

Mt. Greylock Regional School District  
School Committee Open Session Minutes  
School Committee Annual Retreat

Date: Friday, August 2, 2019

Location: Lanesborough Town Hall

Start: 12:04 PM

Community Room

Adjourn: 4:42 PM

In Attendance:

Committee Members:

Regina DiLego, Christina Conry, Al Terranova, Alison Carter, Dan Caplinger

Absent: Jamie Art, Steve Miller

Also Present: Kim Grady; Superintendent

- I. **Call to Order:** R. DiLego called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm.
- II. **Roles & Responsibilities:** The Committee had a brief discussion of the general roles and responsibilities of the School Committee. DiLego noted that the three main functions of the School Committee are the budget and fiscal responsibility, policy, and employing the Superintendent. These are the areas that the School Committee directly controls and oversees. Caplinger led a discussion regarding the time commitment and need for shared responsibility among the Committee members.
  - A. **Subcommittee work** - Responsibilities of subcommittees were reviewed; they should meet regularly when their work is pertinent, report out monthly to the full school committee, post proper agendas through the superintendent and district office, maintain open meeting law regulations, get minutes to District Office within ten days of every meeting conducted and remember that they are a subcommittee of the full committee and their work is conducted to inform the full committee responsibly Existing subcommittees were identified: finance, negotiations, Phase 1 & Phase 2 Capital Gift. Policy was a liaison position to get the District started, but the Committee feels it should now be a subcommittee. Liaison assignments are building and grounds, wellness, endowments, curriculum, and strategic planning. Committee discussion identified the desire for a website liaison. Caplinger asked the difference between a liaison and a subcommittee. DiLego responded that subcommittees are appointed by the school committee to carry out work as designated by the school committee. They must adhere to all open meeting law regulations and meeting practices as the full committee would. Liaisons are school committee members who represent the committee on working groups created and overseen usually by the Superintendent. Since they are not public body committees,

there is greater latitude in meeting structure and compliance. Subcommittees report to the school committee directly whereas working groups report to the Superintendent and the liaison informs the committee of the work being done.

- B. **Policy-** A great deal of work was done by the Superintendent in conjunction with MASC to get our policies updated and combined. They are available on line. DiLego noted that the cover page online needs to be updated in the Committee membership piece. With the manual now set, it is the Committee's responsibility to update and maintain it. The Committee consensus is that this work would be best handled by a subcommittee. MASC sends out regular updates on policy and specific needs arise during the course of the year. The Building Use policy needs to be finalized and ready for the coming school year, and a few policy updates gave come from MASC. Conry noted that she would be willing to serve on this committee when it is appointed.
- C. **Finance/Budget** - Caplinger is chair of the Finance Subcommittee. He would like to establish a regular meeting schedule for his subcommittee this school year. Andrea Wadsworth, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance, is working to set up the books and spreadsheets to best maximize information and understanding for the Committee going forward. DiLego discussed the structure for setting the budget and noted that this past year it did not seem evident that the process as the agreement laid out and as she expected had been followed. Much discussion ensued with all agreeing that the process could be better. The Committee would like more evidence of the Councils' involvement in the budget process. To this end, the Committee would like the Council Co-Chairs to bring the budget recommendations forward instead of the Principals in February. DiLego expressed a desire for a budget workshop with Asst Supt Wadsworth for all School Committee members much later in the year when the process is more established so that all School Committee members can feel more comfortable with understanding the budget. The Regional budget is more complex than the municipal budget format and is a learning curve for the majority of the Committee. There was agreement that such a workshop would be helpful.

- III. **Self-Evaluation:** This is more of a reflective process this year since no goals were developed last fall. The Committee reviewed each area on the MASC self-evaluation form. **Workshops-** Besides the yearly conference the Committee hopes to participate more in the school year presentations from outside people. **Operations-** The chair and the superintendent will meet with all new members for an orientation of sorts. Christina and Ally will make a list of new member concerns/questions they experienced. Roles of the Committee officers was reviewed. The Committee discussed the need to support the chair and help with the work at hand. Caplinger noted that the chair should not be the end all be all of the Committee. It is group work and needs group participation. **Committee/Superintendent Relations** – Terranova observed that the Committee had not supported the Superintendent strongly enough publicly over the past year. The Committee concurred. A strong, positive, supportive relationship is critical to the strength of the Regional District. **Strategic Planning & Fiscal Management** – The strategic plan is underway with Committee support. The group as a whole would like a stronger understanding of the regional budget. **Community Relations** – The Committee feels this is one area that needs the most improvement. We set, as a personal goal. A commitment to have more involvement in events at the three schools.

Members should strive to become involved in whichever school(s) they have the list knowledge. Better communication and access to information for the public is also a priority. **Meetings** – It is sometimes difficult to prepare when material comes in last minute. Long meetings lose everyone’s attention. The Committee decides that extensive topics should have their own separate meetings. Student and principal reports should be at the beginning of the agenda. It was also stressed that agendas be carefully developed so as to avoid last minute rearranging of items at the meeting. Those attending expect the order as presented. The Committee also discussed public comment. Regulations around this have changed and many school committees are removing it from their monthly agendas. The Committee will review the new regulations and make a determination on this after reviewing.

IV. **Protocols** – Steve Miller arrives at 2:45 pm. The current School Committee protocols are reviewed. There is much discussion regarding #6-7-8 and school committee direct contact with staff. Subcommittee chairs should be able to connect with the District Office Manager to post agendas they have reviewed with the superintendent. The School Committee chair is a conduit for obtaining information, as is the superintendent. Committee members, without express direction from the Committee, should not be having direct communication with staff regarding district business. Members should encourage others to follow the chain of command and will forward any complaints or criticisms to the Superintendent or Committee Chair- to include the identifying information of the complainant. In general, anonymous complaints and criticisms will not be addressed by the District. Item 14 on the protocol list regarding remote participation needs the brackets and highlighting removed. Otherwise, the Committee is fine with the protocols as they are.

V. **School Committee Goals**- The school committee goals are tied to the strategic plan and mission statement of the Regional School District. After reviewing the strategic plan, the Committee developed four goals, following the MASC guidelines. The goals as presented here are not finalized. Each member will review them for possible wordsmithing and expansion at our next meeting.

The four goals are as follows:

1. By June 2020, the School Committee will review and adopt relevant policies and support funding for resources which address the social/emotional needs of all children within the regional school district, as measured by policies reviewed, meeting minutes and budgetary commitments.
  - The School Committee will appoint a policy subcommittee to review and update policies
  - The Policy Subcommittee will work with the Superintendent and related Administration to review and bring forward related policies
  - The Finance Subcommittee will work with the Superintendent and related Administration to support budgetary requests that support the social/emotional needs of all students
  - Subcommittees will report back monthly to the full committee on this
2. By June 2020, The School Committee will have worked collaboratively with the Superintendent and senior administrative staff to promote inclusive and diverse curriculum, instruction and cross- cultural experiences which expand student learning

opportunities as measured by agenda items, meetings with the Superintendent and Administration, and meeting minutes.

- The School Committee will meet with the Superintendent to identify needs within the Regional District
- The School Committee will ensure that budget resources are available to support initiatives and align with administrative efforts
- The School Committee will assign a curriculum liaison to work with the Superintendent and/or Curriculum Director

3. By June 2020, the School Committee will have successfully closed out the Mt Greylock school building project as measured by the verified MSBA close out process.

- The School Committee will streamline the process by replacing the School Building Sub-Committee with the current School Committee plus the Superintendent, MCPPO, and Facilities Director, and any other required members
- The School Committee will actively work with and support the Superintendent and District Advisors to facilitate the final process

4. By June 2020, the School Committee will have adopted or developed and implemented a proactive and effective communication plan that improves community engagement and perception as measured by increased community/regional participation at school events/meetings, increased attendance by school committee members at school events, better perceived communication within the Regional District, agenda items and minutes.

- The School Committee will structure agendas to dedicate time at the beginning for student activities/updates and Principal updates
- The School Committee will appoint a liaison to the website workgroup to assist in foster distribution and ease of access of information
- The School Committee will have content in the schools' monthly newsletters to better inform parents
- The School Committee will request receipt of the Principal email blasts which announce upcoming events within all three schools.

VI. **Master Calendar** – The master calendar for the year was reviewed. All felt that the second Thursday of the month at 6 pm works for the regular monthly meeting time. Appointing the Keeper of the Records for the District was added to August. Program of Studies was moved from December to February. Tuition rate was added to January. School Council budget review was also added to January. Caplinger stated he was glad to see school calendar discussion in October so that the process is begun early enough for parents to be informed.

VII. **Mission Statement**- A task force is working with the Superintendent to blend the mission statements from the three individual schools to arrive at an overarching mission statement which reflects the goals and objectives of the Regional District.

VIII. **Review Superintendent Evaluation Process** – The state has developed and is piloting a streamlined evaluation for Superintendents which removes the extraneous items which do not truly reflect the Superintendent's responsibilities. It is also designed to be less confusing and cumbersome for Committee members to complete. Supt Grady has signed the District up to participate in this pilot program. The documents for the evaluation process will not be

available until after August 15<sup>th</sup>. The Committee discussed the need to stay committed to following the process and its timeline. Committee responsibility in tracking progress on these goals throughout the year was also discussed. Much of the material is presented at meetings and Committee members need to be proactive in noting items that are connected to the Superintendent's goals.

- IX. Strategic Plan** – The strategic plan was included only to inform the Committee goals.
- X. Superintendent Goals** – The Superintendent's goals need to be connected to the School Committee goals as well as the Strategic Plan. Until the Committee adopts goals, the Superintendent's goals cannot be set. Superintendent Grady will be doing a self- reflection during her goal setting process.
- XI. Adjourn** – Miller moved to adjourn at 4:42pm Caplinger seconded. All in favor.