

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES****WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2018****Performing Arts Center****6:00 P.M.**

All visitors attending the school committee meeting should sign in at the security booth.

I. OPENING OF MEETINGBLANDFORDMichele Crane
Terri GarfieldCHESTERShirley Winer
Diane DunnHUNTINGTONAaron Welch
Melissa NazzaroMIDDLEFIELD

Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY

Madelyn Austin

RUSSELLTara Balboni
Lyndsey PapillonSECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIONDr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Business & FinanceADMINISTRATIVE COUNCILMegan Coburn, Chs,Lit Principal
Jason Finnie, High/Middle Principal
Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Deanna LeBlanc, High/Middle Assistant Principal
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer
Darlene Rehor, Elementary Assistant PrincipalSTUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: Deb Kuhn, Joey Frappier, Linda Coffey, Stephanie Conway, Amy Thornton, Avery Wing, Brian Wing, Melissa McCaul, Dan Shea, Jodi Cabral-Croke, Pat Diefendorf, Brennan Foley, Rachel Millin, Ruth Harper, Kayla Brady, Kate Fogue, Jason Fogue, Ed Renald, Andy Myers, Darlene McVeigh, Derrick Mason, Amy Porter, Peter Spotts, couple from Middlefield, Annie Pritchard, Kate Albright-Hanna, Eric McVey, Wayne Precanico, Joe Kearns, John Baldasaro, Cara Letendre.

6:05 p.m. II. PUBLIC HEARING – FY '19 Budget

- Dr. Hopson gave a PowerPoint presentation.
- Jason Fogue asked how much is due to enrollment and state aide.
- Dr. Hopson said there is a decrease because of enrollment and decrease in state aid. You get to a point where you can't decrease staff any more. We have not laid off staff since 2005. When staff retired we haven't replaced them. The reduction in state aid has more to do with the way the state calculates chapter 70. There is a decrease in enrollment and the state is underfunding schools whether you are gaining or losing students. The formula has not been updated.
- Dr. Hopson talked about the level assessments.
- Andy Myers said this will allow the towns and Gateway to do a better budget planning since they will know what the increase is going to be. We want to welcome families and get more students into Gateway.
- Dr. Hopson said right now it penalizes a town to have students move in.
- Jason Fogue said as a Chester resident he is all for it this year but is concerned with the fact that you have to vote for it every year. Three years from now one town votes it down and we go back to the old way.
- Dr. Hopson said we have no choice. That town that has a 10 % decrease one year could have a 10% increase the next year. Hopefully the town officials have been out there talking about this. Andy Myers has been going out and giving presentations.

- Eric McVey said the Blandford select board likes the alternative assessment and has voted to move this forward for town consideration.
- Jason Forgue is more concerned with Russell.
- Andy Myers said he gave a presentation to the Russell finance committee. They understanding this is going to be a lot of educating and distributing information to the select board and towns. If we get the information out there, there is a good chance this will go through.
- Derrick Mason said Russell finance is going to have to do some heavy lifting. Russell took a big hit last year. They owe it to the other towns and themselves as an insurance policy to the huge increases or decrease. This may not happen in two months or six months. No matter what we do as a bunch of communities, we should be fighting to get 100% state transportation reimbursement, and pushing for a waiver for claw back (SBA payback). We should also work really hard to keep MARS at the table over the next year. We need to look at the big picture so it is sustainable over the next 10 to 20 years.
- Dr. Hopson said this is the first time in many years where the school committee, administration and town officials are all on the same page. Hopefully it will move forward in a positive manner.
- Wayne Precanico asked if we know who is supporting the increase for small rural schools.
- Dr. Hopson said one of our legislators.
- Mrs. Balboni said at town meeting we will be voting on level assessments. Does that mean there will be two versions?
- Dr. Hopson said it will be whatever school committee moves forward. As a school committee you vote on the bottom line of the budget.
- Darlene McVeigh said yes, but you have to present both in order to pass the amendment.
- Jason Forgue said in the line item budget what is covered in the district salary and why did it go up 500%
- Dr. Hopson said the money for contracts has to go someplace. It will go into separate line items once contracts are settled.
- Eric McVey said the closing of St. Mary's just came up on the news. They only have seventy-eight high school students. When do we become not viable?
- Dr. Hopson said that is a very good question.
- Darlene McVeigh asked if we have a plan to get some of the kids that go to St. Mary's back.
- Dr. Hopson said we do, but he is not willing to share it publicly yet since they just announced the closure and they are trying to keep it open.
- A woman from Middlefield asked if there is a reason behind the increase of sixteen kids in Chester.
- Andy Myers thinks there are some houses that couples lived in and families moved into.
- Derrick Mason said we are under crushing constraints even if we all support this new assessment method getting it passed by six towns in the next two months. It's possible but he is concerned by the short window DESE needs this done. We need to be proactive and vocal on what we want to see over the long haul and that we are going to move forward for our needs.
- Dr. Hopson said there are some changes coming to DESE. Jeff Wulfson will no longer be the acting Commissioner come July and when Christine Lynch leaves a lot of knowledge will be lost.
- Derrick Mason gets his point but we need to be vocal and stay on the radar.
- Mrs. Winer asked why people would object to something that would reduce the extremities of assessments.
- Dr. Hopson said it will be an advantage verses disadvantage.
- Eric McVey said Blandford is going to have a \$90,000 swing. The longer you wait the bigger the swing gets. The work that everyone has done this year makes it a palatable plan.

III. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Stacy L Stewart
 School Committee Secretary