

Southern Berkshire Regional School District  
Finance Sub-committee meeting  
Sheffield, MA  
November 30, 2016

**Members in attendance:** Art Batacchi, Marcella Bush, Charles Flynn, David Hastings, Fran Lartigue, Christine Regan, Dennis Sears  
**Others:** Glenn Devoti, Kerry Burke

Dennis Sears called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

Fran Lartigue nominated Mr. Sears for committee chairperson. Seconded by Marci Bush. 3 voted yes on the nomination, 1 voted no, 1 abstain.

Charlie Flynn and Ms. Lartigue were both nominated for clerk and both declined.

Ms. Lartigue nominated Ms. Bush as clerk, Art Batacchi seconded the nomination. 4 voted yes, 1 abstain.

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**Christine Regan's Report:**

Ms. Regan went over 3 major areas of the finances: compensation, health/dental & insurance & Chapter 70 funding.

Compensation: Ms. Regan went over the projected staffing increases for Units A, D & E. The total projected increase is \$469,000.

Conversation ensued on inherent salary increases for educators. Mr. Flynn suggested that we see what the bottom line is and try to make that work. Ms. Regan stated that that is what she is doing. Increases are higher than standard of living raises. Mr. Flynn stated that we need to justify what we do in terms of salary increases because there staff members could lose their job if we can't afford to pay the staff at this level.

Insurance: We now may \$3,000,000 + for staff health and dental insurance. This will increase 12.5% in the coming year, adding \$384,000 to costs.

Ms. Regan discussed various insurance plans/deductibles/HAS plans

Chapter 70 Funding: We have an estimated foundation enrollment student loss of 36. When applied to FY 17 rates this equals a \$97,000 loss.

SIMS enrollment loss however is estimated at 50.

Ms. Lartigue asked where the losses originate. Ms. Regan stated our information is not yet accurate however some students have moved out of the area, some are now home schooled and some have switched to private schools.

Mr. Flynn suggested that total enrollment be compared to specific class sizes and questioned why accurate data was not readily available

Dennis Sears asked when we would get official date. Ms. Regan stated on Friday (12/2) or Monday (12/5). Mr. Sears questioned having fewer classes in the specific grades where the most decline is. It was suggested that we compare the loss in the foundation budget to the increase in budget costs.

Art Batacchi asked about the affect of The Berkshire School children. Ms Regan stated that this is more of a town issue and that the school has received proper compensation.

Ms. Regan stated that she is exploring many options to deal with this financial issue such as class size, case load, schedules, effective use of people based on programming.

Ms. Lartigue asked if teachers could be dual certified to trim staff. For example, one teacher could teach both math and science.

Glenn Devoti stated that it would be difficult and would be a contractual issue.

Discussion ensued on the number of families moving out of the area and known reasons for their move. There was discussion of the consolidation of the small schools and of doing a cost analysis on each.

Mr. Flynn discussed that the \$200,000 repairs/updates are being made to the South Egremont School building and that closing it would cause upset. The Town of Egremont would not let this happen.

Conversation ensued regarding the possibility of a part time superintendent or a shared superintended in order to reduce costs. The pros and cons of this were discussed.

It was then discussed that there needs to be a move toward innovative programing in order to attract students. Ms. Lartigue stated that it would be difficult to make great strides in innovative programming with a part time superintendent.

Mr. Flynn stated that to make a change like this to the superintendent position would need a five town agreement.

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Mr. Flynn asked about the bond status. Ms Regan stated that MSBA is ready. The plan is to get another short term borrowing in February and then a long term in May 2017. Ms. Regan stated that the towns need to decide iof they want to level the cost of paying the bond over a 10 year span or do we want to look at decreasing costs.

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Conversation regarding the closing of St. Joe's School in Pittsfield:

Mr. Devoti gave a synopsis of the closing of St. Joe's School closing and how he has met with their administration regarding the possibility of some of these students enrolling at SBRSD.

Mr. Batacchi asked Mr. Devoti how vigorously he is pursuing this – Mr. Devoti replied that he pursuing this very vigorously. Mr. Devoti was told by their administration that SBRSD seems to be the best fit, however geography is an issue.

Conversation ensued regarding the possibility of attracting the international students from St. Joe's because Mt. Everett is licensed to offer one year student educational visas.

Mr. Flynn asked about the cost effectiveness of transporting students were they to come. He suggested having a conversation with their administration to find out how they attract international students. Mr. Battachi stated that it costs \$300/day to run a bus to Pittsfield.

Conversation regarding bussing then ensued. Mr Batacchi discussed have more group stops in the future. Ms. Lartigue stated that this creates a hardship for some, especially working, parents if they have to drive 15 minutes to the bus stop.

Mr. Flynn asked how many busses we have. Ms. Regan stated 20 buses. Mr. Sears stated 20 routes. Mr. Flynn asked what the student/bus ratio was.

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Discussing ensued regarding the preparation for December 6 & 7 subcommittee meetings. There was discussion regarding the calendar.

Mr. Sears asked if anyone had any question on the calendar.

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Ms. Lartigue moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Flynn, it was voted unanimously.

Adjourn: 7:40pm