

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Gateway Regional School District will provide an exemplary education that challenges all students in an instructional setting appropriate to their needs.

All visitors attending the school committee meeting should sign in at the security booth.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2021

Middle School 112/114

7:00 P.M.

7:00PM I. OPENING OF MEETING

Call to order: Superintendent Smidy

BLANDFORD

Terri Garfield
Keri Morawiec

CHESTER

Jeana Briggs
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

David Lubbers
Pegg Dragon
Edward Renauld

MIDDLEFIELD

MONTGOMERY

RUSSELL

Tara Balboni
Sarah Page
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Kristen Smidy, Incoming Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Assist. Supt. for Business
and Finance

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Martha Clark, High/Middle Assistant Principal
Megan Coburn, Chs,Lit Principal
Jason Finnie, Middle/High Principal
Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

TBD

OTHERS: Amy Porter, Kendra Gregerson, Sean Heffernan

- Mrs. Smidy opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

- All members introduced themselves.

7:05PM II. REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE

A. Chairperson

Nominated: Sarah Page, Jason Forgue - they both accepted the nomination.

- Ballots were handed out and collected.

Sarah Page 7 votes

Jason Forgue 3 votes

- Sarah Page is the new Chairperson

Once a chair is nominated and approved, the meeting will be run by the chair.

B. Vice-Chairperson

Nominated: Jason Forgue by Mrs. Garfield seconded by Mr. Lubbers

Mrs. Page moves the motion to a voice vote and asks all in favor of Mr. Forgue as Vice Chair.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

C. Secretary (Stacy Stewart recommended)

Nominated: Stacy Stewart by Mrs. Balboni

Mrs. Page moves the motion to a voice vote and asks all in favor of Mrs. Stewart as Secretary.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

D. District Treasurer (Deborah Kuhn recommended)

Nominated: Deb Kuhn

Mrs. Page moves the motion to a voice vote and asks all in favor of Ms. Kuhn Treasurer.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

E. Legislative Contact

Nominated: Ms. Papillon

Mrs. Page moves the motion to a voice vote and asks all in favor of Mrs. Papillon as Legislative Contact.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

F. Counsel for the Committee (Dupere Law Office)

Nominated: Dupere Law Office

Mrs. Page moves the motion to a voice vote and asks all in favor of Dupere Law Office as Counsel for the Committee.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

G. Negotiator for the Committee (Dupere Law Office)

Nominated: Dupere Law Offices

Mrs. Page moves the motion to a voice vote and asks all in favor of Dupere Law Office as Negotiator for the Committee.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

H. Sick Bank Committee: Mrs. Balboni, Mrs. Morawiec

I. Negotiations Committee: Mr. Fogue, Mr. Lubbers, Mrs. Garfield

J. Superintendent's Evaluation: Mrs. Page, Mrs. Balboni, Mrs. Garfield, Mrs. Morawiec

K. Policy Committee: Mrs. Papillon, Mrs. Morawic, Mrs. Page, Mrs. Dragon

L. Warrant Signing Committee: Mrs. Briggs, Mr. Lubbers, Mrs. Balboni, Mr. Fogue, Mrs. Dragon

M. Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) Representative: Mr. Lubbers

7:25PM

III. PUBLIC INPUT - None

(Guests attending the meeting may address the committee. There is a three minute time limit per guest)

7:35PM IV. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT - None

7:40PM V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS - None

7:40PM VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Review of concerns presented to the committee at prior meeting including Health class curriculum, Start of school time, and Hockey Co-op and set goals and timeline for follow up. (Enc.'s)

- Mrs. Smidy said we hired a new health teacher. We will update at the next meeting.
- Mrs. Smidy said Northampton and Amherst are looking at flipping the elementary and high school start times. We could survey families to see what their thoughts are.
- Mrs. Balboni said she thought Boston did and there may be some data.
- Mr. Finnie was concerned about jobs and athletics, as well as older students who watch their younger siblings..
- Mr. Lubbers said there is data that shows it is better.
- Mrs. Smidy said that Southwick does plan to ask us to renew the hockey co-op. We hope to have it at the next meeting.

B. Consider and potentially vote on the Face Covering Policy EBCFA (formerly approved September 9, 2020, (Enc.))

- Mrs. Smidy said the last face policy was approved last September and is in line with the current Commissioner's update. The mandate for masks was continued as of Tuesday.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if we would address it again in October.
- Mrs. Smidy said the K-12 mandate will last at least through October 1. He will consider lifting the mandate for communities with an 80% or higher vaccination rate. That includes staff and students who are eligible.
- Kayla Brady, a parent from Blandford is not happy with the Commissioner's mask mandate. She read a letter stating she liked the plan that was initially in place. She had forwarded her information to the commissioner as well.
- Mr. Lubbers said he read the statement she posted. He is 66 and has never known anyone dying from a mask, but 66,000 died from not wearing a mask.
- Sean Heffernan, a parent from Chester is furious about the mask mandate and not giving an option for remote learning. He liked having a choice; some masked and some not. Where is everyone who is not vaccinated? It is not right to tell him or his child what to do. Why is there no hybrid learning. He is sympathetic, as he has lost grandparents, but kids have been playing all summer.
- Mrs. Smidy said the recommendation before the mandate allowed parents to choose. Given DESE's mandate, it is required to have 5 full days in person. Yesterday the Board of Education voted to allow the Commissioner to mandate masks. She strongly recommended they let their legislators and DESE know

how they feel. If we don't follow the mandate, since it is part of our return to school plan, if it is not approved we can lose our state funding.

- Mr. Renauld thought the policy was thoughtful and deliberate and took into the considerations of both parents that wanted and didn't want their children in masks. The school's hands are tied. You have the option of homeschool or private school. He is going to send his child to Gateway. The 80% vaccination information makes him angry because that is privileged information. They threw out a high number. They suspect only 70% would get vaccinated at large. They are just about to allow children under 12 to get vaccines.
- Mrs. Dragon said Governor Baker said it was recommended and DESE went over his recommendation.
- Mrs. Smidy said the Board of Education voted to declare mask mandates under exigent circumstances. Governor Baker appoints the Commissioner, but they are two governing bodies.
- Kendra Gregerson said she liked the plan when it first came out. Are the kids going to need to wear masks for sports and afterschool activities? That is a long time if they are. She asked if students don't wear masks, how does it impact them.
- Mrs. Smidy said there are built in mask breaks and they are only mandated inside. They will have outside opportunities for lunch and gym classes to be held outside unmasked. We are looking at ordering more picnic tables. The ramifications of not wearing masks will be through progressive discipline. We will focus on counseling and support, but if they can't comply, conversations with families and up to exclusions.
- Mrs. Dragon asked if the school is petitioning the department of education stating we want to follow our school policy. Are we at least addressing and complaining to them?
- Mrs. Smidy is happy to write a letter to DESE.
- Mr. Forgue said what we currently have in place was what we voted for last september. We are continuing the mandate in place; not Mrs. Smidy's policy.
- Mrs. Smidy said it is important to approve the back to school policy. The controversial issue is the mask policy.
- Mrs. Briggs would like to hear from constituents.
- Mr. Forgue said masks are required to be worn.
- Mrs. Smidy said we are working hard to maintain 3 feet. Students who are outside .These regulations are through October 1.
- Mrs. Dragon said masks are irrelevant from a medical standpoint; except for open wounds.
- Mrs. Garfield said masks say right on them they don't protect from covid. They protect the people in the room, but not you. Because Fiser was approved they are going to start mandating.
- Mrs. Page closed public input.
- Mrs. Smidy said the protocol approved tonight and write to commissioner riley,

8:00PM VII. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Review and Vote on Return to School Plan Recommendations

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to waive the two-meeting rule to approve the Return to School Plan.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Ed

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the Return to School Plan with DESE's mask protocol in place. The committee would like the District to write a letter to DESE and poll the community on their thoughts.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah

Nays: Ed

8:20PM VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 6/9/2021 (Enc.)

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mr. Forgue to approve the minutes of June 9 with revisions.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 7 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jason, Terri, David, Sara, Lyndsey, Ed

Abstain: Jeana, Pegg, Keri

8:30PM IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mr. Forgue expressed discontent to move forward with one varsity team for boys soccer. There are about 25. He said Mr. Bonenfant said it's a Title IX violation. He would like to make these teams more realistic. He doesn't understand, in our current trend, what are we waiting for. He would like a coed JV team. There are nine 7th graders on a varsity team. Why are we setting it up that way?
- Mrs. Briggs said these kids are so athletic and competitive and are either getting beat by an 18 year old or giving up a huge chunk of their lives sitting on a bench. It's a disgrace and she blames Mr. Bonenfant.
- Mr. Forgue said the girls have 16 players.
- Mrs. Balboni said it was horrible last year and it was tough for the kids.
- Mr. Finnie said we can look at it. His kids are experiencing the same in Monson. This isn't unique to Gateway. It is largely due to the number of students we have in the

school; it's not all on Mr. Bonenfant. A number of schools have had to eliminate JV teams. We are fortunate we have the same principal for middle and high school.

- Mrs. Coburn asked how many you need to create a team.
- Ms. Fisk said 11.
- Mrs. Papillon said you also need all of the kids to show up.
- Mr. Forgue if you have a JV boys team you have to have a JV girls team.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if we could have a varsity girls and boys and a co-ed JV.
- Mr. Renauld said we should do whatever gives the kids the most opportunity.
- Mr. Finnie said we can look into it.
- Mrs. Briggs said her kids are not going to go to high school here if sports do not change.
- Mr. Finnie said the issue is the number of students we have.
- Mrs. Garfield asked if we have the percentage of students who participate in sports in relation to the total.
- Mr. Lubbers said we should listen to kids more. The kids should vote on how their sports are set up.
- Mr. Finnie said we can look into what the students are interested in, however, we are tied to the rules and regulations of MIAA.
- Ms. Smidy said she, Mr. Finnie, and Mr. Bonenfant can have a discussion and update the committee.

B. Chairperson - None

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Ms. Smidy briefly reviewed her report.

D. Assistant Superintendent

- Ms. Fisk said the buildings are ready, floors are clean and grounds look great. Patio beard boostershak.
- Mr. Forgue said the booster club is no more, everyone quit.
- Ms. Fisk said the school district owns the booster shack.
- Mr. Forgue said the people who volunteered who built it don't think that.
- Mrs. Briggs is unhappy with the sports program
- Mrs. Balboni said we need to have a conversation with Kirsten that is more structured. Some goals need to be set up. You need a larger population playing sports and the includes getting parents involved. Credit for a class.s
- Mr. Forgue said he moved the program he runs somewhere else. Maybe we bring it back and not get charged by the schools. This should be the hub of the district. He has 122 kids playing soccer this fall.
- Put this on the agenda for the next meeting.

E. Administration

- Mr. Finnie handed out a page for credit changes for the new schedule change to the 6 period schedule. They are getting an additional 60 minutes a week for the vocational programs.

- Mr. Fogue is fully in support of a 6 period day. He was not considering the ramifications on the NHS. As a father of 3 in band they want the band electives but also want to qualify for NHS.
- Mr. Finnie said there are some combined sections for honors and cp honors for flexibility. They would still count. He said they took out the hood restriction in the handbook under dress code. For students with some social emotional issues, hoods and weighted blankets can be helpful.
- Mrs. Clark talked about the - PBIS handbook and code of conduct. It explains PBIS and goes to all families. It includes tier 1, 2, and 3 and outlines the possible consequences and defines what that is.
- Mr. Fogue asked where the non mask wearing student is going to fall. That is going to be progressive.
- Mrs. Clark said it will start at tier 1.
- Mr. Finnie said we need to find ways to get them to get back to class with a mask.
- Mrs. Clark is looking at ways to bring the fun back to Gateway; the spirit of Gateway that was taken away from us last year. Monthly spirit days, 100 day celebration, spirit activities, students voices are infused in the planning.
- Mrs. Coburn hired her last person this morning. We did a great job keeping our kids engaged this summer. Chester held a Title I summer program and Littleville had wrap around. It was a busy summer. She is concerned about the elementary kids in the middle of an adult discussion.

F. Town - None

8:40PM X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation
- B. Legislative Liaison
- C. Policy Subcommittee
- D. Building Liaisons

8:55PM XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

9:00PM XII. INFORMATION
Information

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

Warrant

AP#1092 \$207,402.39
AP#1093 \$19.70

PR#26 \$403,060.62
PR#26.1 \$64,123.68

AP#1094 \$118,707.46	PR#26.2 \$909,819.27
AP#1096 \$191,937.82	PR#001 \$87,601.59
AP#1099 \$143,141.27	PR#002 \$104,623.28
AP#1100 \$11.62	PR#003 \$112,699.73
AP#1000 \$64,134.03	PR#004 \$124,515.99
AP#1003 \$625,104.00	
AP#1101 \$58,012.48	
AP#1004 \$158,014.48	
AP#1102 \$16,140.01	
AP#1006 \$50,904.29	

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

XIV. ADJOURNMENT at 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mr. Fogue made a motion seconded by Mr. Renauld to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

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

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, David, Keri, Sarah, Lyndsey, Ed

Respectfully submitted,
 Stacy L Stewart
 School Committee Secretary