



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

December 18, 2015

David Hopson, Superintendent
Gateway Regional School District
12 Littleville Road
Huntington, MA 01050

Dear Superintendent Hopson:

In accordance with Chapter 71, Section 16B, if a regional budget is not adopted by December 1, the department shall establish a budget for the year and assume fiscal operation of the district. In accordance with this statute, I am authorizing a FY16 budget for the Gateway Regional District in the amount of \$16,362,662.

We have reviewed the information provided by the member towns to support a budget level that they deem appropriate and within the town's fiscal capacity. We have also reviewed information submitted by the regional school district to outline steps taken to investigate cost saving measures and to mitigate the financial impact on the member towns, while maintaining a level of spending that will serve the needs of the Gateway students. At this point in the fiscal year, I am reluctant to approve any significant reduction in the school committee's planned expenditures. However, based on the information provided, I believe this .25 percent reduction will allow the district to meet its goals and objectives for the year. I am further requiring that the District engage a consultant, subject to my approval, to provide financial and administrative recommendations to support the district's efforts to institute cost saving measures to create stability for the towns and meet the educational goals for the children of the district moving forward. The maximum obligation for the purpose of hiring such a consultant shall be \$30,000.

I encourage the district and towns officials to work together, and with the consultant to review town and district obligations and needs and to identify areas where there might be future cost savings, including increased regionalization, sharing of administrative services or collaboration with neighboring districts and/or towns. We support the work of the Gateway Sustainability Task Force to consider district and/or municipal operational changes that might improve services while increasing economic efficiencies.

Each member community is ordered to appropriate and pay to the district such assessments as are calculated by the district treasurer for the support of this final approved budget. This budget and the department's fiscal control will remain in place until the end of the fiscal year or until the member towns have approved a budget for the subsequent fiscal year, whichever is later.

December 18, 2015

David Hopson, Superintendent

Page Two

The following actions taken by the regional school committee, the superintendent of schools, or any other official of the school district shall be effective only with the written approval of the Commissioner:

- (a) Adoption or reconsideration of the district budget.
- (b) Transfer of budgetary authority between line items.
- (c) Encumbrance or expenditure of funds not included in the general fund budget.
- (d) Borrowing.
- (e) Execution of new or amended collective bargaining agreements.
- (f) Execution of new contracts or amendments to existing contracts with a value of \$25,000 or more.
- (g) Establishment, increase, or decrease of user fees.

During the period of fiscal control, the Commissioner may impound any unencumbered funds for such period of time as he determines and undertake any initiatives that he deems necessary to secure the financial stability of the district. I am appointing Christine Lynch to serve as my designee to the Gateway Regional District during this period.

I would encourage the district administration and representatives of the member towns to initiate early discussions on next year's budget so that local resolution can be achieved. Please share this letter with your school committee members. Please keep Ms. Lynch informed of all fiscal activities and contact her at 781-338-6520 or at clynch@doe.mass.edu if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,



Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Chair, School Committee
Board of Selectmen, Blandford
Board of Selectmen, Chester
Board of Selectmen, Huntington
Board of Selectmen, Middlefield
Board of Selectmen, Montgomery
Board of Selectmen, Russell
Jeff Wulfson, Deputy Commissioner
Mary Jane Handy, Department of Revenue
Christine Lynch, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education