

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School Library
Sheffield, MA
December 8, 2016
Meeting #1518

School Committee Members: Art Batacchi, Carl Stewart, Bonnie Silvers, Bob Law, Maryellen Brown, David Travis, Marcella Bush, Dennis Sears

Absent: Charles Flynn, Ms. Lartigue arrived at 6:08 p.m.

Administration: Superintendent Hastings, Christine Regan

Press: Cory Willey - Berkshire Record,

Student Representatives: Nolan Dupont

Others: Kerry Burke, Mary Turo

1. **Call to Order:** Mr. Stewart, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Will be presented at the next meeting
3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda Items**

A. **Student Representative Report:**

Nolan, Junior Class President, introduced himself to the school committee. He gave an update on what the individual grades have been doing for fundraisers. All the fundraisers have been very successful. He stated that the Student Council as a whole have taken up a few projects: Listening group for the selection of the new superintendent; trying to get a study hall in the schedule for each day because there are many students in AP classes who are involved in sports and other extracurricular activities and it gets overwhelming. Study Hall would be a big help and reduce the stress level of the students. The Student Council also participated in the flag day ceremony. Student Council has a meeting next week to establish goals for the rest of the year.

Mr. Stewart thanked Nolan for taking the time to speak to the committee and hoped that he would attend future meetings. The Committee is interested in hearing from the students.

4. **Updates/Presentations:**

A. **End of Year Curriculum and Professional Development Report** – Kerry Burke

Kerry Burke, SBRSD Curriculum and Professional Development Coordinator, presented a midyear overview for 2016-17 with an emphasis on three areas: the curriculum and professional development planning cycle; the strategic focus identified by each of the curriculum leaders; and related professional development experiences. She stated that curriculum and professional development are tied to district goals and improvement plans and undergo a five-step, evaluation process. These steps are 1) identify, 2) plan, 3) implement, 4) support, and 5) assess while seeking ongoing feedback from administration and teachers. Ms. Burke has used it with collaboration with colleagues to address Elementary ELA/Writing; new MA DESE Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) standards; and math instruction in elementary and middle school. Similarly, it will be used to explore the new MA DESE Digital Literacy and Computer Science standards. In addition to this work, each of the teacher members of the District Leadership Team has identified a strategic focus for this school year in his or her work as curriculum leaders. Some examples include tracking instructional pacing in elementary math; implementing a new math series in grades 7-8; exploring elementary writing standards along with rubric use in grades K-6; unpacking the STE standards at the elementary and secondary levels; and curriculum development and teacher assistances in K-12 PE/Wellness and Visual/Performing Arts. Finally, Ms. Burke stated that PD needs emerge from both district goals and licensure needs with district funds and federal grants used to support these experiences. Examples offered this year include

onsite recertification workshops in June 2016 and teacher attendances at local, state, and national conferences sponsored by content-based professional associations in the areas of music, secondary English, visual and performing arts. The presentation concluded with questions from the School Committee.

The School Committee asked for more information on the Empowering Writers program. Kerry will provide a link to the program for the committee.

The presentation was interrupted so that Stephanie Graham could introduce the Students visiting from China. This group is the first of two incoming exchanges to our district. The students were from Confucius Hall School, Hong Kong.

Mr. Stewart thanked Ms. Burke for her presentation.

5. **Business:**

A. **Possible Formation of Ad-Hoc Committee with Administration** – Bonnie Silvers

Ms. Silvers explained that the possible formation of an Ad-Hoc Committee was addressed at the last meeting. Mr. Flynn, who is absent today, suggested that Ms. Silvers go as the SC liaison to speak with the administration to get a sense if there is any desire for this committee. Ms. Silvers met with the Administrative team last week, it was a very positive meeting.

Ms. Silvers explained that the purpose of this committee would be working together with administration, becoming partners and creating a conduit for communication. Currently there seems to be an inequality when it comes to the issue of technology in our district. The objective of establishing this committee would be communication and to explore options.

There was further discussion. Mr. Stewart stated that as a school committee member, communication by one or two members of the school committee to any member of the administrative staff is not a determination by the school committee of something that we have decided. It is simply communication.

Ms. Silvers moved, seconded by Mr. Law, to establish an Ad-Hoc committee to deal with the overall issue of access to technology that will act within the specified period of December 2016 to June 2017 with Mr. Hastings putting forward candidates from the Administrative Team and anyone from the school committee who would be interested in being on the committee. It was so voted, unanimously.

Ms. Lartigue, Mr. Travis, Mr. Law and Ms. Silvers will be on the Ad-Hoc Committee.

B. **Superintendent's Report**

1. **Community**

- a. **Jungle Book.** The Elementary School Drama production of the Jungle Book was very well-attended. There were over 60 actors on stage and another ten who served as Technicians. The kids were fabulous! The cast included 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th graders as well as a home-schooled student.
- b. **Senior Citizen Luncheon.** Around 90 Senior Citizens and some of our School Committee Members attended the luncheon on December 1st. Performing for the group were the Kindergarten classes, the Jazz Band, the cast of **Jungle Book**, and the Mount Everett Chorus. Everyone had a great time and loved the food, served in a buffet fashion, with student servers. The food was prepared by the **Culinary Arts Program** students under the direction of **Susan Petrucci**. Vito Valentini was presented with an award for his years of service to the District.

2. Staff

- a. **Project Linus.** Project Linus is starting up again. The overt purpose of this group is to create blankets for the pediatric unit at BMC. The covert purpose of this group is to provide a sense of community for Mount Everett middle and high school students who need it.
- b. **Berkshire Compact.** I attended the Berkshire Compact Fall/Winter Network Meeting on December 2, 2016 at MCLA in North Adams. We had 80 (plus) in attendance. Particular commendations to the leadership/membership of the Berkshire County Education Task Force (BCETF) and Eliot Levine from the UMass Donahue Institute who provided an update of efforts to date, the Phase I study results, and our plans/path forward. Our district is largely absent from the report because the School Committee voted not to send information to the Berkshire County Education Task Force, which provided the Donahue Institute with its information. The administrative team is working now to correct the report.
- c. **Southern Berkshire Shared Services Project.** The Southern Berkshire Superintendents, including Tim Lee (Lenox), Al Skrocki (Lee), Peter Dillon (BHRSD) and I met today to discuss ways that we can continue to share services and perhaps staff. We hope to have a technology assessment completed in December-January, with recommendations to each district. We also discussed, based on a recent Finance Subcommittee discussion, the issue of Virtual High School, in light of the fact that we do not use it much, if at all. We are getting an answer from VHS on the impact of our district's withdrawal on the other cooperating districts.

3. Students

- a. **Berkshire County Sportsmanship Summit.** On Tuesday 12/6, the athletic department sent 10 students to the Berkshire County Sportsmanship Summit. Students attending included Sarah Beckwith, Cavan Brady, Lauren Edwards, Devan Galli, Sean Shallaby, Gwendolyn Carpenter, Nikos Casivant, Jaclyn Derwitsch, Marion Devoti, and Patrick Silk.
- b. **Interact.** Over 20 new members of the **Rotary Interact Club** received a membership certificate and a pin as part of the installation ceremony of the of the club. They represented our school with great poise. The officers are:
 - i. President: Lauren Edwards
 - ii. Vice-president: Sarah Beckwith
 - iii. Treasurer: Gwendolyn Carpenter
 - iv. Secretary: Jaclyn Derwitch
- c. **Mount Everett Alumni Day.** On 12/22 we will be engaging in a day full of varying activities. Among them will be the alumni presentation. It will look different this year as we are breaking it up into grade level groups rather than having a panel in the TACPAC. All grades, 7 - 12, will be split in half and assigned specific locations. Each location will have a handful of graduates present. There will be a list of grade appropriate questions that we would encourage the graduates to answer. Advisors would serve as facilitators for their respective groups
- d. **Mount Everett Field Day.** On 12/19 & 12/20 students will be signing up to participate in field day activities (to be held 12/22). This will take place in the cafeteria during lunch. All students will be assigned an activity. Staff members will be creating special or unique activities and a list of options will be created.
- e. **Wear Your Gear Event.** On 12/21, there will be a "Wear Your Gear" event. Essentially, we are hoping to get the students to reflect on the process of choosing a pathway after high school. Even if students do not have any gear from a college or university you could still participate by highlighting the name of your chosen school, or planned career on the classroom board along with some pertinent facts about that school or career choice.

C. **Vote on Teacher Substitute Daily Rate**

Mr. Stewart explained that currently teacher subs are earning \$80 per day. Ms. Regan further explained that the issue is that the rate of the ESP sub rate is tied to the lowest step on the Unit D contract for ESPs. The para rate has been increasing over time, but the teacher rate has stayed the same. At this point, the lowest pay for an ESP in the Unit D contract is \$11.83 per hour at 7 hours per day equals \$82.81 a day. So an ESP sub would be getting \$82.81 per day versus a teacher sub who will get \$80 per day.

Ms. Regan obtained information from other districts in Berkshire county for comparison. Berkshire Hills pays \$80; Adams, Cheshire is \$80; North Adams pays \$75 and after 10 days \$80; Lenox pays \$75; Central Berkshire pays \$75 and if certified \$100; Farmington River pays \$75, if certified \$85. Paraprofessional rates range from \$75 a day to \$12.24 per hour.

Discussion ensued.

The recommendation was that Chris Regan do an analysis of our subs, e.g. certified vs non certified. Also recommended is that there be a fixed rate for a para sub and two rates for teachers, certified and non-certified, and what the fiscal impact would be on the District.

It was suggested that an analysis be done and brought forward to the school committee before a decision is made on the substitute rate.

D. **Letter from the Town of Egremont** – Carl Stewart

Mr. Stewart gave a brief explanation regarding the letter from the Town of Egremont (attached). This started with the letter of September 27th, to which a response was sent on October 12th. The letter was written by Chris Regan and signed by Ms. Silvers because Mr. Stewart was out of town. The Town of Egremont Select board voted to reject the letter of October 12th. At this time no action is required.

E. **Voting in Open Meetings** – Carl Stewart

Mr. Stewart explained that the day before the last meeting he had received a message from Mr. Flynn that the vote on reorganization had to be done by written ballot and that MA General Law provided that. MA General Law says it must be a voice ballot and not a secret ballot. This is an attempt at intimidation. Any vote taken by any public body in a public meeting must be an open vote, it is a violation to do it otherwise. Raise hands, roll call, all must be open.

F. **Subcommittee Reports:**

1. Finance Subcommittee: Mr. Sears suggested moving this item to #3, just before Ms. Regan's Financial Updates and Transfers.
2. Executive Evaluation/Superintendent Search – Bonnie Silvers.

Ms. Silvers was elected as Chair. There will be a rotating scribe for minutes.

The Executive Evaluation Subcommittee is requesting that \$5000 be made available as a line item in the FY18 budget for a superintendent transition period in the event that the new superintendent is not available to start in July. Mr. Hastings would be willing to come on board, if needed, for \$300 a day.

The Issue of the Donohue report: Mr. Hastings has asked members of the admin team to supply the missing information. This information will be available by next Wednesday to provide to the superintendent candidates.

Ms. Silvers attended the first meeting of the superintendent screening committee. Mr. Glenn Koocher, MASC, has been amazing. He went through the regulations, and issues related to privacy. He noted that we wound up with 21 applicants. All members of the Superintendent Screening Committee had to sign a confidentiality statement and received copies of the Open Meeting Laws and Summary of Conflict of Interest.

All the candidate resumes were put on flash drives. Each of the members on the Superintendent Screening Committee had to sign for them. They will sign when the drives are returned and then the flash drives will be destroyed.

Ms. Lartigue was voted to be Chair of the Screening Committee. She wanted to be chair because this was a new process for her. The goal was a more community approach and the listening groups have reached out and cast a wide net so that people from different backgrounds were heard. The process is only as good as we are able to vet the candidates in an honest and open way. They are glad to have Jennifer Dowley as the consultant.

The next Executive Evaluation Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for December 15th. There was also a discussion regarding the range of the new superintendent salary (\$125,000 to \$145,000 commensurate with experience and benefits negotiable).

To date we have spent \$5,381.68 out of the budget amount of \$20,000.

The following motions were brought before the committee:

Motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to approve the substitution of James Thieriot as the Mt. Everett Parent on the Superintendent Screening Committee in place of Steven Galli. It was so voted unanimously.

Motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to permit a member of the Superintendent Screening Committee (SSC) who misses a meeting due to personal illness to watch a video of the missed interviews prior to the final debate and vote of the SSC. The video will be destroyed after the viewing. Video will be placed in the safe by the superintendent. The chair of the SSC or the SC consultant will ensure the recording of the sessions; this will only take place if a SSC member is missing. The viewer will sign an affidavit that s/he has viewed the entire video and is able to participate in the discussion. It was so voted unanimously.

Motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Ms. Lartigue to permit the Superintendent Screening Committee to bring forward to the School Committee on February 2nd two to five finalists to be interviewed. Mr. Batacchi – opposed, all others yes. Motion carries.

Motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to permit the SSC to offer to the School Committee on February 2nd the consideration of a solution other than a full-time superintendent.

Mr. Batacchi and Mr. Sears were not in favor of this. Discussion ensued.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Batacchi – No; Ms. Silvers – No; Ms. Brown – No; Mr. Sears – No; Mr. Law – No

Ms. Lartigue – Yes; Mr. Travis – Yes; Ms. Bush – Yes

Motion fails (5 No, 3 Yes)

Motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to permit the SSC to present to the School Committee on February 2nd the alternative consideration of re-opening the search in the event that the SSC cannot reach a consensus on at least two finalists. It was so voted unanimously.

Motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Ms. Bush, to approve Jennifer Dowley, the SC Consultant, to serve as the authorized representative of the School Committee to communicate with the press regarding the superintendent search process.

Discussion ensued.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Batacchi – No; Mr. Sears – No; Ms. Brown – Abstain;

Ms. Lartigue – Yes; Mr. Travis – Yes; Ms. Silvers – Yes; Ms. Bush – Yes; Mr. Law – Yes.

Motion Carries (2 No, 1 Abstain, 5 Yes).

3. Berkshire County Education Task Force Report – Carl Stewart

Mr. Stewart was perplexed by which information was denied to Doug McNally. At that time there was no Donohue Report. At that time the committee voted not to supply the data until they knew why it was being requested. Mr. Stewart further stated that extensive minutes and the Donohue report are all available on respective websites. It is the overwhelming feeling of the task force that within a reasonably short period of time there will be major changes in Berkshire County's education.

1. Finance Subcommittee Reports – Dennis Sears

Mr. Sears was elected Chair of the Finance Subcommittee and Ms. Bush the clerk. They have had 3 meetings so far. It is still very early in the budget cycle and still waiting on information from the state. Indications are that this will be a very tough budget year. One of the things is the cost of health insurance. Insurance is going to increase 12% or more.

Chris Regan, Dave Hastings and Terri Licata attended a meeting put on by Berkshire Health Group for superintendents and town administrators to learn about potential changes and what was being proposed by Berkshire Health Group to try to contain costs.

The proposal of Berkshire Health Group is to eliminate the value plus plans because they are more expensive and just keep the deductible plans. The majority of towns and districts are providing deductible plans. There is another meeting scheduled at which time a vote will be taken regarding the elimination of the value plus plans and move to the deductible plans.

On August 9, 2012 the School District adopted MGL Chapter 32B Sections 21 to 23 which allows us to make these kind of changes without having to bargain. It's a different process, we have the right to make the choice and then work with the unions on mitigation. We would apply some of the savings to a plan that would help mitigate any negative impact on employees.

We need to notify the union president of the fact that this is happening. Legal council will provide us with a letter tomorrow that we will issue to the president of the union to let him know that there is going to be a vote to eliminate the value plus plans. Depending on the vote, we will need to follow a very specific process to establish the new plan. Up to 25% of the savings would apply to helping those who are negatively impacted by the deductible plan. We would need to set up an HSA account. The district would need to contribute half of the deductible that will go into this account and goes toward out of pocket cost. If this money is not used, this money is maintained in the account, and belongs to the individual.

There was further discussion regarding this. Some of the school committee members were concerned about the impact that these changes to the health benefits would have on our staff.

Mr. Stewart moved, seconded by Ms. Brown, that the committee give Chris Regan a vote of confidence to use her discretion to vote on what is best financially for the district.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Batacchi – No; Mr. Law – No; Ms. Silvers – Abstain

Ms. Lartigue; Mr. Travis; Ms. Brown; Ms. Bush; Mr. Sears - Yes

Motion Carries (2 No; 1 Abstain; 5 Yes)

G. Financial Updates and Transfers (as needed) – Chris Regan
No transfers.

6. **Communication from the Public/Requests for Future Agenda Items:**

7. **Adjourn:** *Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to adjourn the meeting at 9:53p.m.*

Documents Presented at this Meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1518*
- *Letter from Town of Egremont*
- *Notification of Warrants Signed*
- *Subcommittee List of Members*
- *List of School Committee Members*
- *SBRSD Curriculum & Professional Development*