

**GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 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  
Martha Otterbeck  
Diane Dunn

HUNTINGTON  
William Hathaway  
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: \_\_\_\_\_

**7:05 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.

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**III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT**

- Brennan Foley said the juniors who are eligible for NHS were told today. The middle and junior high had their cabin fever concert and spaghetti supper last Friday. Seniors were measured for caps and gowns. Model UN held a volleyball tournament today and will be at UMASS this weekend. The blood drive is March 18<sup>th</sup>. Friday all the AP takers have to pay for their AP exams. Seniors are receiving acceptance letters and starting to fill out applications for scholarships
- Mrs. Winer asked how Model UN was doing. Mr. Foley said they were doing well, but he is not on it.

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**IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS**

**A. 2025 Update (Enc.)**

- Dr. Hopson provided the summary of the 2025 survey and the 2025 meeting.
- Mrs. Balboni thought it was a terrific and productive session. People were ready to work and provide constructive information. The general feel of the night was good. They were excited and productive. She liked it.
- Dr. Hopson said the next steps are to merge the data from the survey and forum. This will help determine what the next steps are. What does it mean for school committee and budgeting? He said they heard a lot

of maintain AP, course offerings, class sizes, individual attention, and good comments about staff and how school is run. One of the biggest things is we have a lot of good things going on, but they are not necessarily being shared with the community. We are somehow missing something, yet Chanel 22 and 3 are here almost before the police when something is going on. How do we do that? GTA has talked about doing a film.

- Mrs. Foley said it is a small school but students are very welcoming to new students coming in.
- Mr. Wyand said the pie graphs and written data didn't seem to correlate with the percentages.
- Mrs. Buikus said they were different focus groups.

## V. BUDGET

### A. FY '17 Budget Adoption

- Mrs. Crane asked for a motion for discussion.

*Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve version 1.0 of the FY '17 budget.*

- Dr. Hopson said the towns start voting the beginning of May. The House budget will be out in April. The Senate budget won't come out until half way through voting. Legally, additional Chapter 70 money has to go back to the towns. Transportation reimbursement money can be set aside. Currently, our budget includes a 2.1% increase. The per pupil cost is the lowest it has been. There is legislation to increase per pupil costs by \$50 or \$100.
- Mrs. Buikus said we will still be short Worthington money.
- Ms. Fisk said if these numbers change and we get \$50 per student its and increase of \$26,790 and if we receive \$100 per students is is about \$71,440.
- Ms. Fisk talked about hold harmless money. She said they are looking at a \$50 increase because they have done nothing with the foundation review report. So it is a real possibility. If they increase regional transportation to 75% it is roughly another \$102,000 and if it is 85%, its about \$193,000 more than we have budgeted for. We will know more when the House budget comes out.
- Mrs. Crane and Garfield were asked by the Blandford finance to keep assessments down to level funded from the 2016 assessments.
- Dr. Hopson said Middlefield said the same thing at GTAC.
- Mrs. Buikus said Huntington said the same thing.
- Mrs. Crane emailed a sample letter for sending to the legislators in support of 85% regional transportation reimbursement.
- Dr. Hopson said this is a good budget. It is \$420,000 lower than last year. There is a possibility of getting more revenue. He recommends we put this budget forward. If the pieces come together we may be where the towns want us to be.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if there is something on contingency if we have to make additional cuts.
- Dr. Hopson said we do have OPEB and medicaid.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if they could have a list of how many people who retired or left that we did not replace their positions.
- Dr. Hopson said said yes.
- Mr. Wyand asked if we have any feedback on how the OPEB investment was doing.
- Ms. Fisk said is at \$102,000. It is a little lower right not.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the towns didn't vote on the budget we sent last year and DESE lowered it.
- Dr. Hopson said is a town decision. Blandford and Chester signed on with Huntington, but Chester finance said they could afford the budget. Middlefield is less then they allocated last year. We should have the House budget in 3 weeks. It makes sense to vote this budget forward. At the last meeting, Huntington said they didn't want to see the budget cut, they just wanted to see assessments lowered. If school committee doesnt vote this week, they we have to vote next week. If not then, we would be the first regional school district not to approve a budget.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if school committee could get a copy of the letters from the towns.
- Dr. Hopson said yes.
- Mrs. Dunn said maybe we could meet halfway, somewhere in the middle. Did any of the towns get back to you on what they could afford?
- Dr. Hopson said only the letters, requesting a 0% increase in assessments.
- Mrs. Winer asked how many of the towns are in the same shape they have been in right along. Is it a change in finances or is it a change in attitude. Is it political or fiscal?

- Dr. Hopson can't disagree with any towns that say they have roads in need of repair. In Blandford, they don't have a big enough crew to keep with up with that. They had no reserve and now they have \$300,000 in reserve. They have gone from negative to positive free cash and same with reserve. A year ago Mrs. Crane suggested taking the money they had budgeted for education that was extra and put it aside for education. It is hard to say because each town is different, but kudos to Blandford for making it more fiscally stable.
- Mrs. Dunn doesn't understand the disconnect between the Chester select board and finance.
- Ms. Fisk would stress sending letters to the legislature. The GTA did a job creating a form for calling. If we get to 85% transportation reimbursement there will be no increase in assessments. The quicker and earlier we hammer on them, the better off we will be.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if we should vote to have extra money returned to the towns.
- Ms. Fisk would be careful. Chapter 70 has to go back it is the law. Regional transportation would be better to vote again later.
- Deb Kuhn said as of June 30, 2015 the town of Huntington had a stabilization fund of \$899,737.29 and free cash of \$719,247.00. Russell had a stabilization fund of \$892,079.00 and free cash of \$24,513.00. As of July 1, 2015 they had a free cash fund of \$353,953.00.
- Dr. Hopson said we need to look a couple years out. He doesn't think it is possible to cut another \$420,000. We would be looking at a level services budget for FY '18.
- Mrs. Winer said we are losing population and schools are not one of the reasons. Broadband is one of them. We don't want to lower the value of the schools so quickly people won't move it. She knows people who have moved in.

***Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve Version 1.0 of the FY '17 Budget.***

***Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays 2 Abstain 1 Absent 1 (Roll Call Voll)***

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

Nays: Diane, Bill

Abstain: Ruth

Absent: Martha

- Dr. Hopson said we either need to reconsider or have a special meeting next week. It is not your final decision; it is just for you to move it forward. He also reminded school committee that the towns didn't ask for cuts they asked for assessment reductions.
- Mrs. Crane explained that it is not unusual for us to not have all the information before we vote in order to meet the laws.
- Mrs. Austin asked if other regional school districts go through the same thing; are others worse than us.
- Ms. Fisk said yes and the next lowest district is Central Berkshire and they went up .9%
- Mrs. Crane said if we have assessment changes between now and the town meeting school committee can amend the amount so they have to correct number to vote on.
- Ms. Fisk said you could possibly have a second meeting the 4<sup>th</sup> week in April to reduce assessments. If we don't have the house budget by the 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. Wyand said it is select board and the finance asking for these cuts not the towns' people. It is contradictory to what was heard at 2025, people said they would take a tax increase. It is unfair that only a couple people are sending this forward.
- Dr. Hopson said if the towns don't pass it, it comes back to this group again to make adjustments. You may or may not have additional revenue. School committee is saying here is the budget that supports the staff and the students in our schools. You have 3 to 4 opportunities to pass the budget before December.
- Mrs. Winer said we represent the children of the district.
- Mrs. Buikus said we represent the towns too.
- Mrs. Winer said that is not how it is worded. That is not why she is on school committee. She is on it to protect the students from the politics.
- Mrs. Buikus said at the forum they said they wanted assessments lower not cuts to programs or staff.
- Dr. Hopson said the options are to reconsider the budget or have a special school committee meeting. If you do that you need to give the district some direction. Lastly, you could do nothing send it the state.
- Mrs. Dunn said she is going by comments from the people she talks to in town.
- Dr. Hopson said the concerns are not because you are spending too much money, it is because the assessments are going up.

- Ms. Fisk asked if it would help if we reconsider when the House budget comes out.
- Mrs. Otterbeck arrived at the meeting
- Dr. Hopson said you could vote to adopt the FY '17 budget to move it forward and reconsider the assessments when the House budget comes out.

*Mrs. Dunn made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to reconsider the FY '17 Budget.*

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

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

Nays: Bill

Abstain: Ruth

*Mrs. Dunn made an amendment seconded by Mrs. Buikus to review the FY '17 Budget to potentially lower town assessments based upon the House 1 Budget.*

- Mrs. Kennedy asked when the House Budget comes out.
- Dr. Hopson said the House budget should come out around April 13 and the Senate budget mid May. The House budget should include regional transportation and Chapter 70 figures.

*Mrs. Dunn made an amendment seconded by Mrs. Buikus to review the FY '17 Budget to potentially lower town assessments based upon the House 1 Budget.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

*Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve Version 1.0 of the FY '17 Budget with the understanding it will be reviewed to potentially lower town assessments based upon the House 1 Budget.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays 1 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

Nays: Bill

## **7:45 VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM**

### **A. Grants Update/Approval**

*Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve acceptance of the grants Mrs. Long requested,*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

### **B. Towns' Unfunded Mandates Request**

- **Resource Officer** - Mrs. Kennedy has not found what she wants. She is getting conflicting information.
- To be removed from the agenda for now.
- **Mitigation Money** – Dr. Hopson said we are waiting because of the ongoing litigation.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Out of State Field Trip for Seniors – Brownstone Park, CT**

- Mr. Finnie said the senior class is looking to go to an exploration and Discovery Park in CT called Brownstone Park on May 19. It has many outdoor activities including team building.
- Move to old business for a vote at the next meeting.

### **B. Policy Approval**

**ECAF: Security Cameras**

**JB: EEO for Students****JJIF: Concussion****BEC: Executive Session**

- Mrs. Crane said this is the first reading. She asked if anyone had any questions.
- Move to old business for a vote at the next meeting.

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to go into executive session at or before 8:30 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations update, not to return to open session.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

**VIII. CONSENT ITEMS** 2/10/16, 2/24/16, 3/2/16 (Enc.'s)

*Mrs. Dunn made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 2/10/16 with corrections.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

Abstain: Tara, Ruth, Shirley

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the minutes of 2/24/16 with corrections.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

Abstain: Ruth, Martha, Shirley

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the minutes of 3/2/16*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

Abstain: Ruth, Hether, Shirley

**IX. COMMUNICATIONS****A. School Committee**

- Mrs. Buikus asked about the amendments to the regional agreement.
- Dr. Hopson said we shouldn't consider any amendments right now according the Attorney Russell Dupere.
- Mrs. Kennedy said it is nice to use the wheel chair, but we've got to have to have this meeting in a place that is handicap accessible. She is requesting school committee make a motion to re-organize the library so we can move it back there. She has a select board member that can't come to this room.
- Dr. Hopson is not going to argue with Mrs. Kennedy's interpretation of handicap law. He will look into it.
- Mrs. Morgan suggested the Littleville café. He will take a look at that space as well.

**B. Chairperson**

- Mrs. Crane said for new members to check in with Mrs. Stewart about school committee training.

**C. Superintendent**

Central Office Update

**D. Business Manager - None****E. Administration**

- Mr. Finnie talked about the shelter in place for the junior high. He commended everyone who responded.
- Mrs. Garfield thinks it was handed extremely well.
- Mrs. Balboni was slightly scared. But her kids thought it was a drill. It was no big deal, business as usual
- Mrs. Austin said her kids thought the same thing it was no big deal.

- Dr. Hopson explained what a shelter in place is and why we use them sometimes. He also commended everyone.
- Mrs. Long reminded everyone she is starting to plan the staff honors reception May 25. We use the hour before school committee to recognize retiring staff, those who receive awards during the year.
- Mrs. Crane we usually volunteer to bring snacks and drinks.

## **X. COMMITTEE REPORTING**

### **A. Superintendent's Evaluation**

- Met tonight, and will meet prior to the next meeting.

### **B. Legislative Liaison – None**

### **C. Policy Subcommittee – None**

### **D. Building Liaisons - None**

## **XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

### **Future Agenda Items**

School Committee Evaluation Presentation – Pat Corriera – May 11

## **XII. INFORMATION**

### **Information**

Budget Hearing on March 2, 2016

Cabin Fever concert March 4

JRHS Effort Awards for Term 2

Early release in March

Superintendent's Corner February 26, 2016

'Basic Rights in Special Education' Workshop at Gateway

Parent-Teacher Conferences March 7

### **Warrant**

AP#1062 \$193,915.29

PR# 018 \$373,200.32

AP#1065 \$61,768.70

AP#1067 \$40.41

## **9:00-10 p.m. XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**or earlier**

A. Union Negotiations

B. Litigation

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to go into executive session at or before 8:30 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations update, not to return to open session.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

## **XIV. ADJOURNMENT:**

*Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to adjourn at 8:37 p.m.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stacy L Stewart,  
School Committee Secretary