

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Montgomery Town Hall

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
William Hathaway
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
Megan Coburn, Chs, Lit, Ms Principal
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.
- Mrs. Buikus is recording the meeting.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brennan Foley said elections were just held. Class of 2016, Davis Britland, President; Jenna Margarites, Vice President; Allison Garriepy, Secretary; Christian Tweed, Treasurer. Their student council is Stefani Glukova, Christian Tweed, Jenna Margarites and Ben VanHeynigen. Class of 2017, Cami Rock, President; Charlie Sullivan, Vice President; Rachel LeBarron, Secretary; Diana Tereshchuk, Treasure. Their student council is Anna Pless, Charlie Sullivan, Rachel LeBarron, and Gabrielle Goralczyk. Class of 2018, Jessica VanHeynigen, President; Alexandra Clark, Vice President; Joe Coon, Secretary; Megan Wright, Treasurer. Their student council is Jess VanHeynigen and Dawson Atkin. Class of 2019, Kilee Holmes, President; Robert Austin, Vice President; Cade Fuller, Treasurer; Jessica Garriepy, Secretary. Their school council is Grace LeBarron, Meghan Crane, Mason Davis, and Nathan Solitario. Brennan Foley was elected Student Council President. Summer Activities: NHS repainted a ramp and a door at the Middlefield Congregation Church. The Band fundraised at the Blandford and Middlefield fair to fund their trip to the Big E on Friday to march at 5:00 p.m. in the parade. College planning night at Gateway for seniors. Student council – regional student council Jenna Margarites is on the Regional Student Council. There is an upcoming vote for PARCC or MCAS. They are trying to decide as a school council. They are talking to the freshmen since are the only ones who have taken PARCC. The club fair is coming up.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. OPEB Trust Presentation

- OPEB Trust – Ms. Fisk said they met last week to discuss the trust other post employment benefits.

- Maureen Toal with PARS said they specialize in public retirement trusts. About half of their business is in education. In 1996 a school district wanted to prefund their retirement. Then GASB 45 came on the horizons. Retiree health care benefits had to be accounted for you have to actuary them. This is a collection of sub trusts –an IRS protected vehicle and is very strict with what you can fund. PARS uses Vanguard and US Bank. Funds must be dedicated solely to healthcare, contributions are irrevocable and free from collectors. Why fund: 1) actuarial gets a higher discount rate, (can diversify) 4% now can go to 7%. For every 1 % increase it drops the liability. 2) funds are considered assets. 3) make sure benefits are there in the future (not just pay as you go). It's a budgetary stabilization tool. Why using PARS? They have scale, investment pools as assets go in. Vanguard starts at .07% as more assets go in it goes to under .01%. You have your own account. They do everything for us. It is turn-key. Monthly statements and quarterly reports are provided. There is a fee schedule in the document.
- Mrs. Winer asked if they are setting up a large trust with sub trusts for each district.
- Maureen said yes. There are three approaches; US Bank as a trustee, (district picks the pool they want to invest in), Vanguard pool, or to be your own investment provider.
- Mrs. Winer said so it is one big giant investment pool that Vanguard is running.
- Maureen said yes.
- Mrs. Winer asked how we ever make up the kind of money we are going to need.
- Maureen said you can't. They utilize the arc; what you should put away each year. Gateway is in the same shoes as many others. There are very few ahead of the game. If you put in anything, investment returns will help over time. The first started in 2005 and kept putting it in. You can take it out as long as it goes to retirement health care.
- Mrs. Kennedy said page 16 talks about the steps for implementation. We've already funded this without an account; how can it be legally transferred into this account.
- Ms. Fisk said the money is reserved to put into this trust fund once the committee approves this.
- Dr. Hopson said it was recommended we set the money away. We asked Attorney Adam Dupere to look into setting it up and he came up with PARS. He has reviewed the trust documents. We will put the money in once school committee gives the approval to go forward with PARS. It will go from the revolving fund to this fund. We can take money out as long as it is for health insurance.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we have looked at other options, or was this vetted.
- Attorney Adam Dupere said there are not a ton of options in this state. Some have done it on their own. There are a lot of documents and investment fees. Their documents looked good. There have been a lot of legal opinions on the documents. M.G.L. 32B: 20 covers the trust. Documents will be sent to the committee.
- Mr. Wyand asked about the annual return on investments.
- Maureen said she will send it around. She went over the types of risks and what to expect for a return.
- Mr. Wyand how do we decide on making these investments.
- Dr. Hopson's recommendation would be that the committee as a whole makes that. You can change it over time. He doesn't want anyone over time to say he made a bad decision.
- Maureen said over 30 years low 6 moderate is 7, 7.6 as grown. If you go with US Bank you had a portfolio manager that will come out. Either way it is no more than 50 basis points.
- Maureen said our unfunded liability is 13 million.
- Mrs. Buikus said if we fund this every year, (we did it this year because we had money left over) does it become a line item in the budget. She asked how we are going to fund this.
- Ms. Fisk said for FY '16 budget there is no OPEB line item. You can put one in for FY '17.
- Mrs. Winer asked when it is expected we will start paying out.
- Maureen said it depends on future budgets of the district.
- Mrs. Winer said we are not funding this at this point.
- Dr. Hopson said you are paying \$405,000 each year. We are paying current costs.
- Mrs. Crane asked what our next step is.
- Dr. Hopson said put it on next agenda, and send out documents.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, trust agreement and investment sheet. School committee will need to take a formal vote of school committee.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if we can meet with our finance people. Since they are going to be funding it.
- Mrs. Kennedy would recommend we don't vote at the next meeting. An invitation should go out to the towns finance committees for the school committee meeting we will be discussing it.
- Dr. Hopson said we can email it out tomorrow. School Committee can decide to vote or not.
- Maureen said there is a trust agreement, plan document, and investment advisory agreement. A letter will be sent to the IRS.

- Darlene McVeigh would like the school and the committee to investigate the policies and procedure of other school districts that participate in this type of funding vehicle, that have adopted GASB. What other requirements as a school committee there are.
- Dr. Hopson said there are fees depending on who you choose as advisors.
- Mrs. McVeigh would like to have copies because she is having trouble getting documents off of the website.
- Mrs. Kennedy said this is taxpayer information.
- Mrs. Winer asked if towns had to pay this retiree benefit as they go.
- Darlene McVeigh said all towns do except Huntington.
- Move to old business.

B. 1st Semester Field Trips

- Mr. Finnie said the choir is taking a trip to NY on April 7 for either Phantom of the Opera or Wicked depending on what is available.
- The 8th grade DC/Philadelphia April 15-18
- Coach Forand would like to take the wrestling team to an upper level competition in Albany NY on January 30th.
- Move to old business.

7:45 - V. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Worthington Withdrawal

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of litigation and union negotiations.

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

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

Abstain: Madelyn

- Mrs. Kennedy said the new hearing date is October 22.

B. FY '16 Budget

- Dr. Hopson said 4 towns didn't vote in favor of the budget again. School committee has 30 days to put out a new budget. He did email Steve Kulik and they are taking up supplemental budget the first week in October. He and the other delegates assured us it will be there.
- Dr. Hopson asked what direction school committee wants to go in. The committee still has the next meeting to adopt a higher, lower, same budget; waiting on litigation. If we win the hearing we have to create a 7 town budget.
- Mrs. Kennedy said until something new happens we should just vote the same budget and send it to the towns; hold the same with the exception of chapter 70 and school choice. We can't do what we did before and not vote.
- Dr. Hopson said September 10 was the starting date.
- Mr. Wyand said one of the options we have not considered is if the state doesn't come through the money or comes through with a lesser amount. We don't have a backup plan. It is the foundation of next year's budget. The towns have already turned down a 2 1/2 override.
- Darlene McVeigh said there have been a number shifts in line items. She would like to see what it looks like. There are significant increases in transportation, what about SBA payback, and we have firmer numbers on outgoing school choice. That becomes the basis for next year. She asked if there was going to be an updated budget.
- Ms. Fisk said the Chapter 70 change was already sent out, as well as charter school assessment which will handle transportation.
- Darlene McVeigh said revenue, assessments, line item budget and shift where line items she wants to compare it. All in one package.
- Mr. Wyand asked the line item transfers do not constitute new budget.
- Dr. Hopson said school committee doesn't make adjustments, you vote on the bottom line and you vote the transfers.
- Darlene McVeigh said Ms. Fisk updated it in the past.

- Mrs. Crane asked what we can provide to the committee at the next meeting
- Ms. Fisk said the first quarter report. As long as there are there is a vote for the transfers.
- Mrs. Garfield read a letter from Blandford select board.
- Mrs. Crane said the Blandford select board asked the Blandford members and the full committee to petition the state to consider the difference in the budget with Worthington's withdrawal.
- Mrs. Kennedy said she has the information on how to petition the state. The school committee has to petition from the Susann Bump, Mass state auditor. She takes care of all the unfunded state mandates.
- Dr. Hopson asked based upon Mrs. Kennedy's experience should we wait for the litigation or petition right away at the next meeting.
- Mrs. Kennedy said next meeting. She will bring all the information to the next meeting for discussion.

C. Update on "Gateway 2025"

- Dr. Hopson said we have been gathering information from the selected group surveyed. We will then open it up to the entire public.

D. School Committee Team Building -Survey Update

- Mrs. Crane said Dr. Hopson talked to Pat from MASC about the survey from MASC and the one from the Taunton. Pat wants us to start with the survey that she runs. Mrs. Crane has emailed her and has not heard back from her yet.

E. Update on "GTAC Sustainability Task Force"

- Dr. Hopson said the subcommittee met last week. A draft PowerPoint will be sent out. It will be presented at Saturday's GTAC meeting. They are looking to do this in Mid-October.
- Mrs. Buikus has both finance and select board members from Montgomery interested in being on the task force.

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. FY '16 Budget Transfers (Enc.)

- Ms. Fisk said staff shifting goes on throughout the year. Mostly around paraprofessionals. Although, we have one in Chester preschool today. Only one not staffed is the copier line items. Still waiting on SBA final word on payback and further clarification. It will shift into transportation if it happens.
- Mrs. Crane asked if she needed them voted on tonight.
- Ms. Fisk said if you want them in the first quarter report.
- Mrs. Buikus said contract increases for administration came in salary, annuity or time. If some was taken in annuity shouldn't it be in a line item.
- Ms. Fisk said the 403B line item is the annuity portion.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked about the copier.
- Dr. Hopson said the company continues to come out and is working with us. Mrs. Coffey is working on it. At some point it is going to be cheaper for the company to replace it than to service it.

VII. CONSENT ITEMS

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 8/26/25.

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

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

Abstain: Madelyn, Anne-Marie, Bill

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Otterbeck daughter is in her first year of college and feels very prepared and is doing well. She also remembers Mr. Wyand saying the same about his son.

- Mrs. Winer said new for the foundation, they will be approaching businesses. They have a board of those who have donated \$100 or more in a year. We have now gotten 15. Another fundraiser is Sarat Ford will bring cars to Gateway for people to test drive.
- Mrs. Long said for every test drive taken, the foundation gets \$10, with a cap of \$6,000.
- Mr. Wyand asked about coordination and liability.
- Mrs. Garfield said they will be working with the police department.
- Dr. Hopson said the foundation will fill out a building use form and liability will be covered there. It is part of the process.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if an updated list of all the abbreviations could be sent out. She also asked that the administrative contracts be updated on the website.
- Mrs. Kennedy said Saturday the show choir did a fundraiser at the swap meet in Russell. They have been invited to sing at the festival in Huntington on October 3. She is setting up a table of things to sell.

B. Chairperson - None

C. Superintendent - None

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration

- Mr. Finnie asked for help to put feelers out for school councils in Jr. High and high schools. Elections are on the 8th.
- Mrs. Long said the foundation met Monday night, they have funded 7 new projects. They have totaled \$22,500.00 so far.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- Next meeting is October 21 at 6:30 p.m.

B. Legislative Liaison - None

C. Policy Subcommittee

- Dr. Hopson said policy needs to meet. Potential date before next meeting 6:30 p.m. Most are from MASC that are updated legally.

D. Building Liaisons - None

E. Community Curriculum Committee - None

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XI. INFORMATION

Information

Parking fees lowered at Gateway
 Students rewarded for summer reading
 Gateway after-school program starts September 21
 Superintendent's Corner September 4, 2015
 Education Foundation Board to meet
 New staff announced at Gateway
 Principals report enthusiastic opening day
 Fees may be paid online
 Superintendent's Corner September 28, 2015
 September 9 school committee meeting cancelled

Warrant

AP#	PR# 005 \$397,982.89
	PR# 006 \$368,603.18

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

- A. Union Negotiations
- B. Litigation

Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of litigation and union negotiations.

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

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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT at 10 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

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

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

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary