

**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.

**REGULAR MEETING/JOINT BUDGET MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, February 10, 2021**

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/73441877925?pwd=dDNFZzYyZTZhTndxbE42Mkk5cWxqZz09>

Meeting ID: 734 4187 7925

Passcode: 83s984

**7:00 P.M.**

**(A PORTION OF THIS MEETING MAY BE HELD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION)**

**I. OPENING OF MEETING**

<u>BLANDFORD</u>	<u>CHESTER</u>	<u>HUNTINGTON</u>	<u>MIDDLEFIELD</u>
Michele Crane	Jason Forgue	David Lubbers	Sarah Foley
Terri Garfield	Martha Otterbeck	Melissa Nazzaro	

<u>MONTGOMERY</u>	<u>RUSSELL</u>	<u>SECRETARY</u>
Madelyn Austin	Tara Balboni	Stacy Stewart
	Sarah Page	
	Lyndsey Papillon	

<u>CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION</u>	<u>ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL</u>
Dr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent	Megan Coburn, Chs,Lit Principal
Stephanie Fisk, Asst. Superintendent	Jason Finnie, Middle/High Principal
	Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
	Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director
	Darlene Rehor, Elementary AP

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES  
 Brian Forgue

OTHERS: Val Zeh, Dan McKellick, Josh Garcia, Andy Myers, Matt Bonenfant, Jim Duggan, Tamarin Laurel, Melissa McKellick, Nick Balboni, Derrick Mason, Amy Thornton, Kathy Gallagher, Shelbi Macri, Matt Collins, Lynn Russell, Melissa Reid, Ruth Kennedy, Mark Donovan, Linda Hyjek, Sara McNamara

## II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit) - None

## III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brian Forgue said we have been remote for as long as he can remember. Student organizations are chugging along. NHS members will start tutoring students. Yearbook committee is close to being finished. They have been busting their chops.

## IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITION

A.

## V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Winter Athletics

- Dr. Hopson turned things over to Mr. Bonenfant.
- Mr. Bonenfant said It looks like we will be in the fall season II for basketball. Southwick Tolland has extended their seasons into fall II. He said the local district athletic committee is moving cheering, soccer. If a program lost 50% or more of their season they could petition to be put into fall II. We fall under that guideline. It would allow sports as soon as we return to a hybrid model. He has not seen what the new bubbles look like yet. Spring sports could start practice, but he wouldn't recommend it due to the lack of space. Winter basketball and co-op would fall into the fall season II which runs through April 25. It technically starts March 1 with principal approval. Basketball and the Hockey Co-op would be included.

***Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to have Gateway athletes participate in the fall II season for basketball and hockey.***

- Mr. Bonenfant said the bubble should be similar to the fall. It will be the group of schools that are chosen to play against each other.
- What if the southwick program does not look to plan to have games in the second season what would be the circumstances?
- Mr. Bonenfant said there are a couple other hockey teams looking at the fall II. They have been very limited; Southwick as well and other teams are looking at fall II.
- Mr. McKellick asked if Southwick signed up for fall 2 or is that just rumor.
- Mr. Bonenfant has only heard rumors.
- Mr. McKellick said it looks like you are voting.
- Dr. Hopso said as the superintendent, he was planning on touching base with Southwick.
- Mr. McKellick said hockey is different from regular sports. They would rather participate in the season going on right now.
- Mrs. Crane said the intent is if the schools are not in remote they could play, but if they are in remote they can't.

- Dr. Hopson said to approve our vote is to allow our hockey players to play if Southwick moves to fall II.
- Mr. McKellick said the motion is to extend not to terminate. That would be in effect today to the end of fall II.
- Mrs. Crane said yes, that was her understanding.
- Dr. Hopson said if people move into fall II then we would move into fall 2.
- Matt Collins said from a coaches point of view, they are trying to get something in place of nothing. Basketball would move to the fall 2 season.
- Mr. Forgue said as of Thursday if numbers show we can go back, would that start over the break or the week after.
- Dr. Hopson said if the numbers drop they could start practicing or playing right away.
- Mr. Forgue said something is better than nothing. What we have created is nothing for five or six kids. He would like to have a JV portion.
- Matt Collins said an idea for any kid who is already in place to do something for them. We do have a plan in place for the predicted five or six players who might not be able to play varsity.

***Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to have Gateway athletes participate in the fall 2 season for basketball and hockey.***

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Sarah F., Jason, Terri, David, Melissa, Sarah P., Lyndsey, Martha, Michele

- Mrs. Crane asked if there was another motion.
- Mr. Bonenfant is open to Mr. Collins' idea to have JV kids come in day a week to play/practice. They have revised the 25 on the floor limit.
- Mrs. Crane asked how will you notify hockey parents if we come out of remote.
- Dr. Hopson said we will put it on the website and do an all call. Hopefully the numbers will continue to drop and we will continue in the downward trend and make a positive announcement on Thursday night.
- Mr. McKellick said Thursday we may have positive figures, and maybe there is a fall II, but there is no guarantee because supply and demand is different in hockey than any other sport. He would like to get relief from this hybrid verses remote. It contains a formula that does not apply anymore. We are working on a model that is not necessary. They should be able to participate. We need to adapt. Kids in other communities are playing and it is a vital part of the educational program. Participation should be actively encouraged, and be conducted in the best interest of the participants. The policies in place are in fairness, but where. It was fair to allow fall sports to play, but in the winter it is not allowed. For hockey there are no Gateway administrators or volunteers at risk for infection.
- Dr. Hopson said you want hockey to be played even though we are remote and even though we are moving to fall 2.

- Mr. McKellick would like to take away the direct tie with remote learning for winter athletics and any opportunity. It shouldn't be tied to that agreement that was signed in August.

***Mr. Lubbers made a motion, seconded by Mr. Forgue to remove the direct link between remote learning and winter sports or extracurricular activities that is included in the agreement.***

- Mr. McKellick said they wear masks, they get dressed outside and there are no spectators. It is an easy opportunity to allow them to have this advantage. When Gateway is tied to Southwick there is no possible way for them to play. If his kids get sick, they stay in their room.
- Mrs. Nazzaro is bothered by the concept of causing no harm because they are all volunteers. This is a virus that is based on community spread. Your perception of no harm is not a representation of the disease if the host and Gateway are not in sync it is irresponsible for us to think it is okay to mix those cohorts.
- Brian Forgues wants to make sure they can play hockey but he got covid in early January and we were completely remote. He didn't have the usual symptoms. Let's say Gateway remains remote and Southwick is hybrid. Dan plays hockey and gets covid, you do not know you have it for a while and Dan comes back to Gateway before he knows he has covid. He has exposed how many students, teachers, and faculty. Covid is tricky and annoying. We have a lot of older people at risk; people who help our students learn. We have to keep in mind. We cannot mix two districts. The numbers are trending in the right direction and hopefully they will continue.
- Mr. Forgue takes offense that Mr. McKellick thinks the fall sports got preferential treatment. We were in hybrid mode. Nothing started until hybrid started. He is an advocate for all sports all the time. But he agrees with Brian and Mrs. Nazzaro. The rules are the same.
- Mr. McKellick said the kids have nothing else to do. These kids are trying to be productive. He would like to remove the direct tie for remote learning for winter athletics. It shouldn't be tied to that agreement that was signed in August. He is more than willing to have his child to stay remote for the duration of hockey.
- Mrs. Otterbeck believes all our kids have lost out. She feels bad and wants the kids to be involved and it feels overwhelming. She doesn't understand and she is feeling uncomfortable and pressured. We need to be fair across the board. No one believes that kids shouldn't be participating.
- Mrs. Papillon echoed what Mrs. Nazzaro, Mr. Forgue and Mrs. Otterbeck had said. We do not take these decisions lightly. This is hard on everyone. They are missing out on so much right now. When you talk about fall sports, we were remote because of the phased in approach not because the numbers are high like they are now. We have put in a lot of work over the past year to keep our kids safe. We volunteered over the summer. It is an unfortunate decision.
- Mr. McKellick would like to amend the motion to have the boys be fully remote if they want to play in the co-op under the Southwick rules.

- Dr. Hopson asked what about the girls hockey team or others.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said even in remote learning the boys would be able to play hockey. Two other students would then have an opportunity to ask for the same thing. What does that mean for other students who want to play sports or participate in clubs.
- Mr. Forgue said we would be creating a precedent and we don't want to go down that road. The reason we put in the time was so we could keep kids safe.
- Mrs. Crane said we have tried to be very fair across the board, we need to continue to make consistent decisions.
- Mr. McKellick asked if there are any other programs that are channelled through another school system.
- Mrs. Crane said this is only one.
- Mr McKellick doesn't see why you won't give them a chance.
- Mrs. Crane said we have to be consistent. We are remote because of the health of our communities. We have to continue making consistent decisions.

***Mrs. Nazzarro called the question***

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Sarah F., Jason, Terri, David, Melissa, Sarah P., Lyndsey, Martha, Michele

***Mr. Lubbers made a motion, seconded by Mr. Forgue to remove the direct link between remote learning and winter sports or extracurricular activities that is included in the agreement.***

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

Yeas: David

Nays: Madelyn, Tara, Sarah F., Jason, Terri, Melissa, Sarah P., Lyndsey, Martha, Michele

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS - None**

## **VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS**

### **A. Questions on Preliminary FY '22 Budget**

### **B. Draft Town Assessments**

- Ms. Fisk shared a Powerpoint Monday which included a brief overview of how we build the budget and budget requests by category. It is currently based on the January 1 Census. There are currently two towns with an increase at this point. It will change when the March 1 census comes out. Have to be careful with special ed funding, It will be a balancing act coming up. We should receive about \$575,000 which we can apply to FY '21 or FY '22. It has to be spent on Covid related services.

- Mrs. Otterbeck asked if there is a relief fund, we aren't going to have to give money back.
- Ms. Fisk said we want to be careful not to create a fiscal cliff in our district, You cannot use the money to supplant or to reduce assessments.
- Mrs. Crane said we could do remediation sessions with kids to help catch them up.
- Dr. Hopson said that is something administration has been looking into.
- Mr. Forgue said on the income it shows an equal amount of transportation reimbursement, is that really true.
- Ms. Fisk said no but we have the regional transportation fund. We would use that balance.
- Mr. Forgue said there is a decrease in teaching supplies across all the schools.
- Ms. Fisk said we will be using rural school aid to cover that.
- Mr. Forgue said there is a \$50,000 increase in fees and dues, where did the other \$24,000 come from.
- Ms. Fisk said \$26,000 from the athletic revolving account and \$24,000 from the budget.
- Mr. Forgue said the superintendent salary line still reflects the same number.
- Ms. Fisk said there is a one month training crossover; two months of Dr. Hopson and eleven months of the new person.
- Andy Myers asked if Ms. Fisk could you release the presentation to the towns.
- Ms. Fisk said it will be on the website tomorrow.
- Mr. Lubbers asked if there is room in the budget for more mental counselors.
- Ms. Fisk said there is one adjustment counselor at each elementary school, and two at the high/ middle. We are looking to hire one with covid funds.
- Ruth Kennedy asked if the salary is the same for the new superintendent.
- Mrs. Crane said that hasn't been determined.
- Amy Thornton asked if the counselor is for the elementary or the middle/high.
- Ms. Fisk said maybe Littleville but we haven't decided yet.
- Mr. Forgue said the charter school increase is that directly due to what has happened this year.
- Ms. Fisk said it has more to do with how they fund it and give us our revenue.
- Mrs. Crane reminded everyone our next meeting is the budget hearing.

#### **VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 1/27/2021 (Enc.)**

***Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro to approve the minutes of 1/27/2021.***

***Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 2 Absent (Roll Call Vote)***

Yeas: Tara, Sarah F., Jason, Terri, David, Melissa, Sarah P., Martha, Michele

Abstain: Madelyn, Lyndsey

#### **IX. COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. School Committee**

- Mr. Lubbers apologized for writing a letter when he wasn't supposed to.

**B. Chairperson**

- Mrs. Crane said included in the packet was the ad for the yearbook so if you have changes let her know.
- Mrs. Balboni asked if we have heard anything from Frank Pero.
- Mr. Forgue said nothing yet.

**C. Superintendent - None**

Central Office Update

**D. Assistant Superintendent**

- Ms. Fisk said the audit is complete and all went well. She was contacted by the Chester Town Administrator, to see if we or any other town want to share a human resources person.

**E. Administration**

- Mr. Garivaltis said pupil services is starting the annual every 3 year audit. Tiered focus monitoring process. We are in the self assessment process. And they will be on site next school year.

**F. Town - None**

**X. COMMITTEE REPORTING**

**A. Superintendent Search**

- Mr. Forgue said as of this evening we have interviewed 6 of 8 finalists, the other two tomorrow night. Finalists should be announced by March 10. It will then be open to public input to get input and keep the process as open as possible. It's going well and they had a lot of good candidates.

**B. Legislative Liaison - None**

**C. Policy Subcommittee - None**

**D. Building Liaisons - None**

**XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

**Future Agenda Items**

**XII. INFORMATION**

**Information**

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

**Warrants**

AP#1052 \$106,677.53

PR#16 \$359,395.21

**XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None**

**8:35 or earlier**

**A. Negotiations - Union (GEA)**

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

***Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to adjourn at 8:33 p.m.***

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

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Sarah F., Jason, Terri, David, Melissa, Sarah P., Lyndsey, Martha, Michele

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stacy L Stewart  
School Committee Secretary