

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
January 8, 2014
Meeting #1,485

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

Absent: Mr. Flynn

Administrators: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Mr. Simon

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

Student Representative:

Others: Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:**
Ms. Silvers moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to approve the minutes of Meeting 1,484, as presented. It was so voted, unanimously.
3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda**
 - A. Student Representative Report: There was no student representative report.
 - B. There were no communications from the audience.
 - C. Mr. Sears moved to amend the agenda to take up 5C-2, Subcommittee Report. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion, and it was so voted.
5. **Business**
 - C1. Finance Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini (quickly) reported that the subcommittee had met earlier in the evening and had received a preliminary presentation of the FY'16 budget.
 - C2. Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini reported that subcommittee had held a broad informational meeting earlier in the week that was well attended by town officials from every community. He said that the project manager and an expert in biomass had also been in attendance, and that all of the questions regarding the need for the project and the scope of the project had been answered, seemingly to the satisfaction of all in attendance. He said that all seemed to also be in agreement that the decisions made to date were solid.

Mr. Valentini stated that per MA law, it is the School Committee that must vote to borrow the money for the project. He said that such a vote would signal that the School Committee agrees that the project is necessary; the scope, as defined by the architect and engineers is appropriate; and that they agree with the choices made. Mr. Turner added that the Committee would also be agreeing to cooperate with the MA School Building Authority and that the number voted out is \$7,741,000.

Mr. Valentini explained that it is necessary for the School Committee to approve the entire amount of the project, but what they borrow will be the actual cost, less the funds received from the MSBA and the SAPHIRE grant.

Mr. Valentini then moved: That the **Southern Berkshire Regional School District (“SBRSD”)** hereby appropriates the amount of **\$7,741,000.00** for the purpose of paying costs of the **SBRSD Roof/Boiler Project at Mt. Everett/Undermountain School, 491 Berkshire School Road, Sheffield, MA 01257 consisting of replacing the entire roof and three boilers**, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto (the “Project”), which proposed repair project would materially extend the useful life of the school and preserve an asset that otherwise is capable of supporting the required educational program, and for which the District may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”), said amount to be expended at the direction of **SBRSD School Building Committee**. To meet this appropriation the District is authorized to borrow said amount, under and pursuant to Chapter 71, Section 16(d), of the General Laws and the District Agreement, as amended, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The District acknowledges that the MSBA’s grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need as determined by the MSBA, and any Project costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District; provided further that any grant that the District may receive from the MSBA shall not exceed the lesser of (1) **thirty-nine and twenty-one one hundredths percent (39.21%)** of eligible, approved Project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA, and that the amount of borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the District and the MSBA and any additional grant funding received for this project by the District.

FURTHER MOVED: That within **seven (7)** days from the date on which this vote is adopted the Secretary be and hereby is instructed to notify the Board of Selectmen of each of the member towns of this District as to the amount and general purposes of the debt herein authorized, as required by the District Agreement and by Chapter 71, Section 16(d), of the General Laws.

Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion.

Mr. Sears then moved to amend the motion so that in every instance where it says “Chapter 71, Section 16(d)”, it instead says “Chapter 71, Section 16(n).” Ms. Lartigue seconded the motion. Mr. Sears distributed copies of both sections of the law.

Ms. Rundle arrived at 6:25 p.m.

Mr. Sears explained that he was suggesting using Section 16(n), rather than (d), because if the vote goes before a town meeting, the number of voters who come out could be severely limited due to a number of circumstances, especially bad weather, this time of year. He said that this process would let the School Committee go straight to the voters by way of town elections. He added that the town meetings cost the towns additional money, plus some towns would want to request a debt exclusion which would also require a special election. If the Committee voted to use Section (n) instead, the towns would be spared the cost of special meetings, and the District would need to pick up the cost of the special elections. It was also noted that by handling the vote via elections, absentee voting would be allowed.

Mr. Sears then distributed a copy of Chapter 71, Section 14D, “Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the regional district school may, by vote of two-thirds of all its members, require that the approval of any particular authorized issue of indebtedness shall be by the registered voters of the

member towns of the district pursuant to the provisions of clause (n) of section sixteen, rather than pursuant to the provisions of clause (d) of said section sixteen.”

Members discussed the cost to the District. It was noted that if the Committee elected to use Section 16(d), towns would have up to 60 days to schedule a town meeting. It was agreed that the process could cost the District up to \$10,000, but it was believed that the funds could come from any available funds.

Members expressed a concern about the need to be sure the citizens were educated about the project prior to the vote. It was noted that the Committee would be responsible for getting information out to the voters.

In further discussion, it was noted that historically, elections draw more people than town meetings. It was also noted that voting by way of election would mean that the election would have to take place in all towns on the same day, and the results would tallied as a majority of all voters.

A vote was then called on the amendment to the motion, and it was approved, unanimously.

Chairman Stewart then took a roll call vote on the amended motion. The vote:

Ms. Silvers	yes	Ms. Rundle	yes	Ms. Sahn	yes
Mr. Sears	yes	Mr. Valentini	yes	Mr. Batacchi	yes
Ms. Lartigue	yes	Ms. Sparhawk	yes	Mr. Stewart	yes

Ms. Sparhawk left the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Ms. Silvers then moved that the term “The Project” is the complete document, as submitted to the MA School Building Authority and approved to this point. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

Ms. Sahn moved that the “School Building Committee” consist of the Superintendent, the Business Manager, the Chair of the Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee, the Grants Coordinator, and the Director of Buildings & Grounds. Ms. Lartigue seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

5A. Superintendent’s Report: Superintendent Hastings reported the following:

- Representatives from Dollar General had presented each of the principals with a box with a bow on it. They related the story of how their company’s founder in the 1930’s had been functionally illiterate. Therefore, in his remembrance, they asked that their gifts be put toward improving literacy in the District. They presented each of the Sheffield schools a check for \$25,000 toward that end. Superintendent Hastings said that there are already some ideas about different things they can do with the money. Ms. Silvers added that all three of the representatives who came to present the gifts had expressed a great interest in the community and a promise that they wished to work with our students. She said that she felt they could be a wonderful example of a good corporate neighbor coming into the community.
- The select board chairs have chosen Nat Yohalem to represent them on the Negotiations Subcommittee, and Rhonda LaBombard as back-up.
- The Child Care youngsters visit the Sheffield Senior Center each week.
- Ms. Burke arranged a course in Stress Reduction and Mindfulness in Education for staff members, beginning last September. Key elements feed very well into the PBIS program.
- All winter sports teams have had a good start to the season.
- The Western Mass Concert will take place on January 17. Eli Gold and Charles Kerzner are in the chorus, and Max Lowenstein will take part in the band.
- The grades 3-4 winter choir concert will take place on January 15.

- Practice has begun for “*Footloose*”.
- Students in grades 7, 8 and 10 will take a practice MCAS test.
- The annual Poetry Out Loud contest has begun.

5B. Approval of Overnight Field Trips

- Mr. Sears moved to waive the ratio of chaperones to students for the Los Angeles trip for the band and chorus, April 16-20. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion, and it was so voted.
- Mr. Sears moved to send back the trip to Baltimore, MD for the Economics Class and ask Mr. Farmer to fill out the form correctly and obtain a third (female) chaperone. Mr. Batacchi seconded the motion, and it was so voted.
- Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Silvers, to approve the Model UN trip to Boston. It was so voted.

5C. 2b. Mr. Valentini reported that the request to approve a short-term borrowing has been dropped, as the timing made it irrelevant.

5C.3. Negotiations Subcommittee: Following discussion, it was agreed to organize the Subcommittee at its first meeting. Attempts will be made to schedule negotiations by unit to lessen the burden on subcommittee members.

D. Financial Updates/Transfers: There were no financial updates or transfer requests.

E. There were no communications from the public.

On a motion by Ms. Silvers, seconded by Mr. Valentini, the meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,485*
- *Minutes of School Committee Meeting #1,484*
- *Overnight Field Trip Requests:*
 - *for the Mt. Everett Band and Chorus to Los Angeles, CA, April 16-20, 2015*
 - *for the 10th grade to Baltimore/Washington, D.C., March 4-6, 2015*
 - *for the senior members of the Mt. Everett Model UN to Boston University, February 6-8, 2015*
- *Southern Berkshire Regional School District Form of School Committee Vote – MSBA Accelerated Repair Program*
- *Copy of MGL Chapter 71, Section 14(d); Section 16(d); Section 16(n)*