

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
September 19, 2013
Meeting #1,465

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

Absent: Ms. Sahn, Ms. Fields

Administrators: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Mr. Devoti, Ms. Woodsome

Press: CTSB Television; Justin Korn, Berkshire Record

Student Representative: Erica Sullivan

Others: Ms. Rebecca Neet; Ms. Susan Garcia; Ms. Betsy Agar; Mr. Kurt DeGrenier; Mr. Alexander Dagrue; Ms. Linda Higgins

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Ms. Silvers moved to approve the minutes of Meeting #1,464, open and executive sessions, and the Special Working Meeting of September 12, 2013. It was so voted, unanimously.
3. **HERB ABELOW FUND FOR TEACHERS:** Mr. Sears described the fund established with Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation in Mr. Abelow's memory to support the work of District teachers. He also informed the audience how to make a donation to the fund. Mr. Stewart requested that the information be included on the District's web site.
4. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE PERTAINING TO THIS EVENING'S AGENDA ITEMS**
 - A There were no audience communications.
5. **UPDATE(S)/PRESENTATION(S)**
 - A. **Request for Approval of Fence for Softball Field:** Chairman Stewart announced that although this item had come up after the agenda was prepared, he would follow his prerogative as Chair and allow discussion. Mr. DeGrenier and student Alex Dagrue then presented renditions of what the fence would look like. Mr. DeGrenier explained that the fence would be part two of the renovations of the softball field in an effort to make the field appropriate for tournament play. He noted that corrugated pipe would be installed at the top of the fence so that students could not get hurt on it. Further, Berkshire Fence will donate the labor for installation, Tomich Landscaping will do part of the landscaping, and Mr. DeGrenier will do part of the work for the upkeep (specifically the weed-whacking along the fence line.) The fence will be paid for by donations. Mr. Will Conklin will donate his time to take the trees down, and then use them as part of his curriculum. Alex Dagrue showed the audience the animator that he had used to design the fence and explained how the software worked. Mr. Devoti noted that the software had been purchased through the receipt of an Eagle Fund grant.

Mr. Valentini stated that the Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee had expressed support of the project previously. He then moved to approve the project, as presented. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

- B. **Elementary Summer Program:** Ms. Woodsome reported that twenty students had been involved with the Elementary Nature Camp Program this past summer. The program lasted for two weeks, and included incoming 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. Transportation was provided from pick-up points within each community. She said that the approach was hands-on, project-based learning, much of which was accomplished on the path to the campus vernal pool and around the pool itself. The group took two field trips, one to Bash Bish Falls, and the other to Benedict Pond. Ms. Woodsome said that the teachers would love to do the program again next year, and that she believed that although they had a hard time recruiting twenty students this year, they had learned how to better describe the program to encourage the students' interest. She felt that there would be no problem attracting more children next summer.
- C. **Appalachian Trail Project:** Ms. Susan Garcia reported that she and Ms. Neet were the only two teachers in MA who had been accepted into a program called "A Trail to Every Classroom", which is sponsored by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and National Park Service. The program gives educators the necessary resources to engage students in the local community, specifically along the Appalachian Trail, while "growing academically and professionally." Ms. Garcia and Ms. Neet have begun to develop curriculum based on the state standards and common core standards for the Undermountain 4th and 5th graders that will incorporate the use of the Appalachian Trail. Ms. Garcia and Ms. Neet explained many of the events that are planned for this year, including the creation of a kiosk along the Trail showing invasive species and providing information regarding historical landmarks along the Trail. The teachers explained that using the Appalachian Trail and its resources, they are able to teach subjects they need to teach in a way that the students want to learn. They described the excitement of the students at a recent field trip along the Housatonic River in Great Barrington. They said that they will also seek to have the town of Sheffield designated as a Trail Town.

School Committee members expressed excitement about the project. Members suggested the following: that the teachers look into making a presentation on a national level; that they check into grants available from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and from Honda Corp. Fund; that they put some of the information, especially regarding invasive species and historical landmarks, on the District's web page; that they contact a citizen in Egremont who is a through-hiker of the Appalachian Trail. The Committee thanked the teachers for their initiative and excellent work.

- D. **Elementary School Council Report:** Ms. Woodsome reported on a meeting of the Elementary School Council which was held earlier in the evening. She described progress the group has made toward last year's goals, including a greater involvement of parents in the classrooms, collaboration between the PTO, PTA, and the South Egremont Parent Group, the summer enrichment program (reported on earlier in the meeting), and work on school culture through the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program. Ms. Woodsome said that the School Council will meet in October and will bring forward a School Improvement Plan for approval by the School Committee on October 17. Committee members thanked Ms. Woodsome and requested that they receive the proposed School Improvement Plan at least a week before the October 17 meeting in order to allow them enough time to review it.
- E. **Mt. Everett School Council Report:** Mr. Devoti reported that the Mt. Everett School Council had also met earlier in the day. He said that implementing the PBIS program was part of the Council's goals, and that it was working out very well. Among the goals of the Mt. Everett School Council are the following: Use data as a catalyst for discussions; pilot District Determined Measures (which need to be submitted to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the end of the month); update the

District's safety standards, using a new template; refine and review procedures and assess the District's infrastructure; host at least three events as a source of pride for the community; support staff members who are completing graduate work in the area of administration; and contribute to the goal of defining a unique Berkshire education.

5. A. **Superintendent's Report:** Superintendent Hastings reported the following:
- PBIS is working very well at all levels;
 - The educator evaluation process has been embraced by District staff.
 - As part of reaching out to our communities, the chorus will hold concerts in each town, and culinary arts students will prepare meals at the Senior Center in Sheffield.
 - The Mt. Everett Band will perform in the Lee Founders' Day Parade.
 - The soccer scoreboard will be installed within the next few days.
 - The fitness studio is approximately 90% ready for operation, but the machines need to be certified before the students can start to use it.
 - Mr. Tranfaglia is bringing meals out to New Marlborough Central School each day, and it is working very well. Parents and students are happy. Mr. Turner added that the menu has changed this year, and meal sales are going well.
 - Several teachers have been awarded grants through the Donors Choose Program.
 - A problem with handicap parking near the softball fields has been resolved.
 - The New Marlborough Central School will host its annual Harvest Supper on September 25.
- B. **Possible Request for Tuition Reduction:** This item was postponed until the October 17 meeting, as no letter had yet been received.
- C. **Appointment of Early Childhood Task Force Members:** Ms. Silvers explained that all nominees to the Early Childhood Task Force were excited about being included in the group. They will follow the timeline as presented two months ago. The group will hold its first meeting as an organizational meeting, and they will set up their schedule at that time. The School Committee members will not serve on the task force, but they will be available to help, if needed. Following discussion regarding the possibility of additional members, Mr. Flynn moved to approve the membership of the Early Childhood Task Force, as presented by Ms. Silvers (listing on file with these minutes), and to give the ad hoc task force permission to approve other members, as necessary, up to a total of fifteen members. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion. Following additional discussion, Mr. Valentini requested that the question be called, and the motion was approved, unanimously.
- D. **Subcommittee/Representative Reports:**
- **Ad Hoc Food Service** – Mr. Sears reported that this group will organize on September 24. He said that Mr. Batacchi had expressed an interest in being part of the subcommittee, and he asked that the School Committee appoint him to serve. Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Mr. Valentini, to add Mr. Batacchi to the membership of the Ad Hoc Food Service Subcommittee. It was so voted.
 - **Finance:** Mr. Valentini reported the following from the September 16 Finance Subcommittee meeting:
 - It will be necessary to retain Internet services with Time Warner through February or March. This will create an added expense for the District.
 - Fuel prices are up, and Mr. Turner has not yet locked in for this winter's heating fuel. This may also create an added expense, although there is some hope that the current prices will go down.
 - A \$12,000 software purchase that was not indicated in the budget was questioned. It was found that the purchase was made to dovetail with new teacher evaluation system.
 - Discussion took place regarding the students from Farmington River Regional School District who choice into the District, but are tuitioned into one or two other districts. The

Subcommittee asked that Mr. Turner call the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Legal Department to obtain definitions as to under what circumstances students may be choiced.

- The Subcommittee discussed grants and how to get people to actively seek grants. It was requested that the administrators develop a plan to present to the Finance Subcommittee at its next meeting.

- **Transportation:** Mr. Batacchi reported on the recent Transportation Subcommittee meeting. He reported that it was learned that the District can no longer use the fourteen passenger van, as both the state and federal governments have declared such vehicles unsafe. He said that \$30,000 was included in the FY'14 budget to purchase additional vehicles, and that the Subcommittee is looking at multifunctional school activity bus(es) (MSABs), which are fourteen passenger buses that have many safety features and can be driven by anyone. Mr. Batacchi said that Mr. Turner had recommended that the fourteen passenger van be declared as surplus and sold. He said that the Subcommittee had voted 3-1 to flip the vans to purchase the MSABs. Mr. Turner distributed information regarding the MSABs, and he read the bids he had received.

Discussion took place regarding insurance coverage for volunteer drivers. Mr. Turner distributed the form completed by all volunteer drivers which informs them that their private insurance is the primary coverage, and that the District's insurance provides secondary coverage. The Committee requested that Mr. Turner get a letter from the insurance company defining exactly what coverage is available to volunteer drivers.

Following additional discussion regarding the multifunctional school activity buses, Mr. Flynn moved to accept the recommendation of the Transportation Subcommittee to purchase multiuse vehicles, and that the business administrator make the recommendation as to how to finance the purchase. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion. Mr. Sears wished to be sure that the insurance company would cover such a vehicle.

The vote was then called, and the motion was approved. (Mr. Sears voted no.)

- **Policy:** Mr. Flynn reported on the recent Policy Subcommittee meeting. He said that three policies are currently with the attorneys. A new Superintendent Evaluation Policy has been drafted, and that will be taken up at the next Policy Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Flynn also reported that he had spoken with Ms. Pat Correia of the MA Association of School Committees, and she had promised to work with the Policy Subcommittee to be sure errors that had been made in the new policy manual will be corrected.
- **Executive Evaluation:** Mr. Flynn reported that Ms. Silvers has worked with Mr. Hastings regarding a plan to look at non-unit staff job descriptions and contracts. Mr. Hastings will report on that at the October 17 School Committee meeting. Also, the Subcommittee has followed state guidance regarding evaluation of the Superintendent. They have reviewed the Superintendent's goals and objectives, and the Subcommittee recommended that the full School Committee approve. Mr. Hastings briefly presented and explained his goals and objectives for the current year.

Mr. Flynn moved that the School Committee approve the self-evaluation of the Superintendent and his Superintendent's Smart Goals for 2013-14. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

- E. **Lateral Movements on Unit A Salary Schedule:** Mr. Flynn moved to approve the lateral movements on the Unit A Teachers’ Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2013, as per the Superintendent’s memo dated September 14, 2013. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.
- F. **Financial Updates / Transfers:** Mr. Turner distributed the FY 2012 audit report. He said that the auditors will attend the next meeting to go over the report.
- G. **Collective Bargaining:** Mr. Sears moved to approve the contract with Sandra Hubbard, Director of Student Services, effective July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2016.

Mr. Flynn requested that the Committee wait for the process currently underway for the non-unit staff contracts. He said that he believed approving the contract would present problems later on. Mr. Sears cited the accomplishments of Ms. Hubbard in voicing support for the contract. Following additional discussion, a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Flynn	No	Mr. Batacchi	No	Ms. Sparhawk	yes
Ms. Silvers	Present	Ms. Rundle	No	Mr. Sears	yes
Mr. Valentini	Yes	Mr. Stewart	Yes		

Mr. Stewart declared the motion carried, with 4 voting in favor, 3 opposed, and 1 “present”.

Mr. Stewart announced that Unit D mediation would take place on October 3 at 5:00 p.m.

7. **Communications from the Public/Requests for Future Agenda Items**

- A. Mr. Sears requested that the Superintendent give a presentation on PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) tests at the next School Committee meeting.
- B. Ms. Rundle asked that a meeting be scheduled for Monterey. She will speak with the town officials and report to the Committee on a date that they are able to attend.

Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Valentini, to adjourn the meeting. It was so voted, and the meeting adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

Documents presented for this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,465*
- *Minutes of School Committee Meeting #1,464, regular and executive sessions, and the Special Working Meeting of September 12, 2013*
- *Proposed Member List – Early Childhood Task Force*
- *DRAFT 2013 Superintendent SMART Goals*
- *SBRSD Volunteer Driver Form*
- *Copy of General Liability Section from ISO Properties, Inc., 2006*
- *Minutes of August 15, 2013 Executive Evaluation Subcommittee Meeting*
- *Superintendent Educator Evaluation Form*