

**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.

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

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, February 8, 2023**

**Middle School Room 112/114**

**7:00 P.M.**

**7:00 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING**

Call to order: Sarah Page, Chairperson

**BLANDFORD**

Terri Garfield  
Keri Morawiec

**CHESTER**

Jeana Briggs  
Jason Forgue

**HUNTINGTON**

Pegg Dragon  
Lisa Goding

**MIDDLEFIELD**

Tasha Strong

**MONTGOMERY**

**RUSSELL**

Sarah Page  
Lyndsey Papillon

**SECRETARY**

Stacy Stewart

**CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION**

Kristen Smidy, Superintendent  
Stephanie Fisk, Assistant Superintendent

**ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL**

Martha Clark, Comm/Program Coordinator  
Jason Finnie, Middle/High Principal  
Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director  
Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director  
Vanna Maffuccio, Chester Principal  
Chris Parker, Technology Director  
Andrew Samuelson, Littleville Principal  
William Sullivan, Middle/High Asst. Principal  
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

Joseph Pisani

OTHERS: Gloria Farrell, Adare, Tamarin, Chris Mosher, Wendy Long, Andy Myers, Bob Daley, Scot Caron

**7:05 PM II. PUBLIC INPUT**

Guests attending the meeting may address the committee on topics not on the agenda. (There is a three minute time limit per guest)

**7:10 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS**

**A. Grinspoon Teacher of Excellence Award Winner Announcement**

- Jenna Kakimoto had received Gateway's award for 2023. Congratulations Jenna!

**7:15 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Approval of Policies IHAM-R, JIC, JICA, AC, ACR, GBA,GCF, JB, JFBB as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee (Enc.)**

*Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the policies as written.*

**Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)**

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

Abstain: Lisa

**B. Update regarding discipline law**

- Mrs. Smidy said this went in place with little notice and we tabled it. The school committee can not approve, but the only jurisdiction they have is notification, so it would be impeding our families if not approved. Our attorney's recommendation is to approve the communications, but to sign a letter of support with concerns.
- CVSR - all 42 members sent a letter to DESE sharing concerns. DESE is saying they were not aware the legislation was going into place so soon. There are concerns with school safety. A number of school resource officers are teaming up to speak against the bill. We appreciate the intent but the clarification is problematic.
- Mr. Forgue said we are already following it.
- Mrs. Smidy said it included the new language for the law. The approval of the code of conduct is the notification to families. The law trumps our local rules.
- Later on the middle school we look at all elementary, middle and high school code of conduct should be taken care of at the next meeting.
- We could make a motion to collectively be part of the round table letter.

**7:20 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM**

**A. NEASC Participation Consideration and Potential Vote**

- Mrs. Smidy said they are an outside organization that gives accreditation status that says we are rigorous. It was a really valid and important process 10 years ago. With the DESE increasing their requirements and all of their audits, local schools are pulling out of NEASC because it is very costly. Over \$40,000 over five years. There are 8-12 schools locally that have pulled out of NEASC and there are no consequences. She would consider temporarily or permanently pulling out to use the funds elsewhere.
- Mrs. Dragon said our staff is also required to do extra work as well.
- Mrs. Smidy said this is a high school process. The staff have been surveyed and not one person wanted to continue with it.
- Mr. Forgue asked if there is an annual fee.
- Mrs. Smidy said yes.

*Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to remove the budget line item for NEASC for the upcoming fiscal year.*

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

**B. Accept STARS grant - \$4,900**

This grant was written by Littleville staff to have Arcadia come here.

**Mrs. Papillon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the STARS Grant.**

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

**C. Boston Overnight Field Trip Approval (Enc.)**

- Chris Mosher went over his write up. The trip would be April 13 and 14th. 50 students have indicated they want to go.
- Ms. Dragon asked if he knows why students aren't going, is it financial or do you know why.
- Chris Mosher said there was fundraising - but he didn't ask why they weren't going.
- Mrs. Goding asked what the price per student is?
- Chris Mosher said high \$300 to low \$400.
- Could GEF sponsor something in the future. There was discussion about finding ways to help offset the cost of this trip.

**Mrs. Morawiec made a motion seconded by Mrs. Garfield to approve the overnight field trip to Boston.**

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

**D. School Committee Draft Schedule (Enc.)**

Ms. Page said we haven't actually had a January meeting due lack of quorum or weather and would like to use it as a placeholder and have a meeting only if necessary.

**Mrs. Morawiec made a motion seconded by Ms. Dragon to approve the school committee FY '24 schedule.**

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

**E. MS/HS Code of Conduct Review and Approval (Enc.)**

- Mrs. Smidy said we have not received this information back from our Attorney yet.

**7:50 PM VI. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS**

**A. Programming and Fixed Costs updates from Gateway (Enc.)**

**B. Invitation to Town Officials to share ideas, thoughts, and questions**

- Mrs. Smidy said ESSER pays for an interventionist at each school. We have moved those into the budget, and put others that might now be replaced into rural school aid. There is a bill on the floor to fully fund rural aid. If it passes there it will be a million dollars. We would get to keep everything.
- OSD anticipated tuition to go up 14%.
- We want to make sure incoming school choice does not increase our costs.
- Mrs. Goding asked if we could charge more.
- Mrs. Smidy said we have the two vision students who we are charging tuition.
- Ms. Dragon asked who chooses school choice?
- Mrs. Smidy said the family chooses.
- Mr. Fergie said the health insurance group came in two years ago to raise it, but they didn't. Maybe they should have.
- Ms. Fisk said they haven't raised it in a few years. A big piece is we have moved staff from ESSER to budget. A lot is staffing.
- Mr. Fergie made a comment about our legislators supporting rural school aid. Our new representative of Chester Nick Boldyga admitted that they had not read the rural school report
- Andy Myers asked if we actually received the Worthington payment.
- Ms. Fisk said yes, every January.
- Tamarin Laurel-Paine asked if we know how that happens, for towns like Middlefield where some residents were left off of the census. How does that affect their wealth.
- Ms. Fisk does not know, but will try and find out.
- Mrs. Smidy said without all of the grant funding, the budget would go up over 9%. \$900,000 is what we hope we will get in rural school aid. The bill would give us a million dollars.
- Wendy Long asked If that comes in lower where would cuts be made.
- Mrs. Smidy said ESSER III runs through FY '24, after that we won't have it. If we know a staff member is retiring and we know that the position isn't going to be replaced, we will put the salary in ESSER III.
- Mr. Fergie asked what traditionally happens with rural school aid, increase or decrease.
- Ms. Fisk said both. There are so many more schools receiving rural school aid.
- Bob Daley said one of the programs that Martha Clark has been successful with is going to actually start interns on Monday.
- Andy Myers said as a follow up on Jason's suggestion about our legislators. Do we have a date when they might vote on rural school aid?
- Bob Daley said Paul Mark took over for Senator Hinds. He will be in Chester on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 11 am.
- Andy Myers said the report is very comprehensive. You are looking at a 2.8% increase and we usually like 2.5%. All the revenue on non town revenue 2. Chapter 70 The towns' portion is about 3.5% increase. It is \$100,000 less. They want to support the schools as much as possible.
- Mrs. Smidy said if we cut everything in rural aid we would be in a really bad place with compromised programming.
- Bob Daley asked if Mrs. Smidy would get the contact information phones and emails for our legislature to pursue rural aid and anything else we want.

- Joseph Pisani said it may be a good 8th grade civics project. That requires them to contact a legislator.
- Mrs. Goding asked if we could push for transportation reimbursement or is it a lost cause.
- Mrs. Smidy said grant RFP's are more likely to be awarded to schools who receive rural school aid. Grants are to supplement not supplant.
- Mrs. Goding said Joseph Pisani had stepped down as our legislative liaison as he is the legislative director for MASR. We have had legislators say they would be happy to come after the first of the year.
- Ms. Fisk wonders if it would be beneficial to not have it on a school committee night and invite other schools.

**8:15 PM VII. CONSENT ITEMS** 12/14/2022 Minutes (Enc.)

***Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the minutes of 12/14/2022.***

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

**8:20 PM VIII. STUDENT COUNCIL INPUT**

- The best title for this is Student Representative Update.
- Joseph Pisani gave his update both verbal and written (Enc.)

**8:25 PM IX. COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. School Committee**

- Mr. Forgue said wrestling has western mass districts on Saturday. The honor band is at UMass this Saturday. Senior night for girls tomorrow night. GYAA team played at halftime for the JV games. There were a lot of spectators last night. It made a huge impression.
- Mrs. Papillon said we need to have that for all seasons and all sports. It was awesome.

**B. Chairperson - Yearbook Ad follow-up**

- Ms. Page reminded everyone about their yearbook payments.
- Ms. Page said working norms are something that she wants to add to the meeting like the administrative team has been doing.

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

- Mrs. Smidy said there was a long section on school safety in her update. She had been working building policy and procedures to make sure students do feel safe. She spoke to the district attorney who complimented her on doing so and said to expect to see an increase because students feel safe when it is being addressed. She also feels hopeful and we will make some great gains.
- Mrs. Papillon said there had been a lot of the same discussion in their code of conduct meetings.
- We are also trying to come up with creative solutions to create partnerships and a shared special education program potentially with Hampshire.

**D. Assistant Superintendent (Enc.)**

- Ms. Fisk said the second quarter report was in your packet. Third quarter will have budget line item transfers.

**E. Administration (Enc.) - None**

**F. Town Officials - None**

**8:30 PM X. COMMITTEE REPORTING (Enc.)**

**A. Superintendent's Evaluation**

- Met tonight. They are working toward the middle of year progress and the end of year will come out in April.

**B. Legislative Liaison - resignation from Joey Pisani**

- Ms. Page asked if anyone would like to step up to be legislative liaison.
- Mr. Fogue will take it over.

**C. Negotiations**

- The first paraprofessional negotiations met last week. Ground rules and proposals. The next meeting is Monday.

**D. Building Liaisons**

- Mrs. Briggs said the elementary concert was the best one she has been to. It was amazing.

**E. CES Update**

- Mrs. Papillon said they plan collaboration. Kindergarten readiness is one of them. She saw that HEC academy students volunteered at the village closet. They have consultants that come in. Albert Johnson-Mussad was one professional development she had the opportunity to participate in for her job. He is amazing and they are very meaningful.
- Mrs. Smidy said he did a 12 hour pd series here.

**8:35 PM XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

- A. Public Hearing FY '24 Budget March 1, 2023
- B. Next Superintendent's Evaluation Meeting February 8, 2023
- C. Policy Subcommittee Meeting March 8, 2023

**8:40 PM XII. INFORMATION**

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

AP #1046 \$267,726.08	PR #013 \$430,523.94
AP #1051 \$51,897.82	PR #013.1 \$910.00
AP #1054 \$53.09	PR #014 \$432,201.29
AP #1052 \$154,042.48	PR #015 \$404,518.83
AP #1055 \$389,505.51	PR #016 \$435,357.70
AP #1058 \$133,167.69	
AP #1064 \$44.40	

**8:45 PM XIII. ADJOURNMENT by 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.**

***Mr. Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Briggs to 8:50 p.m.***

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

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Jason, Terri, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Sarah

Respectfully submitted,  
Stacy L Stewart,  
School Committee Secretary