

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
March 11, 2014
Meeting #1,473

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

Absent: Ms. Fields

Administration: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Mr. Thompson

Press: CTSB TV; John Sakata, Berkshire Eagle

Student Representatives: Erica Sullivan, Maya Neski, Gwendolyn Carpenter, Brooke Morehouse, Brian Dillon, Madison Ryan, Hannah Herrick

Others: Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem, New Marlborough Select Board Member; Mr. Charles Ketchen, Alford Select Board Chair; Mr. Wayne Burkhart, Monterey Select Board Member; Ms. Alice Tortoriello; Ms. Betsy Agar; Ms. Darcy Meyers; Ms. Joan Baker; Ms. JoAnn Gavriety; Mr. Mark Pezzottini; Ms. Roberta Sarnacki; Ms. Carol Ide; Ms. Jaime Lyn Beaty; Mr. Daniel Weston; Ms. Sarah Siket; Mr. James Siket; Mr. Andrew Rapport; Ms. Danielle Goewey; Ms. Rebecca Wagner; Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. **Approval of Minutes:**

Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to approve the minutes of the Open Hearing of February 27, 2014 and the minutes of School Committee meeting #1,472. It was so voted.

3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda**

A. Student Representatives Erica Sullivan, Maya Neski, Gwendolyn Carpenter, Brian Dillon, Madison Ryan, and Hannah Herrick updated the Committee regarding recent actions and upcoming plans of the student government. Erica reported that they had gone out to the community schools to read to the students and had enjoyed the time very much. She reminded all that Mt. Everett's valedictorians and salutatorians are often alumnae of the community schools. The students also displayed a sample of the T-shirts that they had sold to benefit the Malala Fund earlier in the year.

Ms. Brooke Morehouse spoke in support of the First Responders Class taught by Ms. Sarnacki last year. She urged the School Committee to keep the class and not cut Ms. Sarnacki's position.

4. **Business:**

A. Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent Hastings reported the following:

- The Mt. Everett Robotics Team (Higgs Bots) won the MA championship and will move on to the regional competition in York, PA in April. Mr. Thompson presented a request for an overnight field trip for the Higgs Bots members. Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to approve the trip. It was so voted, unanimously. Members wished the team good luck.
- Michaela White came in in third place in the American Legion's oratorical competition.

- Eli Gold competed in the state championship for Poetry Out Loud, which was held in Boston. Although he was not chosen to go to the nationals, it was noted that only 72 of the 14,000 contestants statewide were chosen to go to the competition to Boston.
- The trip to Washington D.C. had gone well.
- There was a talent show for grades 1-3 earlier in the day. Grades 4-6 talent show will take place tomorrow.
- An African drumming team performed at both Undermountain and New Marlborough Central Schools earlier in the day.
- The *eagle fund* will celebrate its fifteenth anniversary on Friday, March 14.
- There will be a grant writing program for the staff on Thursday, March 13.
- Several students are going to Western District Chorus and Band.
- Mt. Everett High School will present *Grease!* on the weekend of April 4-6.
- April 11 will be Unity Day for grades 4 and 5 students of the District.
- MA Education Secretary Matt Malone will return to the District on May 21 to visit the community schools. SBRSD on Parade will take place that evening, as well.
- Mt. Everett Middle School will perform *Music Man* on the weekend of May 30 – June 1.

C. Approval of Overnight Trip: Mr. Valentini moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to approve a request for an overnight trip to Florida during April vacation. It was so voted, unanimously.

- B. Adoption of FY' 15 Budget: Mr. Valentini moved to approve the following re: the FY' 15 Budget
- Operating Expenditure Budget of \$13,278,583
 - Transportation Expenditure Budget of \$1,179,750
 - Capital Expenditure Budget of \$402,500
 - Total Expenditure Budget of \$14,860,833

With the following assessments:

- Operating Assessment of \$10,897,187
- Transportation Assessment of \$750,750
- Capital Assessment of \$402,500
- Total to be Assessed of \$12,050,437

The motion was seconded by Mr. Flynn.

Discussion then took place.

Mr. Andrew Rapport introduced himself and read a letter requesting that the School Committee delay the vote on the budget in order to allow the Association to seek internal solutions that could decrease the proposed position cuts (letter attached to these minutes).

It was clarified that the following positions had been cut from the budget under consideration:

- 1 elementary teacher (retirement)
- 1 special education ESP (left this year; position to remain vacant)
- 1 library ESP (shared between UME and Mt. Everett)
- Two .2 high school teaching positions
- 1 special education ESP (1:1) (student leaving District)
- 1 regular education ESP (retirement)
- 1 high school teacher
- 1 technology instruction position

Ms. Roberta Sarnacki, Mt. Everett technology and business teacher, handed out a statement (attached to these minutes). Ms. Sarnacki explained that the high school teaching position to be eliminated had been identified as the one she currently fills. She listed some of the various extra duties she has performed while in the employ of the District, and she noted that she brings in her two children and a neighbor's child through school choice and has also spoken with the parents of at least five additional children who are also being choiced into our District from her town. Ms. Sarnacki expressed the hope that she would finish her teaching career in SBRSD.

Mr. Daniel Weston, Undermountain Grade 1 Teacher, distributed a statement prepared by Mr. Pezzottini, Technology Instructor. Mr. Weston also stated that having Mr. Pezzottini in his position allows teachers to do their job better because they receive the support necessary to make the technology they use work. Mr. Weston urged the Committee to take the budget showing the 2.6% increase to the towns and give the voters an opportunity to support it.

Ms. Sarah Siket thanked the Committee for all the hours they put in. She said that she had not realized that the budget would be cut after the initial presentation on February 6. She said she was concerned about losing the library aide position, as cutting that position will impact which hours and how often students can use the library. She noted that with many families in the outlying towns not having good access to the Internet, it is important for students to be able to have access in the school library. Ms. Siket requested that the Committee give the voters an opportunity to support a higher budget.

Mr. Valentini then read a letter received earlier that day from the Sheffield Select Board informing the Committee that the Board was unable to support the FY'15 budget and requesting that the Committee consider closing the Monterey School. Mr. Valentini reported that he had called Ms. Hannum, Sheffield Select Board Chair, upon receipt of the letter and shared his opinion that the letter was out of order because each town has the right to determine its future with respect to how each integrates in the District. He said that Ms. Hannum had understood his point, and she expressed that perhaps the timing of the letter was unfortunate, and the conversation is one that needs to take place prior to the FY'16 budget.

School Committee members expressed disappointment that despite the continuing conversations with the Sheffield Finance Committee, the town officials were still apparently not in support of the District's proposed budget.

Ms. Rundle noted that closing the Monterey School should be thought of as essentially closing just one classroom. She said that the savings would consist of utilities and an ESP position only, and that savings would be spread throughout the District. She expressed empathy for the towns being hit with the largest increases, but pointed out that when Monterey was hit with an 11.68% increase last year, they brought it to the taxpayers and allowed them to decide whether they were able to support the increase.

Mr. Flynn moved to amend the motion on the floor to delay the vote on the FY'15 budget until Wednesday, March 19, 2014, at which time the School Committee will hold a special meeting where the vote on the budget will be the only agenda item. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion.

Following additional discussion, Mr. Batacchi requested that the question be called. The vote to call the question passed, 8-0.

The Committee then voted to defer the vote until March 19 by a vote of seven in favor and one in opposition (Mr. Valentini voted in opposition.)

It was agreed that Mr. Valentini, Ms. Silvers, and Mr. Batacchi will meet with members of the Association and the Administrative team on March 12 at 3:00 p.m. for discussions.

Following a brief recess, Committee members requested that the vote on the amended motion be taken. The amended motion was then approved, unanimously.

D. Request for approval to Provide Alternative Method of Notice of School Committee meetings, Per MA Open Meeting Law, paragraph 4, Subsection b: Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to accept the alternative posting method, as delineated in MGL. Following discussion, the Committee approved the request, with 6 members voting in favor, and 2 (Mr. Sears and Mr. Batacchi) voting against the motion.

E. Subcommittee/Representative Reports

1) Innovative Schools Screening Team: Mr. Hastings reported that the Screening Team had met on February 27 and March 7 and had ultimately voted to reject the prospectus. Reasons for rejecting included that they did not feel that the plan would improve New Marlborough Central School, as it is already a Level I School; and the plan did not support the Superintendent's goal to unify the District. Additionally, the plan was nearly identical to that submitted in 2011 and still held signatures from 2011 and 2012. The team encouraged the staff of New Marlborough Central School to move forward with innovations and to form a committee to present their needs.

2) Policy: Ms. Sparhawk moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to adopt Policy IHD, Special Instructional Programs and Accommodations, as presented. It was so voted, unanimously.

Ms. Sparhawk then moved to adopt Policy JEB, Entrance Age, as amended. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

3) Ad Hoc Advisory Board: Ms. Silvers reported that they had met earlier in the evening, and she had been elected Chair, with Ms. Fields to serve as secretary. The group had reviewed a mission statement, and Ms. Sahn will work with Ms. Silvers to further develop and refine the mission statement. The group will meet again soon to approve the mission statement and objectives, prior to reaching out to community members. Ms. Silvers said that there have been several initial conversations with community leaders, which have provided very positive feedback, thus far. She said that the major theme of the Advisory Board will be to open doors for careers and colleges for students and graduates.

4) Food Service Subcommittee: Ms. Sahn reported that the name of the group will change to the Food Subcommittee. She read a statement which they anticipate requesting the School Committee to act upon. The next meeting of the Food Subcommittee will take place on March 27, and they will invite consultants from the community to attend.

F. Financial Updates: There were no financial updates or transfer requests.

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

A. Mr. Wayne Burkhart, Monterey Select Board Member, spoke. He noted that the towns need to value one another's contributions. He said that Monterey has long supported the District, even when they felt they were not being heard. He continued that although he had no answers to offer, the message must be heard loud and clear that they will go to great lengths to maintain the quality that this District represents. He stated that he would like to see a budget that does not hurt as badly as the one proposed.

4. G. Chairman Stewart amended the agenda to add an issue regarding copyrighted material. The Committee received a letter from Attorneys Michelle McNulty and Julie Muse-Fisher earlier in the

day in response to a question posed to Superintendent Hastings by Mt. Everett Art Teacher Kari Giordano. Ms. Giordano developed art curriculum and received credit toward lateral movement on the salary schedule for her work. She may be offered an opportunity to publish that work, and she had sought the permission of the District to do so. Committee members discussed the possibility of adopting a policy to address such situations. It was ultimately decided to deal with this particular request on an ad hoc basis. Ms. Sahn noted that the teacher can send material to a publisher, and if the publisher wishes to use it, permission must be given, and any contractual agreements could be negotiated at that time. Ms. Silvers stated that a publisher had approached Ms. Giordano and wishes to develop the curriculum further. She said that doing that will take a lot of additional work on Ms. Giordano's part. Ms. Silvers expressed the desire to support handling the request in a way that would benefit Ms. Giordano and also acknowledge the District. Mr. Sears cautioned against setting a precedent, and he urged the Committee to protect the District's assets.

Following additional discussion, Mr. Flynn moved to allow Ms. Giordano to submit her manuscript to a publisher. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously

On a motion by Mr. Valentini, seconded by Ms. Sahn, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,473*
- *Minutes of Open Public Hearing of February 27, 2014*
- *Minutes of Meeting #1,472*
- *Overnight Field Trip Request – York Expo Center, York PA, April 2-5, 2014*
- *Excerpt from Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide*
- *Policy File IHB, Special Instructional Programs and Accommodations (DRAFT)*
- *Policy File JEB, Entrance Age (DRAFT)*
- *Presentation of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District FY 15 Budget, Final Adoption March 11, 2014*
- *Letter from Andrew Rapport on behalf of the SBREA*
- *Statement paper, "Technology Today", by Mark Pezzottini*
- *Statement by Roberta Sarnacki*
- *Letter from Julie M. Hannum, Chair, Sheffield Board of Selectmen, Dated March 11, 2014*
- *Letter from Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, PC, Re: Publication of Teacher Created Art Curriculum*