

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
August 28, 2014
Meeting #1,479

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

Absent: Ms. Fields; Mr. Flynn

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

Others: Mr. Pierre Leger, Ms. Susana Mapstone, Ms. Christina Carlson, Ms. Linda Higgins

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

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and welcomed all to another school year.
2. **Approval of Minutes:**
Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to approve the minutes of Meeting #1,478. It was so voted. (Mr. Batacchi abstained.)
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.
 - C. Mr. Valentini moved to amend the agenda to include discussion regarding receipt of additional transportation funds, which the District will receive in January, 2015. He noted that it was recommended by the MA Association of Regional Schools (MARS) that each regional district establish a reimbursement fund to house those additional funds and that specific legislation had been passed in order to allow the districts to do so. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion to amend the agenda. It was so voted. The Committee agreed to discuss the item under the Business Administrator's report.
5. **Business:**
 - A. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Hastings reported that the District had enjoyed a wonderful opening of schools earlier in the day. He introduced Erika Ide (1.0 fte) and Susana Mapstone (.4 FTE), Elementary Spanish Teachers, and Christina Carlson, Grade 4 teacher. Mr. Hastings also updated the Committee on the various internal transfers that had taken place and positions that are yet to be filled.

Mr. Hastings also reported the following:
 - Ms. Silvers and Ms. Sahn manned a table providing information about the District at the recent Summer Fest, which was held in Great Barrington.
 - The meeting with the Sheffield Select Board to discuss the community schools was a positive one. Those present suggested that a facilitator be sought to help the towns communicate about the community schools issues. Mr. Hastings said that he had contacted the MA Municipal Association, and they had recommended a facilitator who was willing to do the work at a fee of \$1,000 per meeting. Mr. Hastings will also contact Representative

Pignatelli's office to see if he might have a suggestion. He noted that the meeting with the Sheffield board was not attended by the Monterey or Egremont Select Boards.

- District enrollment is up by two students, as of earlier in the day.
- The high school journalism class has 28 students. He said that the Eagle provides those students with free copies of their newspaper daily. There are two journalists from Pakistan visiting the Eagle this year, and they will come to Mt. Everett to talk with the students during the fall semester.
- The Model UN Students will go to the United Nations on September 19.
- The SWAG group will travel to Quincy to help clean up the water front later in September. They have also "adopted" a portion of Route 7.
- The lunch schedule has been changed to allow all high school students to eat at the same time. Adjustments have been made to be sure that the middle/high school students will not intermingle with the elementary children. Elementary parents have been notified of the changes.

B. Request for Waivers for Students Born Beyond March 1, 2010 to Attend Kindergarten in 2014-15/Vote to Confirm Waiving of Provisions of Policy JEB, Entrance Age: Ms. Sparhawk moved to waive the provisions of Policy JEB, Entrance Age, to allow four students to attend kindergarten in 2014-15. Mr. Batacchi seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

C. Admission of Pre-School Out-of-District Students (2 students): Director of Student Services Sandra Hubbard explained that traditionally the District has taken pre-school children from out of the District if space was available, and had charged a higher fee than that charged to in-district students. When the District removed the charge for in-district pre-k students, they did not make provisions for accepting out-of-district students into the program. Two students have now applied to come into the PreK program at New Marlborough Central School.

Ms. Hubbard said that if the two out-of-district students enroll at New Marlborough Central School, there would still be two spaces available in their morning session. there. Mr. Hastings added that the students would be considered tuition students, and there would be an agreement that they could be bumped in order to make room for District students, if need be.

Discussion took place. It was generally agreed that the administration will create an agreement with the parents of the two children stating that if space were to be needed at New Marlborough Central School for in-District students, their children would either need to move into the Undermountain program or leave the District. Additionally, the parents would be welcome to apply for admission under school choice for 2015-16, but there would be no guarantee that space would be available at New Marlborough Central School.

The Committee also stipulated that any future requests for admission of out-of-District preschool students are to be brought before the School Committee, to be considered on a case by case basis.

Mr. Valentini moved to accept the students, subject to available space, into their desired program for the 2014-15 school year, at no charge. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion.

Mr. Stewart again clarified that there is nothing in policy and no promises made that any out-of-district pre-school students would be accepted without paying tuition. The School Committee would make any such decisions.

Ms. Silvers moved to accept the two students for the academic year beginning September, 2014 and ending in June, 2015 into the pre-kindergarten program at New Marlborough Central School without a charge of tuition, and based upon availability. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion.

Mr. Sears expressed concern that to accept the students without a fee might set a precedent and may attract people who would put students into the program for daycare purposes.

Mr. Valentini said that this is a unique situation, and it is the right of the School Committee to waive or set tuition.

Ms. Hubbard pointed out that the PreK program is for ½ day only, and that generally doesn't fit into a daycare type of situation.

It was noted that Chapter 70 now covers 4 year old students.

Mr. Valentini moved to call the question. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

The motion was then also approved, unanimously.

- E. Request for Approval of Overnight Field Trip to China, October 10-16, 2014: Mr. Devoti explained that Ms. Karen Pogoda had presented the school with an opportunity to send two students to China to make a presentation on a local waterway. The students would be hosted by a Chinese school. Mr. Devoti said that Ms. Pogoda previously worked at the Pine Plains, NY school, where she had led 17 trips to China prior to her retirement. Mr. Devoti said that the cost will be approximately \$1,500 for each student and staff member. They will work to raise funds to offset the costs. Ms. Casey and Ms. Graham will also chaperone the trip. All costs of lodging and meals will be provided by the host school in China.

Kosta Cassivant explained that their project will be on the Housatonic River and the cleanup of the PCBs.

Following additional discussion, Ms. Silvers moved to approve the trip to China for October of 2014 for two students from Mt. Everett, two teachers from Mt. Everett, and Karen Pogoda to attend a symposium on water conservation. Mr. Sears seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

Request for Approval of Overnight Field Trip to Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, January 16 to 19, 2015: Mr. Pierre Leger explained a request for a trip to Quebec City for the French classes. He said that he hopes that eighteen to twenty-four students will sign up. Mr. Valentini stated that the Committee would only be able to grant preliminary approval, as the names of students and chaperones would be needed prior to final approval. Mr. Valentini then moved to grant preliminary approval to the Quebec trip, as requested. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

Ms. Silvers left the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

- D. School Committee Meeting Calendar for 2014-15: Ms. Sparhawk moved to approve the projected schedule of the suggested dates. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion. It was so voted, unanimously. (Dates: September 18, October 9 and 30; November 20; December 18; January 8; January 29; February 19; March 12; April 2; April 23; May 21; June 11. Changes will be made, as necessary.)
- F. Approval of Employee Handbook, 2014-15: Mr. Sears moved to approve the 2014-15 Staff Handbook, as submitted. Mr. Batacchi seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

G. Subcommittee/Representative Reports:

- Cooperation Subcommittee: Mr. Sears explained a memorandum of understanding proposed to be signed by the school committee chairs and superintendents of Berkshire Hills Regional School District, Farmington River Regional School District, Lee Public Schools, Lenox Public Schools, Richmond Consolidated School, and Southern Berkshire Regional School District, agreeing to work in collaboration with each other as part of the newly formed Southern Berkshire Shared Services Project (SBSSP). Mr. Sears said that the MOA is the result of on-going work led by Representative Pignatelli and Senator Downing in an effort to figure out what the schools can do to share services in an era of declining enrollments. He said that the MOA represents no commitment, but defines what to look at. The Cooperation Subcommittee recommended approval of the MOA. Ms. Sparhawk moved to accept the Memorandum of Understanding and ask the Chair and the Superintendent to sign it on behalf of the SBR School Committee. Mr. Sears seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.
- Policy Subcommittee: Ms. Sparhawk moved to accept the Transportation Policy, as presented. Mr. Sears seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

H. Financial Updates

- Mr. Valentini presented and explained a handout regarding the additional anticipated transportation funds for FY' 15. He explained that the state legislature has passed legislation which allows regional school districts to create a regional transportation fund in which they can place the unbudgeted additional transportation money in order to give all an additional year to integrate the funds into their finances. Mr. Valentini then moved that per Section 16C of Chapter 71 of the MGL, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, to establish a transportation reimbursement fund. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion. Mr. Turner explained that without the fund, the additional money would automatically go into E&D and would not be able to be used until the following year. He said that establishing the fund would allow the money to be used in planning next year's budget, without having to wait until E&D is certified. Following a brief discussion, the motion was approved, unanimously.
- Mr. Turner updated the Committee on progress with the MA School Building Authority projects. He said that the engineer and project manager have been assigned by the MSBA, and they have come to the building to look things over. They will take samples of the insulation from the roof. The project will likely be a greater project than anticipated. He said that the District is looking at a 30 year roof, and boilers that will last, as well.

Mr. Turner also updated the Committee on other projects completed over the summer.

He reported on the use of the student activity buses, and he said that the buses have been driven 6,000+ miles over the past 6 months.

6. Communications from the Public/Requests for Future Agenda Items

- A. There were no communications from the public.
- B. Mr. Turner commented on MA Secretary of Education Matthew Malone's visit the previous day. He said that he had been a great inspiration for teachers.
- C. In response to questions from Ms. Sahn re: after school transportation, Mr. Turner said that he has been working with the Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority to see if they will come to Sheffield to transport older children to Great Barrington after school. He said that he had not yet had

any requests to transport children from New Marlborough Central to the Sheffield campus after school. Mr. Valentini added that the subject had been discussed in the Transportation Subcommittee, and that he believes it is necessary to have the bus that comes in from New Marlborough Central in the afternoon to make a stop at the Sheffield campus. He asked Mr. Turner to call John B. Ormsbee, Inc. to ask what it would take to make that happen.

- D. Mr. Sears noted that for a future agenda item, the Committee should discuss recent legislation regarding the hiring of a school resource officer and legislation that mandates schools to provide mental health support. Mr. Stewart asked that Committee members read the recent mailings from the MA Association of School Committees.

On a motion by Ms. Sparhawk, seconded by Ms. Sahn, the meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Documents presented for this meeting:

- *Agenda, Meeting #1, 479*
- *Minutes, Meeting #1, 478*
- *Transportation Policy – DRAFT*
- *Memorandum of Agreement, Southern Berkshire Shared Services Project*
- *Memo from Stephen Hemman, Executive Director, MA Association of Regional Schools (MARS) Re: Regional Transportation Fund*
- *2014-15 Strategy*
- *SBRSD Enrollment: 28 August 2014*
- *Sheffield Campus Lunch Changes*
- *Students Who Achieve Goodness 2014-16 Initiative*
- *Request for Overnight Field Trip to Quebec City, Quebec*
- *Itinerary for China Trip*
- *2014-15 Staff Handbook - DRAFT*