

Approved

MINUTES #10/13/2021

## 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, OCTOBER 13, 2021

Middle School 112/114

7:00 P.M.

**7:00PM I. OPENING OF MEETING**

Call to order: Sarah Page, Chairperson

**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, Superintendent  
Stephanie Fisk, Business & 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  
Darlene Rehor, Elementary Assistant Principal

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Joseph Pisani

Others: Susan Rhoads, Val Zeh, Dawn Von Deck, Bill Brown, Amy Porter, Chris Bresnahan, Mrs. Rock, unknown man.

## **7:00PM      II.    PUBLIC INPUT**

(Guests attending the meeting may address the committee on topics not on the agenda. There is a three minute time limit per guest)

- Dawn Von Deck is still concerned with the heaviness of her grandson's backpack. He told her that the teachers require them to put their chromebooks in their backpacks. Is that true? She gets the locker issue with students using the upper and lower at the same time. What happens when the kids hav boots, hats and mittens? Maybe first top and then bottom, then top and bottom at the end of the day. It was a suggestion.
- Mr. Finnie said if it is an issue of traveling back and forth. He would certainly address it, he just needs to come see him.
- Dawn Von Deck said his backpack weighs 12 lbs.
- Mr. Finnie said he works with every student that has an issue.

## **7:10PM      III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT**

- Joseph Pisani said the high school had its first spirit week and it was super successful. They held a club fair where students became interested in and signed up for clubs. Class elections were held last week. All four classes have all four officers. It is the start of the fundraising season. The students received more school spirit in shirt form from Ms. Smidy. MS and HS both had a PBIS celebration. Student council had their first meeting - planning more spirit days and planning reindeer games as long as it can happen. PSAT's were today. At the last meeting he wanted to send out a form to get student input but it went out later than expected. He plans on having information at the next meeting.
- Mrs. Babloni asked who manages the Instagram pages.
- Joseph Pisani said one of the officers from each class.
- Mrs. Balboni thinks it is great! It makes it easy for the community to see what is going on. It's fun.
- Dawn VonDeck asked what Instagram is and what they put on it.
- Joseph Pisani said it's a social media app. They post spirit week information, points, and other activities. Information is also posted on the walls at school for those who don't have Instagram.

## **7:15PM      IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS**

### **A. Athletic Director of the Year Nomination, Matt Bonenfant**

- Mrs. Smidy said PVIAC nominated Mr Bonenfant for athletic director of the year. She congratulated him.

### **B. Commendation for Gateway staff and Huntington Police Chief Garriepy**

- Mrs. Smidy thanked the Huntington Police Chief and a number of staff, Ms. Fisk, Mrs. Clark and Mr. Bonenfant for their quick support. We are lucky to have amazing staff and first responders.

7:20PM

## V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

### A. DESE Mandate Review

-Repercussions (Funding, Time on Learning, Educator Licensure)

-Face Covering Policy

- Ms. Page said we were asked what some of the repercussions would be if we were not to follow the mandate. As a school committee we need to decide that this is something we are going to get behind. We need to stop debating the efficacy of the mask and take it for what it is right now. The policy we agreed on contains the DESE mandates.
- Ms. Smidy put a document in the folder today. There are three big bucket areas if we don't follow the mandate. Reduction or holding back of state aid. 6.2 million dollars could be lost over the course of the year. Time on learning is 900 at the elementary and 990 at secondary. If we don't follow, it could not count while we are not following. Administrators and educators can have their licenses revoked. There are no districts not following the mandates.
- Mr. Lubbers asked Joseph Pisani how the student body feels.
- Joseph Pisani said he doesn't want to say anything on behalf of the student body if he doesn't know that's how they feel. Some students just go to school and go with it. There are students passionate on both sides. He cannot confidently say they feel one way or another.
- Ms. Page feels at this point we need to move on until DESE has released control and then we can argue about it again
- Mrs. Morawiec said it's not about saying we like or don't like masks, we need to follow DESE guidelines.
- Ms. Page said there will be a lot of pieces of it until we are released from the mandate.
- Ms. Dragon said the Governor said we are at 73% vaccinated and we needed to be at 80%. Is it the school or the towns?
- Ms. Smidy said he is looking for 80% of eligible students and staff. Can't just look at the towns. Montgomery is part of Westfield, so there is no way to tell. She has asked staff to voluntarily turn in their vaccination card. She could get more information if the committee wanted her to.
- Ms. Dragon the director said we could opt out.
- Ms. Smidy said schools that have 80% can apply only for those who are unmasked. There are 5 districts statewide right now.
- Mr. Forgue said of those five, three said they weren't going to do it anyway. The application deadline is Friday.
- Ms. Dragon asked if they are keeping the masks on if they are vaccinated or not.
- Ms. Smidy has an equity issue about masking because there are those who cannot get vaccinated. Other ways if we unmask, you would be forced into pool testing (and example of offramp) The commissioner is looking at all options right now.

### B. Hockey Co-op Update

- Mrs. Smidy said that is still in the works. November is the target date. By the next meeting this should be taken care of.

### C. Start Time Update

- Mrs. Smidy met with John Provost from Northampton who flipped the elementary and secondary time schedule. She summarized this today and added it in the folder. Feasibility study costs approximately \$25,000. He indicated the community should be in support of it whether the biological shift makes sense for everyone. Their athletes are missing school to travel. She would recommend this be tabled for a couple of years. We have a lot of curriculum work to focus on. That would be an additional variable right now. We can also take the data from Amherst and Northampton. He can't show systematic changes because it has only been two months.
- Mr. Lubbers doesn't think this should be tabled for too long. He was hoping for January.
- Mrs. Balboni said there is also concern about younger children being left at home as well. Kids in their teens are going through puberty.
- Mrs. Garfield thinks that two years is not a long time to study that. That is a huge change in sports and academics. There is already enough instability. We should revisit this again in two years after we get through Covid. She doesn't disagree, she is a high school teacher, she watches them sleep all the time.
- Dawn Von Deck said a lot of our high schoolers work. That is something important to high schoolers. Jobs aren't five minute away when you live around here.
- Kathleen Rock said they have sports and academics. Her daughter is up till 2 am doing homework. It doesn't matter what time you shift the day, she is still going to have a lack of sleep.

### D. Budget Transfers (Enc.)

- Ms. Fisk said it was in the packet last time and this time. 99% of the shift is in staffing. Budget transfers are 4 times a year. Usually they coincide with the quarterly report.
- Mrs. Dragon asked what budget transfers are.
- Ms. Fisk said a shift of money from one account to another.

***Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the FY '22 First Quarter Transfers.***

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

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

## 7:40PM VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

### A. After School Transportation Update

- Mrs. Clark said the program started yesterday. They currently have twenty-five students. Twenty-two middle and three high schoolers. The busses go to all the town centers. Next week there will be two busses so students staying for clubs can utilize them Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. There will be a sign up sheet on Monday for students to sign up each week.

- Mrs. Balboni asked what time the buses leave.
- Mrs. Clark said 4:30ish. The program ends at 4:15.
- Mrs. Rock asked if they could still sign up.
- Mrs. Clark said yes, they can still sign up.
- Mr. Lubbers asked how much money it involved.
- Mrs. Rock asked if that was a problem.
- Mr. Lubbers said it is not that it is worth it or not, he is just trying to get an idea.
- Ms. Fisk said one Lecrenski bus is \$175 a day. Next week we will be using two. A number of staff get paid to do a stipend to teach after school courses. That is going to happen all year. We are at eight staff now. We are trying to grow it. Some staff were hesitant this year because of Covid. It was high on the priority of staffing at the beginning of the year. It got the most of the votes. We are starting small. We are using SR2 federal funding.
- Mrs. Smidy SR3 runs through 2025. We budgeted about \$40,000 in total on it. We may need to include it in the budget eventually. She gave kudos to Mrs. Clark. Kids can access it but they would need to sign up on Monday for the week. Working on supervision because of the hour difference.

**B. Calendar Change - Professional Development Days**

- Mrs. Smidy said the current approved calendar has 2 half days and 4 early release days. It would be more beneficial to reduce 4 early release days to 2 half days. Eliminate early release in November and April and make February and March half days. She ran it by the GEA and they are in agreement.

***Mrs. Briggs made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to waive the 2-meeting rule to vote on the calendar change.***

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

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

***Mrs. Morawiec made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboi to approve the calendar change.***

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

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

**7:45PM VII. CONSENT ITEMS 9/8/2021 (Enc.)**

***Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the minutes of 9/8/2021.***

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

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

Abstain: Ed

**7:50PM VIII. COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. School Committee**

- Mr. Forge said if you know parents who are interested in the school council, he found it to be helpful. It seems to be a sparse group.
- Mr. Finnie said the deadline is Friday. He has two now. Three including Jason Forge.
- Mrs. Morawiec said it is a simple commitment.

**B. Chairperson**

- Ms. Page said she signed the memorandum of understanding between us and the Community Health Center to continue the services they provide.
- Ms. Page talked about liaisons and said this should be pretty relaxed. We want to know what is going on in the school. Reach out to the administrator and make that connection. We can send the same message to the liaisons.
- Mr. Finnie said it was helpful. He would sit down with the liaison once a year and they became an additional contact when something was going on in the school.
- Mr. Forge doesn't know where the relaxed part came in. Mrs. LeBlanc handed him a large packet to read.

**C. Superintendent**

Central Office Update (Enc.)

October 1 Census (Enc's.)

- Mrs. Smidy went over her report. It included the educator evaluation process and priority focus elements for them to zoom in on administrators and teachers. We are opening another preschool program to take all the kids off the waitlist. As we have had some personnel shifts she has noticed some salary differences she is concerned about. She wants to retain our high quality teachers.
- Mr. Lubbers talked about the rural school hearing. We received \$219,000 in rural school aid, which is early.
- Mrs. Smidy said Ms. Fisk and Dr. Hopson would go to the national conference out of state. This year a focus is on rural schools and she would like to go. Out of state requires your approval.
- Mr. Lubbers heard on NPR a Barr Foundation just gave \$200,000 away to a school in Great Barrington. It was art, music and stuff. He would like us to look into it.
- Mrs. Smidy said Mrs. Stewart put together the census of students in the district. Enrollment is down overall. Last year we had 758, this year it's 736. 4th grade is larger.

**D. Assistant Superintendent**

- Ms. Fisk said the state reports are done and the yearly audit is going on right now.

#### **E. Administration**

- Mr. Garivaltis said we have our tiered focus monitoring process going on this year. The self assessment portion was last year and over the summer. Special Ed, Early childhood, English language learner. The reviewed out documentation now they are coming out in November. Tomorrow he has a virtual orientation with the team chair. Publications will be out next week, then student records compliance, interviews of staff and students. They are doing a parent interview and the date is November 3 at 6 p.m. for any parents who are interested. They have an English Language Learner review in December. They usually find a couple of things which we will then have a year to become compliant with, but he is not worried about it, as he has great staff.

#### **F. Town Officials - None**

### **8:05PM IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING**

#### **A. Superintendent's Evaluation**

- Mrs. Garfield said they met and re-evaluated the committee and the goals. Took all the indicators that Dr. Hopson was nominated and narrowed them down to eight (DESE's recommendation) and they will be presenting them at the next meeting for a vote.

#### **B. Legislative Liaison**

- Mr. Renauld brought up redistricting. We are losing Natalie Blais and going to get Nick Boldyga. It is going to be a big change getting what we need out of the legislature.
- Mrs. Smidy asked if we should invite him to a meeting.
- Mr. Renauld said it is two years away.

#### **C. Policy Subcommittee**

- Mrs. Papillon said they met in September - we have some policies that we are reviewing, the biggest being building use. They were provided with all documentation. They are breaking the policy down and will review it next week.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if we could alternate policy and evaluation between meetings.
- Mr. Forgue asked if it was going to be ready at the next meeting.
- Mrs. Papillon said they are hopeful but no guarantee

#### **D. Building Liaisons - None**

#### **E. Regional Agreement**

- Mrs. Smidy said there was a regional agreement meeting that included some people from towns but not the original committee. There is a lot of information but we are not wrapped up yet. They had two meetings; one with Montgomery and Russell. The second meeting was held with the incorrect assumption we had all the members. It was sparsely attended but the input was valuable. We will bring the concerns from the first and second meeting and hold a new meeting once it is drawn up with MARS. She would

like to run the new agreement by DESE then have an open public forum and decide whether to include alternative options or not. Would come up with 3 options. October 27 will be an information session. We would bring it to the group, then the school committee, and to select boards for their warrants.

- Mrs. Papillon asked if the public forum would be here in the auditorium or remote.
- Mrs. Smidy said she would take their recommendation.
- Mrs. Papillon said it was really hard to hear in the auditorium.
- Mrs. Smidy said we could have it here.
- Mr. Fogue said just to be clear the alternative assessment is not in the agreement right now. In his opinion, there has to at least be an option.
- Mrs. Smidy said the alternative is an option this year. It will expire this year if all 6 towns don't vote in favor of it.

**8:25PM X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

**8:30PM XI. INFORMATION**

**Information**

Reminder: First Joint Budget Meeting is December 8, 2021

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

**Warrant**

AP#1017 \$110.32	PR#006 \$379,146.30
AP#1016 \$99,762.54	PR#007 \$400,179.19
AP#1021 \$1.04	PR#008 \$404,430.26
AP#1019 \$14,758.71	
AP#1024 \$84,845.89	

**8:35PM XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

***Mrs. Morawiec made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to go into executive session at 8:22 p.m. for the purpose of discussion strategy with respect to collective bargaining not to return to open session.***

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

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

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT at 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.**



**Mrs. Papillon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Briggs to adjourn at 8:37 p.m.**

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

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stacy L Stewart  
School Committee Secretary