

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

JOINT BUDGET/REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 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
Melissa Nazzaro

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
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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: Andy Myers, John Baldasaro, Dan Shea, Eric McVeigh, Dan Jacques, Jason Forgeue, Wayne Precanico, Barbara Huntoon

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m.
- Peter Spotts 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

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

- Will be taken up in executive session.

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Policies (minutes included)

- a. DBD – Budget Planning
- b. DBJ – Budget Transfer Authority
- c. DD – Funding Proposals and Applications
- d. DGA – Authorized Signatures

- e. DJE – Procurement Requirements
- f. DK – Payment Procedures
- g. DKC – Expense Reimbursement
- h. EB – Safety Program
- i. EBB – First Aid

- Mrs. Crane said this is a first reading.
- Move to old business at the next meeting.

B. Extension of MARS Meetings

- Mrs. Crane said Mr. Welch brought it up and wanted to know if there was interest in having more meetings. We will discuss this at the next meeting since he is not present.

7:30 VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. FY '19 Line Item Budget Review

- Dr. Hopson said everyone wants to know what a level funded budget looks like.
- Mr. Finnie said a lot has been absorbed over the last few years. The middle and high schools have lost three teaching positions and 1.5 secretaries. One teacher and one counselor transitioned into other positions. Two district administrators – curriculum and technology have been lost. Any additional cuts would have to be in programs. There needs to be a period of consistency. More cuts would mean the loss of courses or entire programs such as health and Spanish. It would also affect academics, social emotional counseling, online learning, cross-curricular and literacy work. By cutting these, he doesn't see how we wouldn't see an increase in school choice.
- Mrs. Crane asked him to talk about what items would cause us to lose accreditation.
- Mr. Finnie said it is a voluntary agreement, but when colleges and universities are looking at high schools they are looking for some sort of accreditation. Just the perception of not being accredited can negatively affect a school especially when surrounding schools are accredited. They look at key areas – learning culture, student learning, professional practices, learning support and learning resources.
- Mrs. Dunn worked in a district that was put on probation and the impact was immediate.
- Mrs. Crane asked him to speak about science.
- Mr. Finnie said the certification piece is what is so hard. Each science has a separate certification.
- Dr. Hopson asked Mr. Shea how hard is it to teach AP?
- Mr. Shea said he holds a bachelor's degree in science and a masters in chemistry from St. Joseph's. It is what you need to teach AP chemistry. It is essentially a college course.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said it is concerning that these could be cut. We need to have AP level courses especially in science. There is a lot of pressure for students to study STEM, especially those applying to engineering and math programs.
- Mr. McVeigh said not having AP courses just stops them from taking AP. How much AP work actually gets credited to college credit?
- Mrs. Nazzaro arrived.
- Dr. Hopson said his daughter could have waived her entire first year at Mt. Holyoke. It allowed her to skip her introductory courses. When you look at college admission having 4's and 5's on your AP exams helps you get in.
- Mrs. McVeigh said some parents had a great experience with AP classes and some not so much because of the pressure and students end up going to community college.
- Dr. Hopson said it is not always whether you get credit in college or not, it helps you move further.
- Mr. Finnie said they are lab science courses so they can't be online. The reason this is on the list is because it will be a challenge to offer even lower level chemistry.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said the concept that a community college is lesser than a four-year college is not accurate any longer. Some go to a community college first to make it more affordable.
- Mrs. Garfield said the colleges are pushing for students to have at least two AP courses in their junior and senior years.
- Mr. Myers asked if there are any AP courses that are different than others we could offer.
- Mr. Finnie said no we don't have the staffing and we'd have to hire.
- Dr. Hopson said if you had a class that was different, you'd have to have a full class.
- Mrs. Winer said when you have courses that other students come to it messes up the class schedule.
- Mrs. Foley said teaching AP classes requires special training.
- Mr. Finnie said yes there is a training AP teachers must take.
- Mrs. Huntoon asked how he arrived at these positions being cut.

- Mr. Finnie reviewed what he said earlier.
- Mr. Baldasaro said it seems everything we are cutting is teaching positions, not support staff.
- Dr. Hopson said custodians have already been cut by 30% and secretaries by 50%. This does have cuts in custodians as we went from an 8-hour to a 6-hour position this year.
- Mr. Baldasaro asked if we could show what has been cut because it always comes up.
- Dr. Hopson yes, he will update the information. We have lost more staff percentage wise than students.
- Mr. Baldasaro thinks that would be good. He doesn't think anyone in this room expected to have a level funded budget, but we needed to see what it looks like.
- Dr. Hopson said we paired down the \$900,000 in requests. He asked everyone except the Special Education Director to talk about why those hours need to be increased.
- Mr. Finnie said it is important now that the summer program is run in house. Also because we've lost our afterschool programs. Extended year programming is written in educational plans. It isn't feasible for principals to run it with the assistant principals only working ten months. All the changes that have happened in special education are due to Mr. Garivaltis. It also effects how we grow in the future.
- Mr. McVeigh asked if we have programs that rely on grants. Since grants are being cut, do we not need the grant writer or can we rely on Jeanne LeClair.
- Mr. Finnie said the funding got cut because of how much progress we made.
- Dr. Hopson said the grant writing part is easier. It is the follow up once the grant is received that is difficult.
- Mr. McVeigh asked if their salary could be part of the grants.
- Mr. Myers asked for the numbers that go with the top cuts.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if you look, DESE says 48% of our kids need extra help. We need to write to our legislators about it. There seems to be a bias built in.
- Mrs. Long said it used to be a much more level playing field. Now there are far fewer grants outside of entitlement grants. A lot of grants have been assigned to certain schools. It can be a governor's priority or specific money coming to the state or the feds. We lost the 21st century learning grant, we can't apply for it again, and it isn't in the DESE budget again for anyone.
- Ms. Fisk said it is \$6,200 to increase days for PSV, \$28,000 for Literacy, \$10,000 for professional development and \$38,000 to replace the secretary with insurance.
- Ms. Fisk said some of it the changes are from staffing changes that happened in between. We will continue to tweak them until the budget adoption. Cherry sheets came out a little higher for choice and charter. Regional transportation should be good. Between Chapter 70 and Regional Transportation you could see a few more changes. Chester has gone up by 16 students since last March and 4 since January. Middlefield went up about 1. Russell has lost a few.
- We talked about the census, how often they are done, how addresses are verified, etc.
- Mr. Baldasaro said we have to all work together and put that pilot in place.
- Mr. Myers said Chester has an increase of 16. Middlefield is such a small town that 1 student affects them. Towns with an increase get penalized. We have talked about equalizing town assessments. We talked to Steve Hemman. He has talked to DESE and cleared a hurdle if we can get the towns to vote on it. It needs to be for more than one year. It makes towns family friendly. It takes the headache away from the district. Every town would get a 1.6% increase. That is without the growth part. We need to be united on this if we have a chance to move this forward.
- Dr. Hopson showed a chart with a 2.5% increase. Because it is an alternate method, each town has to vote on this. If you can get information for mid-March the school committee could vote on it and it could go to the towns.
- Mrs. McVeigh said even if you have a compact for three to five years, the towns would have to vote every year.
- Mr. Jacques said the three methods are statutory, regional and average. Statutory is by census.
- Dr. Hopson said if a town votes it down an alternative method it is dead in the water.
- Mr. Jacques likes the concept, but we have some selling to do. How are we going to sell this at town meeting so they understand that this benefits everyone. We need to get everyone to stop looking in 1-year increments. Would it be advantageous to come up with a model from the past 10 years that would show where we would have been.
- Dr. Hopson said if 10 kids moved into Russell you could be looking at a \$100,000 increase but with this model, it wouldn't be so bad.
- Mrs. McVeigh said the argument is going to be the base, not the 2.5% increase.
- Mrs. Nazzaro asked if we are using the base according to last year's assessments.
- Dr. Hopson said yes.

- Mr. Jacques said we could say we are going to use last year as a starting point.
- Dr. Hopson said yes, but your census jumps all over the place.
- Mrs. McVeigh said when we look at the chart if there is a 2.5% increase every year, the towns can't keep up with that.
- Dr. Hopson said your total education budget has not increased at the same rate as your town budget.
- Mrs. McVeigh said the towns have been deferring purchases. Those differed expenses are getting to the point where we have nowhere to go.
- Dr. Hopson said those should be debt excluded. If you look at the school being a 1 to 2% increase, that is actually a decrease. We need to find a happy medium. This may be the lowest budget you see in a while.
- Mr. Myers said we need to plan growth.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how she is going explain this to the towns.
- Dr. Hopson said went over the Census percentage sheet.
- Mr. Baldasaro said this is one of the main problems between the school, the towns, and the school committee. Right now the towns are not budgeting for any raises. We need to equal it out, project, and plan. This is an insurance policy for everyone.
- Mr. McVeigh said the danger if we don't change is the towns become unfriendly to families.
- Mr. Baldasaro said we have a lot of renters.
- Mrs. McVeigh said the key here is a united front. There are quite a few people who look to the select board and finance committee for recommendations.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said it is important to have a united front. It was very obvious at Chester's town meeting that those that were there were very attached and relied on them select board and finance for guidance. When the Chester select board said we need to support Russell and Huntington, the town people didn't need numbers. We need to present in a different way.
- Mrs. Winer said we are trying to increase the population.
- Dr. Hopson said we need to pick a base. Some are going to have more of an increase. He asked what they needed to have the 6 towns get together and move forward.
- Mr. Baldasaro said there is a hilltown collaborative meeting the first Saturday in March. That could be a start.
- Mrs. Crane asked if this amendment vote will be taking place at a special or annual town meeting.
- Dr. Hopson said he didn't get from Steve Hemman that we had an amendment, it was a pilot. The 2nd Wednesday in March when school committee adopts the budget is when you have to set the assessments alternative or statutory. If the towns agree on an alternate and the school committee agrees we would send the numbers out the towns. As we go through the next month we need to figure out where we are with the budget. Do we put parts of things in if we are not going with level funded. A 1.6% level services number is one that is doable. Might want to consider, if we agree to do an alternative assessment to have the towns do a budget in one vote rather than minimum verses above minimum.
- Mr. McVeigh asked why the district salary line item went up so much.
- Ms. Fisk said it's the district salary line and the money is set a side for negotiations and will eventually be put into individual accounts.
- Mr. Baldasaro said in E & D the district was maxed out and \$9,000 over.
- Ms. Fisk said it will reduce your 4th quarter assessments.
- Mrs. Crane asked what the other towns think of priority. items 9
- Mr. Jacques said at the minimum level services, and desire to improve, administration has demonstrated they are asking for the much needed. He thinks it is worth the shot to say this is what we need to do for our schools and our kids. He can't say Montgomery will pass it on the floor, but no increase is not feasible.
- Mrs. McVeigh said under current scenario with additional priorities – go up 91,726 She would have to go back because last year they did all the cutting they could do. Retirement and healthcare costs keep going up. Those are the places they saved last year. The town budget did not go up a lot. All of that could be subject to an 8 to 10% increase. It would be tight. Their budget figures are due this Friday. She agrees that equalized assessments would be much better.
- Mr. McVeigh said from statutory budget it is okay it's a savings. Equalized assessments would take a little bit of salesmanship. A level service is a way of saying you aren't experiencing a loss. It's 1% of their budget. We've had a big focus on loss. He asked how many students we could absorb without additional costs.
- Dr. Hopson said we lost a lot of kids but we can't lose teachers or we lose programs. Because we are keeping teachers, you could put more students in the high school without hiring staff, but at the elementary that is different if you are maintaining small class sizes.

- Mr. Precanico said his school is closing. He likes the level services budget and the idea of a level assessments across all towns. No matter what the number is there are a bunch of things coming down the road for Russell. Westfield is leaving, they have assessor issues, they have an estimate of \$13,000 for a marketing person, and they need a new highway truck. He is on board. He believes in the school system and knows we need to move forward. He needs this information in order to sell.
- Mrs. Austin said it would be helpful for Mr. Myers and Mrs. McVeigh to come to Montgomery to explain this.
- Mrs. Nazzaro mentioned looking back. She said you can make numbers say what you want. You can run numbers that are true. Maybe it would be helpful rather just use the assessments to go back about 10 years ago and show what it would be.
- Ms. Fisk said it is already done. You are always going to have winners and losers.
- Mrs. Huntoon said the facts need to be presented and they need to be presented in the most understandable easy way. She doesn't want anything over anyone's head.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session now at 8:36 p.m. for the purpose of an update on union negotiations – teachers and Litigation: Kennedy, et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, et al. - No.:HSCV2014-00210 to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Shirley, Michele

VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 1/24/18 (Enc.)

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro to approve the minutes of 1/24/18.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays 1 Abstain 2 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Diane, Terri, Melissa, Martha, Michele

Nays: Shirley

Abstain: Sarah, Lyndsey

- Mrs. Winer had a tough time with the minutes.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

- School Committee
- Chairperson
- Superintendent
Central Office Update (Enc.)
- Business Manager
- Administration
- Town

X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- Superintendent's Evaluation
- Legislative Liaison
- Policy Subcommittee
- Building Liaisons

XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

GYAA Building Use – April 25

XII. INFORMATION

Information

Superintendent's Corner January 19, 2018

VHS to DVD-R fundraiser for Gateway film studio

Gateway student semi-finalist at Arisia Conference
Gateway students take on UMASS

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

Warrants

AP#1050 \$191,121.67

PR# 015 \$347,116.25

AP#1052 \$54,750.01

PR# 016 \$356,315.49

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

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session now at 8:36 p.m. for the purpose of an update on union negotiations – teachers and Litigation: Kennedy, et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, et al. - No.:HSCV2014-00210 to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Shirley, Michele

A. Union Negotiations – Teachers

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

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to adjourn a 9:15 p.m.

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Melissa, Lyndsey, Martha, Shirley, Michele

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary