

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, April 9, 2025

Gateway Auditorium

7:00 P.M.

7:00 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING & QUESTION TO SEE IF ANYONE IS RECORDING

Call to order: Mr. Forgue, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

Nicole Daviau
Keri Morawiec

CHESTER

Brian Forgue
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

Pegg Dragon
Lisa Goding

MIDDLEFIELD

Alex Seid
Tasha Strong

MONTGOMERY

RUSSELL

Tara Balboni
Alicia Hansdn

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Kristen Smidy, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Assistant Superintendent

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
William Sullivan, GRS Principal
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.
Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

OTHERS: Amy Mason, Wendy Long, Mark Folta, Christine Ferrere, Alicia Swendsen

7:02 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)

- Alicia Swendsen would like an update on the investigation since it is past March 31st.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said the report was delivered and the results will soon be forthcoming. She turned in a request for public information for the report or information for herself and Tammy Merenda.

7:17 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Introduce Amy Mason as the recommended candidate for School Business Manager pending successful contract negotiations (to be done in Executive Session)

- Mr. Jason Forgue introduced Amy Mason as the Business Manager finalist upon successful negotiations.
- Mrs. Fisk said as she is leaving, it is nice to know someone will make that transition with minimal interruptions. Those negotiations will be done in an executive session later on.

7:19 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. None

7:20 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

A. Recommendation to Participate in the National School Lunch Program for the FY '26 School year.

- Mrs. Balboni asked if there were any cuts that might affect this.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said it appears we will have it.
- Mrs. Smidy said in the conversation she had with Theodore DeAngelis-Page and Ana Holmes the state would consider continuing the program.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Ms. Daviau to approve participation in the National School Lunch Program for FY '26.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

B. Approval of Student Activities Accounts for the FY '26 School Year (Enc.)

- Mr. Jason Forgue said we have to authorize these every year.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Goding to approve the Student Activity Accounts for FY' 26.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

C. Superintendent requests authorization for the District Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 71 Section 16 (9), and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Gateway Regional School Committee, to incur temporary debt, (borrow from time to time) in anticipation of revenue to be received and source for the fiscal year beginning July, 1, 2025. This is for short term borrowing in case assessments are not received on time, etc.

- Mr. Jason Forgue said this is for short-term borrowing in case assessments don't come in time.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the following motion: Superintendent requests authorization for the District Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 71 Section 16 (9), and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Gateway Regional School Committee, to incur temporary debt, (borrow from time to time) in anticipation of revenue to be received and source for the fiscal year beginning July, 1, 2025. This is for short term borrowing in case assessments are not received on time, etc.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

D. Recommendation to approve FY '25 Third Quarter Budget Transfers.

- Mr. Jason Forgue said these were included in the packet.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Ms. Hansen to approve the FY '25 Third Quarter Transfers.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

E. Recommendation to Participate in School Choice for the FY '26 School Year.

- Mr. Jason Forgue said this is to accept students.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Ms. Goding to approve participation in School Choice for FY '26.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

F. Recommendation to approve the last day of school as June 17, 2025.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Ms. Hansen to approve the last day for school as June 17, 2025.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

G. FY '26 School Committee Schedule (Enc.)

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Ms. Daviau to approve the FY '26 School Committee Meeting Schedule.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

H. Extended Parental Leave Request (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said this is a contractual requirement and she supports the teachers request.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the extended Parental Leave Request presented tonight.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

7:45 PM VI. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Approval of 3/12/25, 3/17/25 Minutes (Enc.)

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the minutes of 3/12/25.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 6 Nays Abstain 2 Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Jason

Abstain: Nicole, Tasha

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the minutes of 3/17/25.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

B. Acceptance of Grants/Donations (Enc.)

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the listed grants and and donations for tonight.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

7:52 PM VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE - None

7:57 PM VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee - none

B. Chairperson - Yearbook Ad Reminder

- Anyone who has not contributed please contribute your amount.

C. Superintendent - Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said her report was in the packet. There are many central office updates. She emailed a video recording of the students who spoke at the joint ways and means hearing. Gateway got a shout out.

D. Assistant Superintendent

- Nothing more than the report.

E. Administration (Enc.) - none

F. Town Officials - none

8:05 PM IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING (Enc.)

A. Superintendent's Evaluation

- Mrs. Balboni said normally the school committee would have the official survey already. The goal is still to have it done by the May meeting. She is sorry she doesn't have it today.

Ms. Dragon arrived at 7:24. p.m.

B. Legislative Liaison

- Mr. Brian Fogue was not able to attend the ways and means meeting. This budget is going to be rough. The House budget will come out in a few weeks. He attended Senator Mark's beacon hill in the berkshires and less important people attended this year. The chair of consumer protection spoke up for aid for the towns and rural aid. None of the Senators made any promises. There was similar language about the big win mentality at 16 million for rural school aid. One speaker was Pavel Payano from Lawrence. He made a direct appeal to him about rural aid. He was receptive and listened to his arguments and other town officials.
- MASC/ Trump/federal government are asking school districts to sign onto something confirming assurance we are following title VI. The state is recommending we don't sign on and the deadline is Saturday. Do we want to discuss this issue tonight?
- Mr. Jason Fogue said the state sent out communications today. We already comply and we plan to continue to comply and that we ignore the letter. The letter from the federal administration said if you don't sign they will hold federal funding. We have \$455,000 to

collect this year and \$700,000 for next year. If we agree we are intending to comply, he is on the side of signing anyway. The news came out after the agenda went out.

- Ms. Goding agrees with Mr. Forgue if we are in compliance we should sign off on it. It seems like taking a stand that we are agreeing to continue to follow.
- Ms. Daviau asked If Mrs. Smidy has a perspective on this.
- Mrs. Smidy is concerned about losing federal funding and it is a huge risk to not receive funding. It is uncomfortable that the state is asking her not to sign. The district will continue to make everyone who comes here feel comfortable and safe.
- Ms. Daviau asked if there will be changes made based on this letter.
- Mrs. Smidy does not anticipate any.
- Ms. Goding asked why the state is saying we aren't required to take any action when we are being asked to take action.
- Mrs. Smidy said according to DESE the secretary should report to DESE and it relieves the local agencies obligation to reply to DESE.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said we only have one admission policy is school choice and it is about space. Title VI says treat everyone the same.
- Mrs. Morawiec asked if we are complying and signing are we poking the state bear.
- Ms. Smidy wrote and let her know , she forwarded the secretary's response. She doesn't want to exclusively make a decision that could affect getting \$700,000.
- Ms. Daviau asked if you can sign it with a statement.
- Ms. Daviau asked if we can sign it and release a public statement to the state and to the community discussing the ramifications of not signing.
- Mrs. Balboni said we are still going to be accepting people and doing our job. We are not rejecting.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said we all know the intent of the letter, but will deal with it down the road. Right now it says \$700,00 please.
- We signed it because we are already complying and continue to comply.
- Ms. Daviau said the chain of command is what they are changing.

C. Negotiations - will happen in the executive session.

D. Building Liaisons - none

E. CES Update

- Mr. Brian Forgue said CES met a couple of weeks ago and they are doing pretty badly. Still with a 1.3 million deficit at the end of the year. Mr. Gazda is planning to meet with every superintendent over the next couple of years. They voted to increase the student rate to \$4. That will go a long way in helping them have a balanced budget.

F. Policy - Postponed

Entered into executive session at 7:41 p.m.

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

8:12 PM XI. INFORMATION

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

AP#1058 \$35,681.87
AP#1060 \$277,495.97

PR #017 \$465,184.87
PR #018 \$444,626.56

8:15 PM XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to go into executive session for contract negotiations for the following:

- A. Executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.- School Business Manager Negotiations**
- B. Executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(3) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares - Custodian and Secretary union contract ratification.**

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Pegg

8:30 PM XIII. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION FOR SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER APPOINTMENT IF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the Business Manager's contract negotiated with Amy Mason.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to ratify the Secretaries 2025-2028 Union Contract.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to ratify the custodians 2025-2028 Union Contact.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

8:35 PM XIII. ADJOURNMENT by 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mr. Jason Forgue made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to adjourn at 8:33 p.m.

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

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Tasha, Jason

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy L Stewart
School Committee Secretary