

**GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2015**

**Gateway Career Center  
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  
Shirley Winer  
Martha Otterbeck 7:25  
Diane Dunn

HUNTINGTON  
Ron Damon  
William Hathaway  
Jeff Wyand

MIDDLEFIELD  
Sarah Foley

MONTGOMERY  
Anne-Marie Buikus  
Madelyn Austin

RUSSELL  
Ruth Kennedy  
Tara Balboni

SECRETARY  
Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION  
Dr. David B. Hopson, Superintendent  
Stephanie Fisk, Business & Finance

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL  
Joanne Blocker, Director of Academics  
Megan Coburn, Chs,Lit,Ms Principal  
Jason Finnie, High/Jr. High Principal  
Sara Laing, Chs,Lit, Ms Assistant Principal  
Wendy Long, District Grant Writer  
Anthony Sabonis, High/Jr. High Assistant Principal  
Alice Taverna, Pupil Services Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

OTHERS: \_\_\_\_\_

**7:05 p.m. II. PUBLIC INPUT (3 Minute Limit)**

- Mrs. Crane opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m.
- Mrs. Buikus and Mrs. Austin are recording the meeting.
- Derrick Mason said he knows DESE’s approach worries people, but he feels the coming of DESE creates opportunities not threats to us. We need to work together on the broader interests. Change is coming. We do not have the luxury or time to go down separate roads. He thanked those who are actively participating on the task force. They would like to have 1 member from each town on the task force. It is better for you and all of us. January 7 is the next meeting.
- Tony van Werkhoven’s comments are on the same venue as Mr. Masons. He has an appreciation for members of the school committee and he sympathizes with the difficulty of their decisions. They have a responsibility to town and the students. They have a community responsibility and need to be aware of the issues facing your towns. He strongly suggests each committee member meet with their finance and selectmen to find out the challenges on their towns. With responsibility to schools you have to deliver quality education to school district that is affordable to the towns in your district. Budget expectations are for members of the committee to look at the budget critically, that you understand it and some of the benchmarking for components of the budget. A prior finance committee did that. Issues we are facing is we are seeing a shrinking population and with Worthington leaving we have created a very difficult situation for finances in the district.

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**III. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT**

- Brennan Foley spoke about blessing bags and handed out a brief presentation. It started out as a social action project in Spanish as care packages for the homeless filled with all sorts of goodies - basic necessities. He and Jenna Margarites went to the Samaritan Inn to find out what they needed.
- Mrs. Winer asked if they wanted people to buy the items or make a donation.
- Brennan said buy items
- Mrs. Dunn asked if it was for both male and female.
- Brennan said yes.

#### **IV. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS**

##### **A. Pupil Services Update**

- Ms. Taverna stated that Sean O'Neill the autism specialist couldn't be here tonight. He will come in April for Autism Awareness Month. She introduced Jonny Barrett, Kiera Coon and Emily MacDonald.
- Mrs. MacDonald introduced herself and the students, and explained the life skills program. She has 8 students total. They have two students who wanted to get their diploma this year. Jonny goes to Westfield State University. There are 6 paraprofessionals in the program. They are part of clubs- concert and show choir, best buddies and the talent show. They did a fundraiser for the homeless cat program. Jonny heading community services such as wrapping gifts at school. They have taken field trips to the ICE program at Westfield State. They put on a Thanksgiving dinner and host an alumni picnic once a year. They have school jobs and volunteer by recycling two times a week at Littleville.
- Kiera Coon spoke about her tasks, and the best buddies program.
- Jonny Barrett a senior at Gateway talked about the ICE Program he attends Westfield State University Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. He explained what his day looks like.
- Mrs. Winer asked Jonny to explain best buddies.
- He said it was a social event, where they made friends.
- Mrs. MacDonald explained how each of the students has a peer model student who plans activities both in and out of school.

#### **V. BUDGET**

##### **A. FY '17 Budget**

- Dr. Hopson sent out information in the packet based on a school committee vote a month ago. Looks like about a \$400,000 budget reduction. It doesn't take away from students but allows us to make reductions. After they remain they way it. It keeps Mr. Sabonis and Mr. Finnie 6-12, 5<sup>th</sup> grade back to make a PreK – 5 at two elementary schools. There are two administrators retiring, Mrs. Blocker and Ms. Taverna so with that we are looking to redistribute and reduce. We are looking at moving closing time of the building from 10 to 9 p.m. at night as this cuts back on security and an amount in utilities.
- Mrs. Winer asked for an honest opinion on how much it is eating into student services. If we weren't in this problem would you not cut Mrs. Blocker.
- Dr. Hopson said if we had all the money in the world we would leave her position.
- Mrs. Winer asked how professional development happens without a curriculum director.
- Dr. Hopson said as a leadership team, we decide on professional development. Mrs. Blocker does all the coordinating and bringing it together. We have cut 30 % of our admin staff. We won't know how well this works until we go through it. It is like not replacing technology director. Does he do as good a job, probably not, but it hasn't stopped us from doing technology.
- Mrs. Winer asked does it stop us from technology training.
- Dr. Hopson said no, but it does take extra time to evaluate and research things. We have a large number of smart boards and projectors that are either old or not working properly. Dr. Hopson and Mr. Parker have looked at boards and projectors and narrowed it down to what works best for us and now we have 12 of them installed.
- Mrs. Winer said what worries her is the director of academics.
- Mrs. Long said one of the nice things about planning this far ahead, she has been cross training with Mrs. Blocker on title. She probably won't be able to do it to the same caliber, but we will be in good shape. Managing the grant is logical for her.
- Mr. Finnie said it is not just as simple as absorbing or thinking about redistributing. It will include teacher leadership. We can set up more opportunities. Some of the expectations for administrators have changed over the years. Is it going to take away time for him to do other things, certainly, but we are trying to make things overlap as much as possible. Some of the professional development is being done like that already.
- Mrs. Winer asked what happens if we have to overhaul the curriculum again.

- Dr. Hopson said Mrs. Blocker has done a 7 year curriculum cycle. A lot of the things Mrs. Blocker and Ms. Kuhn do have to do with compliance. Ms. Paiva and Mrs. Stewart will help with it too. Home school will be taken over by Dr. Hopson's office. We will set up mentors now and that will be an added responsibility. We are looking for ways not to impact student services. We will no longer have two offices in the building and we hope to not have layoffs due to the human resources position.
- Mrs. Kennedy would like to see a correlation with figures with these different points. Is this going to affect teacher negotiations. What is the figure going to a 205 day position.
- Dr. Hopson said we are still working on things, when you get the line item budget next month, it will be there.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked why we need a human resources position.
- Dr. Hopson said we are cutting out a secretary and Mrs. Blocker's position. We can't have Ms. Kuhn still do all the things she is doing. We are looking to put it in one person. It will be a support position.
- Mrs. Kennedy would like to see figures and January is not enough time.
- Dr. Hopson said it will depend on how DESE goes with budget, if the towns convince DESE to cut the budget, we may need to make cuts.
- Mrs. Kennedy thinks she knows where DESE is going. She thinks that they will go with a lower amount.
- Dr. Hopson said we will have that reflected in the line items. It is about a \$400,000 reduction right now.
- Mrs. Kennedy would like it compared to last year or the FY '16 budget and not to 10 years ago.
- Mrs. Buikus asked about grade levels. If we moved grade 5 to elementary last year we were going to have to lay off teachers and having increasing the class sizes.
- Dr. Hopson said part of the answer is attrition. We also talked about moving 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Mrs. Coburn said we lost a position to a teacher leaving over the summer. We were looking at K-6 not K-5 last year so it made spacing harder. Only looking at 1 grade so we have the space. She is considering doing a STEM special that would do hands on science experiments once a week that is connected to their science units. We already lost two classroom positions.
- Mr. Finnie said the focus from the teachers was, is it developmentally appropriate and that created a discussion. We are facing decreasing enrollment and budget. We are trying to create a better structure for sharing teachers. It is better for them to be on the same schedule. In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade there is a skills block, students rotate from content teacher to content teacher based on what students choose as specials. If we can do this 6-8 it creates more sharing and flexibility. We are looking at out of the box teaching, student grouping opportunities. There is still a lot of work. We see this as an opportunity to bring back the middle school model, saving money with a middle school office closure. Focus is first to develop the model, and then to work out if there are potential cuts.
- Mrs. Foley asked what it will look like in Chester.
- Mrs. Coburn said the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class of 19 kids will just stay for 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Mrs. Winer thought the discussion was the middle schoolers wanted to be in the middle school.
- Mrs. Coburn said a lot of her parents are in favor of it. Kids don't know what they don't know. It is important to have change between what is offered K-2 and the upper grades. One of the biggest losses is the 5<sup>th</sup> graders access to the band program. We don't know how that will work yet.
- Mr. Finnie said two transitions; elementary to middle school, and now group of 6-8. The teachers think the middle school model will help with transitions.
- Mrs. Coburn said we share staff too. It limits the flexibility of the middle school because she depends on his staff.
- Mrs. Blocker said there is a huge curriculum advantage. It is really set up as K-5 and then breaks off to a 6-8, and the times don't currently work.
- Mr. Wyand said there is a lot to consider. Are you making any consideration to the high school as far as making more opportunities. Aren't there 10 and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the same class.
- Mr. Finnie said that is not based on schedule that is based on the class and the track that each student is on. There will always be an impact when losing a teacher.
- Mr. Wyand said advanced classes seem to take the hit in that area because there are less students and that is opportunity lost when graduating and going off to college.
- Mr. Finnie said it will depend on the decisions that we make. All information will be presented in February. This is what we are doing, but we are still figuring out how it will affect things.
- Mr. Wyand asked would you consider larger classes in one area to not give up advanced classes.
- Mr. Finnie said certainly but we can't just hand teachers another class if they are teaching 5 different classes already.
- Mrs. Balboni asked from a transportation point will 6 move to an earlier schedule.
- Dr. Hopson said 5<sup>th</sup> moves to elementary and 6<sup>th</sup> goes to high. It will probably allow us to cut a run.

- Mrs. Winer asked what about the amount of electives and the criticism we take on those.
- Mr. Finnie said certainly that will be difficult, but he will give the options.
- Dr. Hopson said at this point we are not looking at reducing a lot of high school staff. It is more about what will happen 3-5 years down the road. We take up some of the slack with online courses. As population shrinks and your teachers don't your per pupil cost goes up.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if we have looked at putting a moratorium on purchases next year, computers, printers, boards, books, etc.
- Dr. Hopson said we have not done that at this point. We have a restructuring plan, a reduction in administrative staff, operational changes, and a long-term capital plan, consistent of purchase text books and equipments. It is easy to skip a year and then it becomes several.
- Mrs. Kennedy asked if she can have a list of what is coming up that needs to be done and what is the five year plan for capital plan and maintenance
- Dr. Hopson said we replace computers every year. We have talked about moving from Mac books to chrome books. By 2019 MCAS 2 will be computerized.
- Mrs. Dunn said she has looked this over, she doesn't think is completely flushed out. It is elegant and commendable. It shows a lot of thought. You used a nice sharp scalpel and not a blunt ax.
- Mrs. Balboni agrees.
- Mrs. Austin asked what will happen with those middle school classrooms.
- Dr. Hopson said somehow or another we manage to reduce students but never have more room. We have more students who need more services. They will be used.
- Mrs. Crane asked if there was anything else on budget.
- Dr. Hopson commended the administrators for their hard work.

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mr. Wyand to go into executive session at or before 9:00 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations and minutes approval not to return to open session.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

## **7:45 VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Towns' Unfunded Mandates Request**

- Mrs. Kennedy is still in the process of working on it. Because of the lawsuit there is not much we can do right now.
- Dr. Hopson said in policy we talked about the law that requires us to have uniformed police officers. Another new law that has no funding for three officers in the district
- Mrs. Winer asked about other unfunded mandates.
- Mrs. Crane said Blandford and Huntington wanted us to file because of Worthington.
- Mrs. Kennedy said it is an unfunded mandate, but we cannot file right now because of the lawsuit.
- Dr. Hopson said the state put a bullying law in with no funding. There are partial funded mandates but no more funding when those costs go up.
- Dr. Hopson said we can start the one for uniformed officers.
- Mrs. Kennedy said she will write that up for the next meeting.
- Mr. Wyand said we could opt out of the uniformed officers if we go the town police chiefs' to sign off on it.
- Dr. Hopson said we could put something together; he has talked to some of the police chiefs.

### **B. School Committee Team Building**

- Survey Update
- Dr. Hopson talked to Pat Corriera on Friday, and she said they were coming in.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Model UN Overnight Field Trip**

- Mr. Finnie said this is an overnight field trip in February hosted by MIT in Cambridge; February 5 and 6. They hope to send 12 delegates with 2 chaperones

*Mr. Wyand made a motion seconded by Mrs. Foley to suspend the two-meeting rule to vote on the overnight field trip.*

**Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)**

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

- Mrs. Dunn asked how old the students are.
- Mr. Finnie said most are upper grade level.
- Mr. Damon said we should support it.
- Mr. Wyand said there were concerns about female chaperones last year.
- Mr. Finnie said yes, but that has been taken care of. Mr. Vooys does a great job and doesn't receive a stipend for it. He does it because he enjoys it.

**Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the Model UN overnight field trip.**

**Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)**

Yeas Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

## **B. Policies (Overview)**

AC: Non-Discrimination

GBA: Equal Employment Opportunity

JFBB: School Choice

JLC: Student Health Services

ADDA: Background Checks

GCCD: Domestic Violence

- Mrs. Crane said the policies were in the packet with a cover letter. The first 4 just have reference changes, the body does not change. The bottom two are new to us. This is a first reading.
- Policy met tonight and more policies will be included in the next packet.

## **VIII. CONSENT ITEMS 11/18/15 (Enc.)**

**Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Otterbeck to approve the minutes of 11/18/15.**

**Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays Abstain 2 Absent (Roll Call Vote)**

Yeas: Madelyn, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

Abstain: Tara, Bill

## **IX. COMMUNICATIONS**

### **A. School Committee - None**

### **B. Chairperson**

- Mrs. Crane said we are going to have our picture. Mrs. Hathaway and Mr. Wyand still owe.
- She reminded everyone to send in their survey.

### **C. Superintendent- Central Office Update (Enc.)**

- Dr. Hopson said we funded the OPEB trust fund. If you took PARCC last year you have to take it this year.
- We are in violation of the regional agreement with regards to assessments.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if we found out when we changed following the regional agreement.
- Dr. Hopson said no, there wasn't any record of it.
- Mrs. Buikus asked if we could check with the towns about making it the fifteenth of every quarter.
- Mrs. Winer asked if we can make it between the first and the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Hopson said we may have a lot of changes.
- Mrs. Kennedy said as a school committee member we can suggest an amendment and vote on it and the request the towns vote on it. It is easy to do.

- Ms. Fisk suggested school committee ask their towns about changing the percentage too.

*Mrs. Kennedy made a motion seconded by Mrs. Buikus to create a draft amendment to change the assessment due date and the percentage due in the regional agreement.*

**Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)**

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

**D. Business Manager** - None

**E. Administration**

- Mrs. Long said the Huntington historical society volunteered to send a girl to girl's state last year. They have encouraged other groups to share in that membership. Ursula Barth the student who went wrote a letter to the editor. The Norwich Hill Congregational Church will fund a girl for this year. If other groups come forward we can send a second girl. The Gateway Education Foundation voted to establish a fund to send a girl. Through December 31 Razor is waiving the fee and.
- Mrs. Winer asked for an explanation of Girls' State.
- Mrs. Long said it is a week-long conference where they elect town officials, senators, etc. They are presented with problems that would take place today and they must solve them. They learn parliamentary procedure. Massachusetts is one of the only states where the boy's and girl's states come together.
- Mrs. Long said the Foundation was selected by the Boston Celtics to sell tickets for the January 29 basketball game. We receive \$10 for every ticket ordered by Dec 22. Tickets are \$30 each. Foundation released a new round of grant applications to teachers and staff.
- Mrs. Coburn said they held their 3rd annual grandparent/friend. It is becoming popular. They had 200 at Littleville and 70 at Chester. She received several complements. They do crafts and other activities.
- Dr. Hopson said Chester was selected as a breakfast challenge recipient.

**X. COMMITTEE REPORTING**

**A. Superintendent's Evaluation**

- Will meet before the next school committee meeting

**B. Legislative Liaison** - None

**C. Policy Subcommittee**

- Will meet before the second school committee meeting in January.

**D. Building Liaisons**

- Mrs. Balboni said the middle school band has been doing great. They held Halloween and Christmas concerts. She went to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade biography reports and it was fantastic it was great. Suburban basketball had 30 boys and girls who are getting out there and playing basketball.
- Dr. Hopson said people attending the senior citizen luncheon were very pleased and send a nice letter of thanks.
- Mrs. Kennedy said the show choir is having soup and salad dinner on Monday from 5-6.

**XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

**Future Agenda Items**

**XII. INFORMATION**

**Information**

Alumni Sought for Annual College Fair  
 Gateway hosts presentation on paying for college  
 Penny social November 20  
 Holiday Bazaar at Littleville  
 Superintendent's Corner November 11, 2015  
 Thanksgiving Break  
 School Literacy Nights enjoy big draw from families  
 Early release December

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NOW MORE THAN EVER: GEF participating in #Giving Tuesday  
 Bands host "Breakfast for Dinner" fundraiser  
 MIAA rescinds middle school rule  
 Superintendent's Corner November 20, 2015  
 'Easy Peasyways to Read with Children' Workshop  
 WINTER CLOSINGS AT GATEWAY

**Warrant**

AP#1038 \$139,585.34 PR# 010 \$366,964.71  
 AP#1039 \$89,340.22 PR# 011 \$398,291.97

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**9:00-10 p.m. XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**or earlier**

- A. Approval of 10/7/15 Executive Minutes (Enc.)
- B. Union Negotiations
- C. Litigation

*Mr. Damon made a motion seconded by Mr. Wyand to go into executive session at or before 9:00 p.m. for the purpose of union negotiations and minutes approval not to return to open session.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

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**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

*Mrs. Otterbeck made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.*

*Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 13 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)*

Yeas: Madelyn, Tara, Anne-Marie, Ron, Diane, Sarah, Terri, Bill, Ruth, Martha, Shirley, Jeff, Michele

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Respectfully Submitted,  
 Stacy L Stewart,  
 School Committee Secretary