

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee  
Mt. Everett Regional School  
Sheffield, MA  
November 14, 2013  
Meeting #1,467

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

Absent: Ms. Fields

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

Press: CTSB Television

Student Representative:

Others: Ms. Stephanie Graham, Ms. Marian Devoti, Ms. Jill Lipsky, Ms. Regan Campbell, Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Superintendent Hastings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **Reorganization:**  
Mr. Hastings asked for nominations for Chairman. Mr. Sears nominated Mr. Stewart. The nomination was seconded by Ms. Silvers. Hearing no further nominations, Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Sears, to close nominations. It was so voted, unanimously. Mr. Flynn then moved, seconded by Mr. Sears, to waive the requirement for ballots. It was so voted, unanimously.

Mr. Stewart was then elected Chair, by roll call vote, 8-0-1 (Mr. Stewart abstained.) Mr. Hastings declared Mr. Stewart Chair and relinquished the gavel. Mr. Stewart thanked the Committee for their support and assumed the duties of Chair.

Mr. Flynn nominated Ms. Silvers as Vice Chair. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Valentini. Hearing no further nominations, Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Sears, to close nominations. It was so voted, unanimously.

Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to elect Ms. Silvers as Vice Chair. It was so voted, unanimously, and Ms. Silvers assumed the role of Vice Chair. Ms. Silvers thanked the Committee for their guidance and support thus far.

**Subcommittees:**

Mr. Sears moved to keep all existing subcommittees as currently formed and stated, unless requested otherwise. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion. (Mr. Stewart noted that Ms. Fields wished to remain on the subcommittees that she was a member of in 2012-13.) Mr. Stewart called the vote, and it was so voted, unanimously.

With discussion and agreement among the Members, Subcommittees for 2013-14 were organized as follows:

**Finance:** Messrs. Batacchi, Flynn, Sears, Valentini; Ms. Sparhawk

**Collective Bargaining:** Mr. Batacchi (exception of Unit D); Mr. Flynn, Mr. Sears, Mr. Stewart (Unit D only), Ms. Silvers, Alternate.

**Eagle fund:** Ms. Rundle and Ms. Silvers (It was noted that only one representative of the School Committee is needed; however, both Ms. Rundle and Ms. Silvers plan to remain active.)

**Buildings, Grounds & Technology:** Ms. Rundle, Ms. Fields, Mr. Valentini, Ms. Silvers, Ms. Sahn

**Policy:** Mr. Flynn, Mr. Batacchi, Ms. Sparhawk, Ms. Rundle

**Executive Evaluation:** Mr. Flynn, Ms. Silvers, Ms. Fields, Ms. Sahn

**Undermountain/Mt. Everett Youth Athletic Association Liaison:** Mr. Stewart, Representative; Mr. Batacchi, Alternate

**Warrant Subcommittee:** Ms. Sparhawk, Mr. Sears, Mr. Batacchi, Mr. Valentini, Mr. Stewart  
Mr. Stewart stressed that all members serve as alternates to the Warrant Subcommittee, and he requested that Ms. Licata notify all School Committee members each time a warrant is ready for signatures, in case some of the regular subcommittee members are unavailable.

**MA Association of School Committees Representative(s):** Mr. Sears, Mr. Flynn, Mr. Stewart (Alt.)

**Liaison to Southern Berkshire Child Care Program:** Ms. Fields

**Liaison to Wellness Committee:** Ms. Sparhawk, Mr. Stewart (Alt.)

**Ad Hoc Liaison to Early Childhood Task Force:** Ms. Silvers

**Food Service:** Mr. Sears, Mr. Flynn, Ms. Fields, Mr. Batacchi, Ms. Sahn  
Mr. Valentini moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to make the Food Service Subcommittee a permanent subcommittee (it had formerly been “ad hoc”). It was so voted, unanimously.

**Transportation:** Mr. Batacchi, Mr. Valentini, Mr. Sears, Ms. Sparhawk, Mr. Flynn

Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Valentini, to reappoint Mr. Harvey Thompson as Treasurer, effective July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. It was so voted, unanimously.

Mr. Flynn nominated Mr. Hastings as Secretary, per policy. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the nomination, and it was so voted, unanimously.

Mr. Batacchi moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to reappoint Dr. Lisa Sylvia as School Physician, effective July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. It was so voted, unanimously.

3. **Approval of Minutes:**

Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Batacchi to approve the minutes of Meeting 1,466. Ms. Sahn noted an error on page 3. The minutes were then approved, as amended.

4. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening’s Agenda**

A. There was no Student Representative report.

B. There were no communications from the audience.

- C. Ms. Silvers moved to amend the agenda in order to consider establishing another meeting working toward the goals of self-evaluation of the school committee. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted.
- D. Mr. Flynn moved to amend the agenda to include a presentation by Ms. Jill Lipsky. It was so voted, unanimously

5. **Presentation/Updates:**

- A. Mr. Hastings introduced Ms. Regan Campbell, middle school math teacher. Ms. Campbell spoke about the SMART (Strategic Memory and Reasoning Training) Brain Study Program she is using with students this year. She explained that the program helps students use frontal lobes, which are the last area of the brain to develop. This method helps students derive a deeper understanding and is a strategy program that the students can use for all of their classes.

In the discussion that followed the presentation, Ms. Silvers requested that Principal Devoti check into expanding this program. Mr. Devoti and Ms. Regan explained that there are other teachers involved, but they need to be very careful about what they share, due to proprietary issues. Mr. Devoti said that a subsequent presentation will be forthcoming, and he noted that Mr. Farmer is using a similar approach from another source and will present in the near future.

- B. Financial Literacy – Ms. Campbell explained the financial literacy class that she is teaching this year. She noted that at the end of the course, students can take a test for the W!SE (Working In Support of Financial Education) Financial Literacy certification. There is no cost for participation in the program. Ms. Silvers disclosed that she is a consultant with W!SE, and she noted that the young woman who manages the program for W!SE is Mt. Everett graduate, Andrea Campbell.

Mr. Hastings stated that his charge to the administrators is to create an environment to encourage teachers like Ms. Campbell to do different / innovative things.

- C. Early Childhood Task Force Report – Ms. Silvers reported that the members have been doing phenomenal research, but they now believe that they will need additional time to complete their work. They had hoped to make a full report in December in order to be ready for the budget process. The group will present a preliminary report on items that may impact the FY 2015 budget in December. They also plan to go into each of the District’s communities to gather additional input from parents.
- D. FY 2012 Audit: Mr. Tom Scanlon, Jr. reviewed the results of the District’s FY 2012 audit. He stated that the District had made a good improvement since the FY 2012 audit by hiring a consultant and improving controls. He pointed out areas of concern, including post-employment benefits. He suggested that the District consider billing on a pro-rated basis, per a law which was passed in 2011. For anyone retiring after January 1, 2011, the law allows the District to bill for a portion of a retiree’s health insurance benefits to another public entity that the retiree worked for prior to coming to the District on a pro-rated basis. He suggested that the District make note of anyone who would come under that law when they are hired and keep a “tickler” file containing that information.

Mr. Scanlon encouraged the District to do the following:

- stay on top of the declining revenue problem in the school lunch area;
- add a lot more detail in journal entries;
- add internal reconciliation for how money is taken out in payroll for health insurance;
- have an additional person look at the payroll.

Mr. Scanlon reported that the District had achieved an “Unqualified Opinion”, which bond companies and some grant givers care about. Scanlon & Associates will start the District’s FY 2013 audit in January or February.

- E. Mr. Hastings introduced Ms. Jill Lipsky, who had asked to speak to the Committee regarding the nonprofit groups Hearts of the Father and Peace Through Community. Ms. Lipsky explained the work done by the two organizations, and she requested that consideration be given to partner the school with either organization to help with projects they sponsor in Ghana. Although the School Committee members were generally positive about the projects, they asked that Ms. Lipsky work with Mr. Hastings to clarify exactly what the school’s role would be and to further explore possibilities.

6. **Business**

A. Superintendent’s Report:

Mr. Hastings distributed a paper which answered the questions the Committee had asked regarding liability insurance, as well as a list of confirmed participants in the proposed trip to Italy next summer. Ms. Stephanie Graham, who will lead the trip, explained that all participants will be required to take out a travel health insurance policy. Ms. Graham will also have the District added to EF’s policy.

(Ms. Graham also distributed an update from Student Representative Erica Sullivan.)

Superintendent Hastings report included the following:

- Ms. Kerry Burke will be the next Curriculum and Professional Development Coordinator.
- The District has hired a long-term sub, for a teacher who left last month. He has been a writer, and although he is not yet “teacher-trained”, he is working toward that.
- Ms. Danielle Melino returned from maternity leave this week.
- The administrative team has nominated two teachers, Jo-ellen Height and Andrew Rapport, for Berkshire County Teacher of the Year.
- Angela Spitia has completed studies and is now qualified to teach an AP course in Spanish.
- The new web site is up and running.
- The annual evacuation drill will be conducted on Monday, November 25.
- The Senior Luncheon will take place on December 5. Mr. Hastings invited School Committee members to attend.
- Ms. Garcia’s and Ms. Neet’s classes will each have a tree on display at the Berkshire Museum’s Festival of Trees. One tree will depict invasive species on the Appalachian Trail, and the other will provide information on historical sites on the Appalachian Trail.
- The Model UN Club will host a debate on the future of the Senkaku Islands on Dec. 3.
- Mr. Hastings distributed a CD of the 1<sup>st</sup> annual South County Chorus Festival, which was held recently.
- Mt. Everett students recently took part in Hip Hop Theater at the Mahaiwe in Great Barrington.
- Mr. Hastings and Mr. Sears recently attended a transportation forum at the Sheffield Senior Center. Mr. Hastings has begun conversations which may lead to help in transporting District students to Berkshire South in Great Barrington.
- Eight District students made the Western Mass. chorus or band.
- MA Secretary of Education Matt Malone will visit the District on December 13.

Ms. Silvers noted an article by Mr. Hastings in the Sheffield Times.

(Ms. Sparhawk left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.)

- B. Report on MASC/MASS Conference: This item was postponed until the December 12 meeting.
- C. Subcommittee Representative Reports
- There was no Buildings, Grounds & Technology report.
  - Executive Evaluation – Mr. Flynn reported that the subcommittee had met earlier in the evening. They will meet on February 5 to review evidence and to receive an initial report from Supt. Hastings on his progress. On February 13, they plan to refine his report with him, and then hear a final report on February 27.
  - Policy – Mr. Flynn reported that the subcommittee is still reviewing the policies to be sure all transitions had been made when the new policy manual was adopted.
  - Mr. Stewart reported that he had received a request for the minutes of four Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee meetings. He asked that the request be honored in a timely manner. It was noted that minutes become public record, as soon as they are in draft form; however, it should be stated if they are not yet approved. Ms. Rundle agreed to forward the draft minutes.
  - **Eagle fund** – Ms. Rundle reported that there is a poster contest in celebration of the **eagle fund's** 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There will also be an anniversary celebration on March 13.
- D. Ms. Silvers reported on the development of the School Committee self-evaluation process. She stated that they hope to finish at the next workshop meeting. It was agreed to hold the next workshop on December 4 at 7:15 p.m.
- E. Financial Updates : Mr. Turner reported that MBI began providing internet service to the main campus on November 13, and to South Egremont and New Marlborough Central Schools on November 14.
- Mr. Turner requested that the Committee declare the District's Ford 1-ton truck as surplus property, as the District had purchased a new truck last spring, and no longer could use the 1-ton. Mr. Sears then moved to declare the Ford one-ton truck surplus property. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.
- Mr. Turner reported that the District has received some insurance money for the boiler. The Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee will determine whether to repair the boiler or to replace it.
- F. Collective Bargaining: Mr. Stewart noted that the union had ratified the Unit D contract. It is expected that the Committee will have the final document for its meeting in December. A vote will be requested at that time.
- G. Insurance Coverage for Volunteer Drivers: Mr. Valentini recommended that the Chair choose School Committee members to meet with the liability expert at Wheeler & Taylor and report back to the full Committee. Mr. Sears reported that he had received a great deal of information on the subject at the recent MASC/MASS Conference. He said that there is coverage available at relatively low expense in the Commonwealth. It was agreed that Mr. Sears, Mr. Valentini, and Mr. Stewart will meet to discuss this issue, and will put it on the December 12 agenda.

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

- A. There were no further communications from the public.

Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Ms. Silvers to adjourn the meeting. It was so voted, and the meeting adjourned at 9:18 pm.

***Documents presented at this meeting:***

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,467*
- *Listing of 2012-13 Subcommittee Members*
- *Policy BDA, School Committee Organizational Meeting*
- *Policy BDB, School Committee Officers*
- *Policy BDC, Appointed Committee Officials*
- *Minutes, School Committee Meeting #1,466*
- *“Financial Literacy Learning Objectives”*
- *Early Childhood Task Force Organizational Meeting minutes*