

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, March 13, 2024

Middle School Room 112/114

7:00 P.M.

7:00 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING

Call to order: Sarah Page, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

Nicole Daviau
Keri Morawiec

CHESTER

Jeanne Briggs
Brian Fogue
Jason Fogue

HUNTINGTON

Pegg Dragon

MIDDLEFIELD

Alex Seid
Tasha Strong

MONTGOMERY

RUSSELL

Sarah Page
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Kristen Smidy, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Assistant Superintendent

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director
Vanna Maffuccio, Chester Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
William Sullivan, Middle/High Principal
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Joseph Pisani

OTHERS: Deb Kuhn, Joe Shea, Thea Papillon, Val Zeh

7:00 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)

7:05 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Hampshire County Insurance Trust Presentation

- Joe Shea - first page history of rate increases. Claims have increased significantly over the last few years. Prior to that there was a lot of smoothing.
- No medical deductibles with this plan. See many years of no or low increases. Then a blip that goes up. Were able to put money into reserve, during covid.

Last two years claims have significantly increased as well as on the pharmaceutical side.

- Second sheet is the reserve. Will have a new audit in the next month or so. Reserve is 28 million, unaudited 21 million and has now dropped down to 18 million projected to lose another 3-4 million. Piggy bank was voted to have 3 months of expenses about 21 million The 8 present won't get us back. He wanted 10% and it was voted down to 8%. 8% might get us to break even.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked, 3 months worth of expenses off of what.
- Joe Shea said a rolling average of 24 months.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked, prior to the last 24 months what has the expense been.
- Joe Shea said about 7 million. He said we are in essence the insurance. It is us who lose, not cvs, we still owe them 3 million a year.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked what is the basis for the increase.
- Joe Shea said people were not having surgery because they were not doing them. Diabetes medication is being used for weight loss and then if that doesn't work, weight loss medications are being used.
- Mrs. Smidy asked for the rationale for not having to keep the reserve in that area.
- Joe Shea said we were running above for a few years and covid allowed us to. You can't ask for an increase when you are sitting on a large pot.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said last time you were here was a year when there was a large pot.
- Joe Shea said it was about the copays.
- Mrs. Smidy said the teachers union inquired about the flexible spending. Why is that not an option?
- Joe Shea manages the trust on a day to day basis. The board is the final decision maker on that. It has been brought up and goes nowhere. He is personally not in favor of it. The younger go to the higher plan and the older people are the rates that are going up. Plus the cash is coming out of your pocket right away. It will be brought up again at the April meeting, but it wouldn't go in place for this July.

7:15 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Policy Second Read

1. JH Attendance
 2. All policies listed in [December 2023 Newsletter](https://www.masc.org/masc-policy-newsletter-december-2023/) except KDCB, EFC, and EFD
 3. All policies listed in [March 2023 Newsletter](https://www.masc.org/masc-policy-newsletter-march-2023/)
- Mrs. Papillon said it includes everything in the March newsletter with the exception of those 3 policies

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to approve all policies as written.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

7:20 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

A. Student Opportunity Act Plan (SOA) Approval (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said this is a requirement from DESE on how we plan to spend our student opportunity act money. She tried to show that the money is not enough.
- Mr. Jason Forgue would like the minutes to reflect that it is an insulting amount of money to do something with.
- Mrs. Smidy appreciates that this committee appreciates that.
- Ms. Dragon asked how we proceed with this and reality.
- Mrs. Smidy said there will be multiple reports that demonstrate progress. It would cost over 1.6 million and we were allocated \$280,000.
- Joseph Pisani said it's not very elaborate, it is basic functionality of school.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said the sentiment is shared by other districts both regional and non regional except the 12 schools who received a lot of money. It's sad that they put forth the requirement but don't hold up their end.
- Brian there is a reason we put a lot into barr foundation activities.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Moraweic to approve the Student Opportunity Act Plan.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

Abstain: Pegg

B. 24-25 Calendar Approval (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said there are two versions in the packet. The updated version has fewer half days acknowledging that families struggled with childcare. Circumstances may require a change.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said at the end of negotiations we hope this will hold.
- Ms. Daviau asked if there were enough.
- Both Ms. Page and Mrs. Papillon said they were excessive.
- Mrs. Smidy said the time on learning requirement at the secondary is 990 instructional hours except seniors and graduation may be held within the last 12 days. It is proposed for May 30. This also includes the last 4 half days for finals at the secondary level and the last two half days for the elementary level.
- Mrs. Briggs asked if we are moving all open houses on the same night.
- Mrs. Smidy said the same timeframe.

Ms. Dragon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the Update FY '25 School Calendar.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

C. [Solar Eclipse on April 8 Discussion](#)

- Mrs. Smidy said the solar eclipse is scheduled for April 8 time between 2-4 pm which is right at dismissal. Through the DPH grant we are providing glasses. The bus company assures us the bus drivers will be okay. Teachers have received guides to provide educational opportunities.
- Ms. Daviau said she will donate staff glasses.

7:35 PM VI. JOINT BUDGET SESSION WITH TOWN OFFICIALS

FY '25 Budget Adoption

- A. Recommendation to approve FY '25 Chester Cost Center (02) Total \$1,415,347 (Lyndsey)

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approved the FY '25 Chester Cost Center (02) Total \$1,415,347.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

Recuse: Lyndsey

- B. Recommendation to approve FY '25 Gateway Regional School Cost Center (08) Total \$5,211,792 (Tara) - Don't need this vote as Mrs. Balboni is not present**

- C. Recommendation to approve the FY '25 budget in the amount of \$17,971,760**

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to approve the FY '25 budget in the amount of \$17,971,760.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

7:50 PM VII. CONSENT ITEMS

- A. 2/7/2024, 3/6/24 Minutes (Enc.)**

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the minutes from 2/7/2024 and 3/6/24.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 7 Nays Abstain 3 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Jeana, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

Abstain: Nicole, Keri, Lyndsey

- B. Acceptance of Grants/Donations (Enc.)**

- Supporting Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health extension..

- Donations are firewood for Chester Elementary and eclipse glasses from the Blandford Library for staff.

Mr. Brian Forgue, made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the Grants and Donations presented.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

7:55 PM VIII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

Joseph Pisani has been joined by Thea Papillon to go over the student rep job. Rural schools bill was gutted of things that would help rural schools almost entirely. We are not going to give up on that front. The budget will be the focus. Sample letter about budget increase.

Ms. Page shared the valentines pushing for rural school aid.

Joseph Pisani said March 5 there were 4 students able to participate in human speak with Ms. LeBlance to advocate for continuation of safe and supportive schools grant for the last six years. We've all been deeply involved with the work this grants funds with an emphasis on student voice. This is student-led. Elementary students celebrated Read Across America day- NHS students got to go to Littleville and Chester to read to students. He got to go to Chester - had two very important carpet meetings.

MS has a PBIS lunch incentive program with a bulletin board. It's a gator race.

High school pictures from the Spain trip. The semi formal happened and Gateway is on As Schools match wits on April 6.

8:00 PM IX. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee - None

B. Chairperson

- Ms. Page said we need an executive session for the purpose of negotiations - Food Services and Teachers.

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to go into executive session for at or before 8:00 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations - Food Services & Teacher not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

C. Superintendent - Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said there is positive work happening with the Barr Foundation - half day PD where we shared all the positives they saw on trip participation. About 40 staff have traveled to other schools. Looking at how we can make education different and enjoyable for students.
- Ms. Page said as a parent she can see some of it happening here, there is work to do.
- Mrs. Smidy said we are doing good work but there is work to be done.

D. Assistant Superintendent

- Ms. Fisk said the audits are done and there were no findings. That is due to the hard work of Deb Kuhn and Scott Caron.
- E. Administration (Enc.) - None**
F. Town Officials - None

8:05 PM X. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent’s Evaluation - Will meet in April**
- B. Legislative Liaison - None**
- C. Negotiations - in executive session**
- D. Building Liaisons - None**
- E. CES Update - None**
- F. Policy - Will meet in May**

8:10 PM XI. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- Student Council Voting

8:15 PM XII. INFORMATION

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

AP #1061 \$158,713.06	PR #016 \$430,123.74
AP #1063 \$58.30	PR #017 \$436,165.12
AP #1065 \$223,229.86	PR #018 \$410,481.17
AP #1067 \$126,192.19	
AP #1070 \$137,712.15	

8:20 PM XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to go into executive session for at or before 8:00 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations - Food Services & Teacher not to return to open session.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Lyndsey, Alex, Tasha, Sarah

- Entered into Executive Session at 7:55 p.m. - Mrs. Papillon left the meeting

8:25 PM XIV. ADJOURNMENT by 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mr. Jason Forgue to adjourn executive session at 8:15 p.m.

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

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Keri, Alex, Tasha, Sarah
Absent: Lyndsey

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary