

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

JOINT BUDGET/REGULAR MEETING

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2017

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
Ron Damon
Aaron Welch
Melissa Nazzaro

MIDDLEFIELD
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY
Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL
Tara Balboni

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:Kayla Brady, Chris Tamburrino, John Baldasaro, Andy Myers, Amy Porter, Darlene McVeigh, Annie Pritchard

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- No one is recording the meeting.

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 - None

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Foundation Budget Review Resolution

- Mr. Welch said MASS is recommending that school committees pass a resolution in support of making the recommendations from the state auditor. He briefly described the resolution.
- Mrs. Crane asked everyone to take a look at it and be prepared to vote on it at the next meeting.

B. MSBA Action

- Mr. Welch put together some content to be put in electronic form, posters etc., urging residents to call the legislators and urge MSBA to take action for loan forgiveness. It includes six or seven frequently asked

questions. It's an action packet. The idea is to move to send it to the select boards for it to be posted in each town.

- Dr. Hopson said it is a vote to have school committee enlist town support.

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to suspend the two-meeting rule to vote on this.

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

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

Mr. Welch made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro for school committee to endorse the development of an action plan to be distributed to the towns for them to advocate the legislature for MSBA loan forgiveness.

- Mrs. Nazzaro said in her experience it does not take very many calls or letters. In most instances they get zero contacts or letters.
- Mrs. Crane said it is retro, but now attention getting to send it snail mail.
- Mr. Welch agreed faxes and physical letters get more of a response.

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

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

C. FY '18 First Quarter Budget Transfers

- Ms. Fisk reviewed each of the transfers. There will be more transfers coming for technology.
- To be voted on at the next meeting

D. Approval of Student Activity Accounts FY '18

- Ms. Fisk said this is a yearly vote. She provided a list of accounts and advisors.
- To be voted on at the next meeting.

7:30 VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. Special Education Budget Presentation

- Mr. Garivaltis started with issues impacting the budget. Since 2013 the district has realized a 17% decrease, but why doesn't the district have less staff. The special education population has increased 17%. Twenty percent of our students have needs. The ELL student population has gone up two hundred percent.
- Compliance- Every six years the special education department goes through a CPR. After, the state issues a final corrective action plan. The ones that impact the budget the most are not preventing substantial regression of special needs. We overhauled our summer program. Instead of two or three days a week, we went to four days a week for four weeks.
- Instructional grouping regulation –The life skills program cannot go beyond forty-eight months in age range in instructional grouping. We created a transition program so the older students are going out into the community. The vans are being used for this. We also needed to hire a 2nd ELL teacher due to compliance related issues.
- Out of district placement – If a student is not successful in our district we have to find a place for them. When Mr. Garivaltis started we had fourteen, now there are four, and he hopes to have only two next year. We are maintaining specialized programs in the district. We also provide high quality professional development for the staff. All paraprofessionals were trained in de-escalation. Additionally, all faculty is receiving social emotional training. This has helped reduce out of district placement.
- Surprises – Move –ins. We had two visually impaired students move in last year, which we had to create a program for them. We've never had visually impaired students in the past. We had to provide a paraprofessional and teacher/mobility specialist so they could navigate the building etc. A month ago, we had three students from Westfield move in who are on the Autism Spectrum. They also need specialized programs and paraprofessionals. We had to modify windows at Chester. Midyear last school year the middle school adjustment counselor took another opportunity. We backfilled with another autism specialist instead due to need. We hired Chris Tamburrino. Chris introduced himself.
- Literacy project – We are hoping to get eight to ten teachers trained in Orton Gillingham.

- Mr. Myers said in last five years there has been a seventeen percent increase in special education, does that mirror the state. If we experience another 17 % increase what is that going to do.
- Mr. Garivaltis said we have a pretty diverse range of programming right now, unless it is a medically fragile student, we should be okay.
- Mr. Myers asked if we are attracting more special education students. Do we receive additional money for that.
- Ms. Fisk said only when you get to one hundred and twenty-five percent above the previous year. It is very difficult to meet that threshold when you keep them in house. Only if you had a \$300,000 increase.
- Dr. Hopson said the state only pays sixty-five percent of the difference.
- Mr. Garivaltis said that is the placement only, and doesn't cover the transportation. Transportation alone is \$100,000 for a student going to Lee.
- Mr. Myers said the trend is not in our favor.
- Mr. Garivaltis said our response to the trend is favorable.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said the services are wonderful, these are peoples' children.
- Mr. Welch said this is why we need to push the resolutions.
- Mrs. Long said in the early 2000's we started to see a spike with the number of students with autism. The state came out and did a study. When they put the data together they couldn't find anything.
- Mrs. Winer asked how we are doing with handling these students, are we being effective.
- Mr. Garivaltis said the most resounding statistic is we haven't had one go out in two years. Are we reducing critical incidents by utilizing interventions. We are not at that place yet. We are where we should be now. Mr. Garivaltis talked about the twins and their progress.
- Dr. Hopson said as Mr. Garivaltis and Mr. Tamberrino develop these programs and we are successful and drawing kids in, we may have to look into the future and perhaps charge tuition.
- Mr. Garivaltis said this is a possibility. We would become the out of district placement.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked what happens with the twenty-one year old and why are they still at Gateway.
- Mr. Garivaltis said they are our responsibility until they graduate or until their twenty-second birthday. They get a certificate of completion and stay until their twenty-second birthday. While they are here they work on daily living skills and pre-vocational and vocational skills.
- Dr. Hopson said they transition to a state program after.

B. District Budget Presentation

- Ms. Fisk said the presentation is linked in the packet. It is an overview of the past fifteen years. If anyone has questions they can call or email her.
- Dr. Hopson said there is over 2.5 million in increases, about the same amount of money we lost in 2003-4

C. FY '19 Town Input/Budget Discussion

- Mr. Baldasaro said we are getting to a point in the facilitated meetings where a couple of action committees have been formed and they are monetizing some of the services. It is a great step forward. We need to be realistic in the year coming up. There is no significant growth in the hill towns, although we are working on it. He thinks we need to level fund the budget. He thinks the SBA forgiveness and green grants will help. These are the things we need to get aggressive about. He doesn't see any more increases sustained by the six towns. Cooperating and working together is what will attract people to Gateway.
- Mrs. Huntoon said that also goes for the towns too. You heard where the towns are and their needs. We are all up against it. The only way to work through is to work together.
- Mr. Baldasaro said the town spends hours going over every line item in their budget. The towns have significant issues in their financial departments that the pay does not attract the right professionals. They are not expecting increases this year.
- Mrs. Winer asked how hard is it going to be to coordinate services.
- Mrs. Huntoon said hard. They are in favor of it. They have tried to get elected positions made into appointed. They have to get an aging population to change and let go of the autonomy. They need to convince the citizens.
- Mrs. Winer said we tried to re-organize the school committee as well and haven't been successful.
- Mr. Baldasaro said it is critical for this to continue.
- Mrs. Dunn said everything we say in public, every no we say, every time we don't want to fund the budget, we are perceived as being negative. We need to do so in a positive way. We want to attract people who don't require tons of services.

- Mr. Baldasaro said at the facilitated meeting that discussion was had. We have talked about marketing the area; both the schools and towns. We need market to a variety of folks. The last special town meeting and what was happening is why we are here.
- Mr. Myers said we looked at how we could share accounting services. The state came in and took a look at it. It would cost us more to hire. We are not going to achieve these goals by cutting our budget only; we need to attract families and investment.
- Mrs. Dunn said another idea might be to hold a joint educational outreach in our council on aging. At least in Chester.
- Mr. Baldasaro said it passed on the town floor, but gets voted down on the ballot box.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked where we are with utilizing students to learn about the government and help the community with technology. There was a large crowd here for the senior citizen brunch. Can we get students out there participating in our towns? We have a great music program with talented artists.
- Mrs. Huntoon said one of the things we talked about was marketing the school. That would be a perfect fit for that; students doing worthwhile things rather than just working in a classroom.
- Mrs. Winer said there is a play coming up. She hopes it gets advertised enough to get a good sized audience.
- Dr. Hopson said this year he and Ms. Fisk plan to do the budget differently. We will bring in and show you what we would put in that we don't have. We will also be going over line items. It will help everyone make a joint decision. We had a presentation about health insurance costs today. We are looking at a 10% increase.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said the perception that we all contribute to the conversation and the budget will help dispel the myths. She suggested at her first meeting to do a budget for dummies. She encourages everyone to review the information. If you understand the concepts, you can speak to the constituents strongly. The special education presentation is about children. We need to recognize it for how can we make it an attraction, not a dark cloud.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked if the special education students are homeowners or rentals.
- Mr. Garivaltis doesn't know. He is not sure we can ask that.
- Dr. Hopson said we don't track that. Some buy a house then move out when the kid's education is over.
- Mrs. McVeigh said as we try to think outside the box she is wondering how many foster children we have. The state is really the ward of the children at that point. Is it a point to raise for the state.
- Mr. Garivaltis said we are obligated to track the special needs students. We have a lot more grandparents raising children than foster parents in this district.
- Dr. Hopson said it might be best to have MASS or a municipal association to look into that.
- Mrs. Winer asked how many ELL students we have.
- Mr. Garivaltis said twenty-seven. We have a variety of students. Some recent immigrants, some that English is not their first language; Russian, Ukrainian, Spanish, etc.
- Mr. Baldasaro said it would be helpful when you delineate by line item, you could separate what the state mandates, and also separate those that don't apply to Gateway. We might be able to work together to get the legislature to help us.
- Ms. Fisk said it depends on how you view things. You have to educate special education students.
- Dr. Hopson said if you look at the superintendent's checklist, there are so many things on there, we only look at some of them when they call, since they really don't apply to us. But we just had a review and because the state is changing things we have to do it again.
- Mr. Garivaltis said it is state mandated if you have students ELL and English is not their first language at the home you have to translate everything, we spent like \$20,000 last year.
- Mrs. Long looked at ways to utilize students who took languages, and they could speak it, but not write it.
- Dr. Hopson said the state does not let you use Google translator.
- Mr. Baldasaro thinks we should put discussion with the towns on the agenda on a regular basis. You would get more towns involved.
- Mrs. Balboni asked what was wrong with public input.
- Mrs. Huntoon said we are not the only district in this situation. Can you identify other districts that have similar situations.
- Mr. Garivaltis said yesterday we had Lee and McCann here. He is going to see Worthington about their preschool developments. They are at 100% and we are at 60%. We are constantly seeking ideas from others. Principals have similar groups as well.
- Dr. Hopson said we need to have broad certifications. You need so many and we only have a few of those teachers in math, chemistry, biology. Each teacher has to have a separate certification. Most do not have multiple.

- Mrs. McVeigh said a lot of rural communities have put pressure on the legislators as they have written legislation, but if you are a community than a certain number, it does not apply. DESE, Rural Commonwealth initiative working together, biology, chemistry, and physics. She thinks it is ridiculous you need to have three teachers.
- Dr. Hopson said we will look at it and share. It will be a learning curve.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 8:30 p.m. for the purpose on Union Negotiations- Teachers and one non union item, not to return to open session.

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

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

VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 10/25/17, 11/8/17 (Enc.)

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mr. Damon to approve the minutes of 10/25/17.

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

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

Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 11/8/17.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Ron, Diane, Terri, Martha, Shirley, Michele

Abstain: Sarah, Melissa, Aaron

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Austin said there was a nice concert at the middle school yesterday. The high school concert is coming up.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said NHS bought toys for 40 families on Sunday. They had more money and were able to by extra toys.

B. Chairperson

- Mrs. Crane said it is time for the yearbook ad. The cost is \$13.00 each for the ad. We will have our picture taken at one of the January meetings.

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

D. Business Manager

FY '18 First Quarter Report

- Ms. Fisk said the 4th quarter is in your packet. There will be a few more transfers coming in January.

E. Administration

- Mrs. Long thanked everyone who gave to the foundation on Giving Tuesday. They just crossed the \$2,000 mark. She just put out the next board projects for January. They are starting to ramp up the marketing on the musical 'The Last 5 Years' which is taking place on January 12. The Foundation funded it. The students applied to local cultural council, but haven't heard yet. Admission is free, but there will be a collection box. It is starring Dawson Atkin and Meg Rock. It is the story of a relationship that ended after five years. Each tells it in the reverse. Students were interviewed by Westfield University's radio station.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- To meet in January

B. Legislative Liaison

- None

C. Policy Subcommittee

- Policy met tonight. There will be a long list of policies for the next meeting. Most changes are very simple.

D. Building Liaisons

- Mrs. Foley and Mrs. Garfield with Mr. Finnie the week before Thanksgiving. The goal is to have open door policy getting the community in to ask questions.
- Mrs. Balboni said boys' basketball had twice as many students try out as last year. Winter sports have started.
- Mrs. Long said it is remarkable that a high school our size can run 5 sports at one time.
- Mrs. Balboni talked about the many hats the students wear.
- Mrs. Long said there is a body of research that shows the benefit of having students attend a small school.

Went into executive session at 8:30 p.m.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**Future Agenda Items****XII. INFORMATION****Information**

Gateway bands Fruit Sale
 Five Gateway students take part in ACDA "Honor Choir"
 Gateway honors senior athletes
 Annual Craft Fair at Littleville
 Middle School holds "Mix it Up" Day
 Superintendent's Corner November 3, 2017
 Save the date for Annual Holiday Brunch and Concert!
 Winter Weather Closing at Gateway
 Chester Family Literacy Night on November 16
 Gateway Education Foundation launches Giving Tuesday Campaign
 Wrap Around to close on snow days
 Gateway Thanksgiving Break
 College Week coming up for Gateway HS
 Magazine Drive benefits Middle School
 Gateway sophomore takes first prize at Game Lab
 Superintendent's Corner November 9, 2017
 Support Gateway Education Foundation on Giving Tuesday
 Gateway Blood Drive saves 41 lives
 Gateway offers Holiday Babysitting
 Lady Gators finish off post-season
 First term honor roll for high school
 Online registration now open for winter sports; Tryouts Coming Up
 Superintendent's Corner November 11, 2017
 Gateway runners finish season strong
 Over 300 'Grandfriends' visit elementary students
 Superintendent's Corner November 22, 2017
 Area seniors invited to holiday brunch, concert
 Superintendent's Corner December 1, 2017
 Holiday concerts at Gateway
 Winter sports season opens
 December School Committee Meeting
 Students cartoon into history project
 Foundation thanks donors

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

Warrants

AP# 1033 \$103,818.62
 AP# 1037 \$58.39
 AP# 1036 \$191,307.98

PR# 010 \$363,030.79
 PR# 011 \$364,585.21
 PR# 012 \$358,523.70

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

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 8:30 p.m. for the purpose on Union Negotiations- Teachers and one non union item, not to return to open session.

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

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

- A. Union Negotiations – Teachers
- B. Non Union Negotiations - Administration

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

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

Respectfully Submitted,
 Stacy L Stewart
 School Committee Secretary