

School Committee: Mr. Stewart, Ms. Silvers, Mr. Batacchi, Ms. Bush, Mr. Flynn, Ms. Lartigue, Ms. Rundle, Mr. Sears, Ms. Sparhawk, Mr. Valentini

Administration: Superintendent Hastings, Mr. Turner, Ms. Burke, Ms. Burgess, Mr. DeVoti

Press: CTSB Television, Ms. Julie Ruth (Berkshire Record), Ms. Heather Bellow (Berkshire Edge)

Student Representatives: None Present

Others: Ms. Shalaby, Mr. Hawver, Jr., Ms. LaBombard, Mr. Foster, Ms. Dunn, Ms. Hawver, Ms. White, Mr. Petersen, Mr. Ketchen, Mr. Pignatelli, Ms. Graham, Ms. Raczkowski, Mr. Smith, Ms. Gagnon

1. Mr. Stewart, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Mr. Stewart introduced Ms. Marcella Bush, the new school committee member from the Town of Egremont, who is filling the position left by Jennifer Sahn. Mr. Stewart also recognized State Representative Smitty Pignatelli who was present at the meeting.

2. The MASS Superintendent's Award to Justin Makuc was moved to a later time because the family was not present.
3. **Approval of Minutes: Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Rundle, to approve the minutes of School Committee meeting #1500 of November 19, 2015 and the special meeting of December 1, 2016 (Open Session). It was so voted.**

4. **Communications from the Audience:**

- A. Student Representative Report: None present.
- B. Representative Pignatelli asked if he could address the Board. He welcomed Ms. Bush to the School Committee and thanked the members for their service to the district.

Representative Pignatelli explained that he had offered to step in and meet with the five towns because of the discourse at the local level regarding the issue with the incorrect calculation of assessments to the five towns. Mr. Pignatelli stated he had ongoing discussions with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and asked if he could read a letter from Christine Lynch, Office of Regional Governance, DESE (copy attached). Mr. Pignatelli had felt it was important for DESE to weigh in on this situation and give some guidance to the school committee. Further, he wanted to clarify that the Memorandum of Understanding was really a good faith effort on behalf of the five towns to come together to fix an unprecedented problem and was never intended by the five towns to be a legal document. He hoped that the School Committee would come to an agreement with the towns and avoid any potential legal action.

Mr. Pignatelli thanked the committee for their time and service to the district.

Mr. Flynn made a motion to amend the agenda to address item 6 E next. No second. Motion fails.

Mr. Stewart thanked Mr. Pignatelli for all his hard work and for coming to the meeting.

5. Updates/Presentations:

- A. Global Education Overview presented by Stephanie Graham, Art Teacher and Michelle Raczkowski, Librarian – Mt. Everett.

Stephanie introduced herself and Michelle to the School Committee and then proceeded to give an explanation of the Global Education Program. She stated that Mt. Everett's Global Education program offered great opportunities for students to engage in either independent or collaborative learning experiences. Global Education at Mt. Everett is organized into four core categories: The World Education Alliance, Short-Term Exchange, Long-Term Exchange, and Educational Travel.

She went on to say that connecting to a global network via exchange, immersed collaboration, or travel, allowed students to bridge the gap between the abstract and the tangible world within their reach. More information is available on the website under Global Education.

- B. 1. Ms. Graham is seeking preliminary approval for this year's symposium in Germany with the focus being on music. Auditions were held, and 8 students were chosen. The students will depart on February 26, 2016 and return on March 4, 2016. The first two days will be spent in Berlin, then travel to Ahrensburg via Hamburg by train, participate in the music symposium on March 3rd and depart March 4th. Group insurance has been purchased in the event that the trip has to be cancelled. Mount Everett is also enrolled in the Smart Travel Enrollment Program which gives access to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate and provides updates on travel warnings and alerts.
2. Michelle Raczkowski is seeking preliminary approval for the June 2017 trip to Ireland, Wales, London and Paris. The itinerary is: Ireland (Ring at Kerry, and Dublin, travel by ferry to Wales (Welsh Castle), take a bus to London (visit Big Ben, House of Parliament, St. Paul's, Buckingham Palace, Piccadilly), take the Euro Star Train to Paris (Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, The Louvre). The cost of the trip is \$3455 and is all inclusive except for lunch. There is an 18 month payment plan also available (\$191.00 a month).

Mr. Stewart asked Michelle if she knew how many students would be going on this trip. Ms. Raczkowski is aware there is an interest in the trip but has not publicized anything as yet. She is waiting for approval before doing this.

Mr. Sears asked if the Global Education program was developed in-house or was it an outside framework. Ms. Graham explained that this was developed by local teachers here at Mt. Everett.

Ms. Silvers explained that this was the same group which involved students going to China last year. We were invited to join the World Education Alliance because of what we have built.

Ms. Silvers also cited the recent attacks in Europe and asked if there were steps in place if conditions got more serious. Ms. Graham informed the School Committee that the group had purchased travel insurance and if the trip was cancelled they would be reimbursed 75% of the cost paid.

Ms. Lartigue asked Ms. Raczkowski if there was a criteria as to how the students would be selected for the trip to **Ireland, Wales, London and Paris**. Any students may go but Ms. Raczkowski would also like to tie it to independent study so they are working with Mr. Hamil on this. Various fundraisers would also be held to help defer the cost.

Mr. Valentini moved to give preliminary approval for both trips. Seconded by Ms. Rundle.

Mr. Stewart suggested that maybe each trip should be voted on separately. Mr. Flynn asked when final approval would need to be made, given that it is already December. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Flynn moved to amend the motion to approve the February 26, 2016 trip to Germany, Seconded by Mr. Sears. Mr. Valentini withdrew his motion. Voted unanimous. The amended motion passed.

Mr. Valentini moved to give Preliminary approval for the trip in June 2017 to Ireland, England and Paris. Seconded by Ms. Rundle. Voted Unanimous.

Mr. Stewart thanked Ms. Graham and Ms. Raczkowski for their presentation.

- C. Student Assessment: Ms. Burke gave an overview of the District Accountability data and the MCAS data from last spring.

Ms. Burke explained that we are still a Level 2 district and school. Since the preliminary data was released in July there have been discussions on what needs to be done to improve our test scores. There is an integrated plan based on information from the School Improvement Plans (developed by the Elementary and High School Principals) and the Strategic District Plan (developed by Superintendent Hastings). The district has been focusing on curriculum instruction and assessment in Grades K-6 and 7-12 with a standards based approach. The District is doing a lot of data analysis to identify how the learned curriculum aligns with the assessed curriculum.

Ms. Burke also explained that the district is in year one of the new Go Math program adopted by Grades K-6 and also has an instructional math coach in place. There are plans to implement Go Math in Grades 7-8 next year. There is also in the works a literacy planning team at the elementary level to look at the reading and writing needs of our schools and professional development for teachers to enrich their teaching practice.

Ms. Burke also mentioned that in the spring the testing will change to PARCC and that Superintendent Hastings will expand on this later. As we move forward we know that a curriculum framework standards based education is still going to be used.

Ms. Burke will present a follow up at the January 7, 2016 meeting and answer any questions the School Committee might have.

At this time Mr. Stewart recognized that the Makuc family had arrived and turned the meeting over to Superintendent Hastings. Superintendent Hastings called Justin up front and complimented him on his outstanding achievements over the past four years. The MASS Superintendent's Award will be presented to Justin in June at Tanglewood. Superintendent Hastings congratulated the whole family for the great job they have done and thanked them for their involvement and support over the years. At this time a short recess was called.

- D. Consideration of switching from MCAS to PARCC:

Superintendent Hastings explained that the SBRSD Administrative Team recommended and District Leadership Team endorsed a move as a district to participate in the PARCC test in spring 2016. Elementary grades 3-6 will do ELA and Math as paper based testing and grades 7-8 will do ELA and Math as computer based testing. Grade 10 will still take the MCAS ELA and Math tests.

Superintendent Hastings stated that by moving to PARCC the district will be held harmless for the way the scores go. We could easily have been a Level 3 school this year. Going forward the district will assess and develop plans to address the technology needs and identify instructional needs to prepare teachers and students for computer based testing.

Ms. Rundle moved that the SBRSD adopt the PARCC test in spring of 2016, seconded by Ms. Lartigue. Voted Unanimous.

Discussion ensued amongst the school committee members. Voted unanimous.

6. Business

A. Finance Subcommittee Report

1. Consideration of Amended FY2016 Budget and Associated Items

Mr. Valentini stated that two finance subcommittee meetings were held back to back on December 2nd and 3rd. The budget presentations and recommendations were essentially mostly level funded. Some of the items not level funded were in special needs, technology and contractual obligations (salary increases).

Mr. Valentini went on to say that the second part of the Finance Subcommittee meeting on December 3rd focused on the Memorandum of Understanding. It was articulated at that meeting that what was important was not necessarily the specifics of the MOU but the intent of the MOU and the consensus of both parties is that there should be certain actions taken by the School Committee and to that end Mr. Valentini presented the following motion. At this point Mr. Flynn recused himself from the table. Mr. Valentini circulated an explanation sheet relating to the motion (copy attached).

Motion #1: Mr. Valentini moved that the School Committee of the Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee vote an amendment of the existing approved FY16 budget of March 11, 2015 pursuant to the provisions 603 CMR 41.505 and to reflect the following changes:

- a) To effect a budget reduction of \$217,000 from the total approved on March 11, 2015 by reducing the Operating and Transportation budget by \$210,000 and the Capital Budget by \$7,000
- b) To direct the Superintendent to apply \$4,000 from FY16 unencumbered revenue to effect a direct reduction of Towns' assessment to be applied as defined in the regional agreement.
- c) To direct the Superintendent to apply \$66,000 from the Transportation Reserve Fund to reduce the FY16 Towns' Transportation assessment to be applied as defined in the regional agreement.

Seconded by Mr. Sears.

Mr. Stewart stated that the motion was made and seconded. He voiced his objection to having, for lack of a better word, such an ominous motion which contained three separate sections. Mr. Valentini stated he would like to go forward with the motion and also mentioned that for the motion to pass there would have to be 7 votes because it is an amendment to the budget and a roll call vote is required. Discussion ensued.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Batacchi – Yes	Mr. Lartigue - Yes	Ms. Sparhawk - Yes,
Ms. Silvers - Yes,	Ms. Rundle – Yes	Mr. Sears – Yes
Mr. Valentini - Yes	Mr. Stewart did not vote	Mr. Flynn recused himself

Motion carries

Motion #2: Mr. Valentini moved that the Superintendent direct the Business Manager to generate a budget status report on or before the 5th day of the calendar months of January, February, March and April 2016 and forward copies of these reports to each of the business offices of all member towns before the 10th day of the month. Ms. Lartigue seconded. Mr. Flynn recused himself. Voted unanimous.

Motion #3: Mr. Sears moved that the Superintendent draft a formal communication to the business office of all member towns informing them that, on the advice of our counsel, the second quarterly billing statement was in error and that in the absence of any approved amendment to the FY16 budget of March 11, 2015, the only applicable billing schedule is the one contained therein. Further, pending any action on any amendment the third quarter billing statement will be based on the March 11, 2015 billing schedule along with any adjustments necessary. Further, pending any action on any amendment the fourth quarter billing will also conform to the schedule set forth on March 11, 2015. Ms. Lartigue seconded

Discussion ensued. Voted unanimous. Mr. Flynn recused himself.

Mr. Sears moved that the School Committee formally request the Town of Sheffield to act on any pending budget amendment before April 1, 2016. Ms. Lartigue seconded. Voted Unanimous. Mr. Flynn recused himself.

B. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Hastings presented the following:

- Paul O'Brien Outdoor Classroom Picture. Former Mt. Everett English Department Chair, Ed Davis, took a series of digital pictures and created a panoramic picture which he framed and presented to the school.
- The Albany Berkshire Ballet gave two performances of The Nutcracker
- The Senior Citizen Luncheon held on December 3rd was a huge success. The event was catered by our Culinary Art Students and entertainment was provided the students.
- Our annual Sheffield Campus evacuation drill to Berkshire School was held on November 24th. The drill started at approximately 8:30 a.m. and students and staff returned to the school by 10:30 a.m.
- The New Marlborough Holiday Fair is Saturday, December 12th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Several teachers were nominated for Berkshire County Teacher of the Year awards: Denise Foss, Lynn Webster, Michelle Peters, Jody Burkle and Mike Farmer. The final award ceremony will take place at MCLA in May.
- Danielle Melino has been selected as a tentative recipient of a \$700 2016 Target Field Trip Grant – this will help reduce the cost for her annual 10th grade spring field trip to the Bronx Zoo.
- Jeremy Wells is applying for a breakfast grant.
- There will be a staff holiday pot-luck meal in the Eagles Loft on December 17th, starting with breakfast at 7:15 a.m.-9:30 a.m. and lunch 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
- Samantha Twing qualified for both Chorus and Band All State Auditions This is a first for Mt. Everett.
- Junior All-Western Massachusetts Chorus: Bethany Kerzner, Ashley Kerzner, Elisabeth Enoch, Mickey Masters, Dom Love
- The Jazz Band and Madrigals will be out on our goodwill tour across Berkshire County on Monday, December 21st.
- The elementary and middle school musical "The Lion King" was a great success, playing to a full house at each performance.
- There will be an UME Winter Solstice Sing, led by Ms. Petty on December 18th at 1:30 p.m. and at New Marlborough on December 17th at 1:30 p.m.
- Mt. Everett will hold a Blue-Gold Pep Rally and Alumni Day on December 22nd.
- The Elementary school will hold it Bee Ceremony on Thursday, December 10th at 10:30 a.m.
- The Eagle Fund reception will be held on December 14th at the high school.
- Mr. Sears reminded Superintendent Hastings about the spaghetti dinner and silent auction fundraiser on December 10th for the band uniforms.

C. Subcommittee Reports:

1. The Transportation Subcommittee: Ms. Sparhawk was elected Chair. The committee is still looking at the New Marlborough to Monterey and Great Barrington route in the afternoon as a possibility of happening. They are also trying to address the shortage of drivers and have asked staff, in the district, if they have an interest in being trained to be bus drivers. The Lower Pioneer Valley have looked at the bus routes and have some suggestions for streamlining the bus routes. There will be further discussions.
2. The Policy Subcommittee: Mr. Sears was elected Chair. Mr. Sears stated that the committee talked about some of the pending items left over from the prior year and will get into more detail at future meetings.
3. The Executive Evaluation Subcommittee: Ms. Silvers was elected Chair. It was decided that since most of the members are women with young children they will be meeting on the Thursday following the school committee meetings at 10:00 a.m. Superintendent Hastings has outlined several areas of concentration which will be addressed. The first meeting will be January 14, 2016.
4. The Food Subcommittee meet for the first time after about a year. Ms. Lartigue was elected Chair. Mr. Wells, Superintendent Hastings and Evelyn Vallianos were present. Ms. Lartigue stated that it was a great meeting. Discussions were held on expanding the breakfast program and looking at scheduling to see if there was a needs based after-school snack opportunity for the food services to participate in. Ms. Lartigue stated that Jeremy gave an excellent presentation and it has become really obvious that he is running a healthy, financially sound nutritious program.

D. Financial Updates:

Mr. Turner had no financial updates or transfers. Mr. Turner mentioned that the wood pellet boilers are up and running and staff will begin training tomorrow. He also stated that the sprinkler system is in the next stage of the project.

Mr. Valentini stated that in a conversation with Mr. Turner it appears that bonding payments will begin in the FY18 budget and that we are only going to be paying the short term loans in the FY17 budget. Mr. Turner stated that there will most likely be interest payments in the FY17 budget but not principal.

E. Consideration of the 5-Town Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Valentini stated he had no comments at this time.

Ms. Lartigue moved that the discussion of the MOU be tabled to an unspecified later time. Mr. Valentini seconded.

There were discussions amongst the School Committee Members regarding the motion. Mr. Stewart made note that a motion has been made and seconded and now there were several people in the audience with comments specifically addressed to the motion. Mr. Stewart stated that he was going to bend the rules somewhat in response to a complicated and unprecedented scenario. Mr. Sears commented that it was not appropriate based on Robert's Rules of Order,

Mr. Pignatelli was offended that the school committee did not appreciate his help and stated that he respected Robert's Rules and noted that he had spoken during citizens' speak time.

There were further discussions regarding the MOU and the motion. Mr. Stewart stated that the school committee could not direct the Town of Sheffield to hold a meeting on a specific date. Ms. Silvers mentioned that she had been at the financial subcommittee meeting and left feeling that it was a very positive, productive meeting and accomplished the goals of the MOU.

Ms. Sparhawk said she didn't like the idea of tabling an acknowledgement and discussion of the MOU without intent. Ms. Rundle wondered why this meeting wasn't the appropriate time to discuss the MOU further. Mr. Valentini stated that tabling is a mechanism that allows the MOU to be discussed at a later date or we remove the motion to table and take up a discussion to recommend that the chair sign the MOU and take into consideration all of the elements of the MOU.

Mr. Pignatelli said that he would love to see this board acknowledge that the five Town Selectboards got together to solve a problem. He went on to say that signing the MOU is not a requirement, but it would be wonderful. Mr. Pignatelli reiterated that it was important the committee adhere to DESE's instruction to take the steps in the MOU before annual town meetings.

There was a further discussion. **Mr. Valentini then withdrew his second to the motion.** There was further communication from the audience which resulted in Mr. Sears referring to Robert's Rules again and an unpleasant remark aimed at Representative Pignatelli. Superintendent David Hastings tried to keep the evening on track by telling the story of Moses leading his people out of Egypt and then wandering around the dessert.

Mr. Pignatelli stated that he was offended and insulted by a remark made by a school committee member. He went on to say that it is because he is involved and cares about the district that he hoped we could resolve the issue. The five towns had asked him to speak on their behalf to try to unify the district. He then left the meeting. Mr. Sears tried to apologize, but Mr. Pignatelli had already left.

Ms. Lartigue withdrew her motion.

Ms. Sparhawk then made a motion that the School Committee accept the Memorandum of Understanding and ask the Chair to sign. Seconded by Ms. Rundle.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Silvers mentioned that our attorney had advised against the school committee instructing the chair to sign the MOU. Ms. Rundle recognized and acknowledged all the work of the finance committee and the five towns was worthwhile. Mr. Valentini stated that in his mind signing the MOU is entering into a contract. Mr. Stewart stated that our attorney had recommended that we do not sign. Mr. Batacchi stated that he could not begin to understand what is right or wrong anymore.

Ms. Hawver stated that all the towns were asking is that the School Committee take and address the continuing budget revisions and reset the clock every 45 days.

Ms. Silvers suggested that we table this until January and speak to our attorney.

Ms. Sparhawk withdrew her motion and made another motion referencing item #5 of the MOU. The Motion: The Committee shall take all necessary and legal measures to certify a new budget at least every thirty-eight (38) days until April 1, 2016 and cause the District Treasurer to recertify revised assessment amounts to the treasurers of the five towns no later than seven (7) days after each revised and reduced budget is certified. Seconded by Ms. Lartigue.

Mr. Stewart stated that we have clear and unequivocal advice from our counsel not to do what has been suggested by this motion. It would be a mistake to go against the advice of our counsel.

Mr. Valentini moved to amend the motion: The School Committee, within 7 days of the expiration of the 45 day clock that started tonight will meet again to consider a revote of the amended budget. Ms. Silvers Seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Batacchi – Yes Ms. Lartigue – Yes Ms. Sparhawk – Yes
Ms. Silvers – Yes Ms. Rundle – Yes Mr. Sears – Yes
Mr. Valentini – Yes Mr. Flynn recused himself
Motion Passed

Mr. Flynn resumed his seat at the table at 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Stewart stated that there was a slight mistake in the agenda and that the school committee will vote to go into executive session and will reconvene in open session, to adjourn and no further business will be discussed in open session. Mr. Flynn asked if the school committee was going into executive session to vote, and if that was the case, he stated that there was clear guidance from the Attorney General that the final vote to execute a non-union personnel agreement must occur in open session. Mr. Stewart responded that the vote will be conducted in open session at the next meeting. There was a discussion amongst the members. The press were asked to remain for the open session.

The School Committee voted to go into executive session at 8:39 p.m.

Mr. Batacchi – Yes Ms. Lartigue – Yes Ms. Sparhawk – Yes
Ms. Silvers – Yes Ms. Rundle – Yes Mr. Sears – Yes
Mr. Valentini – Yes Mr. Flynn - Yes

Ms. Rundle left the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

The School Committee reconvened in open session at 9:01p.m.

Mr. Stewart motioned to approve the Settlement Agreement and general release, to be dated December 9, 2015, between the Southern Berkshire Regional School District acting by and through the School Committee and Mr. Bruce Turner. Seconded by Mr. Flynn.

Vote by roll call:

Mr. Flynn – Abstained Mr. Batacchi – Yes Ms. Lartigue – Yes Ms. Sparhawk – Yes
Mr. Stewart – Yes Ms. Silvers – Yes Ms. Bush – Yes Mr. Sears – Yes
Mr. Valentini - Yes

Motion carries by 8 in favor, 1 abstain and 1 absent.

On a motion by Mr. Flynn, seconded by Ms. Lartigue the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1501*
- *Sign in Sheet of guests*
- *Minutes of Meeting #1,500 and Special Meeting of December 1, 2016*
- *Letter from DESE dated December 8, 2015*
- *Global Education Program Overview*
- *Overnight Field Trip Requests*
- *2015 Preliminary Accountability Data*
- *Recommendation for PARCC Testing*
- *Explanation Sheet – Motion to amend FY16 Budget*
- *Five Town Memorandum of Understanding*