

**GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
JOINT BUDGET/REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2018

**Middle School 112/114
7:00 P.M.**

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

(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
Aaron Welch
Melissa Nazzaro

MIDDLEFIELD

MONTGOMERY
Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL
Tara Balboni
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

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

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
Megan Coburn, Chs,Lit Principal
Jason Finnie, High/Middle Principal
Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Deanna LeBlanc, High/Middle Assistant Principal
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer
Darlene Rehor, Elementary Assistant Principal

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: Sue Luppino, Andy Myers, Cara Letendre, Kayla Brady, Dan Jacques, Barbara Huntoon, Annie Pritchard, Wayne Precanico, Darlene McVeigh, Amy Porter

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- Peter Spotts is recording the meeting.
- Ms. Fisk is participating via telephone.

7:05 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT (3 Minute Limit) - None

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT - None

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS - None

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Foundation Budget Review Resolution (in central office update)

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to support the Foundation Budget Review Resolution to be in line with other districts/organizations in the state.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

Absent: Melissa

B. FY '18 First Quarter Budget Transfers

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the FY '18 first quarter budget transfers.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

Absent: Melissa

C. Approval of Student Activity Accounts FY '18

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the FY '18 student activity accounts.

Mrs. Nazzaro walked in.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

Abstain: Melissa

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. School Nutrition Equipment Assistance for High Needs Districts Grant (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson said we are considered high needs now. Mrs. Long wrote the grant with the help of our food services director. He would ask that the committee waive the two meeting rule since the grant is due tomorrow.
- Ms. Fisk said the grant was written for \$20,000 for Littleville. There are so many lunches now it will help increase production.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if it is additional equipment.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, it boils water.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the School Nutrition Equipment Assistance for High Needs Grant.

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mr. Welch to waive the two-meeting rule to vote on this grant.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the School Nutrition Equipment Assistance for High Needs Grant.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

B. Second Semester Field Trips

Becket Chimney Corners Overnight

- Mrs. Coburn said last year the fifth grade class went on an overnight. It was paid for by the GEF. She is looking to take them again this year. The trip will take place in April.

7th Grade NYC Trip to Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, Liberty Museum

- Ms. Luppino from the seventh grade team read a brief statement about the trip. This trip that was done years ago and had to be cancelled after 911. This is a meaningful trip on the topic of immigration and will provide a lot of background knowledge. The New Jersey port gives them access to Liberty Science Center. It also fits into the seventh grade biology curriculum. This trip will take place Tuesday, May 22.

- Both trips will be voted on at the next meeting.

C. Policy Approval

- Mrs. Crane said included in your packet was a long list of policies with minutes that explained the changes.
- These will be voted on at the next meeting

D. Remote Participation

- Mrs. Crane said Mr. Welch asked to bring this up again. In the past it has been voted down, but we may want to reconsider.
- Mr. Welch said there were a few recent changes to the open meeting law that makes it easier. The committee has to vote to allow remote participation, and then anyone can participate remotely as long as they follow the guidelines. He has missed a few meetings and it would be nice to participate.
- Mrs. Crane said the information was in tonight's packet. We will vote on this at the next meeting.

7:30 VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. FY '19 Line Item Budget Review

- Dr. Hopson said he and Ms. Fisk put together a level services budget, administrators discussed what would be good to add to the budget, and then they prioritized the items. He doesn't anticipate everyone is going to be happy about putting \$750,000 into the budget. In the top five is move the pupil services director to full time. He has done a great job and there are lots of things he could do beyond what he is doing. We have four administrators that are not on a full year schedule- pupil services director, two assistant principals and the grant writer. Moving administrators to full time was one of the recommendations from MARS. The pupil services director was more important than the others. Also, if we are looking at sharing some of these positions, we need to have the money to do that. The technology director was on the bottom. We are doing fine with what we are currently doing. Looking at a full time secretary, it was broken down in multiple areas. We weren't going to replace the retiring guidance secretary. Literacy – we stopped spending professional develop money this year to get a jumpstart and hire a consultant. The money will be spent money on literacy training, and literacy coaching, etc.
- Mrs. Coburn spoke about literacy. She said right now there are so many components because we've dabbled in various programs. Having someone on board is a resource for the teachers, coaching and modeling what the practices are. It would be more cohesive.
- Mrs. Papillon asked what the consultant currently on board is doing.
- Mrs. Coburn said we are going through an audit so we can address what are we using, what do we need help with, what assessments are we using, what data we are getting, etc.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if we see the consultant and literacy coach as two separate staff or could they be the same.
- Mrs. Coburn said the consultant we have now is just going to figure out what we need. Although she might be willing to be a coach part time.
- Mrs. LeBlanc said the consultant will make recommendations.
- Mrs. Brady said as a teacher, we don't have one set program. We are pulling from so many resources. They may have students in a classroom whose reading levels range from second grade through sixth grade.
- Dr. Hopson said again, this is very different from how we usually do business. The idea was to get a feeling from everyone where we need to go.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked if there was a January 1 census.
- Mrs. Stewart said no.
- Mrs. Balboni asked when we expected it.
- Mrs. Stewart said the deadline for information to come in is the January 13.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked about the additions to the budget.
- Dr. Hopson said those are negotiated items. There is an additional kindergarten teacher for Littleville if we need it, coaches, and step and column changes in the salary schedule.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked about the chief academic officer.
- Dr. Hopson said that an extra position. It is essentially half of a curriculum person. We may hire a consultant or share.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked what PSV Administrator is.
- Dr. Hopson said the pupil services director.

- Mr. Myers complimented the administration for handing this out. Looking at numbers, we are still pretty far apart. He said this is a million dollar increase. There are no assessments yet and at the last meeting Mr. Baldasaro recommended level funding the budget.
- Dr. Hopson said it is actually a 1.5 million dollar increase.
- Mr. Myers said these are good items if we were in good times, but we are still far off. The towns are economically stagnant right now and the student population is still going down. We lost about thirteen students from March to October. How can we seriously add these? Maybe we can pick and choose a few. We need to try to stir up economic development and increase student population. He is hoping an additional item would be to have a full-day preschool.
- Mrs. Winer asked how we would pay for it.
- Mr. Myers said there are a couple of ways; one is charging tuition.
- Mrs. Winer asked if we know what it would cost.
- Mr. Welch said we hope to find that out. They will be talking about it at their meeting tomorrow. He said if we can save \$100,000 in transportation by spending \$40,000 on a van, those are the items we need to look at.. Then maybe we can categorize the list after those. There are things like health care costs that we can't control.
- Mrs. Balboni said we did that last year. We had a document that showed us savings verses what we spent, so there is an explanation when it looks like we hired someone, but we did so because we saved money somewhere else. A kindergarten class is a good thing to draw in parents. Parents want the smaller classes. That is why she moved her family here.
- Mrs. Papillon said level funding town appropriations would still require cuts.
- Dr. Hopson said level funded for the school means we would have to cut \$200,000 from level services. Last year we had a number of towns that had a lower assessment. This level service request is .025% more that it was ten years ago. That is part of the discussion we have to have over the next few weeks. We need to have a good school system, where do you expect us to keep cutting. Some towns, like Chester are paying substantially less than they were ten years ago. As you heard from the principals and special education director, we are at bare bones. You need to have a certain number of staff to offer courses.
- Mr. Myers said we need to recognize we have a problem. Gateway has a 16 million dollar budget with 800 students. We have lost student population and the towns have lost growth. What are the things we need to do. We have to live with what we've got. The only towns that passed the budget last year were the towns that had a decrease.
- Mrs. Papillon said this \$200,000 increase is from are the things we cannot control. Keeping things the same is not going to give the towns a level appropriation. It feels very difficult and impossible.
- Mrs. Balboni said towns have to act like that too. She was on an email about sharing services and the first response from a town leader was that people will lose their job. No one blinks an eye when we talk about cutting teachers.
- Mrs. Huntoon said the towns don't have any high paid positions.
- Mrs. Balboni wants to hear the aggressive ideas from the towns.
- Mrs. Huntoon said we have talked about that at the hill town collaborative meetings.
- Mrs. Balboni said in Russell at town meetings the only line item ever discussed is the school.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said she has heard Mr. Myers over and over again and that is why we are here. You don't turn the titanic around overnight. Attracting families is not going to happen by cutting \$250,000, the money to level appropriate each town or by cutting .25 out of the budget that is already lean. She doesn't want to make things worse.
- Mr. Myers thinks the purchase of a van and online learning are two things that would be good investments. He spoke to the online coordinator who said the computers are older and don't do everything we need them to. The hill town collaborative is going to apply for a grant for Gateway. That is something we can promote. It isn't efficient to have a teacher teaching 4 students in a classroom.
- Mrs. Crane said there have been comments such as we need to hold things still while we figure out what to do. That is not acceptable. We cannot hack and cut the budget on the backs of the students here now. This committee isn't going to support that. If we are trying to turn a corner creating a positive relationship, it would be great to decide as a group that a level funded budget is not acceptable and start with a level service budget and prioritize a couple of things on the list. It would be nice if we could all get behind it and sell it to the public. Can we agree with level services? How much could we stomach to make a positive turn in conversation?
- Mr. Myers said the majority of people here want a good education. It's not a positive way to look at it to think the towns don't want to pay for education. The problem is when the assessments come out. We can't approve anything until we see how it affects each town.

- Mrs. Crane said this is where the culture change needs to happen. If we continue to have a town come in and ask for a \$300,000 decrease, we are going to tear our hearts out. We need to improve our culture and behavior as we have students in this school right now.
- Mrs. Balboni said she thinks Russell would approve the budget if there was collaboration between the school committee and the town leaders. A lot of these people at town meeting are going to do what the town says. If the narrative changes they will. It comes down to perception.
- Mrs. McVeigh said we are talking about a short-term solution to a long-term problem. She would suggest the hill town collaborative apply for a grant. The Berkshire task had a study funded by private donations to come up with recommendations. We all have to start thinking about the long-term.
- Mr. Welch doesn't think there is anyone here who doesn't look at the long-term.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said we still have to make short-term decisions.
- Dr. Hopson said we do have to look long-term. Berkshire County started five years ago and it will be ten years before they see a savings. Towns are jumping ship.
- Mrs. McVeigh said all she is saying is we should have a long term plan and it has to go in more than one direction. We have to plan for if we don't have students in this district.
- Mr. Welch agrees with her, but his frustration is we are investing the time, but we still need to pass this budget and if we are not all aligned, we are not doing our jobs here today. His recommendation is to have finance committees recommend the budget we need to figure out how to get there. Level service has to be a base line and then we need to make investments. If we are on the same page the communities will pass the budget.
- Mrs. Balboni said we all want to get more done now.
- Mr. Jacques suggested that on the line items causing a problem, the administration show what would happen if we don't add them.
- Mr. Precanico said that would be helpful, we all have to stand up and defend the budget.
- Mrs. Crane asked if we want to go over the list or make a new list.
- Dr. Hopson said one of the recommendations from the state is level assessments between towns. There is a pilot out there we could participate in where we wouldn't have to change our regional agreement. He asked what the towns are going to do if we get a turnpike exit and broadband, you may have the opposite problem. There is a point where you have to support and move forward.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked what the superintendent does. It looks like his salary goes up \$10,000.
- Dr. Hopson said school committee allocated a \$7,500 for the technology director position and he agreed he wouldn't take sick time buy out when he leaves. He said you shouldn't just focus on the superintendent although it's okay. He also agreed not to take a raise for four years.
- Mrs. Papillon explained the experiences she has had, and she was part of the vote. She said Dr. Hopson does not teach, but he drives this whole bus, and we would be in a ditch without him. People need to understand that. We are looking at not having him in three more years. She wishes that more people would ask those types of questions.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked that because she wants to understand so she can explain. In the town, she doesn't see that many people at town meetings.
- Mrs. Crane said one of the things that is supposed to work correctly, but doesn't seem to be, is if someone calls you from the town and you can't explain you should send them to your friend on school committee who can. We have been fighting for so long, no one trusts what we say. The line item budget also has an explanation as to why things are being added. She said to feel free to call her or Dr. Hopson if you don't understand something.
- Mrs. Nazzaro brought up the the information with the difference between FY '18 and FY '19 level services and then FY '19 with requests. She is looking at difference between level services and requests. We could take any increase over \$50,000 or \$25, 000 and talk about where the increases come from and give the information out next time. Could we agree level services has value, then pick one or two things to add in.
- Mr. Myers said we don't know what level services is.
- Dr. Hopson said historically, it has gone up.
- Mr. Myers said we are working with SBA but we don't know if or when that is going to happen.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said if SBA is out this is a moot point.
- Dr. Hopson said we won't know that till June.
- Mr. Myers asked how the towns can approve something they haven't seen.
- Dr. Hopson said they should get themselves familiar with the items while waiting for the Governor's budget.
- Mrs. McVeigh said at least it gives us an idea or projections. She doesn't think the towns have ever said they won't pay for education.

- Dr. Hopson said there are two sides to a budget. It makes sense for the towns to have their revenue. Without going forward to get rid of the clawback or looking at being a pilot for equal assessments, the question has never been is it a good or bad budget, it's always been can we afford it. This is a change. If we are not fighting for MSBA clawback now, it's not worth waiting. We have to start understanding the budget.
- Mr. Precanico said typically we have to do a good job of defending the budget. Russell went up on their taxes, MSBA is in there now, if it goes up any more it is going to be a tough sell. When he moved here he was told there is low income, lots of seniors, and no diversity. They need the numbers because it is reality. If people see the numbers it may still be a tough sell but they will understand why.
- Mrs. Papillon said if the conversation changes and school committee and town representatives stand together, the towns will pass the budget.
- Mrs. Otterbeck agrees with Mr. Jacques' statement. We should be looking at what causes the most angst. We need to keep it simple now and then look at the bigger picture. We need to stay focused on the present and look at the bigger picture.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said there are only ten items that have a greater than \$25,000 increase. You could back it down to the items of \$10,000 or more.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said maybe this is the opportunity for the towns to share what works for them rather than us giving them the information.
- Mrs. Crane said maybe it would be helpful if we heard from the towns what information is useful.
- Mrs. McVeigh said when she puts together Huntington's budget she breaks it down by category such as salary. Then looks at the increase and what is causing the increase. It is step and column that is causing a salary increase. You can probably explain the increase in less than ten lines, The individual pries for the reason. When they ask how come teachers' salaries are going up 5.5 %. She explains it. Those are the components that need to be explained. It has to be in writing. If we can put together the major increases it would be helpful.
- Mrs. Nazzaro was asking to break out
- Dr. Hopson said if everyone is agreeable we have a direction for discussion at the next meeting. We can show why things went up.
- Mrs. Crane asked if we could also take the top priority list and explain why it is needed and what happens if we don't have it.
- Mr. Welch suggested we make five or six copies of our materials or put it up on the board.
- Mr. Myers wants to second Dr. Hopson's recommendation to look at equalized assessments. It equalizes it and it doesn't penalize those with population increase.
- Dr. Hopson thinks DESE is going to have one school be a pilot school. He would have to get more information. The only way this will work is if you pilot it for 3 years and get the towns to vote for it.

VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 12/13/17 (Enc.)

- Vote on at next meeting

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee - None

B. Chairperson - None

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson would urge everyone sign up on that.
- This Friday is 'The Last Five Years' production funded by the Gateway Education Foundation. The production is self-directed by the students.

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration - None

F. Town - None

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to go into executive session now at 8:40 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations-teachers, not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation
- B. Legislative Liaison
- C. Policy Subcommittee
- D. Building Liaisons

XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA
Future Agenda Items

XII. INFORMATION
Information

Students benefit from mitten mystery!
 Gateway continues services to community in December
 Holiday break coming up for Gateway schools
 "Distractology" takes high school students for a ride
 Gateway hosts 90 area senior citizens for brunch, concert
 Save the date for Blood Drive at Gateway
 Student organizer thanks donors
 Save the date for The Last 5 Years at Gateway!
 Superintendent's Corner December 15, 2017
 Literacy celebrated at Littleville!
 Don't miss 'The last 45 Years' at Gateway January 12
 Accolades keep coming for Gateway's VanHeynigen
 Holiday, two half-days coming up for Gateway
 January School Committee Meetings
 Middle school first-term effort awards announced
 Superintendent's Corner January 1, 2018

The warrant signing committee had reviewed the following warrants, found them to be in order, and approved them.

Warrants

AP#1042	\$212,801.61	PR# 013	\$358,734.92
AP#1038	\$99,661.08	PR# 014	\$334,745.02
AP#1043	\$57.05		

**8:35-9 p.m. XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION
 or earlier**

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to go into executive session now at 8:40 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations-teachers, not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

A. Union Negotiations – Teachers

XIX. ADJOURNMENT at 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to adjourn at 9:00 p.m

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Diane, Terri, Melissa, Martha, Aaron, Shirley, Michele

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacy L Stewart

School Committee Secretary
