

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

JOINT BUDGET/REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 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
Paula Hepburn

SECRETARY
Stacy Stewart

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

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
Jason Finnie, High/Middle Principal
Deanna LeBlanc, High/Middle Assistant Principal

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: Andy Myers, John Baldasaro, Joe Kearns, Dan Jacques, Barbara Huntoon, Kayla Brady

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.
- Peter Spotts is recording the meeting.

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

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Megan Crane said the girls' basketball team is the undefeated league champ this year. She said Payton Bucko also present is one of our highest scorers. Wrestling had their senior night. Girls Basketball senior night is February 15, Boys Basketball senior night is February 12, and the Alpine Ski Team has their senior night February 13 at Berkshire east. The showcases were decorated with a decades' theme and the seniors won. The next theme will be Disney and all things under Disney. The Semi-Formal is February 6 at Tekoa and the prom is at Chez Josef.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS - None

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Second Semester Field Trips

**Becket Chimney Corners Overnight
7th Grade NYC Trip to Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, Liberty Museum**

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the overnight field trip to Becket Chimney Corners and 7th Grade New York Trip to Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, and Liberty Museum.

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

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

B. Policy Approval

- a. ACE – Nondiscrimination On The Basis of Disability
- b. ADC – Tobacco Products on School Premises Prohibited
- c. BBA – School Committee Powers and Duties
- d. BBBA – School Committee Qualifications
- e. BDD – School Committee-Superintendent Relationship
- f. BDE – Subcommittees
- g. BDF – Advisory Committees
- h. BEDA – Notice
- i. BEDB – Agenda Format
- j. BEDH – Public Comment at Meetings
- k. BEDC – Quorum
- l. BHE – Electronic Messaging
- m. BIA – New School Committee Member Orientation
- n. BIBA – School Committee Conference
- o. CB – School Superintendent
- p. CBD – Superintendent’s Contract
- q. CBI – Superintendent Evaluation
- r. CE – Administrative Councils
- s. CH – Policy Implementation
- t. CHA – Development of Procedures
- u. CHC – Procedure Dissemination

- Mrs. Crane said the long list of policies have very simple changes which were explained in the subcommittee minutes.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to approve Policies a-u.

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

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

C. Remote Participation

- Mrs. Crane said information was sent out. We need to decide if we want to allow it. This committee hasn’t ever done so with voting members.

Mr. Welch made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro to approve remote participation.

- Mrs. Winer asked what we are talking about.
- Mrs. Crane said having members take part by phone when they cannot be here.
- Mrs. Winer asked what happens if we have multiple people who want to participate remotely.
- Mrs. Nazzaro asked if there is access to a call in for conference calling.
- Dr. Hopson said yes, our current system will take in three at a time. You might want to put a limit as to how many can conference in.
- Mr. Jacques said he was just at an update at a MMA conference. In order to have this work there needs to be a quorum in the room and then additional people can conference in.
- Mr. Welch said information was included in the packet of the previous meeting. We would have to abide by those guidelines.
- Mrs. Crane asked how many have people been away that could have participated by phone.
- Mr. Welch said three times.
- Mrs. Otterbeck and Mrs. Balboni said they haven’t.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said our first preference is to be here.

- Mr. Welch's understanding is we could vote it in and decide to stop it at any time if it isn't working.

Mr. Welch made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro to approve remote participation.

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

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

D. Litigation: Kennedy, et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, et al. - No.:HSCV2014-00210 - Update

- Dr. Hopson said the court decided our appeal is not justified. We didn't have standing and our arguments were not valid. The Attorneys have been talking.
- Mrs. McVeigh said Huntington met tonight and will have a meeting next week to get other members on board and discuss next steps.

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. GYAA (Enc.)

- Jason Fogue is here on behalf of himself and other parents. He has been here before and has asked for school use relief in the past for the Memorial Day tournament that they no longer hold due to lack of participation. He believes they should be viewed as a feeder program and a benefit to the social emotional needs of the students. At the last meeting he thought about everything Mrs. Coburn and Mr. Finnie said. He believes it all comes back to sports. He would like to come up with a way to increase sports programs by lowering fees. GYAA has paid over \$24,000 to Gateway since 2014. He would like to reclassify GYAA and other organizations like them or re-write the fee structure for these organizations. He asked for a summary of money in and money out. The district is using it for lawn mowers, ice machines, etc. and there was over \$70,000 in that account. He is looking for assistance in lowering fees.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked what he was looking for.
- Mr. Fogue said no fees.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked what he is planning to do if there are no fees.
- Mr. Fogue said the fees for participating would be reduced. He would like to reduce them by 10% across the board. The price reduction would be significant.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked what other rec's charge?
- Mr. Fogue said Southwick is town funded. The towns have facilities. Dalton has no school use fee. Northampton is maintained through the town.
- Mrs. Balboni asked if any families are being turned away because of the cost.
- Mr. Fogue said no. No one has been turned down.
- Mrs. Winer asked how some schools can make it free and some don't.
- Mrs. Nazzaro asked is this building use fund is used for property use.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, and also if the custodians are needed for an outside function, the group using it pays the custodian's salary.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said she would hate to think this fund is being used for routine improvements. Do you reach a point where you reevaluate the fee structure.
- Ms. Fisk said town services are exempt. There are four structures really A: PTO, School Councils, Gateway sponsored Student groups. B: are towns and their related departmental functions, C: organizations whose sole purpose is to raise funds for the benefit of Gateway programs, D: Non-profit, Boys Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H. E: Non-profit, GYAA, Little League, etc., F: is for profit persons.
- Mrs. Nazzaro asked what the dollar amount in the account is now.
- Ms. Fisk said \$59,000 at end of last year. We spend anywhere between \$7,000 and \$25,000 each year.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said if GYAA is hovering in the \$5,500 range, would we increase the amount we are charging other organizations and say invest \$25,000 every year, would we make it more attractive to the outside.
- Ms. Fisk said we are pretty consistent with the groups that are here.
- Mr. Fogue said if anything we are at risk of losing, some are unhappy with the access and what the district has to offer.
- Ms. Fisk said we are not a sports facility. There is no grass on the softball field due to GYAA soccer use.
- Dr. Hopson said when you reseed a whole field, it depends on the weather as to how long it takes. There are no other fields to use. Eighty percent of the wear and tear is from GYAA.
- Mr. Fogue disagrees with that statement.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said we are trying to encourage students. There is no Gateway feeder program, maybe we should look at GYAA as our feeder program.

- Dr. Hopson said when an eighth grader plays sports at Gateway, there is a fee. If you are going to reduce fees across the board, should we reduce Gateway's too.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said this is a revolving account.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, it is used for grounds and maintenance. She could charge electricity, but that gets too difficult. We should look at what other schools are doing.
- Mrs. Crane asked for the fee schedule.
- Mrs. Winer asked how many fields are under renovations.
- Ms. Fisk said one, and we only have four.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said during GYAA soccer, there have been as many as seven fields set up.
- Mr. Forgue said if we lose tournaments, that is a \$30,000 loss. He doesn't understand why they aren't part of the town structure.
- Mrs. McVeigh said when GYAA was formed it was formed with folks from other towns, because each town couldn't afford to have their own program, this was set up because we needed to regionalize.
- Mrs. Austin asked which tournament they lost, and if they could get it back.
- Mr. Forgue said once you lose a tournament it is almost impossible to get it back. Part of the problem is that other areas wanted to have their own and there was a lack of participation.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said, we've lost a lot to Roots and their Premier League.
- Move to old business.

7:30 VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. FY '19 Line Item Budget Review

- Dr. Hopson said this information was presented last time. Mr. Jacques asked for an explanation of what would happen if we didn't add requested items. About 34,000 over what we had last year. Governors budget just came out. The census drives the amounts paid by each town.
- Ms. Fisk said the Chapter 70 revenue is about \$400 off. Regional Transportation is about \$33,000 less. She is not worried. The interesting part is if you look at the assessment part it is apples to apples, if minimum shifts it is going to throw off the other two numbers. The number will change quite a bit. The difference is the DESE has a different number for minimum 5,148.358 it is actually. There are some big swings in minimum.
- Mr. Myers asked if it is lowering or hiring assessments.
- Ms. Fisk said both. Blandford is at \$970,346; Chester, \$846,686; Huntington, \$1,424,220; Middlefield \$329,152; Montgomery, \$604,450 and Russell \$967,878.
- Mrs. McVeigh said so the total minimum is down from last year.
- Ms. Fisk said she wants to look at what the state had versus what she had.
- Dr. Hopson went over the major increases/changes. Some of those are the therapeutic contract is offset by the line items for staffing. Regular education is up \$140,000 - step and column, special education is up \$45,000 and they keep shrinking preschool grant, district salary is up by negotiated changes. The 4000 account which is heating is up \$22,000, fixed charges - retiree health insurance, MSBA \$138,000 hopefully we can get that waived for using the Russell school. Also increase pupil services to full-time. We are up \$209,000, about \$72,000 without clawback. The only place you can take out \$200,000 is through salaries and staff. Dan's question was what do we get for what we asked for. Pupil Services - Not being able to continue to look at literacy, professional development, add people to make sure it gets done, Literacy and Math, need to have to comprehension. You don't get the ability to identify and act on literacy.
- Mr. Finnie said part of the challenge, is we have lost staff through attrition, and lost staff to elsewhere, we don't have to flexibility to do targeted work. They really need this as they have been ignoring it.
- Ms. LeBlanc said we need the support from the outside to build the capacity to be there long term.
- Mr. Baldasaro said there have been assessment increases based on budget scenarios. The towns have been extremely clear on what they need. Chester has instructed their departments to level fund or cut if possible. He asked for a level funded budget and they got a level services budget, he understands why, but this is not going to fly, we need to find out what we can do, we need a budget we can pass at town meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said despite what you see,
- Mr. Baldasaro said he asked to put it on paper so we can show them. He doesn't think there is anyone here who isn't willing to put things in worth investing in.
- Mrs. Dunn said so you want to have the cuts in gory details like who would get laid off.
- Mrs. Balboni agrees. These are the hard questions and we need to be able to show them. To have level funding versus giving just the numbers may just be the key to getting more support.
- Mr. Baldasaro said everyone always says the school threatens us to cut teachers and never does.
- Mr. Jacques agrees, this is what he was alluding to last meeting. Option, A, B C.

- Mrs. Nazzaro said it has to be presented in a way that is for conversation purpose. Anyone who is on the fence of coming or leaving it will make a decision based on this information. It is all about perception. She can get on board with showing a budget with level funding, level services, and then top ten priorities.
- Mrs. Balboni said the numbers that come to our meetings don't always make sense. A column approach will be helpful.
- Mr. Myers said at the first joint meeting we talked about the disconnect. The disconnect is still there; the school population is still going down and Gateway is still asking for more money. Last year there was an increase of \$159,000 and this year \$209,000. We need to agree the model is non sustainable. Other districts are closing schools and sharing administrative costs. We haven't looked at what restructuring Gateway looks like. We have talked about bending the curve. We are not going to get there immediately. They had no increase in salaries, and they took money from free cash to buy down the tax rate. It has been helpful for Gateway. The budget looks like business as usual. He understands Gateway's needs.
- Mr. Jacques asked Mr. Myers what he suggests. We are all here trying. What comes out.
- Mr. Myers said school choice.
- Dr. Hopson said last year our budget was what it was five years ago, we've done all the things the towns have asked us to do, and yet you still asked us to cut.
- Mr. Finnie said at the leadership team they have to show what things look like. It has both staff and community impact. There are some positives, but business as usual is really unfair. We are recovering from Worthington leaving. He is going to need to talk to his staff, to explain good decisions verses bad decisions. It hasn't been business as usual. There has been restructuring every year he has been here. Every day people are dealing with new responsibilities, new students.
- Mrs. McVeigh said we have been facing this for a number of years. We need a taskforce. Every single change requires a 2 1/2 override. Huntington was able to raise their levy limit by \$80,000 before having a proposition 2 1/2 override. Last year they cut hours in positions, they did everything they could to stay within the limit. They can only do that for so many years. Limited to the amount they can increase in taxes.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said the bigger picture is with the levy limit. There are already two Massachusetts towns have reached their limit, and there are a slew of towns coming up on it. If you could consider the cost impact on the household, it is not as bad as you think. All the things that are happening are systemic Massachusetts's issues. It is going to be an issue across the commonwealth.
- Mr. Myers said it is positive we recognize it is not sustainable. We had like eighty-nine students school choice out of Gateway. We have spots for every one of those. One of the things that could help with that is a taskforce to help keep students here.
- Mr. Welch said we are all on the same page no one thinks this is sustainable. It is a testament to the school that has a budget less than inflation, also that the towns have been able to continue to invest in the schools. He agrees you have to see how scary it is to look at level funded. Those increases still have to happen, so that means sports or band and then the kids go away. There is a disconnect there. Putting it in context will be helpful. Then we can go to the towns. Towns listen to their finance and select boards.
- Mr. Baldasaro said they do to a point, but not when you have to go to a proposition 2 1/2.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said the information would be helpful. In Chester it is the same 50 people. Perhaps getting more parents together to have information would be helpful. She said we have talked about school choice for as long as she has been on this committee, they choice out for very specific reasons, sports, vocational, private school, etc., she is not sure how we would do that.
- Mr. Myers said outdoor club, entrepreneurship program, and the all day preschool would be nice, those are the types of things that will keep them here.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said we need to get people to come to the school and transportation is a key.
- Mr. Myers said we hired and economic developer for that.
- Mrs. Balboni said we get creative and then we have to cut. It takes so little to get a family to say we are out of here because we cut something. The high school is where the problem is; it's where students leave.
- Mr. Myers wants to enhance technology in Gateway.
- Mr. Finnie thought it was helpful to share what we are doing, we have been trying to keep school choice. If we level fund the budget we will lose school choice. How do we add something only to lose it. It is not been business as usual. We need to maintain what we have. Everything we are doing in this budget is an investment.
- Mrs. Dunn said we need to do what Mr. Baldasaro has suggested. As long as we phrase it correctly it won't be more harmful then any other round. It is not business as usual. She feels like it is a nagging phrase.
- Mr. Myers used that phrase because we need to bend the curve numbers are decreasing and
- Mr. Myers said they are being realistic

Mrs. Balboni left the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

- Mr. Baldasaro said at some point we will have to talk about restructuring the district. We have to show them what things look like. At some point we will have to talk about what happen if we had to close schools.
- Mrs. Huntoon said we keep saying if we don't approve the budget, these are the things that happen to Gateway. What happens to the towns if we pass a budget they can't afford. She is asking school committee to see their point of view.
- Multiple school committee members said they understand, they also live in those towns.
- Mrs. Huntoon said she has learned a lot during this process. She understands, appreciates, and values what school committee does. She and Mr. Jacques feel we have to go after the state.
- Mr. Jacques said the state is the one missing part in this conversation. MARS is going to be here with the legislators. We need to take advantage of that meeting. Regionalization has changed, everything has changed, but state law has not changed.
- Dr. Hopson said so the towns want specifics for a \$209,000 reduction whatever it is. Sports, music, and art are hard to keep. Regarding staffing, you have to be careful, those staff on the list are likely to be gone by May.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 8:50 p.m. for the purpose of Union Negotiations- Teachers and Litigation: Kennedy, et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, et al. – No.:HSCV2014-00210 not to return to open session.

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

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

VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 12/13/17, 1/10/18 (Enc.)

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to approve the minutes of 12/13/17.

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

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

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to approve the minutes of 1/10/18.

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

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

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

B. Chairperson

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

D. Business Manager

E. Administration

F. Town

- Mr. Baldasaro reminded everyone that MARS has invited the legislators to the February 1 meeting.
- Mrs. McVeigh said they need to start meeting what they promised fifty years ago such a fully funding regional transportation.

Entered into executive session at 8:48 p.m.

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

Foundation Board to meet
 Gateway senior wrestlers approach last home meet
 Superintendent's Corner January 5, 2018
 2nd Annual Hilltown Chili Challenge!
 Elementary musical, art show on January 25
 Superintendent's Corner January 12, 2018

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

Warrants

AP#1046	\$50,588.78	PR# 015 \$
AP#1048	\$50.36	

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

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 8:50 p.m. for the purpose of Union Negotiations- Teachers and Litigation: Kennedy, et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, et al. – No.:HSCV2014-00210 not to return to open session.

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

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

- A. Union Negotiations – Teachers
- B. Litigation: Kennedy, et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, et al. - No.:HSCV2014-00210

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

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

Respectfully Submitted,
 Stacy L Stewart
 School Committee Secretary