

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2016

**Room 214/216 Jr. High
7:00 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
Diane Dunn

HUNTINGTON
William Hathaway
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY
Anne-Marie Buikus
Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL
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: _____

7:05 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT (3 Minute Limit)

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:08 p.m.
- Mrs. Buikus, Mrs. Austin and the reporter are recording the meeting.
- Mrs. McVeigh read a letter on behalf of the Huntington select board. Both Blandford and Chester have backed the statement.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said Jonathan Rooney, Nick Herman, Allison Garriepy, Jessica Garriepy, and Shannon Burke went to states for skiing. The three girls were considered a team. Senior night for boy’s basketball is tonight and the girl’s is tomorrow night.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. FY ’15 Audit Report – Stan Kulas (Enc. 2/10/16)

- Stan Kulas said this is the latest he’s ever come to give the audit report. The reason is we were waiting for pension information that was required from Hampshire County Retirement System. We received the first report on December 1, which wasn’t quite right. We received the final report on January 21.
- Table 3-1 is the full accrual balance sheet. The district has a net position \$9,254,981 to the good. He pointed out other post employment benefits.
- Table 4-1 has the total fund of \$985,716. It is made up of OPEB \$106,658, assigned set aside to finance fiscal 16 \$400,000, and E & D of \$479,058 which is 2.9%. The district can have up to 5%.

- Table 4-2 General fund has \$171,433 loss because of the difference between your incomad and what you set aside. This happens as you keep using money from the prior year
- Mr. Wyand asked asked for a description of the loss.
- Stan said the surplus wasn't great enough to offset the finance sources. His recommendation is to try not to take any funds from your debt fund.
- Other topics reported are compliance requirements with federal monies –there were no issues with compliance regulations. We had about \$750,000 in federal monies. There was a deficiency like every other school district is that you don't create an audit report. There is not regional school district that has the resources to create one.
- In table 9-2, the only observation is the payroll clerk should reconcile the general ledger payroll withholding account to supporting documentation.
- Prior comments; there is a new set of federal guidelines. There is one set of circulars. The district needs to get their hands on one to make sure they are complying. Ms. Fisk did get one, and MASBO has created a control document.
- Mr. Wyand asked how can the payroll calculations be off.
- Stan said there were the deductions sent to the entity that is wasn't supposed to go to. We found money that had been deposited in dental verses insurance. That was corrected.
- Mrs. McVeigh said in table 4-1 the MSBA obligation is listed as \$2,948,000 she thought it was supposed to be reduced.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, it was, but not in June.
- Darlene McVeigh said the obligation was decreased in November and thinks it should be a subsequent event so it is adjusted.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Litigation

Mr. Wyand made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to go into executive session at 7:26 p.m. for the purpose of litigation to return to open session no later than 8:00 p.m.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Heather, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

VI. BUDGET

A. FY '17 Budget

- Went into executive session at 7:26 p.m.
- Returned to open session 7:51 p.m.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to suspend the two-meeting rule to vote on the motion taken in executive session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Heather, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Mr. Wyand made a motion seconded by Mrs. Dunn to appeal the lower court's decision regarding Worthington's withdrawal.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Heather, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

- Dr. Hopson said at GTAC Andy Myers from Chester would like to see a 0% increase in assessments. A 0% increase is another \$190,000. DOR numbers say the average town has increased their budgets by 2.8%, and the school budget has decreased about 8% over the last 8 years. We are operating on the same budget as 2003. Do you hold the line or do you continue to cut the budget to meet the towns' requirements. There is another superintendent who is willing to look at sharing a business manager. It won't be as straight forward

since they already have an assistant business manager. The curriculum and technology positions may be able to be considered for sharing.

- Mrs. Winer has an objection to having all towns pay the same amount.
- Dr. Hopson said it doesn't mean that you will hold it every year. We will show you what that would look like when we consider making changes to the regional agreement.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how you came up with \$250,000. They weren't looking at cutting services. It was said that OPEB money could be used if needed. School choice went up. Total increase is \$151,000 in Huntington.
- Dr. Hopson said if we use \$104,000 for retirement this year, that doesn't solve anything. What are you giving up to keep a 0% increase?
- Darlene McVeigh said there are a lot of issues and she is asking the committee to consider it. We need to step back for a year.
- Mrs. Buikus said she was on finance last year. They weren't asking to eliminate jobs, they asked to look into longevity for one year, buy back for one year, changes to amendment A, and insurance for administrators to be 50%. We couldn't change them because they are always on a 3 year contract so it couldn't be done. Finding other things we can cut for 1 year.
- Mr. Finnie talked about class sizes and the three main reasons they are the way they are. One is to maintain a competitive course of studies, two is the need for remediation, and three is schedule flexibility.
- Mr. Wyand asked where we are on satisfaction of students getting the courses they want.
- Mr. Finnie said it has gotten better with the seven block schedule. It is more challenging for freshmen. Most students who want to take AP Courses get those courses except when they are specific things they are scheduling around, such as band.
- Mrs. Crane asked Mr. Finnie about making further cuts beyond the current proposal, what would that do to our accreditation.
- Mr. Finnie said that we we had to make further cuts from the budget it could affect our current accreditation. We might have to file with NEASC to say we aren't meeting certain goals. Further curts could affect the renewal of our accreditation wich will be re-evaluated in 2018 depending on how deep the cuts go, we may have to file with NEASC. The majority of our teachers already teach 3 classes out of 5.
- Mrs. Winer said we have been shrinking in population in these towns. Two things we that we need to stop that are: Broadband and our schools.
- Mr. Wyand said if we do lose accreditation, there goes our revenue from incoming school choice.
- Mrs. Long said we need to be careful. When we start down this path of discussing cuts that don't actually happen she often finds out during exit interviews, that parents make a decision to leave based on something that never happened.
- Mrs. Coburn gave her presentation. She looks at special education, special staff, and classroom teachers. Her special education staff is already slim. If we were to eliminate any specials teachers we wouldn't be able to meet contractual obligations. We have decent class sizes. If we cut another teacher we will have class sizes of 27/28.
- Mr. Wyand asked if we have looked at the idea of having paraprofessionals in the classrooms.
- Mrs. Coburn said right now our class sizes are good. If you eliminated a teacher and hired a paraprofessional, how much are you really saving?
- Mrs. Balboni said you would also lose people who don't want their kids to have class sizes like that. You can't complain that people are losing and then cut all the good things.
- Mrs. Foley said if you devalue your schools you devalue your towns.
- Dr. Hopson said we have to take all this into account. We don't want to make staff layoffs. Administrative salaries are another thing. You can look at taking money from things you put aside. If 2.1% is too much this year and school choice is shrinking every year, is it going to be too much next year. There haven't been many years where all the towns have been happy with their assessments. We used more E & D. Do we think the towns will have equalized and bring in revenue in two years. If they don't and we use all our money, what do we do then? We have cut 4 times more than the towns.
- Darlene McVeigh said the road miles have not changed and there are more houses, they still need to maintain the roads and a viable fire department, etc.
- Bill Lavakas from Blandford understands what you are doing, but we are asking us to cut in order to get business into the town Fire The fire department is like a garage. There equipment is 30 years old. They are asking the towns to do the same things they are asking us to do. How are you going to get businesses to come in without a fire department?
- Mrs. Winer said nothing is going to happen in terms of the towns getting people and business to come in if there is no school system.

- Dr. Hopson doesn't disagree with Mrs. McVeigh's or Mr. Lavakas' points. The numbers are going to change in terms of the March census. The school committee needs to think about the direction they want to move. Almost 1 million dollars has been cut in the last two years. This is not easy for the towns or the schools. If we get 85 % transportation reimbursement the towns would have had the same assessments as last year and we wouldn't be having this discussion. It is not the school budget that is the problem, it is revenue from the state that isn't going up.
- Ms. Fisk said at the GTAC meeting they were told by Hummason's aide to contact your legislature. Have everyone contact them by calling them. Get everyone on the GTA to call or write a letter. It would be about \$190,000 for us. It is the incentive.
- Mrs. Dunn asked can we possibly meet in the middle.
- Dr. Hopson said it is not can we cut, it is how much do we continue to cut.

7:45 VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

A. Approval of Consultant RFP

- Dr. Hopson said DESE has approved it and is requesting that school committee approve it as well.

Mr. Wyand made a motion seconded by Winer to approve the RFP for the Education Consultant.

- Mr. Wyand has some concerns with the price guarantee only being good for 30 days. That doesn't seem reasonable with all the requirements. He thinks it should longer.
- Dr. Hopson thinks we can do that in 30 days.
- Mr. Wyand said one of the big things is price. If we could change it and make it longer it would benefit us. We are looking to secure the price guarantee. He is concerned with having it come back for school committee approval.
- Dr. Hopson asked him if he wants to push back awarding the contract within 60 days? It could be a problem. It doesn't have to come back to the committee for approval.
- Dr. Hopson said you can approve this tonight with the understanding we will push the dates out. We will have to push the dates out anyway, as March 15 is not enough time for the RFP to be posted and have consultants submit proposals.
- Mr. Wyand said everything was open to scrutiny, should there be a line there. They are going to access to computers, their own office. Etc.
- Dr. Hopson said they won't have access to personnel files, what they are looking at is can we share positions, etc. What they give you is a recommendations, it is up to the school committee to make those changes.
- Mrs. Winer asked does this allow for what we tried to do a number of years ago which is change the school day.
- Dr. Hopson said they will probably look at changes within the laws.

Mr. Wyand made a motion seconded by Winer to approve the RFP for the Education Consultant. (dates will be two weeks out to adjust and allow enough time to post and receive proposals)

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Heather, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

B. Policy Approval

- JH: Student Absence
- JIC: Student Discipline
- JK: Student Conduct

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Dunn to approve policies JH, JIC, and JK.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne- Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Heather, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

C. Towns' Unfunded Mandates Request – Nothing at this time.

- Resource Officer

- Mitigation Money

VIII. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Grants Update – Wendy Long

- Move to old business for a vote at the next meeting.

IX. CONSENT ITEMS 2/10/16

X. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee - None

B. Chairperson – Survey Update

- May 11 Pat Corriera will be at the school committee meeting to go over the self-evaluation.

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update

- Mrs. Crane and Mrs. Austin each sat in on a set of negotiations. Mediation is March 8. Both Café and Custodians have scheduled their next meetings.

D. Business Manager

- Ms. Fisk reminded the towns that Ms. Kuhn has requested information from them and the due date was February 29th and she is still looking for information. She emailed the request out on the 11th.

E. Administration

- None

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- Evaluation subcommittee meeting March 9 at 6:30 p.m.

B. Legislative Liaison – None

C. Policy Subcommittee

- Policy met tonight. They will be moving policies forward for the next meeting and will then be taking a break.

D. Building Liaisons - None

XII. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XIII. INFORMATION

Information

Second term honor roll for high school
Public takes part in long-range planning for Gateway
Superintendent's Corner February 5, 2016

Warrant

AP#1060 \$113,777.20

PR# 017 \$350,085.14

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

- A. Union Negotiations

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to adjourn at 9:06 p.m.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Heather, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary