

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 24, 2020

Via Zoom

Meeting ID: 780 2185 5994

Password: t92a05

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	
<u>STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES</u>		Kurt Garivalentis, Pupil Services Director	
Brian Forgue		Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director	
		Jeanne LeClair, Communications	
		Darlene Rehor, Elementary AP	

Others: Bill Brown, Peter Curro, Ruth Harper, Matt Collins, Jim Duggan, Logan McKerkin, Val Zeh, Susan Addis, Dawne Piers-Gamble, Andy Myers, Theresa Brownlee, Amy Thornton, Laura Macklin, Susan Luppino, Kim Sakaske, Darlene Osowski, Bob Daley, Doreen Bashista, Sara

McNamara, Chris Dame, Joe Hough, Julie Gagnon, Jodi Fairman, Melissa McCaul, Theresa Lynch, Laura Fisk, Kelly Hawley, Annie Pritchard, Dan Shea, Ramona Thieme, Mary Hull, J. Maynard, Kristen Henrichon, Sara Bissonault, Cheryl Wright, Heather Dekarski, Kathy Gallagher, Angela McCulkerin, Cathy Servaes, Chris Dame

Mrs. Crane opened the meeting once everyone signed the disclosure.

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

- Bill Brown read a brief statement that expresses deep support of the 6-8 teaming model that is being altered by the many changes. The GEA is creating an extended anchor committee to address staff voices and issues as they come about. It allows students to successfully transition from elementary to middle school.(statement included in packet)
- Matt Collins said all staff are amazing. Pertaining to middle school and team leaders. Are there any other specific savings besides this.
- Dr. Hopson said this result is because we don't have a state budget, and assuming the GEA signs the furlough agreement there will still be teaming. All those cuts will not be made and teachers and leaders will be restored if those both happen.
- Matt Collins asked if that includes middle school.
- Dr. Hopson said it will be a model with teaming even with the change.
- Susan Rhoads read a statement thanking the school committee and administrators for their hard work. She talked about the negotiations and the furlough being asked of the teachers and paraprofessionals over the next couple of years. They want to be part of the solution. She felt they were being offered akin to extortion by being asked to a 15% furlough for 3 years. She would employ the school committee to come up with creative ways without having furloughs, do we need a full-time superintendent when Dr. Hopson retires and also that negotiations be in good faith.(statement included in packet)
- Dr. Hopson said the 6th grade will still be teamed but it will be under the elementary school administration.
- Sarah McNamara said staff is passionate with the middle school philosophy. It could be extended 5-9. The middle school teaching model is unique. Would 6th grade be temporary due to COVID.
- Dr. Hopson has no idea. Everything is temporary until we have a budget.
- Mrs. Otterbeck has been struggling with the proposal of dismantling the middle school model as we have worked very hard to make that program fabulous.
- Dr. Hopson said at this point the middle school model remains because the GEA has agreed to a furlough which covers a little more than a 10%. With the furlough we can handle up to a 12% reduction in state aid. The 6th grade will still be a teaming model.
- Dawne Piers-Gamble thanked everyone and Mrs. Papillon for the kind words at the last meeting. She is speaking as a middle school team member. This is a very difficult age span and she is concerned about getting rid of the teaming mode. Teachers train to work with students at that developmental level.
- Val Zeh said she had dreaded this year for the last 5 years, losing Sue and Dawne. It's a delicate dance. They operate on 236 years of experience. The middle school is losing 160 years of experience at the middle school level. There is a physiological growth

change students go through. They did significant professional development this year to foster lifelong learning. The DESE review said we need to stop changing in order to see an increase. They respect the school committee, but they should make all three levels be non negotiable.

- Cathy Servaes currently works in the 6th grade. She went to middle school from high school. She wants to echo what her peers have said about being on the chopping block. The middle school model is more than paying a team leader, it's common planning time, etc. She asked if they could be included in coming up with a creative solution this year to keep the middle school model and then can we look at this again next year.
- Dr. Hopson thanked everyone who has spoken. He taught for 19 years before he came here. If nothing else changed we would be in perfect shape - it will be years before we recover from this. We are looking to maintain the district. As part of the MOU we agreed to expand the process of having people meet with administrators. We have no idea what is going to happen and until now we had no reason to have a big group get together. We had an unknown.
- Jason Forgue said in response to Susan Rhoads, he has the utmost respect for all teachers here. The statement of extortion he takes exception to. When we voted to go ahead with the up to 15% furlough it was to keep from making any cuts. He too feels like the attack is on the teachers sometimes but not to the extent of extortion tactics. In ways to save money he has gone over the budget and had about 17 questions about how we could save. As far as a full-time superintendent, all options are open. He agrees it is too large a salary and we need to come up with another way. He gets the impression they are all admit about keeping the middle mode. It is not an attack, it is more of a current faculty and assessment to make this move. We are all doing our best to come up with creative alternatives.
- Peter Curro worked at Gateway for 33 years when he retired as the middle school principal. He went to the town meeting and there wasn't any budget information. He has spent the last five years as the middleman working with schools and with Westfield University. In addition to middle school teaming he has worked in high schools where 9th grade has been teamed. Teaming is important to the whole child but it's also a culture that brings out a more positive tone than lack of teaming. Learning in a supportive environment so when they try new ideas as they are conceptual learners gives an opportunity to take a risk and make a mistake in a safe place where they won't crash and burn. He hopes that someday the middle school can be put back together. He would love to be part of the superintendent search.
- Mrs. Garfield said with the savings from the furlough, why would the 6th grade still have to be moved to the elementary.
- Dr. Hopson said we have to plan that there will be financial cuts if not this year, but next year. He doesn't know how many teachers won't show up due to underlying health issues, getting kids to school, and specials, (hopefully state will come through), but at this point it is planning for the future.
- Mrs. McVeigh said in listening to the public input, she would like to understand how many teachers were involved in this plan.
- Dr. Hopson said no teachers were involved in the initial plan.

- Mrs. McVeigh suggested he take a serious look at involving the teachers as he moves forward. They should be able to nominate people to the group.
- Dr. Hopson said we have already put that process in place.

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Brian Fourgue said they are full on in summer vacation mode. He believes he was in 7th grade when they closed the hallway that is now used for the preschool. He does remember having all those teachers around emotionally and that he loved everyone. He was never in need of the social emotion support. He agrees with Mrs. McVeigh we need to make sure the teachers are involved in the decisions that are being made. Even little changes like moving Mr. Brown to English. He is so helpful to the teachers. The teachers understand their mental health very well and need to be included in future negotiations.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITION

A. DESE Guidance - Opening Schools

- Christine Dame is a parent and part of the school council and is happy to know the middle school model will remain. Her child has had a positive experience in both schools and feels the middle school was good to both her students. She hopes it would remain as is under the same administration as her daughter was 5-8 and it was personally better for her daughter.
- Dr. Hopson was hoping the commissioner and the governor would have something to say yesterday, but they did not.
- Mr. Crane is disappointed that they didn't have anything to say.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - End of Year Summary Approval

Mrs. Papillon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve the superintendent's FY '20 evaluation summary.

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

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

- Mr. Forgue wishes more of them had completed it.

B. Approval of Budget Transfers

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro to approve the Budget transfers.

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

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

C. Recommendation to award special education transportation contract to Lecrenski Bros., Inc. for FY 20-21 and FY '21-22.

- Ms. Fisk said she had two quotes; VanPool and Lecrenski. Lecreanski underbid Vanpool by \$10 per day.

Mrs. McVeigh made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve the Special Education Transportation Contract for FY '20-21 and FY '21-22.

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

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

D. Approval of FY '20 final payment to Lecrenski Bros., Inc. for regional transportation

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to approve the final payment to Lecrenski Bros., Inc. for FY '20 for regional transportation.

- Mr. Forgue asked if that was in line with what towns are paying.
- Ms. Fisk said we wanted 58%, Westfield wanted 55-60%. We are the lowest in state
You do have to pay your contractor to qualify for CARES

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to approve the final payment to Lecrenski Bros., Inc. for FY '20 for regional transportation.

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

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

E. Approval of FY '20 final payment to VanPool for special education transportation.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve the final payment to Vanpool for FY '20 special education transportation.

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

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

VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Warrant Signing Committee

- Mrs. Crane said we need additional people to help over the summer.
- Dr. Hopson asked if anyone has an objection to Mrs. Crane appointing members to the warrant signing committee.
- There were no objections.

B. Resolution for Unfunded Mandates

- Mrs. Crane said the resolution was put in the packet today. There are over seventy school committees that have endorsed it. It is asking the state to pay for all the cleaning and PPE's She would like us to pass it tonight
- Mrs. Foley said she read it and it makes sense.
- Mrs. McVeigh, Mrs. Garfield and Mrs. Nazzaro all agree.

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Ms. McVeigh to waive the two-meeting rule to vote on the COVID 19 Resolution.

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

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

Mrs. McVeigh made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the COVID 19 Resolution.

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

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

- Mr. Forgue feels like altering it to address the hundreds of other issues.

C. Recommendation to accept a donation to the food service revolving fund.

- Mrs. Hartley received an anonymous donation to cover the student outstanding debt. It is considered a gift so the school committee needs to approve it.

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Nazzaro to approve the two-meeting rule to vote on accepting the donation.

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

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

Mrs. Papillon made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to accept the donation to cover the outstanding student lunch debt.

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

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

D. Juneteenth

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve Juneteenth as a holiday.

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

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

VII. CONSENT ITEMS 6/10/2020 (Enc.)

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the minutes from 6/10/2020.

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

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

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Papillon thinks the administration needs to include teachers in the process. They are looking for a member to join the Foundation. She is now the single school committee member on the Foundation. She talked about the positive things the foundation has done. They meet every other month.
- Mrs. McVeigh said tonight is her last school committee meeting and selectboard meeting. She knows we have some tough decisions over the next few years. Steve Estelle is her brother and he heard from the MIAA he was chosen as girls soccer coach of the year.
- Mrs. Crane thanked Mrs. McVeigh on behalf of the committee for the hours on the committee and the volunteer hours she has put in at her town plus the questions she has asked has brought us good discussion, particularly around budget and number matters. Most of us give a lot of time to our towns and know how hard and much time it takes away from our family. She wishes her good luck.

- Mrs. Otterbeck said as we move forward can we work and support our teachers and staff in restructuring. Is there a way we can all work together towards that goal. This is a great opportunity despite this virus and lack of recommendations from the powers at be.
- Dr. Hopson said we are already looking at how we can put things together. We met with union leadership on how to move forward. We will be working closely with teachers.
- Mrs. Otterbeck said it was powerful how passionate the members were.

B. Chairperson

- Mrs. Crane said this is our last meeting between now and August 26. Dr. Hopson will keep us informed as a committee and inform us if we need to meet.

C. Superintendent

Central Office Update

- Dr. Hopson said three town meetings are done and three towns have adopted the statutory method. By Monday evening we should have a budget.

D. Business Manager - None

E. Administration

- Mr. Finnie said there are a lot of questions about graduation. He is waiting to put out the plan till the end of the month.
- Mrs. Crane asked if the school committee will be able to be involved as in the past.
- Mrs. Nazzaro said maybe we can come up with a creative way to be known if we can't be there physically.
- Mr. Garivaltis gave thanks to everyone for their passionate advocacy in middle school teaming and the passion to be involved.
- Mrs. Balboni asked if we usually have a July meeting.
- Mr. Crane said we have had them in the past, but last year we decided to forgo the meeting due to other outside activities.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked can we make sure we address the chats.

F. Town - None

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation - None
- 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# 1085 \$38,124.53

PR#026 \$436,177.04

**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION- None
8:35 or earlier**

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

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

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

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

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary