

**GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2015**

**Room 214/216 Jr. High  
7:30 P.M.**

**(A PORTION OF THIS MEETING MAY BE HELD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION)**

**I. OPENING OF MEETING**

BLANDFORD  
Michele Crane  
Terri Garfield

CHESTER  
Martha Otterbeck

HUNTINGTON  
Ron Damon  
William Hathaway  
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD  
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY  
Anne Marie Buikus  
Sandra Haas

RUSSELL  
Ruth Kennedy  
Tara Balboni

WORTHINGTON

SECRETARY  
Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION  
Dr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL  
Joanne Blocker, Director of Academics  
Jason Finnie, High/Jr. High Principal  
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer  
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: \_\_\_\_\_

**7:35 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit)**

- Mrs. Crane called the meeting to order.
- Mrs. Buikus is recording the meeting.
- Derrek Manson said GTAC is meeting Saturday from 9:30-11 a.m. at Stanton Hall in Huntington. As always the public and their input are welcome.

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**III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT**

- Brennan Foley said David Britland and Christian Tweed went to Boys' State. Ursula Barth went to Girls' State. Last week the band went to Littleville and played for the students to show them what band is all about. Littleville had field day last Friday and some NHS members helped out.
- Mrs. Crane thanked him for updating us this year.

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**IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS**

**A. Handbook Changes**

- Mr. Finnie went over changes to the Jr. high and high school handbooks.
- Some changes are to dress code, parking (will be the flat rate of \$25 per semester), and vapor/electronic cigarettes. It is appropriate to be in line with state regulations. Civil rights had been added due to the DESE audit and non-discrimination. One program of studies change is the addition of a computer science program. A grant will provide for curriculum training and support groups throughout the year for the teacher. It will be targeted mainly to juniors and seniors.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked about the non-discrimination changes.

- Ms. Taverna said it is a new protected class and one is added almost every year. Homeless is new this year. They are just going over things with a fine tooth comb to make sure we are in alignment.

#### **7:45 - V. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

##### **A. Recommendation to Participate in the National School Lunch Program**

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to participate in the National School Lunch Program.*

- Mrs. Buikus read in the newspaper Pittsfield is participating in a certification program. If 40% or more of your students are low income, the entire district could qualify for federal funding that pays for 100% even the ones who are not free.
- Dr. Hopson will talk to Mrs. McCaul.

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to participate in the National School Lunch Program.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent*

##### **B. MASC Joint Conference**

*Mrs. Buikus made a motion seconded by Mrs. Haas to approve to send a representative to the MASC Joint conference.*

- Mr. Wyand asked if we ever decided to pay for hotels, meals, etc.
- Dr. Hopson doesn't believe that we did, as Ms. Fisk didn't budget for it. He doesn't see why you can't.
- Mr. Wyand asked for it to be put on the agenda for next meeting.
- Mrs. Buikus feels it should include travel expenses too.

*Mrs. Buikus made a motion seconded by Mrs. Haas to approve to send a representative to the MASC Joint conference.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent*

##### **C. Recommendation to Establish an OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) Liability Trust Fund**

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mr. Wyand to establish an OPEB Liability Trust Fund.*

- Mrs. Buikus had asked Ms. Fisk how it was to be funded and suggested maybe it be tabled.
- Dr. Hopson said if you table it you can't use this year's funds.
- Attorney Dupere said you can establish it but you don't have to fund it.
- Mrs. Buikus asked will the school committee have to right to add to it.
- Mr. Damon said we pointed out there was a reduction in health insurance; those would be excellent excess funds to put that in the OPEB Liability Trust Fund.
- Mrs. Crane said we could establish the fund and discuss funding it later.

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mr. Wyand to establish and OPEB Liability Trust Fund.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 2 Absent*

##### **D. Annual FY '15 Line Item Transfers**

- Dr Hopson handed out an updated transfer sheet. Dr. Hopson said Ms. Fisk has the explanation of why transfers were made on the sheet.

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the FY 15 Transfers as presented.*

*Mrs. Buikus made an amendment seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve the \$237,440 and not the OPEB transfers.*

- Dr. Hopson said if we lose the opportunity to put the money in there, it would go to E & D.
- Mrs. Buikus said we need more information.

***Mrs. Buikus made an amendment seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to approve the \$237,440 and not the OPEB transfers.***

***Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent***

***Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the FY '15 Transfers as presented for a total of \$237,440, excluding OPEB transfers.***

***Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent***

***Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to transfer the \$106,000 into the OPEB Liability Trust Fund.***

- Mr. Damon said it is perfectly safe to put the money in a trust fund we control. We need it.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked what other information we need collectively.
- Mrs. Buikus said if you look at the line item, there is a line item where we fund insurance in the budget. She questioned does this become like a revolving account. She said the money would be put in, and the health insurance would be paid out of it.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked how it is handled if it is not a line item.
- Mrs. Buikus said if it is not a line item it is handled differently. We need to keep track of line items and where the money comes in and goes out.
- Dr. Hopson said this is money left over, this money if approved would go into OPEB, but not come back out. Dr. Hopson sees this as separate from roll over. It would be to start the build up for funding the 14 million. It would only come out for insurance payments.
- Mrs. Buikus said this is also \$106,000 we wouldn't be able to use to offset the budget next year.
- Mr. Damon said if we vote to put it in, we could vote to pay it out.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said this money would only come out for this purpose; not for anything else. It would pay for retiree costs. You will still be able to use it for OPEB.
- Mrs. Kennedy said we have a lot of unknowns coming into our future. To tie up \$106,000 we could use as a safety net is uncomfortable for her. Nothing says it has to be funded now. If we don't get the \$630,000 we are in serious trouble.
- Mrs. Foley asked about the consequences be of not taking the \$106,000.
- Dr. Hopson said if you put it in the only thing you can take it out for is OPEB insurance. It still could be used to lower the budget. If the courts see we are starting to fund OPEB, it may buttress the lawsuit; that the district is looking at this liability. It might play well to support the lawsuit.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said it would support the lawsuit. With E & D you can't use this money next year. It has to be funded.

***Mrs. Buikus made an amendment seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to put the \$26,000 in the OPEB Liability Trust Fund and the other \$80,000 in E & D.***

- Mr. Wyand said we are still going to have a line item each year in the budget for the retiree payments. Next year, if we don't get the mitigation, and we are planning on lowering the budget, you are still lowering the budget just in that line item.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said the point is not to spend the money. It would be like using your savings to pay your bills.
- Mr. Wyand said you could use this account or E & D.
- Mrs. Kennedy said if we show we have all this money to fund this, the state won't give us as much money.
- Dr. Hopson doesn't disagree, but there is no difference between this or E & D, they would still look at it as being excess.
- Mr. Wyand thinks it would be the same thing for the transportation fund.

***Mrs. Buikus made an amendment seconded by Mrs. Kennedy to put the \$26,000 in the OPEB Liability Trust Fund and the other \$80,000 in E & D.***

***Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 4 Nays 7 Abstain Absent***

***Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to transfer the \$106,000 into the OPEB Liability Trust Fund.***

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 7 Nays 4 Abstain Absent*

**E. Worthington Withdrawal – None**

**F. Furlough Day Action**

- Mrs. Stewart will bring the furlough vote to the next meeting.

**G. FY '16 Budget**

- Dr. Hopson said you could vote for a 15-day extension which would have to be granted by the commissioner.

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Buikus for Dr. Hopson to request a 15-day extension of time to work on the budget. (DESE has to take money off the budget figure; 1/12 budget for July 1)*

- Dr. Hopson said you all received the letter. The commissioner can do whatever he wants. He would send the letter out on Friday, and is asking for school committee approval.
- Derrick Mason asked what that creates as a new deadline for consideration of a new budget.
- Dr. Hopson said it would be 45 days from Chester's vote on the 13<sup>th</sup>. (3<sup>rd</sup> week in July)

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Buikus for Dr. Hopson to request a 15-day extension of time to work on the budget. (DESE has to take money off the budget figure; 1/12 budget for July 1)*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) yeas 11 Nays abstain Absent*

**8:15 - VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

**9:00 p.m.**

**A. Superintendent's Evaluation (Enc.)**

- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we had all the results. It is public information. She asked for them to be shared.

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to accept the evaluation subcommittee results.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 7 Nays 2 Abstain 2 Absent*

**B. School Committee Professional Development/Team Building**

*Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to move forward with a plan to hold professional development.*

- Mrs. Crane said she and Dr. Hopson have had conversations with Mr. Koocher from MASC. We were thinking October or November to talk about how we can work better as a team.
- Mrs. Kennedy said all we need to do is ask him to come down.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said this vote is about agreeing to do the training.

*Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to move forward with a plan to hold professional development.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 3 Absent*

**VII. CONSENT ITEMS 5/27/15 (Enc. 6/10), 6/10/15(Enc.)**

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 5/27/15.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 3 Absent*

Move 6/10 minutes to next time (include in the next packet)

## VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

### A. School Committee

- Mrs. Buikus said Mrs. Long did a great job with the school choice ad. It was beautifully written up. If we are so good how come so many kids are choosing out?
- Mrs. Crane said there are a lot of reasons why people choice out; it is not always the quality of education.
- Mrs. Long said her kids got a great education here and did extremely well in a variety of majors. She see's things as still as good or better. She would recommend any parent to send their kids to Gateway.
- Mrs. Buikus said we need to get more communication to the parents and the community.
- Dr. Hopson said if you look at the data, you will never have football or lacrosse. There is a limit to what we can offer. Some people choice out because sports are limited.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said her daughter just graduated and was successful. She was dumbfounded when she was one of two parents at the Chester town meeting. She is a huge advocate. Unfortunately people make up their minds.
- Ms. Taverna said what she hears is negativity; there aren't a sufficient number of individuals selling the school system. Parents recognize it but people voting don't recognize it. At least in Russell; she is not sure about other towns.
- Mrs. Garfield said Mrs. Long has been doing an exceptional job with communications; Westfield news, Country Journal, etc., more so than any other schools. She doesn't know how else to get the word out. This is a prep/private school atmosphere with an exceptional staff. We are the best kept secret.
- Mrs. Buikus said the houses are moving but the kids are not changing schools.
- Mr. Finnie said some of the reasons are vocational schools in the area, students experiencing mental illness and choosing home school, and the religious component due to state frameworks. At the Jr. High and high Worthington students are staying with us. Two-way communication is a struggle. He would encourage school committee to get community members to participate in school council. We are always investigating alternatives
- Mrs. Balboni has three children in district. She is from Westfield and has only been here for 1 school year. She has not had an unhappy moment she is very happy. People leave because of the testing environment and it is not unique to Gateway. There are so many awesome things we are doing, but people are inclined to share their negative opinions. There are a lot of missed opportunities in social media. Put GatorRoo on social media and 10 people will like it who don't even know where Gateway is.
- Mr. Damon has been associated with Gateway for 50 years as a teacher or school committee member. Once we recognize our problems we overcome them. Any parent who wants to send their kids somewhere else is going to. They have already paid for Gateway and they are not getting a better education anywhere else.

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 9:00 p.m. for the purpose of union, non-union negotiations, and litigation to return to open session.*

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

Yeas: Ruth, Jeff, Tara, Terri, Martha, Sarah, Ron, Sandra, Anne-Marie, Bill, Michele

- Mr. Wyand's son returned from another year at Boys' State. This is his 2<sup>nd</sup> year as a counselor and he can't say enough about the program. They discussed it this week. It is a positive experience and amazing how much they grow as individuals and learn about government function. John has posted around 34 UTube videos, if you want to see what goes on. It is a good introduction to college. In a matter of hours they are bonding and building relationships and the outcome is life long connections. As a school committee we should be more involved in it. It would be nice to get some follow up.
- Mrs. Long just finished the article. The Huntington historical society funded Ursula Barth, and they won't be able to fund a student next year. They hope another civic organization would take a year.
- Mrs. Foley asked what the cost is.
- Mrs. Long said either \$300 or \$500 she will let us know.

### B. Chairperson - None

### C. Superintendent

- We have hired Sara Laing as assistant principal. We have a couple of other people coming down the pipeline.

### D. Business Manager - None

**E. Administration**

- Mrs. Long brought some items created by Mrs. Levreaults to display for her send off. Unfortunately she was ill and unable to make it tonight. She was a co-founder of Friends of Gateway and rewarded volunteerism. She designed the artwork on the buttons for the volunteer dinner along with the cover for a staff directory. Mrs. Long thinks she may have even paid for them. She participated in the legislative forum and helped design the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary button. Mrs. Long can't express how appreciative we are for all this work of which was on her own time; whatever you needed and asked for, Mrs. Levreault was there. This was all before she became a school committee member.

**IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING****A. Superintendent's Evaluation** - None**B. Finance Subcommittee** - None**C. Legislative Liaison** - None**D. Policy Subcommittee** - None**E. Building Liaisons** - None**F. Community Curriculum Committee** – None

Entered into executive session at 8:53 p.m.

Returned to open session at 9:25 p.m.

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve a 1.5 % raise for administrative and non union to be taken either in salary, annuity, or time for the FY '16 school year.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays 3 Abstain 1 Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)*

Yeas: Tara, Terri, Martha, Sarah, Ron, Michele

Nays: Ruth, Sandra, Anne- Marie

Abstain: Jeff

Absent: Bill

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

Gateway ASMW Team advances to semi-finals

Gateway Graduates 80

LeBarron, Green and Piangerelli take top honors for Gateway

Superintendent's Corner June 8, 2015

Gateway open to school choice for 2015-2016

Chester wins in 'School Breakfast Challenge'

Pless represents Gateway at MassSTAR

JRHS Orientation June 22

Superintendent's Corner June 12, 2015

**Warrant**

AP#1094 \$66.80

PR# 25 \$

AP#1095 \$30,343.20

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**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to go into executive session at or before 9:00 p.m. for the purpose of union, non-union negotiations, and litigation to return to open session.*

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

Yeas: Ruth, Jeff, Tara, Terri, Martha, Sarah, Ron, Sandra, Anne-Marie, Bill, Michele

- A. Union Negotiations
- B. Non-Union Negotiations
- C. Litigation

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**XIII. ADJOURNMENT: *Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Buikus to adjourn at 9:30 pm***

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**Respectfully Submitted,  
Stacy L Stewart,  
School Committee Secretary**