

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
New Marlborough Central School
Mill River, MA
May 8, 2014
Meeting #1,475

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

Absent: Mr. Stewart

Administration: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner

Press: CTSB TV

Student Representatives:

Others: Ms. Francine Groener, Ms. Jessica Tomich, Ms. Susan Tomich, Ms. Linda Hamill, Ms. Roberta Sarnacki, Ms. Elizabeth Kuzmech, Ms. Erna Lampman, Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Vice Chairman Silvers called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. She thanked Mr. Hastings and the leadership team for their work in planning upcoming events for the elementary students and for their work with the many high school students planning to further their education. Ms. Silvers also thanked Mr. Valentini for his help in securing approval of the FY'15 District budget.
2. **Approval of Minutes:**
Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Mr. Batacchi, to approve the minutes of School Committee Meeting #1,474, open and executive sessions, as presented. It was so voted.
3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda**
 - A. Ms. Roberta Sarnacki spoke to the Committee. She pointed out that the removal of her current teaching position from the FY'15 budget would affect both the technology department and the foreign language department, as Spanish will now begin at the 3rd grade level, rather than in 1st grade. She said that additionally, the First Responder course had served non-traditional students who had been able to find work, based on completion of that course. She added that the Microsoft Office course would also not be offered to middle-schoolers. Ms. Silvers thanked Ms. Sarnacki for her comments.
 - B. Ms. Elizabeth Kuzmech also spoke in support of retaining Ms. Sarnacki's position, pointing out that it will be a loss to the 7th graders, in particular, and that other teachers will be moved around to cover, putting stress on them.
 - C. There was no student representative present.
4. **Update(s)/Presentation(s)**
 - A. Ms. Francine Groener, New Marlborough Central School Building Leader, welcomed the School Committee and audience to the school. She explained that NMC is a PreK-4 school, with multi-grade classes. She pointed out the unique aspects of the school, including the multi-grade setting, with project-based learning. She said that there is also a school garden, which has evolved to a community garden. Additionally, students have access to the Joffey Nature Trail and other hiking trails, ukulele lessons, and many other programs. Following a question and answer session, Ms. Silvers thanked Ms. Groener for her presentation.

- B. Ms. Jessica Tomich and Ms. Susan Tomich explained the upgraded fitness center at Mt. Everett. They offered a public thank you to the School Committee for their support in getting it up and running. They said that their ultimate goal is to have it be open until 7:00 p.m. each day, but for now, it is open until 4:00 p.m. They then showed a shortened video of an instructional tape that will go on the website with a sign-off that to attest that a person has watched it. The sign-off sheet would then be turned in, prior to use of the fitness center. The instructional video was put together by Mr. Siket's Digital Video Class, with Vincent Burt as the lead producer. Following a question/answer session, Ms. Silvers thanked them for their presentation.

5. **Business:**

A. Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent Hastings report included the following

- A special thank you to the School Committee members for their support and for their work on getting the FY'15 budget passed;
- Plans to celebrate Teacher Appreciation week;
- Announcement that Jo-ellen Height was named Berkshire County Early Childhood Teacher of the Year at MCLA. Her speech is on the District's website.
- MA Secretary of Education Matt Malone will visit the District on May 21.
- Mt. Everett students performed selections from *Grease!* At the Colonial Theater recently.
- Community outreach events include the offering of free tickets to seniors and veterans for *Stork Club*. Also, the culinary arts students will cater a luncheon at the New Marlborough Council on Aging, and the Madrigals will perform. A Sheffield Senior luncheon was held in the Culinary Arts Classroom recently, rather than at the Senior Center, due to water problems there.
- The annual Agricultural Fair will take place on June 13, to coincide with the elementary Unity Day.
- Alexander Ginzburg, of New Marlborough, who has vast experience in the financial field, spent the past week teaching the honors economics class how to invest and about diversification. Mr. Ginzburg has worked with Mr. Farmer to learn about effective teaching.
- Black Thumb Farm has offered to donate approximately \$10,000 for a batting cage. The addition of this item will be proposed to the Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee and then brought to the full Committee for approval.
- Mt. Everett Science Teacher Steve Antil will be a presenter at the upcoming Berkshire Community College Environmental Summit.
- Plans are underway to launch "the biography project" on May 21. This project will add a component to the bios of the staff on the District's web page. When a staff member's picture is clicked on, the individual's interest/passion will be revealed.
- Tom Nadolny explained events planned for Unity Day on June 13.
- Kari Giordano and her students have published a book entitled *Benny Everett's First Day* for children entering kindergarten. Mr. Hastings passed around a copy and thanked Ms. Silvers and Mr. Valentini for the idea which they brought up approximately a year ago. Ms. Silvers noted that the students had put much thought into the work and were very careful about what went into it. Both she and Mr. Valentini felt that the work should be copyrighted. Ms. Silvers said that author Hester Vellmans had offered to work with the children. Mr. Nadolny said he would follow up with Ms. Giordano to see that a copyright page is added.
- Mr. Hastings explained a proposal for an elementary summer program. He said that it is an extension to the Appalachian Trail Program, and will run 4 days per week, with transportation provided.
- Black Thumb Farm will donate \$2,500 to help with SBRSD on Parade.
- Several students attended a construction career day on April 30.

- 36 of 49 graduates plan to further their education, and three will enter the military. Twenty-four students will take forty-three AP exams this year. (In contrast, last year, twelve students took fifteen AP exams.)
 - There are fourteen students who wish to sign up for VHS classes next year.
 - Special Olympics took place the previous day.
 - Nine students wished to attend Boys and Girls State programs this year, and the American Legion will provide the money to fund all nine.
 - Four students have been interviewed to participate in the Business Chamber of Commerce.
 - Mt. Everett will host a robotics scrimmage next year.
 - A 10-person committee has been formed for the principal search.
 - During April vacation, representatives of the School Building Authority came to the District to look at the boilers and roof. They explained that the accelerated process would mean that if the projects were approved, funding would be provided at the beginning of FY'16.
 - Ms. Fields informed the Committee that the annual cleanup day would be held at New Marlborough Central on May 10.
 - Ms. Sahn informed the Committee that drawings of invasive species by students in Ms. Garcia's class had been made into note cards and postcards and were available for sale.
 - Mr. Batacchi suggested that Mr. Turner contact Adams-Cheshire RSD to find out about their solar array. Mr. Turner agreed to do so, and he said that he is also working with a solar developer who is working on a project in Sheffield. He added that our District currently enjoys the lowest power rate in the county.
- B. Approval of School Choice Openings for 2014-15 School Year (per C 76, s 12B): Mr. Sears moved to approve the plan for the School Choice Program, as presented. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion. In the discussion that followed, Committee members questioned how the numbers were arrived at, and they voiced opposition to the report, in general. A vote was called, and the motion was defeated, 8-0.

Mr. Valentini then moved that the School Committee of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District recommend and report to Mr. Hatch that the District will participate in the School Choice Program for the 2014-15 school year. Ms. Sanzone seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously. Superintendent Hastings will convey the vote to Mr. Hatch.

C. Subcommittee/Representative Reports

1) Cooperation Subcommittee: Mr. Sears stated that Mr. Stewart has volunteered to be the third person on this subcommittee. Ms. Rundle and Mr. Batacchi both expressed an interest in also joining the subcommittee, and it was generally agreed that both would be a part of it and attend meetings when they are available. Mr. Hastings reported that there is a meeting scheduled for area superintendents on May 20 at 7:30 a.m.

2) Ad Hoc Advisory Subcommittee: Ms. Silvers updated the Committee on the progress of the Advisory Subcommittee. She said that the final meeting of that group will take place in conjunction with an Executive Evaluation Subcommittee meeting. She issued a last request for the names of community people who may be interested in serving on the Advisory Committee.

- D. Memorandum of Agreement / Furlough Day: Mr. Hastings reported that the Memorandum of Understanding is still with the attorneys, thus no action could be taken. He said that once agreed, plans included the addition of a new technology position (the current one would be eliminated), an education support professional position to work both in the libraries and in elementary classrooms, and a classroom education support professional which would most likely be a position in the kindergarten class.

- E. Financial Updates: Mr. Turner acknowledged the work of Ms. Kerry Burke and Ms. Ingrid Borwick on the budget document distributed at the town meetings. He said that four of the five towns have met and have all voted the budget, thus the FY'15 budget is approved.

Mr. Turner also reported that the District has applied for a Sapphire Grant through the MA Department of Energy Resources to investigate the use of geothermal energy for heating the Sheffield campus. He noted that the average oil consumption at the Sheffield campus is generally 45,000 gallons; however, due to the long winter, 65,000 gallons had been used this year.

Mr. Valentini stated that he would be calling a meeting of the Buildings, Grounds & Transportation Subcommittee soon in order to talk about borrowing for the air conditioning of the second floor of Mt. Everett. He also requested that the Transportation Subcommittee receive the actual bus routes and students assigned so they can begin to study those.

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

- A. Ms. Silvers broached the topic of the School Committee giving out a monetary award to a senior who is planning on continuing his/her education and who has gone above and beyond in service to the community. Other members offered their thoughts on the subject. No consensus was reached.
- B. At Mr. Valentini's request, Mr. Turner agreed to look into whether there were discontinued textbooks available to send to a school in Liberia.
- C. There were no communications from the audience.

On a motion by Ms. Sparhawk, seconded by Mr. Batacchi, the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,475*
- *Minutes of Meeting #1,474, Regular and Executive Sessions*
- *Draft of Letter to Roger Hatch, Office of School finance, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*