

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

**Gateway Career Center
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
Heather Morgan

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
Sara Laing, Chs,Lit, Ms Assistant Principal
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer
Anthony Sabonis, High/Jr. High Assistant Principal
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: _____

7:35 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT (3 Minute Limit)

- Mrs. Crane opened meeting at 7:36 pm.
- Mrs. Buikus is recording the meeting.
- Mrs. Crane stated that over the past few months, several members of the committee have asked her to take steps to improve the tenor of the debate at our meetings as well as improve efficiency and make the meetings shorter and more efficient. There will be a change to how we receive public comment. At the beginning of each meeting we will accept public comment on any topic. It can be something, new, old or on the agenda. Comments need to stay within the 3 minute time limit. We will not receive public comment during unfinished or old business and action items, and we will not receive public comment during new business. It is the Chair’s prerogative to decide how much public comment to allow at meetings. This does not prevent us from asking someone in the gallery to clarify a point or get specific information from an administrator. It is her hope that these changes will allow for a more efficient meeting and that we will get more work done. More importantly she hopes it will give us a chance to have more dialogue between the members of this committee. She feels that many members hold back on saying key things or on asking questions in the interest of saving time or because they are intimidated. That needs to stop and we need to have more open, constructive dialogue between members at meetings. She would also like us to be more disciplined during debate, starting with a motion on the floor and sticking to the topic at hand. If we follow these guidelines, we will be doing a better job and the meetings will be more efficient. She is looking for help from School committee during with this process.

- Cheryl Wright thanked school committee for sending back the same budget saying this is what we need not what we are going to cut. She is speaking not as a member of negotiations, but what she hears. She is concerned about losing prep time. There is more being put on them by the state. Less prep time is going to mean less time to prepare for class. This will affect their ability to teach. The morale is very low among teachers because they are feeling frustrated with not enough time. Taking away prep time would be taking away time from the students when they are trying to do the best for the children.
- Cat Bishop said this has been a difficult year. They are in a rough place with negotiations. It is a great time, and a difficult time as well. She has been working with seniors and their college applications and college essays. If you cut prep, she has nothing left to give up. Money is not an issue for her. She loves her students and colleagues. Teachers are talking about retiring early. She also talked about the difficulties of replacing teachers with their salaries.
- Pat Diefendorf said she is sad to hear about towns leaving the district and that people are considering leaving. She has had quite a few parents who come in who she had as students, she feels sad with what is happened with this district. She would encourage everyone to work together and be positive.
- Sue Luppino said she is very thankful for school committee. She was happy that Mrs. Crane spoke about the tenor of discussion. She feels that is part of why they have not agreed on a contract. She has so many students in her classroom that come back to here for extra help.
- Val Zeh said in last couple days there were 8 students who showed up for help during her prep time. It is time to take care of what they need to do and love to do.
- Cathy Servaes said one of the main things she does during her prep time is meet with one of her peers. It could be 15 minutes to longer. It's tough when kids are knocking on the door while they are working.
- Mrs. Garfield asked why the teachers were wearing red.
- The teachers said solidarity.
- Mrs. Garfield said she understands that what happens at any level affects them. As a school committee member she supports them and as a parent she appreciates them. Both her sons went through Gateway and their success show how much you do. The high school teachers were a huge part of her sons' success.
- Mrs. Crane thanked the teachers for their comments.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said student council is planning for the semi-formal slowly but surely. Last week they had a food drive. Last Friday was point's day. On Thursday they only had four cans. On Friday they collected 950 cans. They are picking colors for reindeer games shirts. Next Wednesday is the college fair with Gateway alumni. The Swamp will be picking a customer of the month in student. Your name will be entered every time you make a purchase. You could win popcorn for a week. Damon Grant is doing clinics with the students. There will be a concert tomorrow night. Two weeks from today is the senior citizen's concert. The choir is having penny social this Friday and next Friday the band will be hosting breakfast for dinner. On Saturday NHS will be collecting donations at the bridge in Huntington for hiltown holiday help/toys for tots from 9-2. They will go shopping on December 12.
- Mrs. Foley announced that Brennan got accepted to the University of Vermont.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS - None

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Recommendation to adopt document titled: "A vote of the School Committee of the Gateway Regional School District authorizing the adoption of the Public Agencies Post Retirement Health Care Plan and Trust (OPEB Trust)."

- Mrs. Crane asked for a motion to approve OPEB Trust money be invested with PARS.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to adopt document titled: "A vote of the School Committee of the Gateway Regional School District authorizing the adoption of the Public Agencies Post Retirement Health Care Plan and Trust (OPEB Trust)."

- Mrs. Crane said we voted to put the money into a fund. This vote chooses the fund.
- Mrs. Buikus thinks we should leave it where it is. It should stay where it is for retiree insurance. We are going to need the money.

- Dr. Hopson said you can put it in here and take it out, but only for the retiree health insurance line item. It's earning .05% interest. A moderate portfolio is earning about 5 %. It is up to you whether you leave it or invest it and if you want to take it out.
- Mrs. Winer asked if we could use it for retirement purposes.
- Dr. Hopson said yes to offset the retiree line item by \$107,000.
- Mrs. Buikus said isn't there a cost for them to handle it for that time. Would it offset it? We are going to need that money.
- Dr. Hopson said it was in the minutes. It will be \$400 year. 5 % will more than cover the cost.
- Mr. Wyand said if we were taking that money out, we would be taking it out in less than a year. We don't have to take all the money out either.
- Dr. Hopson said they said there is no set amount either.
- Mrs. Garfield said if we put it in it will earn 5%.
- Mr. Wyand said we are 14 million behind right now, and we are obligated to pay this to the people who retire.
- Mrs. Austin asked if there is a guarantee you won't lose money.
- Dr. Hopson said no.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to adopt document titled: "A vote of the School Committee of the Gateway Regional School District authorizing the adoption of the Public Agencies Post Retirement Health Care Plan and Trust (OPEB Trust)."

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

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

Nays: Anne- Marie

Abstain: Heather

Absent: Ruth

B. Acceptance of Grant Funds

- Mrs. Crane stated that we need to approve acceptance of these grant funds.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mr. Damon to accept the grant funds as presented.

- Mr. Wyand said one of that grants was still up in the air.
- Mrs. Long said there are several we applied for and are still waiting to hear about. The only one we officially got was STARS. Her intent would be to anticipate grants ahead of time so when we receive them we can just accept them. This is under the New Uniform Grant Regulations.
- Dr. Hopson said the Federal Government has new regulations. We are going to follow the procedures for all of them even though we don't have to.
- Mr. Wyand asked which ones we are accepting.
- Mrs. Long said all of them.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mr. Damon to accept the grant funds as presented.

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

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

Absent: Ruth

C. Blandford Unfunded Mandates Request

- Dr. Hopson said Mrs. Kennedy wanted to hold off until after the lawsuit.
- Leave it on the agenda for next time.

D. Worthington Withdrawal - None

E. Update on "Gateway 2025"

- Mrs. Crane said we were all sent a link to the report.

- Dr. Hopson said it is online, but the 20 page summary and the 100 page Google document. There is a lot of good information. Everything is online. We are going to try to hold a focus group with teachers before the holidays and the community after the holidays.
- Mrs. Foley thought it was interesting there was support of local control. The majority were in favor of keeping everything local.

F. School Committee Team Building - Survey Update

- Mrs. Crane apologized for the survey not being complete. We only had 9 people take the survey. The survey is being sent out again. She asked everyone to please take the time to complete the survey and return it to Pat. The survey was handed out.

G. Update on "GTAC Sustainability Task Force"

- Dr. Hopson spoke briefly to "Smitty" Pignatelli. They have a date for a meeting set up to investigate different options.
- Mrs. Buikus said a suggestion about students was made. The suggestion is to follow a class. The number who started in 9th how many are still in the class at graduation, how many go on to college (two-year, four-year), how many and how many last first semester, first year, how many finish, etc.
- Dr. Hopson said we have information on a lot of that, but not everything.
- Mrs. Buikus thinks it would be nice to keep track.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked what the greater goal was.
- Mrs. Buikus asked what are the dynamics of when they start and at graduation. What will come for the future.
- Dr. Hopson said we have the information on dropout student.
- Mrs. Foley asked how do they do the follow up for college.
- Dr. Hopson said it is just voluntary. He will check to see what we have and check with guidance

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to go into executive session at or before 9:00 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations update not to return to open session.

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

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

Absent: Ruth

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. FY '17 Budget

- Dr. Hopson handed out Basic Choices for Planning for FY 17 Budget. He is looking for direction from school committee as he starts meeting with administrators.
- Mrs. Winer asked if there is any reason to even think about another \$630,000.
- Dr. Hopson said it was difficult to pay with \$630 in mitigation, do you really expect towns to pick up another \$630,000. We are most likely not going to see more mitigation money, nor will there be a change in Chapter 70. If you move that forward and level fund the budget it is still \$630,000. There are some towns who can't afford it with the \$630,000. Even though Chester voted the budget down it wasn't because they were against the budget, it was because state hasn't done what they should do.
- Mr. Damon asked which of these 4 will come closest to level services budget.
- Dr. Hopson said a 2 % increase in number 4 is a million dollar increase to the towns.
- Mr. Wyand asked which one gives us the same services for classes and programs and perhaps doesn't include increases in salaries.
- Dr. Hopson you have a number of association who have already received increases and you have the teachers in negotiations. If you didn't give an increase, you would be in violation in the labor law
- Mrs. Austin asked when the last time Chapter 70 was looked at.
- Dr. Hopson said 1993.
- Mrs. Austin said you just sent some information that might help.
- Dr. Hopson said they had input from MASS and MASC the bottom line is it is 1.6 billion more than the state spends in education. There is talk about 9c cuts mid-year this year. How do you make up for 1.6 billion dollars? They will probably put pieces of that in over the years.

- Mr. Wyand heard it was a guarantee that we were not going to get \$630,000 again. Doesn't mean that we won't look for it in other ways.
- Dr. Hopson said the mitigation money wasn't put in the FY '16 budget so it could be put in the supplemental budget.
- Ms. Fisk arrived at the meeting and said the budget failed in Russell 22-36
- Dr. Hopson read an overview of a handout Ms. Fisk brought from the meeting that was read by Mr. Mason at the meeting.
- Mrs. Crane asked Dr. Hopson to explain what happens if we don't approve a budget.
- Dr. Hopson said if Blandford does not pass the budget, the commissioner will set a permanent budget for the rest of the year on December 1. All budget decisions will then have to go through the commissioner. School committee will lose local control of budgetary issues.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if towns or the school committee.
- Dr. Hopson said if the commissioner maintains the 1 /12 budget the towns will have the same assessments. The towns will have to have a special town meeting.
- Mrs. Buikus said it takes budget line item approval out of hands of school committee.
- Dr. Hopson said you would approve it and then DESE might approve it or make changes.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked will they be so maybe today, maybe tomorrow like they have been in the past.
- Mr. Damon said it is like Holyoke almost.
- Dr. Hopson said it is not a receivership.
- Mrs. Crane said our vote is a recommendation to DESE.
- Ms. Fisk said transfers that will be made after December 1 will be sent to the DESE for approval.
- Dr. Hopson is only looking for a direction at this point.
- Mr. Damon is interested in what student services are not going to exist in these budget options.
- Dr. Hopson said we would work on what it looks like at that level and it would be easier to put items back in. You would be able to see those cuts.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if we are going to look at restructuring.
- Dr. Hopson said it will depend on which direction you go in. Option 1 would include restructuring.
- Mrs. Buikus said if we decide to restructure, is it possible to go back to elementary K-4, 5-8, 9-12, then a principal for each, special education director and curriculum.
- Mrs. Otterbeck confirmed we are just looking at a place to start. In the the interest to be productive if we choose a direction today, can we relook at it.
- Dr. Hopson said yes, it will just give us a starting point.
- Mr. Wyand said last year our strategy for the educational plan was to show we intended to keep things the same. We should do that. We need to show we don't want to tear our school apart. It would give us grounds that we do need the funding.
- Dr. Hopson said to move forward everything the same would be between 3 and 4. You can look at it and keep it the same, add back or make reductions.
- Mr. Wyand felt with the past budget process we didn't have a backup plan. It is important to know what that picture looks like too.

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to move forward with budget option number 2-accounting for inflation and approved growth in contractual agreements, allow the corrected 'base' budget (without mitigation) to increase by 2.5% (\$16,171,055 – yealding a feduction from FY '16 of \$235,584 or -1.4%)

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

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

VII. CONSENT ITEMS

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve the minutes of 10/21/15.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Ron, Dunn, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Heather, Martha, Shirley, Michele

Abstain: Anne-Marie, Jeff

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Crane said we will move the yearbook photo to the December meeting.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if school committee could look into making all assessment payments due on the 15th of the month.
- Ms. Fisk said we would have to change the regional agreement.
- Mrs. Buikus said the regional agreement states they are payable by the first but two monthly payments have been changed to the 15, so could we as a school committee change them all to read the 15th. She had been called and asked to check why her town had not sent their payment. Jane had issued the check but held it until she had the money in hand
- Ms. Fisk said Chapter 70 is every month instead of quarterly. That is a big difference. We can look into it.
- Ms. Buikus said there are two payments made on the 15th but the regional agreement says the first.
- Mrs. Buikus said she was asked about bussing; could it be first on first off instead of first on last off.
- Ms. Fisk said it may be the time of the bus run, if there is a feeder bus, or the type of road they live on. She can look into it.

Joint Conference Overview – Ruth Kennedy

- Mrs. Kennedy doesn't have anything tonight. She picked up a lot of information. Some are advertisements for companies we use. She has bags for the new members. The lawsuit is an unfunded mandate, but filing for it now is not the appropriate time according to Secretary Bump. We have a lot of support from the state. There are people who can help us fill out the forms.

B. Chairperson - None

C. Superintendent - None

Central Office Update (Enc.)

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration - None

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - None

B. Legislative Liaison - None

C. Policy Subcommittee - None

D. Building Liaisons - None

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XI. INFORMATION

Information

Fall Parent Teacher Conferences

Education Foundation Board to meet

Don't miss free, professional concert at Gateway on November 19

Jr. High holds 2nd Annual 'Mix it Up' Day

November School Committee Meetings

Superintendent's Corner October 30, 2015

Discipline De-Escalation and Behavior Management parent workshop at Gateway

Final week for Gateway '2025' online survey

Keep warm through Annual Heating Oil raffle!

Preschoolers read and brush with Gator Grins staff

Superintendent's Corner October 16, 2015

Save the Date: Damon Grant at Gateway

Warrant

AP#1024 \$177,606.30

PR# 009 \$376,457.89

AP#1028 \$192,085.10

PR# 9.1 \$1,212.12

AP#1035 \$66.50

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

- A. Union Negotiations
- B. Litigation

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to go into executive session at or before 9:00 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations update not to return to open session.

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

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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sara, Terri, Ruth, Heather, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michel
Abstain: Ron

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary