

APPROVED

MINUTES 3/16/2026

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.

SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, March 16, 2026, 7:00 pm

Middle School Room 117/119

<https://zoom.us/j/98079702063?pwd=9llp6PoFas6sSDzVJ96ZxU2gOSmfEs.1>

7:04 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING & QUESTION TO SEE IF ANYONE IS RECORDING

Call to order: Mr. Forgue, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

Nicole Daviau

CHESTER

Jeana Briggs
Brian Forgue
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

Lisa Goding
Brianna Sloane

MIDDLEFIELD

Tasha Strong
Stephanie Simonowicz

MONTGOMERY

Peter DeGregorio

RUSSELL

Alicia Hansen
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

James Hayes

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, Superintendent
Amy Mason, School Business Administrator

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Theodore DeAngelis-Page

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Joan Tuttle, Dir. of Accountability & Grants
Dr. Todd Gazda, Chester Principal
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
Dr. William Sullivan, GRS Principal
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.
Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal
Stacy Stewart, Human Resources Director

OTHERS: Lexie Jennings, Mike Labranche, Kayla Turner, Jen Pappas, Kellye Dowd, Steph Fisk, Susan Rhoads, John Mcveigh

7:01 PM II. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM - Approve FY 2027 Budget

Rural School Aid Variability

- Nicole Daviau asked what would happen if Rural School Aid comes in lower than expected.
 - Amy Mason explained that the district would likely follow a similar approach to this year, when the district received \$300,000 less than expected but did not make significant cuts.
 - Amy Mason noted that additional funding opportunities sometimes arise during the summer or fall that can help offset shortfalls.
- Jason Forge asked if funding could also go the opposite direction (i.e., come in lower overall).
 - Amy Mason confirmed that this is possible.

Potential Use of Additional Funds

- Brian Forge asked whether, if the committee proceeds with Options 2–4 and Rural School Aid ends up being higher than expected, funds could be added back into the Capital Stabilization Fund.
 - Amy Mason said she would need to research that further and noted that Capital Stabilization may not allow adjustments after the fact.
 - It was also clarified that Rural School Aid is in a separate fund and cannot be moved mid-year.

Handling Surplus Funds

- Peter DeGregorio asked if additional funds received would be returned to the towns as surplus.
 - Amy Mason explained that surplus funds would instead go into the Excess and Deficiency account.

Option 1 Language and Budget Flexibility

- Lisa Goding suggested changing the wording in Option 1 so that if funding changes, the district is not tied to a strict dollar amount.
 - Jason Forge responded that a specific number is required to present to the towns.

Community Trust and Communication

- Jason Forge expressed concern about maintaining trust with the community regarding Option 1.
 - Melissa Matarazzo clarified that the intent was not to be misleading but rather to avoid appearing irresponsible given previous discussions and requests.
 - Brian added that from Chester's perspective, there were no concerns or implications that anything was being misrepresented.

Timeline Concerns

- Jason Forgue stated that it feels like the committee is trying to fit eight weeks of conversations into two weeks, which is making it difficult to complete the process thoroughly.

Funding Cap Question

- Brianna Sloane asked whether there is a cap on funding and whether funds could be moved into an account with a better rate.
 - Jason Forgue responded that the current fund is not overly risky and is appropriate for now.

Motion: Lisa Goding made a motion to proceed with Option 1.

Second: Alicia Hansen seconded the motion.

Clarification on Funding Uncertainty

- Brianna Sloane stated she is still confused about what would happen if the expected funding does not come through.
 - Jason Forgue responded that the current discussion is based on the assumption that the funding will come through.
 - Alicia Hansen added that there is historical precedent for the funding being received.

Risk Comparison Between Options

- Wendy Long asked whether it would be less risky to approve Option 4 now and potentially move toward Option 1 later if funding becomes available.
 - Jason Forgue stated that the committee could attempt to raise that initiative later if needed.

Budget Flexibility if Rural School Aid Changes

- Brian Forgue asked whether the committee could approve the budget using Option 4, and if Rural School Aid comes in around \$12 million, move line items from the General Fund to the Capital Stabilization Fund (CSF).
 - Stephanie Fisk stated that she does not believe that would be possible within the district's authority.
 - Jason Forgue then asked how the shortfall would be covered and whether the towns would need to cover it.
 - Stephanie Fisk responded that the district would use Excess and Deficiency (E&D) funds.

Capital Stabilization Fund Restrictions

- Lisa Goding asked whether there is any way to remove money from the Capital Stabilization Fund once it has been allocated.
 - Stephanie Fisk confirmed that there is no way to remove those funds once placed there; the money remains in that fund.

Future Budget Impact

- Peter DeGregorio asked if, under Option 4, taking \$400,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund would become an ongoing practice.
 - Jason stated that if the amount is reduced this year, it would be extremely difficult to increase it again next year.

The motion failed by a vote of 2–9.

Yes: Nicole Daviau, Lisa Goding

No: Jeana Briggs, Peter DeGregorio, Brian Forgue, Jason Forgue, Alicia Hansen, Stephanie Simonowicz, Lyndsey Papillon, Brianna Sloane, Tasha Strong

Motion: Brian Forgue made a motion to proceed with Option 4.

Second: Lisa Goding seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 11–0.

7:58 PM III. ADJOURNMENT by 8:00 pm unless extended by majority vote.

Lindsey Papillon moved

Brianna Sloane seconded.

James Hayes

School Committee Secretary