

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
July 23, 2015
Meeting #1,495

School Committee: Mr. Stewart, Ms. Silvers, Mr. Valentini, Ms. Lartigue, Mr. Flynn, Ms. Sparhawk, Mr. Sears

Absent: Ms. Sahn, Mr. Batacchi, Ms. Rundle

Administrators: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Ms. Burgess, Ms. LaBlanc

Press: CTSB Television; Ms. Julie Ruth, Berkshire Record; Mr. Derek Gentile (Berkshire Eagle)

Student Representative:

Others: Ms. Nadine Hawver, Chair, Sheffield Select Board; Ms. Karen Chamberland; Ms. Maryellen Brown; Mr. Scott Jenssen, Mr. Steve Weisz, and Mr. Kenneth Basler, Monterey Select Board members; Ms. Karen Ketchen; Ms. Zoe Nelson; Ms. Ingrid Borwick

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Mr. Sears moved to approve the minutes of School Committee meeting #1,494. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.
3. **Communications from the Audience:** There were no communications from the audience. No student representatives were in attendance.
4. **Updates/Presentations:**

A. Development of Process and Parameters to Guide the Creation of a Southern Berkshire Regional School District 5-Year Plan

Mr. Flynn noted that developing a long range plan in school committee meetings would be cumbersome, and Dave Hastings will be asked to create a transition plan as part of this 5-year plan so it makes sense to have the executive evaluation committee develop the 5-year plan.

Ms. Silvers stated that the School Committee first needs to agree that it wants to do long range planning as a school committee.

Mr. Valentini agreed that a smaller group is needed to steer the planning and begin parameters. The small group should be the Executive Evaluation Committee to start with and they can bring in School Committee along the way.

Mr. Sears stated the document created by Jennifer Sahn about the 5-year plan should be used as guidance for the Executive Evaluation Committee.

Mr. Sears moved to have the document used as guidance for the Executive Evaluation Committee. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion and also asked that the Curriculum Director be assigned as facilitator to work with the Executive Evaluation Committee.

Motion approved unanimously.

5. Business:

A. Superintendent's Report: Mr. Hastings reported on the following items:

- Administrators participated in a retreat over the past 3 days and worked on a District Improvement Plan involving new challenges and goals. Administrators will finalize the plan in a month or so.
- Hillary Bashara has been offered the nursing position in Undermountain Elementary. Brianna Ourlette from Rhode Island School of Design will be the art teacher. John Tranfaglia has resigned and is headed to North Hampton. We are talking about shared services with other districts. The District would like to hire someone with experience in cafeteria paperwork.
- A draft of the Staff Manual has been distributed for the School Committee to review. Changes are noted in red. The draft will also be posted on the website for review. Carl Stewart noted that all should be aware of the open meeting law when sending suggestions about handbooks.
- Linda Higgins is retiring; this is prompting some reorganizing in our office. Terri has taken on more and more HR responsibilities throughout the years, so Accounts Payable duties will be transferred to Ingrid.
- Other schools in Massachusetts have introduced Global Education Programs where students are issued a certificate at graduation. This program can include taking an extra language, service projects overseas, research papers, etc. This type of program may be a perfect fit for Mt. Everett.
- The summer school sessions were moved from Undermountain Elementary to Mt. Everett to accommodate the roofing project. There was minimal health risk due to insulation but decided to move the programs to be on the safe side. The programs will return to the elementary building on Monday.
- MakerSpace received a \$10,000.00 SABIC grant for equipment. The MakerSpace program will move into Angela Spitia's room in the fall, and Angela will move to a new room.
- Mr. Turner will provide a more detailed update on the building project, but things are moving along very well.

B. Update Re: Elementary Class Sizes for 2015-16: Elementary Principal Stacey Burgess and Assistant Principal Deanna LeBlanc reported there are a significant amount of students requesting to choice into the District. In order to avoid class sizes becoming too large, the following guide has been developed:

Community Schools

K and EK – largest class size 20 with a cap on school choice at 16, preserving the last 4 spaces for district children to enroll

Grade 1 – largest class size 20 with a cap on school choice at 16

Grades 2, 3, 4 – largest class size 24 with a cap on school choice at 20

Undermountain Elementary

K and EK – largest class size 20 with a cap on school choice at 18

Grade 1 – largest class size 22 with a cap on school choice at 19

Grades 2, 3, 4 – largest class size 24 with a cap on school choice at 22

Grades 5, 6 – Largest class size 25 with a cap on school choice at 22

A brief discussion ensued about whether a cap on choice students is necessary.

C. School Committee Meeting Calendar for 2015-16:

Ms. Silvers made a motion to adopt the proposed School Committee Meeting Schedule for 2015-2016 with one date change, moving January 28th meeting to February 4th. Mr. Sears seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously. (Approved dates: September 17; October 1 and 29; November 18; December 17; January 7; February 4 and 18; March 10 and 31; April 21; May 19; June 9 and 30.)

D. Discussion/Vote Re: Proposed Joint Statement of Monterey Select Board and Southern Berkshire Regional School District Committee Regarding the Monterey School Program, 2015-16:

Mr. Scott Jennsen reported that the Monterey Select Board met with Maria Rundle to draft and reply to Dave Hastings' proposal to suspend the Monterey program for the upcoming school year. The letter is a clarification of the facts surrounding the suspension and not a counter response. The letter is in harmony with what the District is proposing, but provides some clarification. Letter was read.

Mr. Valentini commented that any money contributed for repairs in Monterey will have to be reviewed by the Building, Grounds and Technology Subcommittee and the School Committee.

Ms. Maryellen Brown, Monterey resident and former Business Administrator for the District, suggested that if there is a problem with the structure then an alternative site should be found for this year. She also pointed out that many of the children attending the Monterey School in the past have been from New Marlborough. She urged the District to keep the program open because if it closes now it will not open again.

Ms. Karen Ketchen, resident of Alford, pointed out that it is important to know what the costs are for repairs in Monterey.

Mr. Valentini noted that there is money set aside in the budget for the Monterey School.

Mr. Wiesz reported that the Town of Monterey has authorized \$10,000.00 for repairs.

Berkshire Eagle Reporter Derek Gentile asked what the official enrollment is in Monterey, and Mr. Stewart indicated that officially the enrollment is 0. Mr. Gentile then asked if the member towns need to vote in order to suspend the program in Monterey. Mr. Stewart responded by saying the MA General Laws do not apply because the school is not closing and merely suspending the program for a year.

Mr. Flynn suggested that the School Committee should obtain a legal evaluation of the letter from Monterey prior to voting on the agreement to suspend.

Mr. Valentini stated the letter is not subject to legal interpretation since it is a statement from the Town of Monterey. Furthermore, a school cannot be operated with 0 children. This is not a way to close the Monterey School, but rather a way to save the school.

Mr. Stewart moved to accept the proposal as detailed in the letter from Monterey dated July 21, 2015 with the letter as an exhibit. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion except Mr. Flynn.

E. Financial updates/transfers (Bruce Turner):

- Update Re: Food Service Account current financial status: Mr. Turner reported that DESE was here and will provide more updates as they become available. The Director of Food Service had difficulty with reporting requirements and did not keep up with the reporting during the 2014-15 school year. As a result, government reimbursements were withheld for an entire year. It is expected that most reimbursements will be recovered, except \$10,000.00 from last September. The Food Service Director has resigned. Ms. Marinelli and Mr. Turner will attend food service classes the week of August 3rd which will include details on the reporting requirements.

Mr. Sears noted that this is a good opportunity to look at sharing services. He asked whether Lee could run both of food service operations. He suggested that such a sharing may result in some financial savings.

Mr. Turner said he needs to learn the reporting requirements since the reports are not being submitted, and we need to make sure that doesn't happen again. Mr. Tranfaglia had assured him that he was submitting the reports, but it was not happening. Mr. Turner said that he can do the reporting himself, but would also like the manager to have some nutrition background.

Mr. Flynn noted that all the necessary reports are in the food service computer system so there is no excuse why paperwork was not submitted. There has to be accountability on a daily basis and Mr. Turner needs to demand the reports.

Mr. Valentini sought confirmation that only \$10,000.00 was lost and Mr. Turner confirmed that amount.

Ms. Silvers asked whether there is an appeals process. Mr. Turner stated that there is no appeals process, but he would like to contact senators and congressman to see if they can assist. Ms. Silvers also stated that accountability is needed in food service and better quality food to attract more students.

Mr. Flynn stated SBRSD should not share the position of Food Service Director with another district but rather hire a high quality Food Service Director for SBRSD.

- Proposed contract for audit services with Scanlon & Associates: To be addressed at next School Committee Meeting on August 13th.
- Update Re: Building Project: Bruce distributed a colored diagram showing the areas of the roof that have been completed and those that are in progress. The roof project is on track. New floors were poured in the boiler room. The first boiler will be delivered the first week of September. Pellets have not been ordered and will need to go out to bid.

F. Subcommittee/Representative Reports:

- Policy Subcommittee: Nothing new to report.
- Transportation Subcommittee: Bruce has asked for quotes on the afterschool route. Monterey route will be discontinued.
- Negotiation Subcommittee: Dave reported that the union did not want to push for a side letter and therefore district employees cannot work a second job in the district. This could have been legally accomplished, but the MTA representative did not want to allow it.
- Berkshire County Ad Hoc Committee: These meetings are open, and anyone can participate. The meetings take place every third Saturday from 9:00-12:00 until the end of the year at the middle school in Dalton. The next meeting is Saturday, August 8th.
- Cooperation Subcommittee: Exploring combining Farmington and Southern Berkshire Regional School Districts. Farmington School Committee voted to create an Ad Hoc Committee to meet with a similar committee at SBRSD.

Mr. Sears made the following motion:

“I move the SBRSD School Committee form an ‘Ad Hoc’ Committee for the purpose of engaging with a similar Committee formed by FRRSD, (Farmington River Regional School

District), to investigate all possible forms of shared delivery of educational services including combining both Districts into a single district. As recommended by the SBRSD Committee of Cooperation, this committee will consist of two members from the SBRSD Committee of Cooperation, Dennis Sears and Maria Rundle, and two members to be selected from non-Committee of Cooperation members; one as the third “Ad-Hoc” Committee member and the other as alternate.”

Mondays after 6:00 p.m. are recommended time for Ad Hoc committees to meet. Mr. Sears would like to have Roger Hatch, of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, evaluate the financials for combining the districts.

Motion was seconded by Mr. Valentini. All voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Mr. Flynn moved to adjourn. It was so voted, and the meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,495*
- *Minutes of Meeting #1,494*
- *SBRSD Elementary Students Enrollment Handout Dated July 23, 2015*
- *July 21, 2015 Letter from Monterey Select Board Re: Suspending Operation of Monterey School*
- *Food Service Preliminary Report from Bruce Turner*
- *Scanlon & Associates Audit Engagement Letter Dated July 20, 2015*
- *Roof Project Progress Diagram*
- *SBRSD Long-Range Planning Suggested Action Plan*
- *2015-2016 Proposed School Committee Meeting Schedule*
- *SBRSD FY 2016 Draft Budget Development Calendar*
- *Changes to 2015-2016 Mount Everett Student Handbook*
- *Draft of 2015-2016 Mount Everett Regional School Student/Parent Handbook*
- *Draft of 2015-2016 SBRSD Staff Handbook*