

**GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017**

**Middle School 112/114**

**7:00 P.M.**

All visitors attending the school committee meeting should sign in at the security booth.

**I. OPENING OF MEETING**

BLANDFORD

Michele Crane  
Terri Garfield

CHESTER

Shirley Winer  
Martha Otterbeck  
Diane Dunn

HUNTINGTON

Ron Damon  
Jeff Wyand  
Aaron Welch

MIDDLEFIELD

Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY

Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL

Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

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

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Wendy Long, District Grant Writer

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:07 p.m.
- The reporter is recording the meeting.

**7:05 p.m. II. FY '18 Budget**

- Mrs. Crane stated the committee has a new representative from Huntington. His name is Aaron Welch. The committee introduced themselves.
- Mrs. Crane explained this meeting is a special meeting and the reason for the meeting is the budget didn't pass in at least four of the six towns.
- Mrs. Crane would like to straighten out some line items due to members who have immediate family working for the district. Mrs. Papillon, Mr. Wyand and Mrs. Crane have family members who work for the district in some capacity.
- Ms. Fisk said we would need to take out function 2000. Mr. Wyand has a family member who subs, and Mrs. Papillon has a family member that works for the district.

***Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve function 2000 in the amount of \$7,589,882.***

- Mrs. Kennedy asked about the 10 votes needed for the budget.
- Dr. Hopson said you only need 10 votes for the bottom line. The following votes are eliminating the issue of conflict of interest.

***Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve function 2000 in the amount of \$7,589,882.***

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

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

Recues: Lyndsey, Jeff

- Mrs. Otterbeck took over for Mrs. Crane so she could recues herself from the next vote. She has a family member who coaches for the district. Mrs. Papillon will also need to recues herself from this vote.

***Mrs. Dunn made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve function 3000 in the amount of \$2,010,409.***

- Mr. Baldasaro asked about what was being discussed.
- Dr. Hopson said this is just to clear up items that there could be a conflict of interest. There will be discussion on the overall budget after.

***Mrs. Dunn made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve function 3000 in the amount of \$2,010,409.***

***Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)***

Yeas: Madelyn, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Shirley, Aaron, Martha

Abstain: Jeff

Recues: Michele, Lyndsey

***Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve Version 2 of the FY '18 Budget in the amount of \$16,089, 814.***

- Dr. Hopson said version 2 takes about a \$106,000 reduction from a number of line items we discussed last week. But the budget was in the hole. This is about a .2% decrease.
- Mr. Baldasaro asked how we come to those decisions.
- Dr. Hopson said the leadership team looked at all the potential reductions from a long list and collaboratively decided on a number that had the least impact on student services. In the original budget there were 5 extra days for the Chester and special education secretaries. We will go without. There was a half-time nurse in the budget for Littleville due to some higher needs, we will not be hiring that nurse. This budget would eliminate evening security. There is a small savings from the food services director due to potential sharing. Floating high school secretary will now cover clerical subs in Chester. The five blizzard bag days saved us about \$ 6,500 in sub costs. We decreased para subs by \$7,500 not every paraprofessional has to have a sub. We put off text books to the following fiscal year. We cut copier supplies by 30%. There will be less copying. We had set aside money for curriculum facilitators rather than hiring an administrator. This is being cut by \$7,000. The secretary retiring mid-year won't be replaced for the second half of the year. Although that might change slightly as the secretaries are coming up with some potential savings. Total reductions equal \$105, 908.
- Mr. Baldasaro asked, when you review the process is it a team or does the school committee review it.
- Dr. Hopson said the leadership team makes decisions and then it is brought to the school committee for discussion.
- Mr. Baldasaro asked if we are taking into consideration contract negotiations.
- Dr. Hopson said that has no effect on this budget.
- Mr. Baldasaro asked is the .2% spread equally to the towns.
- Ms. Fisk said yes by your census percentage. Chester will go down \$4,014. Blandford by \$3,024. Huntington by \$7, 118. Russell by \$7,118. Middlefield by \$963. Montgomery \$1,873.
- Mr. Baldasaro asked if the cuts are going to be enough to offset opposition.
- Dr. Hopson is not sure, but if it isn't, it will impact services to students.
- Mr. Baldasaro wants to find a way the towns and schools can work more cooperatively. We should be in agreement. It seems like a lot of decisions are already made before the vote.
- Dr. Hopson said we have a process in place, but with a 30 day window, there is not enough time for this budget. Hopefully Chester will appoint someone.
- Mr. Baldasaro said Chester appointed Andy Myers.
- Mrs. Crane said we start working on the next year's budget very early. It could be October/November or November /December. Just like town budgets, there are targets that are always moving which is difficult. We try to look ahead to do the best we can. We have a lot of presentations from administrators and staff members which support what is in the budget. We have a lot of time to look at things, and ask questions. So when you come to one meeting you don't always see the whole picture. What you see at the end of the year, it is not just poof here is the budget.

- Mr. Baldasaro understands that. The towns need to have more involvement. It can't be at just a school committee forum. If we lose one more town we are done. They are willing to do what is necessary to make it work. We have to interact more effectively. Starting in September would be great. We have to look out for each other. He is asking for whatever help it takes.
- Mrs. Crane said she and Mrs. Garfield met with Blandford in January to offer help. Members and towns need to work together. There have been a lot of things said in public, not in public and in the press that is caused angst amongst us. We need to be professional and rise above it.
- Mrs. Dunn said it is a lot easier to understand all of this when you see it as it happens. Can the select board get the same information as the committee?
- Mr. Baldasaro said it is not the same if they have to go find it. If they saw some of that communication, that would be helpful.
- Mrs. Dunn said it is public and it is posted. If it just comes into your email, it might be easier.
- Mrs. Garfield said this is the first year we haven't traveled. We went to these towns and no one ever showed up. She understands the process is complicated complex and dry, but it is important to understand.
- Mr. Baldasaro said there needs to be more initial involvement between the school and the towns.
- Rene Senecal, Chester selectmen was at the last meeting. He went home and tried to pull the budget information and couldn't. Maybe it was just him. He feels it should be emailed directly. When the budget comes up on the discussion how does anyone know what the changes are and how does a new member know what they are voting on.
- Mrs. Crane said we are presented with a unique situation tonight. Committee members have the changes in their packets. Mr. Welch can decide whether he feels comfortable voting on the budget or not.
- Mr. Welch said he has been at GTAC and he has been following the budget process.
- Mrs. Crane said we will try to figure out a way to make this work.
- Mrs. Kennedy would like the Russell finance and select board to be informed. She also wanted to clarify something. She read in the paper that school committee is a legislative committee. It is not. MARS didn't say the school committee had to run these meetings.
- Mrs. Winer said the school budget is way more complicated then she imagined. Things are constantly changing. It took quite a while for her to figure out what the budget meant. It is the same as why people think have too many administrators.
- Mrs. Otterbeck appreciates the discussions because she is new. It is important to know what is in the budget. They may have had little discussion last time, but they have been working on this for awhile. She agrees it would be helpful to include the towns in those communications.
- Mr. Welch asked if there is any reason why it can't be a news letter. He can help with that.
- Mrs. Crane asked if there was any more discussion on version 2 of the FY '18 Budget.
- Ms. Fisk said the bottom line is \$16,089, 814.

***Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve Version 2 of the FY '18 Budget in the amount of \$16,089, 814.***

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

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

- Ms. Fisk wanted to give the towns a heads up. The assessment letters are going to be confusing. The towns will be getting assessment letters for this budget and a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget. Towns will be paying on 1/12<sup>th</sup> which will be based on minimum contribution. We can't even draft those letters until we receive the letter.
- Mr. Damon said the vote in Huntington failed by 4 votes (48 to 44). He is not sure if we will get those numbers again. Everyone would benefit from suggested talking points for the budget.
- Mr. Baldasaro said he is not trying to be disrespectful, but we have to find a way to stop that, if we don't get this our kids lose things. We won't need talking points if we are all on the same page.
- Mrs. Crane said sometimes when we sit here and no one shows up, we have to figure out how to get people here.
- Mrs. Garfield asked Mr. Baldasaro if there a number Chester can live with.
- Mr. Baldasaro said it is not a number, it is the process. The school is the majority of the towns' budgets. Chester's assessment was only \$14,400.
- Mrs. Garfield said as a teacher in another district, these are hard cuts to make.
- Mr. Baldasaro said Chester is running a 14 million dollar budget with part-time people. We need to be creative and think outside the box. We have a senior center that is falling apart. Maybe there is a room at

the elementary school for some of the seniors to have lunch at the elementary schools. Maybe we can make a community effort to get them involved. It won't happen without interaction and communication.

- Mrs. Garfield said people from the towns need to be here and show up.
- Cara Letendre, Blandford select board said it has become us versus them. It breaks her heart see the talking points. There needs to be a large scale united front.
- Mrs. Dunn said the negativity is shooting us in the foot. The education here is very good.
- Mrs. Austin asked what about our facilitated budget meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said the school committee is putting forth effort. Hopefully we have massaged this issue. The first one is collaboratively developing budgets. The 2<sup>nd</sup> is a facilitated discussion. We haven't decided who or where. MARS and DOR might be a good combination to facilitate. The towns should have received both invitations.
- Dr. Hopson said he would like to talk to Mr. Baldasaro about some of the ideas Chester has.
- Mr. Baldasaro would like to do that. This is good timing the state is looking at us through the collaborative. This is our chance.
- Dr. Hopson said the district has already been working with Montgomery with regards to maintenance help.

## II. ADJOURNMENT

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to adjourn at 7:57 p.m.*

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Lyndsey, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Aaron, Michele

Absent: Ron

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Stacy L Stewart,  
 School Committee Secretary