

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.

JOINT BUDGET/REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 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

Michael Lafleur
Michael Morrissey

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
Emily Loux, Communications
Chris Parker, Technology Director
Darlene Rehor, Elementary Assistant Principal

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Joseph Pisani

OTHERS: Lori Belheumer, Adair, Tamarin, Persa Patra, Alexis Batra, Andy Myers, Rich Holzman

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)

7:10PM

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Joseph Pisani said this is a big month of the year. Spirit week before vacation, pj, ugly sweater, class color, white out were some of the themes. People are excited about reindeer games. They have finalized planning and line-up. He is MCing the day. Senior class celebration for those going out into the world. The holiday concert is being planned and recorded due to covid guidelines. He has been hearing a lot about having more school spirit activities such as reindeer games and spring fling. It is also a unification of the students. It is interesting after being out for a while.
- Mike Lafleur asked if Joseph Pisani had a chance to ask the students about a longer school day to have a longer lunch.
- Joseph Pisani said he would have to send out another form, but the items that came up were longer lunch, bathroom use, phone use, such as texting parents.
- Mr. Lubbers asked if the concert Joseph Pisani referred to is indoor or outdoor.
- Joseph Pisani said it will be recorded and sent out to the community. Everyone will be able to view it from home.

7:15PM

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

7:20PM

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Hockey Co-op Update

- Ms. Smidy said the hockey co-op is official and off the ground. MIAA has officially voted to approve it.

B. Approval of Grants (Enc.)

Mr. Morrissey made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve the Grants as presented.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Mike M., Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

C. Superintendent Goals (Enc.)

- Ms. Smidy said she received feedback on school district priorities and make them more clear in terms of our commitment to address gaps in learning. There was interest in ensuring our Chapter 74 programs are promoted more widely as well.

Mrs. Morawiec made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the Superintendent’s FY ‘22 goals.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Mike M., Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

D. Updated Building Use Policy (Enc.)

- Ms. Page said it has remained the same since last week when Mrs. Smidy shared it with us.

Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the updated School Use Policy as presented.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Mike M., Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

E. Regional Agreement Updates

- Mrs. Smidy reached out to the department of education, after discussion between local officials and the school committee. DESE sent it back with clarification questions. A meeting was held to update the agreement and fix a few grammatical changes, but there are some we need to discuss. The alternative assessment was a sticky point and there was reluctance to discuss a new alternative calculation until the pilot ended. She, Ms. Fisk, and Russell Duperes, met with DESE. They said we could include the new alternative assessment as long as we use the pilot calculation and use a new one for FY’24 they would review the language. Parameters were that it needs to be approved by all towns in order for it to be passed. They will be open to what the towns agree on. The current might not be the best fit, but they are willing to review additional language. Next step is to consider what the new calculator would look like and keep the language needed to be approved to all towns. We could come up with a calculation and then leave it up to the towns to approve or not approve statutory or alternative. She asked DESE to send us some examples to see what other schools do. In order to get a warrant article on all town warrants we need to meet their 45 day timeline, as well as come up with one and get DESE approval.

- Mr. Lubbers said It seems complicated. He is always in favor of students directing their own education. He asked Joseph if there are any young people who are wizzes at calculus.
- Joseph Pisani said Ms. Wright gets students excited about calculus.
- Mrs. Renauld asked why are we putting the alternative assessment language into the regional agreement? It wasn't there to begin with. Statutory is what the state uses. If you want a new regional agreement and you put it in there it is not going to pass. There are enough towns that don't want it.
- Mr. Morrissey said he proposed it would be an amendment so you could get the agreement working. The formula is the stumbling block. Maybe we change the amendment by tweaking it over a few years.
- Mr. Foruge said it is imperative that it is in there. Any year you don't want to use it, you vote no.
- Mr. Renauld said it hasn't passed since the first year. The town that has to bite the bullet and pay for other town's kids isn't going to support it.
- Mr. Forgue said it is disincentivizing bringing families into your town. To leave it as an amendment, it will never pass. To say it will be revisited are just words, it will never be used. If the stumbling block is the formula, let's get all the towns to work together to come up with one that works. The alternative assessment is also in the law.
- Mrs. Smidy did ask DESE for samples. Gateway's is one of the most unique, because it doesn't take enrollment into play. Most regional agreements have alternative assessment as an option, they are just not necessarily used. Their point was to put something in, you can always amend it.
- Mr. Morrissey thinks it is more prudent to get a working document and then amend it. He saw the urgency, we need to address the one man one vote. We should get the agreement compliant and then amend it.
- Ms. Smidy said most alternative assessments are on a rolling average. She doesn't want to have it be a block, but she wants us to come together.
- Mr. Morrissey we have a five year window after this year. We could use that as a model. The point about 8 kids moving into town jumps up but other than that it is spread out. Huntington and Chester did well if we used the alternative over the 5 years. The burden got shifted to one town.
- Mrs. Smidy proposes gathering information from other towns and coming back to the regional agreement group with some suggestions.
- Ms. Page said it is looking at the students who go to Gateway as our students, not each individual town's students.
- Mr. Foruge said when a new family moves to the area, he doesn't want to say oh crap I hope they didn't move to Chester.
- Mr. Morrissey said if someone moves into Chester and they have 4 kids, maybe that town foots 50% and the rest gets allocated to the other towns.

- Ms. Fisk said that is interesting. It is important to have some wording in the regional agreement that ties us all and the ability to use the alternative assessment.

7:35PM VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

7:40PM VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. FY '23 Budget

- a. Financial Overview
 - b. Capital Plan
- Ms. Fisk gave a budget presentation
 - Mr. Lubbers asked what they do in the afterschool program.
 - Ms. Fisk said mini-courses, dancing, knitting, gardening, health classes, robotics, virtual reality 3-D printing, games, outdoor sports, skiing. Wrap around is separate.
 - We are also adding a preschool program.
 - Ms. Dragon asked if they had a certified babysitting program in the work study program for students.
 - Ms. Smidy said it was part of our health II program, but it is not being offered right now with the 6 versus 7 periods.
 - Ms. Dragon suggested it be offered in the after school program.
 - Mr. Forge asked for the current balance in Building use revolving.
 - Ms. Fisk said \$30,000.
 - Mr. Lubbers asked for an explanation of circuit breaker.
 - Ms. Fisk said reimbursement for special education costs from the state.
 - Mr. Morrissey OPEB is a looming program. You can't keep more than 5%, instead of it coming back, is there something we can put in our regional agreement to have it go in there.
 - Ms. Fisk said you have to have transparency. You have to have an OPEB line. You can do it a different way. If you took the health insurance line and OPEB line, that is our total amount.
 - Mr. Forge asked if we budget for every employee whether they use health insurance or not.
 - Ms. Fisk said we budget in the middle, not the low or high end.
 - Andy Myers has been appreciative that they have kept the budget at 2% or less. He hopes that will be the same this year. Took the tour this week. He is pleased with the preschool program and its expansion. That is going to help bring new families into the area.

8:05PM VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 11/3/2021 (Enc.)

Mr. Morrissey made a motion seconded by Mr. Renauld to approve the minutes of 11/3/2021.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Mike M., Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

8:10PM IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee - None

B. Chairperson

- Ms. Page said we need a motion to go into executive session at 8:35 p.m. or earlier for the purpose of negotiations - secretarial negotiations not to return to open session.

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to go into executive session at or before 8:35 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations - secretaries not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Mike M., Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said we received another \$79,000 grant for covid support - approval for next time. As anticipated with our numbers since Thanksgiving break there is evidence of in school transmission. Nurses are working very hard to make sure people understand the protocol. She did a survey of the students asking them to give reasons why students are thankful for Gateway and she received a lot of very good responses.

D. Assistant Superintendent - None

E. Administration

- Mrs. Coburn said they are wrapping up the first round of mini courses. They were successful and looking forward to more in the spring. Working on the preschool program.
- Mrs. LeBlanc said math teachers have been working with Mike Flynn on the new program. They are working really hard on that work.
- Mr. Garivaltis said they finished the tiered focus evaluation last week. He doesn't believe we will have any non compliance. It was an excellent exit interview and the things we needed to follow up with were taken care of. Anticipated commendation area is the district's student collaboration with the health center.

- Mr. Finnie said winter sports are up and running. The after school program has expanded and the popularity is increasing rapidly. He gave kudos to those staff. Some of the items were a workshop on robotics and kayaking at the Dam.

F. Town Officials - None

8:15PM X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation - Meeting prior to school committee on January 12.
- B. Legislative Liaison
- C. Policy Subcommittee
- D. Building Liaisons
- E. CES Update

- Mr. Lubbers has been working with them. He is concerned with special education, He has been in communication with Mr. Garivaltis about the Mt. Tom Academy and the HCC program. Mr. Garivaltis assures him we have it under control in house. Mr. Lubbers said they have other programs for educating teachers. Some of them are \$850, is there a way for the school to pay for it or could we ask the Barr Foundation.
- Mrs. Smidy said Barr likes to fund student centered items outside the state standards. If the professional development was tied to a student outcome project, they would more likely be on board. There are lines in our budget that are allocated for funding for professional development, but it is limited.

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

8:30PM XII. INFORMATION
Information

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

Warrant

AP#1034 \$149,220.23	PR#010 \$403,328.45
AP#1038 \$411,852.46	PR#011 \$411,852.46
AP#1042 \$81,159.45	PR#012 \$396,989.10

8:35PM XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Union Negotiations - Secretaries

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to go into executive session at or before 8:35 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations - secretaries not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Mike M., Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

8:35PM XIV. ADJOURNMENT at 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Mike L., David, Keri, Lyndsey, Ed, Sarah

Absent: Mike M.

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary