

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, FEBRUARY 9, 2022

Middle School 112/114

6:30 P.M.

6:30PM I. OPENING OF MEETING

Call to order: Sarah Page, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

Terri Garfield

CHESTER

Jeana Briggs
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

David Lubbers
Pegg Dragon
Edward Renauld

MIDDLEFIELD

MONTGOMERY

Michael Lafleur
Michael Morrissey

RUSSELL

Sarah Page
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Kristen Smidy, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Business & Finance

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Joseph Pisani

OTHERS: Attorney Russell Dupere, Andy Myers, Jackie Sugrue, Steph Conway, Ruth Kennedy, Cara Letendre

6:30PM

II. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Regional Agreement Update and Discussion for Alternative Assessment Calculation with Select Board and Finance Committee Member Input

- Mrs. Smidy said DESE had some feedback. On page 2 under voting regarding weighting, they initially suggested specific weights for each town up to 108. Then said it should add up to 100. Three towns went down 1/10th of a point. On page 4 the last paragraph about if the budget needs to change after towns have approved it. Plug in the regulatory language. It goes to the selectboard within 7 days and then the selectboard has 45 days to take a vote. On page 6 alternative assessment language (b) we told them we have not agreed yet and they are okay with our options we just need to decide. Page 9-10 around the withdrawal process. Need to add a clarifying sentence to include any town that withdraws would no longer be a part of the agreement. It is recommended to come up with a way to distribute liability. We will keep the negotiation piece of any town that is withdrawing.
- Mr. Morrissey asked if it was the number of reps or the total weight of the town.
- Mrs. Smidy said Montgomery has two votes at 5.6% each. Quorum has to be over 50%.
- Alternative Assessment Method -
- Mrs. Smidy said Ms. Fisk has done some number crunching. She shared a summary of the 1.5% cap and the 2% cap with increases with proportional distribution to other towns with rolling average. We are in the final year of assessments and there is a summary of assessment options. It shows the total over 5 years at 1.5% and 2% with the current alternative assessment and statutory.
- Mr. Morrissey said there is not much difference on an annual basis, but it does over the five years.
- Mrs. Smidy said Middlefield was hoping the district would commit to a true five year plan. The alternative assessment method lessens the blow.
- Mr. Morrissey said Middlefield is going to have a 32% reduction in a few years. How quickly can they realize the savings? They won't see that for another four to five years.
- Ms. Fisk said Kurt Robie said they have quite a bit of real estate for sale. They have no idea who is going to move in.
- Mrs. Smidy thinks they have thought about doing the educational revolving fund like Chester.
- Mr. Forgue feels the summary does address the spikes, it is just how long. We are talking about \$5,000.
- Mr. Morrissey said the 1.5% method is the best chance we have.
- Ms. Fisk said these are based on the February first census and we will have new numbers in March.
- Ms. Dragon likes the idea that when there was a big fluctuation, they would go up and then the difference would be spread by the towns. We are working as a district. At some point we are all going to need it.

- Mr. Renauld said in discussions with the other selectboard members, relying on the other towns to take the bite, isn't going to get voted year to year to pass, unless you can do it for five years and get everyone on board.
- Mrs. Smidy said it is possible to have a town hold this up.
- Mr. Morrissey said that has been the history of this except for the first year.
- Mr. Renauld said the town will have to hold another meeting in order to pay the difference. DESE should allow us to have all towns vote for it for five years.
- Mr. Morrissey asked about numbers in the beginning and Dave Hopson said you couldn't calculate them because Worthington was leaving, but Ms. Fisk disclosed the numbers to this body. Chester should see a lower number. It is up to Chester or any other town to put the money into an education revolving fund. Each town should regulate their increase.
- Ms. Fisk thinks they could do the same method with the 1.5%
- Mr. Morrissey said the issue is apportionment, the rolling average addresses the spike more than the apportionment. Is it five, four or three years?
- Mr. Forgue said they will benefit just not as much.
- Mr. Morrissey said it is up to the towns to save when they have a reduction.
- Mr. Forgue said we are getting beyond what we do here. We need to make it an option to use.
- Ms. Fisk said Middlefield for example, statutory this year is \$382,000 and at the current alternative they are \$500,040. We are backing into the statutory method, but we are lessening the spikes.
- Cara Letendre said if you have a couple of large families move into towns, that creates havoc. Towns are trying to grow. These alternative methods help stabilize the increase.
- Andy Myers said when we put the warrant together, we put the alternative and statutory method on it so we don't have to have another town meeting.
- Mr. Morrissey said Russell sent out the alternative method, and added.
- Mrs. Smidy asked how everyone felt about the Regional Agreement.
- Ruth Kennedy wants to bring it back to Russell's finance and selectboard.
- Ms. Smidy asked if there were any other thoughts on the calculation or are we okay with the 1.5%.
- This will go on the March 9, 2022 agenda.
- Mr. Morrissey said Montgomery's Annual Town Meeting is the second Monday in May.

7:10PM III. 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)

7:15PM IV. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Joseph Pisani said they held a student council meeting and planned a spirit week in February. Semi formal is being planned and they will adhere to the guidelines at the time on March 18. There are two senior nights coming up; tomorrow night for boys and Friday night for girls. Connor Hourihan will play trumpet at tomorrow's game.

- Joseph Pisani sent out another form. He asked about school pride and the majority answered a 4 out of 5 and that was awesome. Terms used to describe the school year: awesome, better not worse, fabulous, lively, eventful. He asked if they would like to have a 7 or 6 block schedule 81% said 7 blocks. The reasons why were to have another block to take an elective. Some were for six stating that an hour isn't long enough to learn something, and 45 minutes is less. Reindeer games added a boost to school spirit. Classes not offered they would like to add are: oil painting, sign language, first aid, financial literacy, basic life skills, civics, tax forms, getting a passport, etc. 54.3% feel they need more time. He asked if they feel unity in the school? 58% said yes. 94.3% are for a longer lunch and the reasons why are: not enough time to eat once they go to the lunch room and get their food. They need time to socialize, use the restrooms, call home, etc. They would like a 30 minute lunch. 64.7% said there wasn't enough time to socialize in school. They would like to see more opportunities in the school day. 77.1% would like an advisory block. 97.1% said they would like to see it in the schedule next year. Over 50% would like exploring workforce and career development. He asked if they would be willing to extend the school day and 56% said no to that. In the open session they want more clarification for the iReady testing and what it is being used for. Is there a different way it can be approached or a different test so students would be more willing to take it seriously.
- Mr. Morrissey said as town officials we just had meetings with our local emergency management and they are having a hard time recruiting. They have money that would pay for training. Students would have to be a certain age. But they can provide the materials.
- Ms. Dragon said 35 responses were received out of the 170.
- Ms. Page said the first survey was sent out to middle and high school, this one was only the high school.
- Ms. Dragon said it could be handed out as well as online.
- Cara Letender is seeing the same thing in her school. iReady is not really for high school.
- Mrs. Smidy said we had this exact discussion today in our leadership team.
- Mr. Fogue gave kudos to the kid that grasps the 45 min to an hour. How do we express to the students why we went to the 6 block schedule?

7:20PM V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Field Trip Approval - SkillsUSA - Early Education and Care Students (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy gave an overview of the information that was included in the packet.

Ms. Dragon made a motion seconded by Mr. Renauld to approve the SkillsUSA Early Education Care field Trip.

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

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

B. Grant Approval- Accelerated Literacy Learning (Enc.)

Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the Accelerated Literacy Learning Grant.

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

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

C. Secretary Contract Approval

Mrs. Garfield made a motion seconded by Ms. Dragon to approve the secretarial contract.

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

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

Recuse: Mike M.

7:30PM VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. FY '23 School Calendar (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said there are some things to be determined such as dates of the parent conferences. Also the December break. This is the one in every seven years by 22, or half day on the 23 This is a first reading.
- Mrs. Papillon asked why we would have a half day of professional development on the 3rd day.
- Mrs. Smidy said a lot of districts do this for training, reading IEP's, and a lot of the work that needs continued is moved to the first pd day and it felt too late. The hope is to keep the full day in November. She also wants to put a disclaimer on the calendar, should we need a delay on a half day that it reverts to a full day and move the pd. She would like to avoid what happened last time.

B. Recommendation for Special Education Transportation Contract

- Ms. Fisk said the recommendation would be Lecrenski. She did not reach out to Vanpool; they were not cooperative to work with when we were out for covid. Lecrenski's quotes that came in were reasonable; less than 6% over 3 years. Our transit vans are in and now they need to be equipped. Move to the next meeting.

7:35PM VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. FY '23 Budget

a. MS/HS Budget Presentation

- Mr. Finnie gave a brief overview of the main structural goals in middle and high school.
- Mrs. Briggs asked if the middle school students have the opportunity to see the vocational offerings.
- Mr. Finnie said they plan on doing this for not only vocational programs. We haven't had the opportunity in the past couple of years.
- Mr. Garivaltis explained that we are in the process of putting together a program for the visually impaired. So we could recruit students into the program. He met with DESE today.
- Ruth Kennedy asked what is the math sustainable improvement plan.
- Mr. Garivaltis said this is being identified on MCAS scores. It is a statewide system of support that has been supporting us. Middle school math was the target area.
- Andy Myers said the last census was October 1, is there a significant change?
- Ms. Dragon said it is nice you highlighted the welding program. You used to have an 8th grade class, does the teacher need assistance.
- Mr. Finnie said we did post for a half time position and didn't get any applicants. We did find having more students in the shop environment without having the experience in other areas created an increase in those students who wanted to go to a vocational school and not stay. If a student doesn't have a specific career in mind there are also opportunities at the college level.
- Ms. Dragon said she has twin brothers who approached the vocational opportunity very differently.
- Mrs. Briggs said she is struggling with her 14 year old making the decision to go to vocational school so young.
- Mrs. Smidy said we are having an open house in March for prospective students which could be our 8th graders.
- Ms. Fisk has been working on the budget since October and is still working on staffing and curriculum. She is trying to keep it to a 2% assessment increase. The budget is .5% increase. Instructional services are 55% of the budget. There is an increase in Hampshire county retirement. In revenue projections we used quite a bit of E&D to lower assessments. This year we will use a little more than half of E&D. She went over Revenue percentages. Chapter 70 formula is local income -translates minimum contribution. Based on the February 1 census, there is a shift in a few of the towns.

Mr. Renauld left the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

- Ruth Kennedy asked if we received covid relief and what we are using for.
- Ms. Fisk said it is referred to as ESSAR and we are funding 3 staff members for the next three years. It may extend another 3 years but we are not sure.

8:05PM VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 1/12/2021 (Enc.)

Mr. Morrissey made a motion seconded by Ms. Dragon to approve the minutes of 1/12/2021.

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

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

8:10PM IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mr. Fogue said wrestling sectionals are coming up this Saturday. Three or four have a good chance to move on. Vision program support; he had a player on the GYAA program who is also one of the ones he mentioned above. His teacher Amy Mason came out to practices and games on her own time. He would like to see the program stick around

B. Chairperson

- Ms. Page said we needed an executive session.
- Mr. Morrissey as a point of order challenged the executive session posting.
- We will move the executive session to the next meeting.

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said DESE announced the mask mandate will be ending on February 28th. To recommend wearing masks we would have to change the policy. She is also looking into piloting a therapy dog/animal.
- Mr. Morrissey suggested we align with DESE's directions.
- Mrs. Smidy said we may want to have a zoom or special meeting.
- Mrs. Papillon said the Zoom meeting may be difficult to manage.
- Mr. Fogue thinks it is easier to manage.
- Ms. Page thinks we should hold a special meeting.
- Mike Morrissey asked where the subcommittee meeting minutes are kept. He was asked by someone in his town.
- Mrs. Smidy said they are available but now on the website. We will look into this further.

D. Assistant Superintendent

FY '22 Second Quarter Report (Enc.)

- Ms. Fisk said the 2nd quarter report was in the packet. There is an uptick in substitute costs. More miscellaneous receiving due to covid money.
- Mr. Morrissey asked if we were going to use ESSAR.
- Ms. Fisk said we will keep it in the budget and do some shifting.

E. Administration - None

F. Town Officials - None

8:20PM X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's - no meeting tonight
- B. Legislative Liaison - None
- C. Policy Subcommittee - No meeting tonight.
- D. Building Liaisons - None
- E. CES Update - None

8:30PM XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

8:35PM XII. INFORMATION
Information

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

Warrant

AP#1052 \$62,076.72	PR#013 \$411,405.08
AP#1056 \$35.29	PR#014 \$409,827.14
AP#1057 \$60,269.40	

8:40PM XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - moved to March 9 Meeting

- A. Union Negotiations - Paraprofessionals

8:50PM XIV. ADJOURNMENT at 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mr. Morrissey made a motion seconded by Mr. Forgue to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.

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

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

Absent: Ed

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary