

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

Absent: Ms. Bush, Lynette Gagnon

Administration: Superintendent Hastings, Mr. Turner, Mr. DeVoti

Press: CTSB Television

Student Representatives: None Present

Others: Mr. Jamie Foster, Mr. Travis Daly, Mr. Jesse Carpenter

1. Mr. Stewart, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to approve the minutes of School Committee meeting #1501 of December 17, 2015 as amended. It was so voted.
(Ms. Silvers stated that the minutes were incorrect. Item 5.B.2 paragraph 6 should read for the trip to Ireland, Wales, London & Paris and not Germany).
4. **Communications from the Audience:**
 - A. Student Representative Report: None present.
 - B. There were no communications from the audience.
5. **Updates/Presentations:**
6. **Business:**
 - A. Request for approval of Grade 8, Grade10 (Economics) and Grade 12 (Social Studies) trip to Washington D.C. from March 2 through March 4, 2016. Teachers going will be Jesse Carpenter, Mike Farmer and John Hammill.

Mr. Valentini moved to grant approval for the 8th, 10th and 12th grades trip to Washington, DC from March 2 through March 4, 2016. Mr. Sears seconded the motion. It was so voted, unanimously.
 - B. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Hastings presented his report:

Community Outreach:
 - The National Art Honor Society is holding an Adult Painting Workshop on January 22nd from 3-4:30 p.m. at Mt. Everett.
 - Glenn Devoti has arranged for Covesto (formerly Sheffield Plastics) to conduct a training event in the building during the February vacation.

Staff:

- SchoolArts Magazine – Kari Giordano and student Olivia Finston-Fox are highlighted in the magazine on paged 9 and 10 (back-to-back).
- Elementary Math Curriculum Specialist Pat DeAngelis is continuing with instructional math coaching. She began at Undermountain and will continue at New Marlborough Central and South Egremont.

Students:

- PARCC Testing. The District Leadership Team is collaborating with the administrative team to support the transition for both teachers and students to PARCC testing in spring 2016. Grades 3-6 will do paper based testing for ELA/Literacy and Math in May. Grades 7-8 will do computer based testing for ELA/Literacy and Math in May. Grade 10 will continue to take MCAS tests in ELA, Math and Science.

There were questions raised regarding the computer based PARCC tests. Superintendent Hastings stated that the tests are very similar to the MCAS. Mr. Devoti also mentioned that it is a challenging test. Navigating the buttons and questions will take some practice by the students. Mr. Flynn stated that there will be practice tests and that the students pick up very quickly and will not have a problem with it. Mr. Devoti believes that the students will be very comfortable with the test.

Superintendent Hasting then continued with this report.

- Music: Grades 3&4's winter concert is Monday, January 11th at 6:30 p.m. in the TACPAC
- Cabaret is on January 29th and 30th.
- Western District Chorus is Saturday, January 16th.
- All-State Chorus auditions are Saturday, January 23rd.
- Middle School: There are 12 peer mentors in 8th grade this year that have been trained by the district attorney's office in leadership skills.
- Athletics:
 - Girls basketball is off to a 5-2 start.
 - Hockey, despite losing 10 seniors last year, has started 1-1-3
 - Boys basketball, in a rebuilding year, has played hard. The JVs picked up their first win during vacation beating Lee in a thrilling overtime game.
 - Wrestling – we have had numerous 2nd and 3rd place finishes in early season tournaments.
 - Cheerleading squad made their season debut at Monday's boys basketball game.

Superintendent Priorities:

A first and second draft of the Superintendent Priorities were emailed to the school committee members. The Executive Evaluation Subcommittee will look at the document again at next week's meeting and either approve the priorities or provide additional guidance. Hopefully the priorities will be finalized in time for the February school committee meeting.

Mr. Flynn asked why there was nothing on vocational education in any of the priorities and that we were doing a disservice to our community by not having a viable vocational program. Ms. Lartigue stated that she heard of a school in Connecticut that just started a vocational program and she would be happy to pursue this to see what they have been able to do. Mr. Batacchi asked what it would take for our FFA program to be a bonafide program. Mr. Devoti stated that it is, but it would take a lot of infrastructure, staff, and expense to increase it to a full vocational program. This might be a topic for other districts in Berkshire County to discuss. Mr. Stewart mentioned that a perfect location would be in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District at the old Searles School. This site could be used as a south county vocational, technical and agricultural school. There are possibilities but it requires physical and financial commitment and work. Mr. Valentini mentioned he had read an article on a successful vocational program out west on an Indian Reservation which combined agriculture with academics. Both are seen to succeed.

Ms Silvers stated that one of the things that Danielle brought up is that there are a lot of kids interested in a more extensive agricultural program but they are competing with other courses. She wondered if there were funds available to have an extended day program.

C. Theater Positions:

Mr. Jamie Foster introduced himself as the SBREA representative. He stated that the district budgets a certain amount of money for all stipend positions. With the theatre program some of the money comes from theatre sales. Mr. Foster explained that all the stipends should fall under the Unit A contract. Some of these positions are filled in-house, some are not.

Mr. Stewart asked Mr. Valentini to explain the issue. Mr. Valentini mentioned that because of this possible contractual question, the play which is supposed to be underway at this moment, has been placed on hiatus. He further stated that the play is an important part of our program, and we should get the play going and then deal with the contractual part of the problem. He recommended that the Superintendent make an executive decision to go forward with the play and secondly address the issue of the stipends which is significantly more complicated.

Mr. Stewart stated that there were two issues to resolve. The contractual issue and the delay in getting the program started.

Ms. Lartigue stated that she did not understand the issue in its entirety and would like clarification.

Mr. Stewart asked Mr. Foster for an explanation. Mr. Foster stated that this issue started with the Fall production where there were positions posted that were not in the Unit A contract. He looked into it and met with Mr. Hastings and Mr. Stewart in October. They talked about these theatre stipends which were not part of the Unit A contract and that they were not bargained. The SBREA want the positions to be bargained for so that when the district pays it comes from the budget and not ticket sales.

Ms. Silvers was concerned about the time that has been lost in terms of the theatre production. She understands the need to look at the issues, but her objective is to have a motion to move ahead with funding Chicago and that Mr. Foster and the School Committee Negotiation Team address the bigger issue at a later date.

Mr. Daly explained that by now auditions would have been held and rehearsals started.

Mr. Flynn stated that he remembered that these positions used to be laid out as contracted positions in the contract and that we need to move forward with the play and find the money in the budget.

Mr. Valentini made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lartigue to direct the Superintendent and Artistic Director to go forward with the plays.

There was a lengthy discussion following this motion.

Mr. Foster stated that these positions should be funded by the budget and not ticket sales. He wants to make sure that everyone who works gets paid and that the stipends should be agreed upon. The elementary production box office manager position was not a paid position this year, in the past that position was paid \$300.

Mr. Flynn stated that there should be a motion and that these positions are contracted positions not stipends. He is holding Superintendent Hastings responsible to make sure that the play happens.

Mr. Stewart asked Mr. Daly if anyone has been hired for the production. Mr. Daly responded that per the contract the positions have to be posted for 10 days.

Both Mr. Batachhi and Ms. Lartigue were upset that they were hearing about this just now.

Superintendent Hastings stated when this issue was first brought up he checked with counsel and they advised us to stop the process.

Ms. Silvers commented that there will be many students and adults who will be very upset if this does not go forward. She suggested that the motion pass and it is unfair to our community if this is not resolved. She also agreed that the School Committee should have heard about this before.

Mr. Stewart clarified that it cannot be a grievance until the union brings forth a grievance.

Ms. Lartigue moved to call the question immediately. Seconded by Mr. Valentini. Vote:
Mr. Flynn – Yes Mr. Batacchi – Yes Ms. Lartigue – Yes Ms. Sparhawk – Yes
Ms. Rundle – Yes Mr. Sears – No Mr. Valentini – Yes

The Chair gave permission for Mr. Sears to speak. Mr. Sears understood that the positions are not listed in the contract as defined stipends. He further stated that as we put a production together there are a number of positions that can be filled as contracted positions and made available to people in the community, or people who are in the SBREA, Unit A, D and E and anyone else who wants to participate. After further clarification and discussion, Mr. Sears voted Yes.

Motion carries unanimously.

Mr. Valentini made a motion that the negotiating committee meet with the SBREA union to define very specifically how this impacts the district and whether there have to be adjustments and develop the details. Ms. Lartigue Seconded.

After further discussion Mr. Valentini withdrew his motion.

Ms. Silvers suggested that we figure out what the issues are and then present it to the school committee and clarify it for everyone. If possible the head of the school committee, head of the bargaining unit and head of the district should meet to clarify the issues. Secondly, was there a way to shorten the contract period of posting the jobs because of the 10 day posting period.

Mr. Stewart asked Mr. Daly if he could hire the necessary staff in the next 2 or 3 days. The school committee recommended not following the 10 day posting period.

Ms. Lartigue, seconded by Mr. Flynn, motioned that Mr. Daly hire the positions he deems mission critical within the least amount of time possible for the upcoming Chicago play. Voted unanimous.

Ms. Silvers asked Mr. Foster to convey to the SBREA members the sense of the School Committee and that they were not looking to violate the contract and the 10 day period. No comment from Mr. Foster.

Ms. Rundle stated rather than a sense of what we are trying to convey, the School Committee should put practicality and expediency first and look forward to some kind of solution. She further stated that there was a legitimate issue here which was not resolved in October. She doesn't see any path toward a resolution and it seemed we hit a dead end. Ms. Rundle would like to know what can be done to resolve this. Mr. Valentini's solution is to build this into the budget so that everyone will be assured that they are compensated and keep ticket sales separate.

Further discussion ensued amongst the school committee members regarding the posting of the theatre positions and violation of the contract. There was also discussion regarding the posting of the jobs and whether anyone who performed a duty didn't get paid. Mr. Stewart asked Mr. Daly if there was anyone who worked in the past who has still not been paid. Mr. Daly confirmed that everyone who worked this school year has or will be paid.

Ms. Rundle felt that there were still a couple of problems which needed to be addressed. One is an internal housekeeping matter and would recommended that the finance committee address the ticket sales in relation to the budget. Mr. Valentini said that this would be on the agenda for the next Finance Subcommittee Meeting.

Ms. Rundle went on to say that the second issue is that the school committee does not think the theatre positions are contracted positions. Counsel would have reflected this back to us when we checked with them in October, but that is not what they said. We need to address this issue. It is not going to go away. We need to address that this as an equity issue. Two problems, but no solution.

Mr. Flynn's opinion is that both of these items belong in policy. Ms. Lartigue asked if it was possible to have a negotiation meeting, not to negotiate, but to have a discussion.

Mr. Foster addressed the school committee. He asked the School Committee for clarification that they had voted tonight to violate the contract, in that there was a motion to post and hire the positions and not wait the 10 days

Mr. Stewart responded that this was Mr. Foster's characterization.

Ms. Silvers raised a question to the Superintendent as to how this would be addressed in terms of letting the staff know the resolution taken tonight by the School Committee. Mr. Hastings responded that he would send a message to everyone before he went home tonight.

Ms. Lartigue mentioned the finance committee is looking into the ticket sales dilemma but there is nobody slated to look into the union versus contract/stipend dilemma that we seem to face. What is the course of action regarding this? Mr. Stewart stated that there will either be a grievance or not. It is best not to act on something that has not happened.

Ms. Silvers referenced page 46 in the Unit A contract which lists the stipend positions, where:

Drama – suggest independent contract remove from stipends.

Artistic Director – suggest independent contract, remove from stipends.

Mr. Stewart stated that this was meant to be suggested for the next contract period, which begins September 1, 2018. The suggestion was that the negotiation committee meet specifically with the union so that a memorandum of understanding can be drawn up which clarifies or amends the contract for the next 3 years.

D. Subcommittee Assignments:

Mr. Stewart stated that this item is related to Marcella Bush, who recently joined and would like to be on some of the subcommittees. There was a discussion and the decision was as follows:

Ms. Bush will join the Executive Evaluation Subcommittee, Food Subcommittee and Policy Subcommittee.

E. Subcommittee Reports:

1. Building, Grounds and Technology:

Mr. Valentini reported that the subcommittee reorganized and he was elected chair. The feeling of the committee was that the chair meet with Mr. Turner and Mr. Finkle and report back to the committee as to exactly what the capital status is at the moment vis a vis pending projects, and projects planned that perhaps will not happen. In other words a full report of the status of our capital expenditures and projects. The subcommittee also generated a casual list containing items that they would like to address and also planned that sometime in the near future there would be evaluations made in the community schools, New Marlborough, Monterey and South Egremont.

2. Finance Subcommittee:

Mr. Valentini reported that there was supposed to be a meeting tonight but it wasn't posted because there were significant items in the budget that would not have been resolved in time for tonight's meeting. The next meeting will be on January 14th at which time the budget will be reviewed.

3. Task Force: Mr. Sears stated that he thought he had reported on this. Ms. Silvers stated that he had reported on this at the last meeting.
4. Transportation:
Ms. Sparhawk stated that the committee has not met since she reported at the last meeting. Mr. Valentini mentioned that Zoe, who works for us, has a bus driver license and used to drive for the district. Mr. Stewart wanted to know the status of the refund/rebate on the fuel. Mr. Turner stated that this is being deducted from the current monthly bills/payments and that he is working with the bus companies on the FY15 figures. Ms. Sparhawk would like a report presented at the next meeting.
5. Policy: Mr. Sears reported that they had met last night. He stated that the committee has a handle on what was left over from the prior year. The committee also agreed to review the existing policies. Each of the members agreed to take sections of the policy as a pilot trial of doing a read through and coming forth with what they think is existing policy which needs to be renewed, reviewed or changed. There are also sections of the policy that are different from what we are practicing. Mr. Sears stated that we either need to practice what the policy states, or we need to change the policy to what is practice today.

There was a discussion on how the subcommittee meetings are scheduled. Mr. Valentini stated that it would be nice to have a procedure for scheduling subcommittee meetings. Mr. Flynn stated that scheduling discussions are not violations of open meeting law. All that is needed is a quorum for the meeting.

6. Executive Evaluation Subcommittee: Ms. Silvers reported that the Executive Evaluation Subcommittee met and reorganized. Ms. Silvers is the Chair, Ms. Sparhawk is the recorder of minutes. She stated that Mr. Flynn had spent a lot of time over the past two years trying to come up with a system that worked in simplifying what came from the state in terms of evaluation. Mr. Hastings is checking to see if there is a better form to use that is acceptable. Superintendent Hastings sent out revised priorities. Ms. Silvers would like the committee to look it over, Mr. Flynn and Mr. Sears had made some comments. Future meetings will be held on the Thursday after the school committee meetings at 10 a.m.

Before going on the next item, Mr. Stewart apologized for the problem that has arisen with the theatre program and bears some of the responsibility. When he had heard there was a problem with the stipends he did not logically connect the dots and did not realize it would create this problem. He thought that this was a matter of negotiation with the SBREA and not something that would affect the drama production. The production was supposed to go forward and it wasn't because the positions were not filled. The dispute on pay was more than a simple dispute on pay but a dispute on positions and whether or not they could be filled and consequently got us in this unfortunate position that we are in tonight.

Mr. Valentini stated that on page 2 of the Unit A contract it very specifically defines the procedure in a grievance and when we receive a grievance we will follow the procedure as set forth in the contract.

F. Financial Updates and Transfers:

Mr. Turner stated that there were no transfers. He also stated that Superintendent Hastings had sent the first report to the Selectboard members this week, per request of the School Committee. Mr. Turner also stated that one of the pellet boilers has issues and they are working on getting the problem resolved. The trench work was done over the break to begin the final push on the stage sprinkler system. Progress is being made. There was a meeting regarding the sprinkler system, Mr. Valentini attended this meeting. His sense after the meeting is that there are really good professionals doing the work and we are lucky that they are here now.

Mr. Sears asked if the School Committee members were copied on the letter that went to the towns. Superintendent Hastings reported that they were. Ms. Lartigue asked if the February 11th meeting was within the timeframe to vote on the budget. Mr. Valentini stated that it will be at the next Finance Subcommittee meeting on February 4th. Finance will discuss the budget and bring it forward to the school committee.

Mr. Stewart questioned the next school committee meeting which is scheduled for February 11th. There was a discussion as to whether to have a meeting on February 4th. Mr. Turner stated that the February 11th was picked because of the 45 day time frame. There is a 5p.m. meeting for the towns followed by the regular meeting at 6 p.m. on February 11th.

On a motion by Ms. Lartigue, seconded by Mr. Flynn the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1502*
- *Minutes of Meeting #1,501*
- *Overnight Field Trip Requests*
- *Letter to the town of Sheffield*