

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

Absent: Ms. Fields; Mr. Batacchi, Mr. Valentini

Administration: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Mr. Devoti, Mr. Simon

Others: Ms. Tara White, Chair, and Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem and Ms. Michele Shallaby, Members, New Marlborough Select Board; Ms. Christine Martin; Ms. Linda Higgins

Press: CTSB TV; Ms. Julie Ruth, Berkshire Record

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 Meeting #1,477. It was so voted, unanimously.
3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda**
 - A. There were no student representatives in attendance.
 - B. There were no communications from the audience.
4. **Updates/Presentations:**
 - A. School Choice (requested by Tara White, Chair, New Marlborough Select Board): Ms. White explained that the New Marlborough Select Board had questions regarding the school choice program, in general. Some of the questions they wished to have answered included whether there is a District policy regarding school choice and when it had last been reviewed; whether changes were anticipated; and if the acceptance of choice students had created additional classes. Mr. Hastings distributed a preliminary listing of the number of choice students, by grade, for 2014-15. He noted that although no additional class sections had been added for the upcoming year, in one or two grades, there were enough choice students to constitute a full class. Mr. Hastings also explained that the number of vacancies available is determined by the principals and announced each spring. He added that once a student is accepted, (s)he becomes the District's student until graduation. Mr. Sears pointed out that although the School Committee could restrict the number of students choosing into the District, they cannot discriminate or accept students based on academic performance. It was noted that there has been no additional hiring of staff due to school choice students.

Regarding the school choice policy, Mr. Flynn explained that the Policy Subcommittee meets on a monthly basis and reviews a section of the Policy Manual. He said that all policies were reviewed and accepted by the School Committee in September of 2012.

Ms. Sahn said that roughly 1/7 of the District's population is made up of school choice students. She said that if those students were not part of the District, it would greatly reduce the programs that the District would be able to offer to students. She noted that athletics, in particular, would be affected.

Mr. Flynn said that if the District should choose not to participate in the school choice program, it would stop students from choosing in, but it would not prevent District residents from choosing out. He said that it would be the hope of the District to have a balance of choice in students and choice outs. He noted that the District loses \$5,000 for every choice out student.

Ms. White agreed to address any further questions to the Superintendent.

- B. Mt. Everett Course Enrollments, 2014-15: Mr. Devoti distributed a listing of teachers, the courses each will teach in 2014-15, and the number of students currently signed up for each course. He said that Mt. Everett has 29.4 regular education teachers teaching 184 courses in grades 7-12. He said that there are eleven sections which have five students or less enrolled. Each of those is a very specialized course, including Voice and Guitar, 3D Design, Robotics, and Film. There are 109 courses with between 5 and 14 students enrolled, and 9 courses with more than 25 students enrolled. There have not been any additions due to school choice students. Mr. Devoti further explained that Mr. Berstein is picking up independent study students during his prep time, and that Ms. Gingras's classes are actually students taking courses on line through Berkshire Community College or Springfield Technical Community college. Mr. Flynn complemented Mr. Devoti and his staff for using the small size of the school as an advantage. He thanked Mr. Devoti and the Mt. Everett staff for providing the students with a great education.

5. **Business:**

- A. Superintendent's Report: Regarding the reinstatement of the FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools) program, Superintendent Hastings reported that there is currently \$13,000 still in the budget (for the partial funding of a Spanish teaching position) that could be used for that program, and that the money saved by not hiring a vice principal for July and August could also be used, for a total of \$20,000 available. He asked the Committee to let him know whether they wished him to use those funds to hire a .4 elementary Spanish teacher. The Committee then discussed the pros and cons of keeping the Spanish program in grades 1 and 2. In response to a question from Mr. Flynn, Mr. Hastings explained that he believed that students would gain some fluency by starting in Grade 1, but he did not believe there would be a measurable difference between kids starting in grade 3 and those starting in grade 1 by the time they reached high school. Mr. Hastings said that he had given the matter a great deal of thought prior to making the recommendation; however, he noted that he had only been able to locate studies regarding students beginning to study languages in grade 5 vs. those starting in grade 9.

Following discussion, Mr. Sears moved to take the Superintendent's approach (i.e., use the \$13,000 currently in the budget for Spanish, plus the funds budgeted for vice principal for July and August) to fund the hiring of a .4 Spanish teacher in order to maintain the elementary Spanish program as it has been. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion. Additional discussion took place, including a statement by Ms. Martin that exposure, practice, pronunciation, and brain learning that happens at the earlier ages turns off after a certain age. She said that she continues to advocate for starting at grade 1. The motion was then approved, 6-1 (Mr. Flynn voted against the motion.)

Mr. Stewart then moved to Item 5D.

- D. Approval of Student/Parent Handbooks: Following a brief discussion and the noting of areas in need of editing, Mr. Flynn moved to approve the Mt. Everett parent/Student handbook and the Elementary Parent/Student Handbook for 2014-15. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

- F. Financial Updates / Transfers - Award of bid to Charles Cardillo Plumbing, Heating, HVAC, Inc. for air conditioning of the second floor of Mt. Everett Regional School: Ms. Silvers moved to approve the bid of Charles Cardillo Plumbing, Heating, and HVAC, Inc. Mr. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.
- C. Request for Waivers for Students Born Beyond March 1, 2010 to Attend Kindergarten in 2014-15: Mr. Hastings explained that there are four prospective students born after March 1, 2010 whose parents have requested their admission into the kindergarten program in the fall. He said that two were born on March 2, and that twins, who are registered to attend school in Monterey, were born on March 15. He said that the previous elementary principal had approved their attendance, as there was no formal procedure in place at that time. Mr. Hastings said that he was asking the Committee if they would waive their policy and allow the four students to be enrolled. He presented a procedure to be followed for the handling of future requests.

Mr. Flynn noted that the request would require a 2/3 vote to waive the policy and would need to be voted again at the August meeting.

Following discussion, Mr. Flynn moved to waive the policy regarding entrance age for the four students known to the superintendent for the 2014-15 school year. Ms. Rundle seconded the motion. The vote:

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| Mr. Flynn | yes | Ms. Silver | yes | Mr. Sears | yes |
| Ms. Rundle | yes | Ms. Sahn | yes | Ms. Sparhawk | yes |

- A. Superintendent's Report (continued): Mr. Hastings introduced Mt. Thomas Simon, Interim Elementary Principal. Mr. Simon stated that he is happy to be here and is looking forward to meeting with community members, parents, students and School Committee members to get a better sense of the "big picture" of the District. He invited them to stop by and share their thoughts with him at any time.

Mr. Hastings reported that the assistant principal position will be posted soon. Ms. Elaine Hunter, teacher at the South Egremont School, has resigned. Ms. Christina Carlson, of Sheffield, has been hired to teach 4th grade in 2014-15.

Report on meetings with member town Select Boards re: the future of the District's community schools, July 8 and July 10, 2014: Mr. Hastings reported that he had met with the Monterey Board of Selectmen on July 8 and with four of the five member town Select Boards on July 10. He said that the tone of both meetings was excellent. He said that everyone did not agree, but there was no nastiness. Meetings with each of the other towns will be scheduled in the near future.

Mr. Hastings reported that the District has signed contracts for a .6 FTE physical therapist (\$38,669.96) and a .8 FTE occupational therapist assistant (\$50,097.96) with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.

- C. School Committee 2014-15 Meeting Schedule: The Committee agreed to meet on August 28, 2014 and to consider the schedule for 2014-15 at that time.
- E. Subcommittee/Representative Reports:
 - 1) Cooperation Subcommittee – Mr. Sears presented the "SBRSD Committee of Cooperation Charge" and requested that it be adopted as the formal charge of the subcommittee in order to give the subcommittee authorization to reach out to other school committees. Mr. Sears then moved that the School Committee adopt the SBRSD Committee of Cooperation Charge as the formal charge of the subcommittee. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

2) Ad Hoc Advisory Board: Ms. Silvers reported that the group reviewed the iteration of outreach material and will have a final version to be approved on August 28. She said that they have set an initial gathering off campus at Ms. Miller's home on October 16. People who have expressed or have been solicited to express support of them mission of the District will be invited.

3) Evaluation Subcommittee – Mr. Flynn reported that he has received evaluations from all members. He said he is returning them, as some comments may not have been received. He asked that if they have additional comments to send, please send them in Word. Once received, the chair will compile individual ratings and drafts and write a summative evaluation report to present to the superintendent and school committee in advance of a public meeting. He noted that the Committee cannot rate the superintendent as exemplary at this time, as he is new. Mr. Flynn will compile all of the information and give it to Chairman Stewart to write the summative evaluation.

4) Policy – the Committee observed the first reading of a transportation policy. Mr. Flynn explained that the purpose of the policy is to be sure young children are left off in a safe environment.

G. Letter from Melissa and James Byrne Re: SBCCP: The Committee acknowledged a letter from Mr. & Mrs. Byrne regarding a problem with the Southern Berkshire Child Care Program. Although the SBCCP is not a part of the District, the Committee agreed that the letter should not be ignored. It was agreed that Mr. Hastings will write a simple letter acknowledging their concerns, but stating that such decisions are not under the control of the School Committee or the Superintendent. It was also agreed that all District material should be reviewed to be sure that it is clear that the SBCCP is a separate organization.

On a motion by Mr. Flynn, seconded by Ms. Silvers, the meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Documents presented for this meeting:

- *Agenda, Meeting #1,478*
- *Minutes, Meeting #1, 477*
- *Minutes, July 8, 2014 Superintendent's Meeting, Focus: Monterey*
- *Minutes, July 10, 2014 Superintendent's Meeting with Member Town Select Boards*
- *Administrative Procedures for Early Childhood Programs of Children Not Meeting the Age Requirements of the District Policy*
- *"SBRSD Committee of Cooperation Charge"*
- *Transportation Policy – DRAFT*
- *Letter from James Byrne III and Melissa Byrne Re: SBCCP*
- *24 July 2014 Superintendent's Report*
- *2014-2015 Staff Enrollment Report for Mt. Everett Regional School*