

- Union Negotiations
- Litigation

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

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary