

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
March 10, 2016
Meeting #1505

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

Administration: Superintendent Hastings, Mr. Turner, Deanna LeBlanc, Stacy Burgess

Press: CTSB, Julie Ruth-Berkshire Record

Student Representatives: Maya Neski, Lauren Edwards

Others: Karen Chamberland, Karen Frighetto, Jeremy Wells, JoAnn Gavrity, Alice Tortoriello, Paul O'Brien, Chris Thompson, Marvin Casivant, Nat Yohalem – New Marlborough Select Board, Charlie Ketchen-Alford Select Board, Tara White – New Marlborough Select Board, Nadine Hawver - Sheffield Select Board, Scott Jenssen – Monterey Select Board, Lynette Gagnon

1. Mr. Stewart, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** *Ms. Lartigue moved, seconded by Ms. Silvers, to approve the minutes of School Committee Meeting #1504 of February 25, 2016 and the review of the Preliminary FY17 District Budget meeting. It was so voted.*
3. **Communications from the Audience:**
 - A. Student Representative Report:

Lauren Edwards, Grade 10 Vice President gave an overview of the fundraisers that have been held so far and also future fundraisers, i.e. the fundraiser for EXPO and another one will be with Staples.

Maya Neski, Junior Class President and All School President, gave an update on the Junior Class, they are focused on fundraising for the prom on May 13th. The last fundraiser was a raffle basket and raised a lot of money. The next one will be guess the # of Jelly Beans.

All grades are working on their individual fundraisers. They will also be setting up a community effort with Monument Mountain High School and will be focusing on doing a clean-up on Earth Day – more of a cooperative venture between the two schools. The students will be working together on creating a list of things that need improvement in the school.
4. **Update(s)/Presentations:**
 - A. Presentation on the Robotics Team:

The students introduced themselves to the School Committee as did Paul O'Brien, Mr. Casivant and Chris Thompson.

Mr. Chris Thompson stated that the Robotics Team did not make it to the State championship this year, but they are league champions. The team did run into some difficulties at the State championship, one was the change in technology, also the challenge was very difficult this year. When this started eight years ago there were 2 students and as this team has grown we now have 16 students who participate in the program. There were two teams, but one program – the Mt. Everett Robotics team. A lot of good things are happening, other districts have shown interest in the program and also the possibility of holding a robotics summer camp.

The students gave a demonstration of what they had produced. Mr. Paul O'Brien commended the team on how hard they had worked. Special thanks was made to Mr. Casivant on all the time he has put into this project.

Mr. Stewart then introduced JoAnn Gravity, who was involved with Literacy Night. She gave a brief presentation of what had happened during the day. She brought some props so that she could take a picture of the school committee to add to the photographs. Ms. Burgess stated that various fun activities were done with the students and families to stress the importance of reading. The students played Bingo for Books, students won books that teachers very generously donated. There was also a book fair in the library and a magic show for parents and students.

5. **Business:**

A. Adoption of the FY17 Operating, Transportation and Capital Budget

Mr. Valentini motioned, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, that the School Committee approve the FY17 Operating, Transportation and Capital Budgets, and Assessments as follows:

FY17 Budget

• <i>Operating Expenditure Budget</i>	<i>\$14,188,178</i>
• <i>Transportation Expenditure Budget</i>	<i>\$ 1,185,500</i>
• <i>Capital Expenditure Budget</i>	<i>\$ 400,000</i>
• <i>Capital Project Interest</i>	<i>\$ 90,000</i>
<i>TOTAL EXPENDITURE BUDGET</i>	<i>\$15,863,678</i>

Fy17 Assessments

• <i>Operating Assessment</i>	<i>\$11,712,782</i>
• <i>Transportation Assessment</i>	<i>\$ 535,500</i>
• <i>Capital Assessment</i>	<i>\$ 400,000</i>
• <i>Capital Project Interest Assessment</i>	<i>\$ 90,000</i>
<i>TOTAL TO BE ASSESSED</i>	<i>\$12,738,282</i>

Mr. Flynn inquired if the Monterey School was included in the operating budget and that we may be violation of the regional agreement. Ms. Rundle also asked why expenses for operating the Monterey school were not included in the budget.

Superintendent Hastings replied that as of today no one had registered for the Monterey School for next year. Mr. Flynn asked whether it was the school's responsibility to populate the building.

Mr. Hastings replied that it is the Superintendent's responsibility to provide the best education possible to the students. The district needs to balance the cost of the program versus who we are serving, if there are no families who request a program then there is no reason to put a teacher and an aide, pay utility bills, and run a program for zero participation. In January, it was projected that they may be one or two families who may select Monterey, but so far no one has. If there are no students registered, there is no reason to put a teacher and aide in the program.

Mr. Valentini asked Mr. Turner if there is money in the contingency fund adequate for the operation of the Monterey School should the need arise. Mr. Turner replied that there was.

Roll call vote:

<i>Mr. Valentini</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mr. Sears</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Ms. Silvers</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mr. Stewart</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Ms. Bush</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Ms. Rundle</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Ms. Lartigue</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Ms. Sparhawk</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mr. Batacchi</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mr. Flynn</i>	<i>No</i>				

Motion carries 9 to 1

B. Request for Approval of 6th Grade Overnight Field Trip to Nature's Classroom, April 4-8, 2016

Deanna LeBlanc and Stacy Burgess gave a brief presentation on the Grade 6 trip to Nature's Classroom.

Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to approve the 6th Grade Overnight Field trip to Nature's Classroom, April 4-8, 2016. Voted Unanimous.

Mr. Valentini wanted to clarify that with regards to the approval of the budget, it states in Mass law that we have 30 days, however we will be doing this before the 30 days.

C. Approval of the Vending Machine Contract

Mr. Wells stated that he would like to lease a vending machine to feed the kids who stay for after school activities. Mr. Wells explained that there were two different term leases available. If the vending machines sales are not profitable the machine can be returned in the first year of the lease. The machine would provide healthy choices of food. The vending machine would be set up in the cafeteria and be available only when breakfast and lunch were not being served. At the end of the lease the machine may be purchased for \$1.

Ms. Lartigue motioned, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to approve the 60 month lease of the vending machine.

Ms. Lartigue stated that the subcommittee had considered the two options available and the 60 month lease seemed the best to go with. The machine would be installed within a month. Ms. Lartigue stated that the Food Subcommittee worked on the items that would be available and decided to go with primarily nutritious options.

Voted unanimous. Motion carries.

D. Letter from the Town of Monterey

Mr. Scott Jenssen, Chair, addressed the School Committee regarding the letter from the Town of Monterey requesting that the \$10,000 allocated by the School Committee for repairs be released.

Mr. Valentini stated that the funds are available for the Town of Monterey once the work begins. Ms. Lartigue questioned the process of giving the money to the Town of Monterey. She thought that the construction process would work on a reimbursable model, whereby the Town does the work and then sends the district a bill for reimbursement. Basically, the district does not just hand over a check for \$10,000 to the Town of Monterey. There should be a protocol in place.

Mr. Jenssen stated that several weeks ago Mr. Valentini and Mr. Hastings had attended a town meeting and at that time they had stated that the funds were available. He further stated that the Town of Monterey had every intention of collecting the \$10,000 so that work could begin on the Monterey School Building. On another note, Mr. Jenssen stated that they are also expecting the Kindergarten program to be reinstated for the 2016-2017 academic year. As a

side note, Mr. Jenssen stated that Mr. Hastings is responsible for sending students to each school in the district without the School Committee's approval. He felt that the committee has crossed the line and that the district was skirting around the regional agreement and that the district is very close to be insubordinate with the regional agreement.

Mr. Jenssen went on to say that the Town of Monterey has decided that they are no longer seeking to be actively a part of the district. Further he stated that they are now in the process of hiring lawyers who will be attending town meetings to listen to their concerns. The Town will lay out to the lawyers the steps that the School Committee has irresponsibly taken in the back door closure of a district building run by 5 towns. Mr. Jenssen continued that the district is run by the towns, not the other way around. He continued that the Town of Monterey will not go down in flames with the shenanigans of this district. The town of Monterey will not have anything to do with the budget nor will it support the district in the future. Let it go on record that the town was told that the \$10,000 is available but tonight they are being told that the money is not available.

Mr. Stewart stated that this was a misrepresentation of what was said. Mr. Stewart asked Mr. Jenssen to clarify whether the Town of Monterey was going to withdraw from the district and if they still wanted the \$10,000.

Mr. Valentini stated that whatever Monterey feels they need to do they will do. He further stated that last year this committee went to the max with two towns in this district who refused to support the budget, because we refused to close the Monterey school. It was articulated by the other towns that if we closed the Monterey school they would support the budget. The School Committee argued against that. The reason that the school was placed in hiatus as opposed to a motion coming from the floor to close the Monterey school, was simply because we had in our hearts a hope that they would be a possibility of it being open. At this time there are no children enrolled there so it cannot be open.

Mr. Valentini continued that to say to certain parents you must go to the Monterey school is something he did not think we would be able to do. Thoughts are perhaps that the building can be renovated and used for other purposes. He would not vote for a motion to close the school, but at the same time if there are no children we cannot have a program. This committee did not abandon the town of Monterey. As a member of this committee we have done everything that we can to keep that building open, but to put a teacher there with no children would be silly.

Mr. Flynn mentioned that it seems that we can close a building in Monterey because there are no children. Yet this year, as a result of the reduction in children, there could have been positions cut, but this was not done.

Ms. Rundle then addressed some of the things that were said. Monterey used to have the kindergarten program and that all the children would go to the Monterey school for kindergarten and at some point this changed. Ms. Rundle stated that she feels that it has been her job to be present whenever the Monterey school was mentioned or discussed. Most of the time there was misinformation about why the Monterey school should be closed. She has wanted to keep the Monterey school open, and feels so sorry to the people of Monterey. On a personal level, her son did not get to go to the Monterey School whereas her daughters did and it was an invaluable start to their education. She has turned over every rock that she possibly could, working with the committee and administration as partners. This whole conversation about the closure of the Monterey school used to be adversarial. Ms. Rundle continued to say that the district has worked cooperatively to make this work.

Ms. Rundle continued to say that at this point, there are two paths, one path is very divisive. The reality is if we go down a path where we force the towns to act we will end up with the school permanently closed. The other path she sees is that the district suspend the program because there are no students, do the needed work, see if there is a program, maybe an after school program, robotics, etc. We stick together and work cooperatively. She went on to say that there are groups in the Berkshires working together to make the best use of resources and provide the best education to our students.

Mr. Flynn read paragraph 3 of the regional agreement. There needs to be a concerted effort to bring the PK/K program back to the Town of Monterey. Our community consists of 5 towns and the individual schools mean a lot to the communities.

Mr. Sears began by apologizing that once again, one of our school committee members is wearing the wrong hat for the meeting that he is in and was quoting from the wrong section of the regional agreement.

At this point Mr. Flynn interjected and addressed the Chair that Mr. Sears was out of order. There continued a dialogue between Mr. Flynn and Mr. Sears at which point Mr. Batacchi spoke up and said that the conversation between the two committee members was inappropriate.

Mr. Sears apologized to Mr. Jenssen if the school committee had not kept the Town of Monterey informed of some of the things that the district has been doing. He went on to say that the district has formed a regional planning board between FRRSD and SBRSD to see if they can be combined into one district. There would be the opportunity for kids from Monterey to go to FRRSD from PK to Grade 6 before going on to middle and high school. The only way a school could be closed was if that town agreed to close its school. He hoped that the Town of Monterey would reconsider before hiring legal representation to remove the town from the district, which would be an expensive path for both the town and the district. Mr. Sears reiterated that the district is not closing the Monterey school, just suspending the program.

Mr. Stewart intervened that this was not the appropriate time to discuss the issue of bussing students to other districts which at this time is not a reality.

Ms. Rundle also had concerns regarding this and the length of time the youngest kids spend on the bus. She went on to say that trying to address this concern the district has moved to limit the number of out of district choice students to New Marlborough as well as to write policy which gives Monterey students a preference amongst in-district students, so that we can have that security of knowing that our kids will have a place in a local community based school with manageable class sizes. She stated that the trust and goodwill between the district and the Town of Monterey is at stake here and it is important in terms of how we move forward, either with unity or divisiveness.

There was further discussion between Mr. Jenssen and Mr. Valentini. At this point Mr. Stewart said that this was not an appropriate time to argue about this issue. Mr. Jenssen requested that the district do what is right and bring it to the towns for a vote. He requested that the district do what needs to be done correctly, put it to a vote. He was asking the school committee members to honestly amongst themselves deliberate the request to bring to the towns to put on their warrants the closure of the Monterey school. At this time Mr. Stewart stated that this was becoming an argument between the representative of the Town of Monterey and some of the school committee members and that it was not

related to any item on the agenda. The item on the agenda has been discussed and we need to move on to the next item.

E. Superintendent's Report

Community Outreach:

- a. **SWAG Blood Drive:** SWAG sponsored a blood drive this week.
- b. **8th Grade Information Night and Ice Cream Social.** This event is tonight, starting at 6:30 in the Mount Everett Cafeteria. Families of next year's 8th grade class had the chance to meet department heads and several teachers that they will have next year.
- c. **Literacy Night.** This activity ran this evening and included a Dr. Seuss Magic Show. Grades K-4 had a performance this afternoon.

Students

- a. **Girls' Basketball Team:** Our team advanced to the Western Mass MIAA Finals, to be played this Saturday at 10:45 at UMASS. The team defeated Lee in overtime. On Saturday, the team will play Quaboag Regional.
- b. **Marya Makuc** was one of the winners in the semi-final state competition for Poetry Out Loud in Springfield and will move on to the state finals in Boston on Sunday, May 13. Jeanne Lemlin has been the driving force behind this great program for many years. This will not be the first time that one of our students has advanced to the state finals.
- c. **Danielle Melino's Class observed Horse Surgery:** Ashana Legey's horse was having a complicated surgery done on March 8th and the parent and veterinarians have invited Danielle's Animal Science class to observe.
- d. **Germany Trip Delayed:** The group was delayed out of Hamburg and missed the connection in Dublin. They stayed overnight at the Carlton Dublin airport hotel and took the 11:30 flight to Boston the next morning. Glenn was able to contact all. The group finally arrived in 1:50 a.m. Adam Kerzner took a Marshmallow bus and picked the group up on Saturday.
- e. **Cheerleading Team:** The Cheerleading Team placed fourth in the state over the weekend in a new competition category, "Game Day". In this event, the team was given game scenarios (time out, foul shot, etc)
- f. **All-State Chorus.** **Simon Salzmann will be representing Mt. Everett** at the MMEA All-State Choir performance **Thursday through Saturday in Boston.** He will be joining the best auditioned choir students from all over Massachusetts, rehearsing **with Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt, Director of Choirs at the University of Toronto,** for two and a half days, with a performance on Saturday at Symphony Hall. If you see him today wish him good skill! (because it's not about luck, but it is about skill.)
- g. **FFA Competition:** Six FFA members will be attending and competing at the **State FFA convention** next week, March 15-18 in Sturbridge MA. The competition events include: Job interview, Quiz Bowl, chapter exhibit. **Bria Wells and Paige Parks Smith** will be earning their **State FFA degree** which is quite an honor - based on their SAE agriculture project and FFA activities over the past 3 years.
- h. **Sheffield Times Student Articles:** **Marya Makuc, Lauren Edwards and Sarah Beckwith** share a bylined column in the Sheffield Times. This is an ongoing journalistic assignment for them that may well continue until their senior year, at which time hopefully new journalism students can pick up the commission. The Sheffield Times is delighted with their students' perspective and their journalistic skill, and I am of course extremely proud of them.

Ms. Silvers mentioned that the Eagle Fund grant is available for any staff or community member. Applications must be in by April 1, 2016.

F. Subcommittee Reports:

1. Finance Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini explained that the subcommittee met to bring the budget forward. It was the final meeting and the only topic of conversation. The budget was unanimously voted on at the meeting and brought forward to tonight's meeting for the School Committee to vote on.
2. Building, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini stated that the committee had generated a list of capital projects for 2017 (list attached).
3. Transportation Subcommittee: Ms. Sparhawk stated that the subcommittee met. They are still considering whether the district can use trained teachers as bus drivers, union issues need to be addressed. She feels confident that there may be a way to consolidate some of the regular routes so that the New Marlborough to Great Barrington bus can be established for next year. Will have to be discussed with the bus companies.
4. Food Subcommittee: Ms. Lartigue explained that the committee had discussed the installation of a vending machine and the availability of healthy snacks to meet the nutritional needs of the after school students. She said that Jeremy is managing the breakfast program very efficiently. This year the cost is \$380 to run the whole program for every day for all the kids for breakfast and snack. There was a \$3,600 line item for this year and a \$3,800 item for next year which was moved into the food budget. Mr. Hastings recommended that as we push breakfast in the classroom next year, Mr. Wells should use this money for supplies, advertising, and whatever else is needed to make the program take off. Ms. Lartigue commended Mr. Wells on the fantastic job he is doing with the nutrition program and how lucky we are to have him.
5. Executive Evaluation Subcommittee: Ms. Silvers stated that the Evaluation Subcommittee had met that morning. Mr. Thompson is working on a user friendly evaluation form for the committee to use. Ms. Silvers explained that Mr. Hastings has put together a committee to work on a SBRSD brochure. There was also discussion on the transition for the business office for when Christine Regan comes on board and ways of using the building as a community center (reaching out to MCLA and other colleges to give courses on campus for our students).
6. Policy Subcommittee:
Mr. Sears presented Policy JFBB which was passed and finalized at the policy subcommittee meeting. This will be the first reading on the update to school choice.
The change is #4 "*When the number of requests exceeds the number of available spaces for any district school, selection will be made by lottery with district students having priority.*"
This is the enhancement that was talked about at the last meeting.

Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to approve the first reading of the new JFBB school choice policy.

Mr. Flynn stated that a motion was not required on the first reading.

Mr. Sears withdrew the motion. This policy reflects the discussion that was had at the last school committee meeting regarding the policy.

G. Reorganization of Negotiation Subcommittee:

Mr. Stewart stated that the Negotiation Subcommittee currently includes Art Batacchi who cannot take part in the Unit D negotiations because his wife is part of Unit D. There is a need for another member on the committee. Ms. Silvers (who is currently an alternate) will become the permanent member while Mr. Batacchi cannot do it. Mr. Sears mentioned that Mr. Nat Yohalem would be interested in being a Municipal Representative on the Negotiation Subcommittee. Superintendent Hastings will send an email to the towns.

Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to have a municipal representative on the Negotiation Subcommittee. Voted Unanimous.

Mr. Sears moved, Ms. Lartigue seconded, that we have Ms. Silvers as a member of the Negotiation Subcommittee during Unit D negotiations. Voted Unanimous.

Mr. Stewart stated that tonight is Mr. Turner's last night giving us the financial updates and thanked him for his service to the District.

Mr. Turner stated that officially the roof project is complete. The boiler project is still ongoing, the pump is on order.

Ms. Lartigue motioned, seconded by Ms. Silvers, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. It was so voted.

Documents Presented at this meeting:

Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1505

Minutes of Meeting #1504 and Open Public Meeting Minutes

Vote to Approve FY17 Operating, Transportation and Capital Budgets and Assessments

Overnight Field Trip – Grade 6 Nature's Classroom

Vending Machine Lease

Letter from the Town of Monterey

First Reading of Policy JFBB (with amendments)