

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.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2018

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
Martha Otterbeck
Shirley Winer

HUNTINGTON

Darlene McVeigh
Melissa Nazzaro
Aaron Welch

MIDDLEFIELD

Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY

Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL

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
Deanna LeBlanc, High/Middle Assistant Principal
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: Attorney Russell Dupere, Joe Shea, Deb Kuhn, Robert Austin, Melissa McCaul

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

7:05 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT FOR ITEMS NOT LISTED ON AGENDA (3 Minute Limit) - None

III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT

- Robert Austin said both the boys and girls cross-country teams beat Palmer. Soccer senior nights are coming up; girls tomorrow and boys Monday. The freshmen won the first showcase competition. The theme was music. They are still working on stamp books for certain events. The annual food drive hosted by student council is coming up in November.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Health Insurance – Joe Shea

- Mrs. Crane introduced Ms. Kuhn
- Ms. Kuhn said last year this was brought for a vote for adoption. This allows discussion between union representation to make changes to the health insurance premiums. It was voted on and we got all the way through, then one of the MTA reps said they were going to sue because notifications weren't sent certified. So this year we sent out certified letters notifying all union representatives of the vote.

- Joe Shea gave an overview of the trust. The trust itself is the insurance company. The trust hires Blue Cross Blue Shield to process our claims and perform actuarial services. Sixty-nine municipal groups make up the trust. Eleven thousand insurers are covered in the trust. Mr. Shea is the insurance director who reports to the executive committee and then insurance advisory committee. They make the final decision on premium and insurance changes. He went over finances from 2002 to 2014. We were doing so well we were able to bank money for the future. Pharmaceuticals went from 6 million to 12 million. Now they are at 13 million. He went over the unaudited financials and the four-year history of the trust. Total net assets were 25 million in 2015. It dropped to 19 million in a year. In 2017 we lost another million so they started increasing rates. Claim rates have started to slow down again. We are seeing larger growth in our investments. 21.9 million is what we have today above and beyond our liabilities. On page 18, number five is a benefit summary of what they were going to put into effect in July 2017. We started these discussions three years ago. The group wanted to just tweak some of the benefits. The middle column is what we were expecting to increase. Our premiums are still better, and our benefits are still richer than what is out in the market right now. The changes should save about 5% on the premium. We would lock them in for a number of years to see how it would impact the claims. The closest in comparison to us is the Amherst Pelham trust. They had three premium increases in the course of a year. They went bankrupt and had to go to MIIA.
- Mr. Welch asked what the net impact is.
- Joe Shea said it would save approximately 5% on premiums.
- Mr. Welch said we've seen a decrease in claims in the past three years. BCBS projected a 20-20% increase. He is not sure what the urgency is with the reserve going up.
- Joe Shea they are looking long-term. They are relying on an actuary that knows our data better. We have them look at it every year.
- Mr. Welch asked what happens if we do nothing according to the actuaries.
- Joe Shea said we would use more of our reserve. The rule of thumb is to have approximately 3 months of reserve.
- Mr. Welch said 80% of the members would benefit from a lower premium. But the co-pays seem high.
- Mrs. McVeigh asked about the retirees.
- Joe Shea said retirees are on Med-ex once they are 65 or above. This does not apply to them.
- Mr. Welch asked if this has the total deductible.
- Joe Shea said no, we do not have deductibles.
- Mr. Welch asked what was the reasoning for not having the MTA involved from the beginning?
- Joe Shea said they were told in May 2017 at a meeting. The MTA representative was there and decided to do nothing with the information. Last year we tabled it. They wanted to have representation at the table.
- Mr. Welch said you talked about briefly about 19.
- Joe Shea said the trust and the MTA disagree.
- Dr. Hopson said each of the local union reps have voted to go forward with this, only the MTA has a problem with it. The local representatives are fine with it.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said our unions didn't contest the process here. We reached an agreement. The issue was in other school districts. It was limited to a handful of groups. The rest of the group could have moved forward, so it was kind of a reboot. Section 19 has been around for decades. Even when 21-23 was not an option. Section 19 was not effective over the years. He said he had two schools that have voted section 19 and they can never come to an agreement. It gives you the ability to make changes in insurance. Employers used to change rates all the time. Section 19 just doesn't seem to work. 21-23 is a smooth process. Voting the law itself is usually the hardest part.
- Mr. Fogue said Joe Shea said that 80% of members save. You are planning a 7% increase in premiums and you are saving 5% so there is a 2% increase overall.
- Joe Shea said yes there would be.
- Attorney Russell Dupere it is cost avoidance. Instead of paying \$200 in premiums, you are only paying \$100.
- Mr. Welch doesn't see this as a priority or something that needs to be done right away.
- Dr. Hopson said his understanding from last time if we didn't accept this 5% avoidance, the premium goes up 7%, which is \$1,000 per family. Gateway is on the hook for their portion. There is going to be a cost no matter what you do. If you look at GIC or other plans there are seldom that are comparable.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said at least 80% of your budget is staff. This is still the best plan in the state, even with increased cop-pays. When you look at the 80%, 20% shifts every year. That 20% is the biggest reason why your premiums are increasing. Either way that 7% is going to be covered by staff. One way or another the employees will have an increase.

- Mr. Welch said if we don't adopt this you are guaranteed a 7% increase.
- Joe Shea if the executive committee meets and the insurance advisory committee moves forward with benefit changes and Gateway we hasn't adopted it you may have a lawsuit from the MTA.
- Attorney Russell Dupere said today you are voting to adopt the law. You will vote later to agree to the changes. You direct your representative on how you want them to vote. Adopting the law gives you the ability to make the change. If the union says no, you will get pushed out of the trust.
- Mrs. McVeigh said if we voted this already why we do we have to do this again. Did we do it right?
- Attorney Russell Dupere said our letters went out.
- Ms. Fisk said the law says two days notice. It is just someone else taking it to the next level.
- Mrs. Crane asked when we need to make these changes.
- Joe Shea said January and then again in April. Tonight is just going on record to give this group the power to make changes.
- Mr. Welch asked how many didn't adopt it last time.
- Joe Shea said he would have to look.
- Mr. Forgue takes exception to the 20 % causing the 7% increase. Is it for the long-term plan or to keep over the 3-month reserve?

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion second by Mrs. Winer to suspend the rules and take the health insurance vote out of order.

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

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

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to adopt Section 21-22 of MGL 32B, thereby notifying union and bargaining groups of the intent to make benefit changes to the district's health insurance plans.

- Mr. Welch said he is uncomfortable taking this vote right now.
- Mrs. Crane asked what he is uncomfortable with.
- Mr. Forgue asked who the representative is for the district.
- Mrs. Crane said Ms. Kuhn.
- Dr. Hopson said this is just giving us the ability to make changes. Ms. Kuhn will have to come back with any changes.

Mr. Welch made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to move to postpone the vote to the November meeting.

- Mrs. Nazzaro asked Joe Shea if postponing the vote three weeks changes the outcome. She feels that the union representatives are not here because they don't have an issue with this.
- Mr. Finnie asked where this concern is arising. He receives benefits too. He doesn't want to see us lose this group.
- Mrs. Nazzaro wants to give them an opportunity to put everyone at ease.

Mr. Welch made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to move to postpone the vote to the November meeting.

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

Yeas: Sarah F., Jason, Terri, Melissa, Sarah P., Darlene, Lyndsey, Aaron, Shirley

Nays: Madelyn, Martha, Michele

- Vote has been postponed till November.
- Mrs. Crane asked what folks need to see for the vote in November. Certified letters need to go out again.
- Mrs. Otterbeck asked if the letter is clear that it is just to vote the law, not the proposed changes.
- Ms. Kuhn said yes.

B. Chapter 74 Early Education Application

- Mr. Finnie said as part of the Preschool program, this was the next step. We have the students and the teachers for the program. We will just need to add one teacher. He and Mr. Garivaltis met with Housatonic. This is a process we can apply for this year. We had to notify any stakeholders, which was

easy, since we are not part of a vocational program. We had to reach out to mass hire folks and come up with a regional workforce need. Educational services is one of the top three priorities in this area. The application for intent is due on Friday. Mr. Finnie has to get signatures from school committee as representatives for the member towns. He handed out the letter he drafted. They surveyed the 7-12 students as well.

- Mrs. McVeigh said we file this letter of intent and then several other applications and then DESE gives the final approval.
- Mr. Finnie said yes and we are hoping to start next year. We will have to create a PAC (parent advisory committee) in the process.

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to suspend the two-meeting rule to vote on this tonight.

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

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

Mrs. McVeigh made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to support applying for the Chapter 74 Early Education Application.

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

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

7:35 p.m.V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Foundation Reform Resolutions

Mrs. Foley made a motion seconded by Mr. Welch to approve the foundation reform letter.

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

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

B. Recommendation to adopt Section 21-22 of MGL 32B, thereby notifying union and bargaining groups of the intent to make benefit changes to the district's health insurance plans.

- This was postponed till the November meeting.

C. Recommendation to Waive Article Thirty-Five of the Teachers' Contract for a Teacher Retiring this Year.

Mrs. Nazzaro made a motion seconded by Mrs. McVeigh to waive Article Thirty-Five of the Teachers' Contract for a Teacher Retiring this Year.

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

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

D. Policies – Minutes (Enc.)

- IC – School Year/School Calendar – IC becomes ICA
- ID – School Day
- IE – Organization of Instruction
- IGB – Support Services programs
- IHA – Basic Instructional Programs
- IHAE – School District Wellness Program – IHAE becomes ADF
- IHAI – Occupational Education
- IHAM – Health Education – IHAM – 1 becomes IHAM
- IHAMA – Parental Notification Relative to Sex Education

- j. IHB – Special Instructional Programs and Accommodations
- k. IHBEA – English Language Learners
- l. IHBH – Alternative School Programs
- m. IJ – Instructional Materials – IJ replaces IJJ and IJK
- n. IJLA – Library Resources – IJLA replaces IIAC
- o. Vote change the reference of “No Child Left Behind” to reflect the new law “Every Student Succeeds Act” in all policies affected.

Mrs. Winer made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve policies a-o.

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

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

8:00 - VI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

8:30 p.m.

A. October Grant Approval (Enc.)

- Mrs. Long talked about the Model Comprehensive School Health Services grant. This used to fund the Nurse leader, but now it pays for our resource nurse to cover for the nurse leader to go to meetings, trainings, etc. This is a new iteration of the grant. Most of the funds go to the resource nurse plus screening equipment. She talked about the School Nutrition Equipment Assistance for High Needs Districts. She said we apply for it every year and never get it. So why not again. We’ve identified a piece of equipment that meets the criteria. Last she talked about the Chapter 74 Funding for Early Childhood Program. This would fund the development of an Early Childhood vocational program at the high school, which would be tied to the preschool programs.

B. MCAS Update

- Mrs. Coburn spoke about the science results and what they did differently. Literacy is why are working with the consultant.
- Mr. Forgue said Mrs. Coburn said one of the teachers used more hands on. Does she think that is why.
- Mrs. Coburn said this year was the first year STEM was online. When she spoke to the teacher she reflected on her practice more. We don’t want to go away from hands on but scientific method may have to be reflected upon from time to time.
- Mr. Forgue doesn’t want to shy away from hands on to make this prettier.
- Mrs. Coburn agrees.
- Mrs. LeBlanc said STE was an online test for the first time as well. Open response needs work. Comprehension went well. Writing continues to be a focus. Math Graphics: Need to look at how we break apart problems. With ELA they need to look at a universal screener to see what part of breaking down language are they struggling with.

C. Maintenance Update (Enc.)

- Ms. Fisk said included in the packet was a brief overview of what has been completed, and what is coming up.
- Mrs. Crane met with Mr. Quinn and Mr. Hartley last Monday and they talked about the items in the presentation and how clean and bright the school is. It would be nice if we could get something in the stabilization for the future.

VII. CONSENT ITEMS 10/10/18 (Enc.)

Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to approve the minutes of 10/10/18.

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

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

Abstain: Aaron, Shirley

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Mrs. Austin said the band is having a movie night fundraiser. There will be prizes and costumes. They will also be selling popcorn.
- Mrs. Foley said the boy's soccer team won tonight and the girls were playing still.

B. Chairperson - None**C. Superintendent** - None

Central Office Update (Enc.)

D. Business Manager

- Ms. Fisk said they are at the beginning of the budget process. Meetings with administrators are next week after NEASC. We received notice from DESE we will be receiving small rural school aide. It will come in October and April \$155,000 total. It's a special revenue account. When we got the letter it said general fund and she called them and told them it was illegal. Hopefully it will continue next year.
- Dr. Hopson said part of the small rural schools aide is the each school has to show what they have been working collaboratively. What we have been doing with the towns is a great example.

E. Administration

- Mrs. Long said two alumni of Project 351 have started a service project. They bought 150 bracelets with a grant. They are selling them for 5\$ each and the money goes to Southern Hill towns safety at home fun. The money will be used for gas cards, phone cards, and food.

F. Town

- Mrs. McVeigh said Novis is coming to the town of Huntington tomorrow. Novis is the IT company that was chosen to help out the towns.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING**A. Superintendent's Evaluation** - Next Meeting 1/9/19**B. Legislative Liaison** - None**C. Policy Subcommittee**

- Met tonight and the next Meeting is 12/12/18

D. Building Liaisons

- All the cross-country kids wore black bracelets with an "R" on them for the student who lost his life.

X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**Future Agenda Items****XI. INFORMATION****Information**

Elementary Picture Day
 Superintendent's Corner September 7, 2018
 Winter Sports registration now open
 Gateway Senior Nights coming up
 Don't miss Gateway's 3rd Annual Homecoming Weekend
 'Soctober' community service project at Gateway
 "Bandana Dan" fund donates instruments to Gateway
 5-Year Literacy Initiative underway at Gateway
 October Early Release
 Superintendent's Corner October 12, 2018

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

Warrant

AP# 1026 \$76,618.11

PR#008 \$380,233.91

AP# 1031 \$51.33

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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary