

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 MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2020

Via Zoom (virtual)

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75747447239?pwd=NW90cGFQUXNRRVBScIRXcDRsdTQ3QT09>

Meeting ID: 757 4744 7239

Password: U2G7Eb

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	Darlene McVeigh	Sarah Foley
Terri Garfield	Martha Otterbeck	Melissa Nazzaro	
	Shirley Winer		

<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	Martha Clark, High/Middle AP
Stephanie Fisk, Business & Finance	Megan Coburn, Chs, Lit Principal
	Jason Finnie, Middle/High Principal
	Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director
	Jeanne LeClair, Communications
	Darlene Rehor, Elementary AP

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
 Brian Forgue

OTHERS: Kyle Mangini, Alexis Batra, Denae Dostal, Persa Batra, Kayla Brady, Kristina Schultz, Sue Luppino, Brad Brusseau, Amy Thornton, Bill Brown, Karen Golann, Beth Guertin, Chris Mosher, Ruth Harper, Jodi Fairman, Martha Gendron, Cheryl Wright, Susan Arkoette, Bob

Daley, Emily Johnson, Shari Laurie, Amy Mason, Theresa Brownlee, Alex Renton, Ashley Bates, Asher Rotenberg, Annie Pritchard, Amie McLaughlin, Jeri Beauregard, Cathy Servaes, Cynthia Heroux, Dan Shea, Kathy Murray, Darlene Osowski, Diane DeFalco, Elizabeth Hamaoui, Ginny Lee, Hannah Sullivan, Heather Cabral, James Duggan, Jenna Kakimoto, Jennifer Bak, JJ, Joe Hough, Goncalves, Kathy Gallagher, Kelly Bartolo, Jen (a parent) Mark Donovan, Val Zeh, Matt Collins, Misty Robataille, Sarah DaSilva, Nancy Bigos, Nancy Blume, Chris Parker, Rachel Millin, Andy Myers, Laura Macklin, Lynn Russell, Linda Hyjeck, Laura Fisk, Mary Lyons, Catherine Moriarty, Ramona Thieme, Sam Casler, Kim Sakaske, Susan Rhoads, Emily MacDonald

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m after everyone agreed to the disclosure.

II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit)

- Andy Myers said the Chester selectboard is going to hold the annual town meeting at the Chester town and not the GPAC. He thanked the district for the offer. The meeting Monday June 29 at 7:00 p.m.
- Kayla Brady asked to talk about the fall and the return of kids. She has two kids at Chester. She is in full support of kids going back full time. If they go back in a hybrid mode she asked the district to consider how families will work, and consider not doing a rotating schedule. If it is a set day or days each week it is more consistent. They need to have health, PE and music. She urges full remote learning for those who don't want to fully homeschool, but are not ready to come back. Some districts are having younger kiddos go in and the upper kids go remotely. Obviously the budget is tight, she understands as her position was eliminated in the district she works. Cuts will negatively impact learning. Ask for surveys for families and consider looping or at least that students meet with last year teachers so they can have closure.
- Cathy Servaes said 6th grade took a virtual field trip through the library to Canada last week. It was wonderful. They then went to the wetlands, which her kids jumped in on it.
- Mrs. Crane thanked everyone for their comments.
- Mrs. Crane gave a big thank you to Mrs. Winer as this is her last meeting. She has given 25 years to the District. She was on the foundation. She was a huge resource for new members. Usually, we would be together but we cannot have a gathering this year. She brought a gift to her last week.
- Mrs. Winer is going to miss it but not the change in computers.
- Dr. Hopson thanked Mrs. Winer for her service, he has been there with her for all of those 25 years.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brian Forgue said he is not doing much. Online learning has slowed down to a trickle. Students are in the middle of transitioning to summer vacation. It is weird, it was almost summer in March and now, here we are.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITION

A. Budget/COVID 19 Update

- Mrs. Crane said we will discuss how to recognize retirees.
- Dr. Hopson said this is what went out based on a 10% reduction in state funding. He went over the handout. Leadership has done a great job with the least impact on staff. For those few who have been around since 03/04 when we lost two million dollars knows Gateway hasn't fully recovered. State flipped the amount and went from paying 60% to having 60% be paid locally. We promised towns we wouldn't increase assessments. The state is promising to do their best not to cut Chapter 70 but the plan for a 20% reduction. 10% is what it will likely be. We are discussing space on what we may or may not think it will be but going with a K-6 and 7-12 mode.
- Mr. Forgue said MIAA does not plan to follow the current national guidelines. Do we have some information that has not been made public? Or are we just moving in that direction for monetary purposes.
- Dr. Hopson said we will probably follow what DESE recommends and not MIAA. We would have to follow DESE rules. He said there is a division of board members whether they should or shouldn't follow national guidelines. A lot of our athletics costs are paid by a revolving account.
- Mrs. Papillon understands the reorganizing K-6 and 7-12 in terms of certification. She is curious how the physical space is with 10 students to 2 adults in a classroom.
- Dr. Hopson said 4 years ago 5 and 6 were attached to the elementary schools. They would go back to the lower middle school hallways.
- Mr. Forgue asked what are Mrs. LeBlanc's thoughts on the curriculum changes we've started to make, what would it do to the progress we've made.
- Mrs. LeBlanc said right now it is centered around middle school set up. As Mrs. Papillon said there is the certification piece. It does play an impact. We will need to do a lot of curriculum work. It doesn't necessarily set us back, it's just a lot of work.
- Mr. Forgue asked if there are going to be some kind of concessions in uploading standards?
- Dr. Hopson said the only leniency is 9-11 didn't get to take the science test, but the course will count.
- Mr. Forgue said the numbers in middle school Math have been on the low side. Will there be leniency in the structure in making progress on improving them.
- Dr. Hopson thinks the state will have to look at leniency because of 3 months of online learning.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked how do we see this impacting students with no spanish and combining K-1. How did you come up with or decide on these things.
- Dr. Hopson said they talked about who was not returning and how to shuffle positions around with the least impact on courses. This discussion is probably happening in every school in the commonwealth. Staff who are retiring, and not

having to replace them with new staff, who may have to be laid off prior to the start of school. There are no good solutions, only the best workable solutions.

- Mr. Otterbeck asked do we need to be preparing for this since his needs to be implemented for the fall. We are preparing for the loss and the restructure even though we don't have definitive answers.
- Dr. Hopson said this is our best hope. This is probably the better year of the next couple of years. If somehow the state funds Chapter 70, student opportunity and rural schools 100% we would have to look again in the middle of summer. What does 20 or 25% really mean? This is better than contemplating one million dollar loss.
- Sue Luppino said It is clear that the middle school is being hit hard. Her primary concern is the fact that this means that what happens is just lucky that they are retiring, as opposed to looking at what is in the best interest of our kids. This decimates the middle school and most of our professional development has been around social emotional needs. If we get rid of teaming, what does this mean for the health of our children. If they are not healthy, they will not be able to learn. She asked how non renewal is different from a layoff.
- Dr. Hopson said for whatever reason, they decided not to renew a position and the decision was not budgetary based. Lay offs is to
- Sue Luppino asked why did we wait and not address the issue early, why did we wait till now.
- Dr. Hopson said if people know three months ahead, they stop working 3 months ahead. Realistically a lot of it has to do do with lawsuits.
- Sue Luppino hopes that the committee would spend time looking at what this does in the 6-8 age group and seek their input.
- Dr. Hopson said there was a lot of thought put into this, we know not everything is in the best interest of the district. We could just tell the state we aren't going to open and then they will put us into a receivership.
- Denaë Dostal said from the coach of a non-contact sport, she is concerned about the language to go ahead and forgo all sports. If there are some guidelines to allow for non-contact sports to happen, it would be appreciated. We have a lot of seniors that have been with us since grade 6. Also there is a large group that won't be able to start.
- Val Zeh said she listened to Mrs. Crane speak compassionately about Mrs. Winer. The non renewals and letting people go without a reason really takes the personal aspect out of it. For people who have worked in this district, it would help give them guidance to help them in their future. She said it is a business but it is an educational business. Why if the cuts don't happen, wouldn't we bring these people back. Where it states something about the fact that as we move forward, the possibility that senior or professional teachers may feel the impact on the district as employees, what does that mean?
- Dr. Hopson agrees, it seems impersonal when you non renew people. We have to follow legal advice and this comes from years of issues between the MTA and schools. In terms of replacing staff members that are retirees if there are no cuts

in Chapter 70, rural schools, transportation, there is no need to make these cuts. We don't want to rehire people and then have to lay them off and pay unemployment. There is nothing in the law that says you have to lay off only non professional staff, if there are 3 music teachers and there is a non professional staff who has another certification, those others could potentially be let go, when the music teacher leaves. If we look at programmatically cutting 10-12 people, that will have a bigger impact.

- Val Zeh said the middle school is a program and she would beg that we not try to cut it. It's the biggest change students go through. She cannot imagine going to the Jr. High mode again. The last presentation with cuts and furloughs - the other units weren't being cut because they gave a 3% furlough. The GTA was offered up to 15% per year for three years. A lot of their discussion was about what a 15% furlough would do to the education of our children. If she was furloughed for 27 days, she would have been done before June 3.
- Dr. Hopson said what we provided was a draft to all the associations. The teachers turned us down and the others came back with a counter. It doesn't mean the teachers cannot come back with a counter offer. 5% covers more than a 10 % cut in Chapter 70.
- Kayla Brady asked under the K-6 model please consider what that would do to bussing. Kindergarten students would be on busses with 6th graders.
- Dr. Hopson said that is another consideration when we look at how many kids can go on a bus. No one said this is good for children. We need to get the state to give more money. If the kids have to wear masks, we have the option to offer a virtual online academy for those who don't want to have their kids come back or homeschool. We are looking to offer online learning. High needs and K and 1 should come on a daily basis. Looking at family concerns and combining certain towns on certain days. There are lots of other questions without absences. We need to follow DESE guidelines. He is not sure the commissioner is thinking about parents, but most school districts probably are. We will be collecting input from families. The commissioner's list of PPE's will cost an estimated \$2,300 per student per year. He is trying not to lay off people, we have an open ELA position and a librarian that is certified in ELA.
- Sue Luppino spoke passionately about the librarian and all he has brought to her 7th grade classroom. You need all those connections, field trips, projects, etc. There are so many things he can support for the library that he cannot do as a classroom teacher. It will be astronomically felt by the children.
- Mrs. Crane said you all look heartbroken, which is how she feels. We are all shouldering an impossible thing right now and no one wants to do this stuff. They want to do things for the good of the kids, staff, and increase programs to the students. We are trying to make it up as we go along, trying to figure how we will get through this.
- Sue Luppino said while she respects this, she just needs to desperately point out that this is not being shared across the district. There is one place in

particular being decimated except middle school. There is a particular area that is going to feel this more than others.

- Mr. Finnie said looking at this list the impact is true. What is not on this list is all the connections and other reasons. Any other place we make cuts is going to impact more or have greater cuts due to unemployment, which would be deeper in the middle school and high school and have impacts at the elementary level.
- Jim Duggan said Val and Sue have made very good points. It was brought up that the Association had no counter proposal. They had discussion on some level, and we are not necessarily done. He doesn't know that no counter offer says the whole story.
- Dr. Hopson agrees there have been discussions since.
- Jim Duggan said the topic has come up in their discussions.
- Dr. Hopson understands you might not be able to make an agreement before the budget comes out in July.
- Misty Robataille doesn't understand. Why can't they continue in Chester and have the volunteers participate as a way to do things as we move forward rather than cutting it out. How would they combine K, 1. She has a son going to kindergarten.
- Mrs. Coburn said the library in Chester has been run by volunteers and that would continue. We have the benefit of an added Title I teacher who would collaborate with them.
- Mark Donovan talked about the cutting of the librarian. Gateway would benefit from having an aide who is competent. It feels like a lot to put on someone.
- Ginny Lee said she was at the meeting when this original MOU was presented. She directly said they were unwilling to talk years two and three as it was too far away. They would discuss year 1, but that they would have to see a budget. That was her reality.
- Susan Rhoads asked how many staff are not renewed.
- Dr. Hopson said two.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said this is devastating, we cannot express to the employees we are not happy with this on any level. We welcome alternative conversions on how to reach the goals. Even with the issues in the past, this particular year is unprecedented. We are all trying to figure this out. If we don't do this right, we may lose the district.
- Dr. Hopson said Mrs. Nazzaro has a valid point. School committee meetings in the past have discussed whether there should be a district and/or higher grades.
- Mrs. Crane asked about saving the chat.
- Dr. Hopson said it can be saved, but not as an official record.
- Sue Luppino said anyone on the meeting can save the chat.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Student Participation in Meetings

- Mr. Finnie said he is trying to follow similar guidelines to the student council.
- Mrs. Crane asked what everyone thinks about the wording.

- Brian Forgue said the wording about being on the committee and his belief on how students would be chosen by Mr. Finnie or how we used to elect our student council president candidates. They would go to the elections and then there would be a vote as a whole.
- Mrs. Crane just wanted to clarify they could be able to serve both, president or vice president and school council representative.
- Brian Forgue asked how it would work as things are now.
- Mr. Finnie said we would have to do it virtually.
- Brian Forgue asked if the student council members should vote now through meets or group chats, while these talks are going on. It is important for students to be part of the discussion of funding, budget cuts, etc. Should we vote before next year?
- Mr. Finnie said he is not sure it is fair to have a student council that might now be serving next year. But he understands the question,
- Mrs. Crane said if the representative was a junior would it be okay for them to serve over the summer until the next person is elected.
- Mr. Finnie said that sounds reasonable.
- Brian Forgue said that person would be a representative now, then they would re-elect in the fall.
- Mrs. Crane asked if anyone was scratching at Brian's door to come along. She has a sense, the student body would be okay with it. She has a feeling he will continue.
- Mr. Finnie said we have some challenges, with students having turned in chromebooks. Could this be a pilot program to help finalize things and then officially elect someone next fall.
- Mrs. Crane asked for a motion to accept having a student council member sit at the table and being a non-voting only in regular session.

Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to have a student representative sit at the school committee table without voting rights only in regular sessions.

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

B. GEA Resolution Approval

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the resolution as amended.

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

C. Recommendation to Participate in the National School Lunch Program - FY' 21

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve participation in the National School Lunch Program for FY '21.

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

D. Recommendation to Increase Lunch Prices for FY '21

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to increase school lunch prices for FY '21

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

E. Authorization to negotiate transportation payments spring 2020.

- Ms. Fisk said Lecrenski has submitted their paperwork. They are looking for 55% for March through June, basically since covid. They also discussed being up and ready for the beginning of the school year. Lecrenski layed off their drivers, vanpool did not. Vanpool is booking a 75% and judgeting from the staffing costs it is in line. Anything left would roll into the reimbursement fund to offset next year's expenses. Lecrenski has come up the lowest in the special education contract starting the summer of 2020. She said they don't know what is going to happen but the affidavit has to do with them applying for CARES money or any of that. There are different qualifications. But initially they don't qualify.
- Mr. Forgue is assuming vanpool did receive funds. Because we don't have Vanpool's sworn statement, it doesn't feel right. So you are asking to negotiate. It started at 88% and got down to 75%
- Ms. Fisk believes the towns have negotiated.
- Mrs. McVeigh has an email going from general council to DESE stating the legislation that was passed does not address the fact that towns need to have a school committee. Once they get the go ahead, they will negotiate for the voke and anticipate it coming in at 50/55%
- Mr. Forgue aid when August roles around and is too stringent. Who suffers.
- Ms. Fisk said they do, they have a performance bond. A lot of it is we are waiting for the state to come out with guidelines.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to authorize the negotiation of the spring 2020 transportation payment.

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

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - End of Year Summary

- Mrs. Crane said evaluation met tonight and approved the end of year evaluation. Nine members took the survey. The results were put in the packet. The subcommittee voted and recommends it to the whole committee.

B. 3rd Quarter Budget Transfers

- Ms. Fisk said this is actually 3rd and 4th as well. She is trying to lesson the impact of next year by purchasing PPE's for next year. She went over the transfers. Last item is going to go into the transportation revolving account.

VII. CONSENT ITEMS 5/27/2020 (Enc.)

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mr. Forgue to approve the minutes of 5/27/2020.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

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

Abstain: Melissa, Darlene, Shirley

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Papillon thanked teachers and staff for coming, being supportive, and giving inputs. She thanked Sue Luppino and congratulated her. Dawn Piers-Gamble also touched her heart and her daughter's. Her daughter had her and Mrs. Papillon was her student teacher.

B. Chairperson

- Mrs. Crane asked if we want to have the meeting on the 24th or we need to suspend the rules to vote the transfers.
- Overwhelmingly school committee wanted a meeting on the 24th..

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Dr. Hopson said we covered most, but the changes at the national/federal level around Title IX may require changes in policy, but now there is a lawsuit.

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration

- Mr. Finnie thanked everyone who was involved in the senior awards. Chief Garriepy, Mrs. McVeigh, and both fire and police staff. There have been many thank you's from parents.

F. Town

- Mr. Forgue asked if anyone knows any town that is not voting the high amount.
- Dr. Hopson said Blandford Is going to move on the floor to increase to the higher amount.
- Mrs. McVeigh said Huntington has put in the alternative amount, but will amend it to the statutory amount. She said the total increased \$255,000 for everything. They are taking a huge hit to the stabilization account. Town budget went up less than \$15,000.
- Mr. Forgue asked if she sees issues on the floor.
- Mrs. McVeigh said they have no other place to go. Usually not and she anticipates that at least one town is going to vote it down so they stand ready.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation** – Met tonight.
- B. Legislative Liaison** - None
- C. Policy Subcommittee** - None
- D. Building Liaisons** - None

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future Agenda Items

XI. INFORMATION

Information

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

Warrant

AP#1081 \$133,649.22

PR#025 \$373,950.37

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

8:35 or earlier

A.

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

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Winer to adjourn at 8:58 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