

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Gateway Regional School District will provide and 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

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020

Middle School 112/114

7:00 P.M.

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

I. OPENING OF MEETING

BLANDFORD

Michele Crane
Terri Garfield

CHESTER

Jason Fogue – 7:24
Martha Otterbeck
Shirley Winer

HUNTINGTON

Darlene McVeigh
Melissa Nazzaro

MIDDLEFIELD

Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY

Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL

Tara Balboni
Sarah Page
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. David B. Hopson, 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
Jeanne LeClair, Communications

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Brian Fogue

OTHERS: Ruth Kennedy, Mike LaFleur, Andy Myers, Ruth Harper, Amy Thornton, Peter Spots.

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:01 p.m.
- Peter Spotts is recording the meeting.

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

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brian Fogue said student council is collecting money and fundraising for the semi formal. Basketball and wrestling is in full force. They are planning another activity with Mrs. LeBlanc which will be coming up in early February. Last weekend as schools match wits participated and came in 7th and 12th out of 16 teams. They have been talking to the communications director about starting a political activism group/roundtable. They have their first meeting at 6 p.m. in the library on February 5 before the next school committee meeting. Mrs. Crane asked if they were discussing local or national politics. He said both. Mrs. Crane said

there was a subcommittee meeting at the same time so hopefully some of the other school committee members will be able to attend.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITION - None

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. 2nd Semester Field Trips – Overnight Model UN Conference at UMASS

- Mr. Finnie said they weren't able to get double rooms on campus, but will stay nearby like last year.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the Model UN overnight field trip to UMASS.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Sarah F., Terri, Melissa, Sarah P., Darlene, Lyndsey, Martha, Shirley, Michele
Absent: Jason

Dr. Hopson said we have another item not on the agenda, but related. We have two other staff members who submitted ethics disclosure forms for the trips discussed last meeting. One for Kimberly Sakaske and Samuel Casler

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the following: As the appointing official, as required by G.L. c. 268A, s. 19 I have reviewed the particular matter and the financial interest identified by the above municipal employees, Kimberly Sakaske and Samuel Casler. I have determined that the financial interest is not so substantial as to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of the services which the municipality may expect from the employee.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Sarah F., Terri, Melissa, Sarah P., Darlene, Lyndsey, Martha, Shirley, Michele
Absent: Jason

7:30 VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. FY' 20 Second Quarter Transfers

- Ms. Fisk went over the transfers. We had a Chester teacher leave in the fall and we filled it with a long-term sub. The same happened at the high school. Guidance was a reclassification of their job duties. (full time adjustment counselor)
- Move to old business for a vote

VII. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

A. FY '21 Budget – Questions and Issues

- Ms. Fisk said at the last meeting we talked about the census as of January 1. This budget is based on the House 2 budget. It will only get better. The only thing that won't change is chapter 70. Regional transportation is low for us. It should come up by the time we get to the final budget. Circuit breaker is part of an increase to increase out of district transportation. We are on the first of three years. She said there are some huge assessment swings from a -4% decrease to an 11% increase in Montgomery. Bottom part is a comparison of statutory to statutory and then statutory to alternate. The last one shows leveling between the years if you kept the alternate. There will be a lot of changes between the census and budgets. The state has warned us it will be a late budget.
- Mrs. McVeigh said based on this \$400,000 it is well over \$200,000. They are losing money on the cherry sheet. There is no way they can afford that in Huntington.
- Ms. Fisk said a big part is school choice and charter. It looks favorable; they are up a little more. If that remains stable they will be able to reduce the budget by \$70,000 right off the bat.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how much has to do with the fact that there are no more blizzard bags.
- Ms. Fisk said it was \$25-30,000. A big piece of this budget is the transportation bid. We have 15 bid packets out. Couple of changes; no need to have a garage in the district and it is a straight out 5-year contract. There are companies from out of state looking to get into Massachusetts. She feels better about believing we will have more than one bid.

- Dr. Hopson said the bottom line is this is probably the worst-case scenario. The difference between statutory and alternate is a big change for some towns. Russell will make out better under statutory and Montgomery will not this year. If we don't see an increase in revenue from the state or we don't do well on the bid, how does the school committee want move forward?
- Mrs. Nazzaro asked what is a responsible timeframe for us to discuss it.
- Dr. Hopson said you have to have a budget in place 60 days prior to the first town meeting.
- Ms. Fisk we should know more after next week. We should go with the choice and charter numbers and see where we stand in February.
- Dr. Hopson do we ask for administration to start looking at that so we have started the process just in case. We could look at 2.5%.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said can we vote on the statutory or alternate again.
- Dr. Hopson said you can vote on which one you want. School committee puts forth the statutory or the alternative. The towns then vote up or down.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how much did we get in rural school aide. It was outside the budget process and assessments. Where did we spend it.
- Ms. Fisk said the \$159,000 covered Jeanne's position, early childhood positions and health insurance.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how confident are we that we will get that money again.
- Ms. Fisk said there is more money this year than in previous years. We are \$50,000 over in health insurance and sped transportation.
- Mr. Myers asked if this percentage was for Gateway or town appropriation.
- Dr. Hopson said getting it down to 2.5% would be for town assessment.
- Mr. Myers said Chapter 70 for all regional schools went up 3%. Ours is 1.5%.
- Dr. Hopson said 200 plus schools got minimum we are one of those 200 plus schools. No matter how you work the numbers we are only getting \$30 more per students. We would have to increase by 1,600 students to get more money.
- Mr. Myers asked why we are getting less in transportation reimbursement.
- Dr. Hopson said because when we cut busses, we receive less reimbursement in the following year.
- Ms. Fisk said we do have the transportation reimbursement fund in case we come in lower.
- Dr. Hopson said you won't see the chapter 70 numbers change. But you will see changes between the House and Senate in transportation and rural schools.
- Mrs. McVeigh said there is a lot of competing interest this year. They have been warned there are a lot of schools who will see a decrease. We don't have the diversity. We are not getting our piece of the pie
- Dr. Hopson said it is not covering the cost of inflation, you have other districts getting 30 to 40 million in chapter 70. We have to have a plan in place in how we are going to use the money to increase student opportunities.
- Mrs. Balboni asked do we have any retirements.
- Ms. Fisk said it looks like 2 or 3 possible teachers, 1 custodian, and 1 paraprofessional.
- Ms. Fisk said when we have a teacher retiring we budget the average teacher salary. For a paraprofessional and custodian we estimate step 1.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we were planning on replacing those.
- Dr. Hopson said no.
- Mr. Fogue said regional transportation is up 15%.
- Ms. Fisk said some of it is blizzard bags and bid. The first year in the last contract went up 37%.
- Mr. Fogue thought 15% was low. Should we be projecting more?
- Ms. Fisk said no, we put some different options in the contract that should help us. There is a 1 and a 2-tier bid price. They can bid the same for both, but she is thinking with the competition they won't. There were a lot of changes for the bus drivers during the last contract. The biggest changes are to 7D drivers. 7D is the special education transportation. We have received our first set of quotes and they look good right now.
- Mrs. Crane asked when will we be voting.
- Ms. Fisk said it will come up in February for a vote.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked about our total special education transportation cost.
- Ms. Fisk said special education is a 1/3rd of the cost or about \$364,000 and regional transportation is roughly \$980,000. We get circuit breaker for out of district 25%. We are scheduled to have one next year, but we currently have two.
- Mr. Fogue said there is a lot of accounting work for shared staff.
- Ms. Fisk said we used to float them around, we separate out the % so it totals 100%.
- Mr. Fogue asked about starting to accumulate OPEB numbers.

- Ms. Fisk said the \$50,000 is our total insurance cost anticipation. To put money in OPEB we have to have a line item to start with. That money if not taken then it can be moved to OPEB. The \$50,000 is what she has anticipated.
- Mr. Forgue said unemployment went from \$10,000 to \$61,000.
- Ms. Fisk said if we have long-term subs we need to cover their unemployment and anyone anticipating leaving is a certain percentage. It includes 2 long-term subs, and any anticipated. There will be a line item change for that in the 3rd or 4th quarter.
- Mr. Myers said since January, have there been any significant changes in the census.
- Ms. Fisk said we lost one from Chester.
- Mr. Myers asked if we attract special education kids from other districts.
- Mr. Garivaltis said yes. Two in the learning lab and four who are coming in between now and the end of the year.
- Ms. Fisk said the 4 coming in the spring will be after March 1. These are families that moved into the district.
- Mr. Garivaltis said we have specialized programs at each level to deal with the high needs population.
- Mrs. Coburn has one special education school choice coming into a specialized program.
- Mr. Garivaltis said the child Mrs. Coburn is talking about was in district and is now school choice. We could get special needs kids
- Ms. Fisk said when a special education child comes in there is a special education increment.
- Dr. Hopson said we are not marketing for special needs students, but we do accept them. It might be problematic to market for them.
- Mr. Garivaltis said we build our program based on student need. We don't have open slots.
- Mr. Forgue asked about extraordinary maintenance. He knows we used it for booster, but what happens if we don't use it.
- Ms. Fisk said it goes to E & D.
- Mr. Forgue asked how much of it was used.
- Ms. Fisk said we use it every year. We used it on flooring, water heater, gym pads, lights, fields, preschool playgrounds.
- Mr. Forgue asked about the \$33,000 in district salary.
- Ms. Fisk said it is for negotiating contracts. There has to be a pot of money. Paraprofessionals are negotiating now. You have to have money in the budget for negotiated raises. She anticipates what the school committee is going to approve. You can't just say there isn't any money so there won't be any raises. The teachers will be negotiating year.
- Amy Thornton asked why the level service budget does not include substitutes for paraprofessionals.
- Ms. Fisk said there are substitute budgets for paraprofessional where students need an aide.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked how much is in the school choice fund.
- Ms. Fisk said your school choice is going to be your E & D eventually which makes her a little fearful.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked if we can schedule that out over five years.
- Ms. Fisk said about \$250,000. It is funded out of school choice, which has help pay for technology staff, and some of the rural school positions this year. She will also need to cover \$70,000 from somewhere. Our compensated absences is going to need to be funded. That is when staff retire and they have severance. The auditors have asked us to build an account. They want us to get to a target amount of \$450,000. It is much like OPEB. It is another liability. We do have quite a few support staff retiring in the next 5 years or so.
- Mr. Forgue said we voted to raise the sub pay, but the budget for subs went down. Do you not anticipate needing as much?
- Ms. Fisk said she budgets on a three or five-year average. We are a small school district. Some of the money is in a long-term sub account. It's tricky.
- Mr. Forgue asked what is included in the \$96,101 that is in athletics. Does it include transportation.
- Ms. Fisk said coaching stipends and some transportation. The rest is funded out of revolving. She has a survey coming up for admission fees and user fees.
- Mr. Forgue asked if there will be relief for athletic transportation
- Ms. Fisk said yes. We have to availability to use our own transportation. Which was not part of the last contract.
- Ms. Fisk said the good news is the Hampshire County Trust is not increasing their premiums.

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve the minutes of 1/8/2020.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain 2 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Madelyn, Sarah F., Jason, Terri, Melissa, Sarah P., Lyndsey, Shirley, Michele

Abstain: Tara, Darlene

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Papillon talked about visual literacy. Mrs. Luppino has three classes. They are going to have a show and asked for emails for school committee to attend. Three winners will be chosen from each class to come and present. Mrs. Luppino asked about funding for printing them.
- Mr. Fogue said Mrs. Guertin arranged for German band students to come Memorial week. Band families are being asked to host them.
- Mrs. Foley has been following the ski team from afar. One of our local vocational students placed 9th. Wrestling won their meet tonight.

B. Chairperson – School Committee Ethics Follow-up, Yearbook Ad

- Tomorrow night is the Facilitated Discussion Meeting.

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson spoke about the superintendent in Mohawk who has agreed to step down after an affair. He is not sure how that will affect the rural schools group.
- He spoke to Glenn Koocher, who is adamant that you can do it yourself, and MASC will be happy to help. He will come out and meet with Dr. Hopson and Mrs. Crane. If you are all interested in sharing superintendents he would suggest Mrs. Crane reach out to Mohawk now. It will be a good time. Hampshire will complete their search this year.
- Mrs. Winer asked if he recommends that.
- Dr. Hopson would recommend school committee reach out. You could also look at Otis/Sandisfield although their school committee was against sharing a business manager.

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration

- Mrs. Coburn said tomorrow is Littleville's art and music show in the auditorium.
- Mr. Garivaltis said the SEPAC is putting on a 3 part parent series; building resilient children – developing grit and persistence.

F. Town

- Mrs. McVeigh met with Mrs. LeClair at the select board meeting. The hill town collaborative is looking at a - part video of the different towns. Are there some videos of the school and activities that are archived that they could use.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

A. Superintendent's Evaluation –Next Meeting 2/5/20

B. Legislative Liaison – None

C. Policy Subcommittee – Will set up a meeting for March.

D. Building Liaisons - Mrs. Crane and Mrs. Winer are scheduled to meet with Mr. Garivaltis.

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.

Warrant

AP#1045 \$258,149.64 PR#015 \$376,147.77

AP#1048 \$42.89

**8:35-9 p.m. XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None
or earlier**

XIV. ADJOURNMENT:

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to adjourn at 8:28 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary