

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
June 12, 2014
Meeting #1,476

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

Absent: Ms. Sahn

Administration: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Ms. Burke

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

Student Representatives: Marina Germaine; Erica Sullivan

Others: Ms. Tara White, Chair, Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem and Ms. Michele Shalaby, Members, New Marlborough Select Board; Mr. Charles Ketchen, Chair, Alford Select Board; Mr. Wayne Burkhart, Chair, and Mr. Scott Jenssen, Member, Monterey Select Board; Ms. Rene Wood and Ms. Nadine Hawver, Members, Sheffield Select Board; Mr. John Arthur Miller, Director, Sheffield Senior Center; Ms. Germaine; Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. **Approval of Minutes:**

Corrections were noted for the minutes of Meeting #1,475 (references to FY'16 budget should read FY'15; Committee member seconding a motion should read "Ms. Sparhawk" not Ms. Sanzone). Also, on page 3, it was requested that the verbiage be changed as follows: Strike "plan to further their education" and replace with "will be attending college or university". Mr. Valentini then moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to approve the minutes, with corrections, as noted. It was so voted, unanimously.

3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda**

- A. Student Representative Marina Germaine gave a rundown of activities and fundraisers held by the student body this past year. The Committee thanked Marina for her report, and they also applauded the efforts of Student Representative Erica Sullivan, who had reported to them during the 2013-14 school year.
- B. Ms. Rene Wood spoke regarding a letter sent by the Sheffield Select Board to the School Committee requesting that the Committee discuss the closure of the Monterey School. She stated that although the subject was brought up a couple of years ago, it was brought forward by a superintendent who was not supported, and the discussion at that time was whether to close all of the community schools, rather than just one. She also said that voters had not had a chance to weigh in on the issue in the privacy of the voting booth. Additionally, Ms. Wood stated that discussions with the Buildings, Grounds & Transportation Subcommittee last year had become contentious. She suggested that the subject should be discussed among the Select Boards and the School Committee during the summer months.

Mr. Wayne Burkhart, Chairman of the Monterey Select Board, stated his disappointment that the Sheffield Select Board was making the request at this time. He said that he felt there was too much thinking about individual towns, and not enough thinking about the District. He suggested that the towns need to look for constructive solutions, rather than looking at consolidating facilities.

Ms. Tara White, Chairman of the New Marlborough Select Board, said that her town had also sent a similar letter, and they were disturbed at having received no response. She agreed with Ms. Wood that it would be a good idea to have the discussions during the summer before the school year starts.

4. **Business:**

A. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Hastings reported the following:

- Secretary Malone recently visited the community schools. After his visit, he sent a note stating that he "loves our district".
- Mr. Valentini, Mr. Turner, and Mr. Hastings traveled to Boston to the MA School Building Authority's recent meeting. The District's application has been accepted into the accelerated program, which means that work on the UME/Mt. Everett roof and boilers can begin in approximately fourteen months.
- Several recent events have been conducted to reach out to the community.
- "Music Man" will be performed by grades 6-9 this weekend.
- Mr. Nadolny is moving on to Farmington River Regional School District. A search for a new principal has begun. Three candidates were selected and interviewed, but due to various reasons, a new search will need to begin.
- Mt. Everett English Teacher Wendy Casey was nominated for a Kapteyn prize. She was selected as a finalist, but unfortunately, did not win.
- The 2014 graduation was a great success.
- The softball team made it to the Western Mass semifinals.
- Mt. Everett was the winner of the first annual Berkshire sportsmanship cup.
- The final PBIS celebration will be held on Friday, June 20 at 10:30 a.m. at UME.
- The Oyotte Garden will be dedicated on June 17 at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Sears moved to change the order of the agenda in order to take up item 4D next. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

- D. In recognition of the receipt of correspondence from three towns, Mr. Valentini moved "to begin the process Proposed School Action, as defined in Section 3, the District Schools, of the Regional Agreement, for the closing of one or more of our community schools. Specifically, the Egremont School, the Monterey School, and the New Marlborough Central School. Further, the three schools are not to be coupled, and each school will require a separate vote for a total of three votes." Ms. Rundle seconded the motion.

Mr. Valentini outlined the procedure, per the Regional Agreement, that would be followed, should there be an affirmative vote to close any of the three schools. He also presented additional information regarding the cost to run each of the three schools during 2013-14 and shared projected enrollments in each for 2014-15.

School Committee members generally agreed that it is important to have discussions about the community schools, even if the pending motion should fail. They also expressed concern about how a headline announcing the vote would appear and its effect on the public's view of the District. Mr. Valentini noted that Superintendent Hastings had suggested that each individual town be invited for a series of meetings. This suggestion stirred the interest of several Committee members.

Following much additional discussion among Committee members, Mr. Flynn moved to suspend the rules such that the Chair can allow the audience to speak during the discussion of the motion. Mr. Batacchi seconded the motion. Following a brief discussion, a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Flynn	yes	Mr. Valentini	no	Ms. Rundle	yes
Mr. Sears	no	Ms. Fields	yes	Ms. Sparhawk	yes
Ms. Silvers	yes	Mr. Batacchi	yes		

Much additional discussion took place, which included input from several Select Board representatives, each of whom voiced a desire to move forward with a dialogue through a meeting process, as suggested by Superintendent Hastings. Noting that the intent of his motion had been to promote such dialogue between the towns and School Committee, Mr. Valentini withdrew his motion. Ms. Rundle withdrew the second.

The Committee discussed possible dates and who should host the meetings. Ms. Silvers moved to have an ad hoc subcommittee specifically to address the issue related to the various towns and the question related to closing and maintenance of community schools. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Flynn moved to delegate the role of chairing the meetings to Superintendent Hastings. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion. Following a brief discussion, it was so voted, unanimously. It was agreed that Superintendent Hastings will arrange and post the meetings, which will be open to all. Each meeting will focus on one town, although dialogue with representatives of other towns will be invited. The meetings will start on or about July 10.

Mr. Jossen, Select Board member from Monterey, requested that concrete numbers of the cost to run each of the community schools (budget numbers from FY'15) be made available at the first meeting. He suggested that discussions begin with those figures and progress to talking about how each school affect's that town's character.

School Committee members thanked all for their input and offered special thanks to Mr. Valentini for his work on this issue in the past.

Ms. Fields left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

- C. Discussion/Vote to Determine Whether the District Will Administer MCAS or PARCC Test in Spring, 2015, per MGL Chapter 71 §37: Ms. Kerry Burke, Director of Curriculum and Professional Development, addressed the Committee and recommended that the District stay with the MCAS test for 2014-15, but embrace pilot PARCC test(s) as may be requested of the District. Superintendent Hastings voiced agreement with Ms. Burke's recommendation. Following discussion, Mr. Flynn moved that the Southern Berkshire Regional School District stay with the MCAS as the standard testing method, but to participate in PARCC pilot testing, as requested/required. Following additional discussion, the question was called. The vote:

Mr. Flynn	yes	Mr. Valentini	yes
Mr. Sears	yes	Ms. Sparhawk	yes
Ms. Silvers	yes	Mr. Batacchi	yes
Ms. Rundle	yes (as opposed to PARCC)		

- B. Chairman Stewart noted that at the June 26 School Committee meeting, the Committee will be asked to decide whether they wish to hold a summer meeting or meetings. He said that he would also e-mail them a proposed meeting schedule for 2014-15 for their comments.
- E. Subcommittee/Representative Reports:
- Cooperation Subcommittee – Mr. Sears requested appointment of two new members of the Cooperation Subcommittee. Mr. Stewart stated that such was unnecessary, as he would serve as the third member of the subcommittee, although anyone could attend, as available or interested.

- Ad Hoc Advisory Subcommittee – Ms. Silvers moved that the Ad Hoc Advisory Subcommittee continue to meet on an as-needed basis in 2014-15. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.
- Policy Subcommittee: The Committee observed the first reading of Policies ADDA, Background Checks; ADDA-R, DCJIS Model CORI Policy; and IJOA-R, Field Trips.
- Executive Evaluation Subcommittee: Mr. Flynn distributed a form for Committee members to use in the evaluation of the Superintendent. He noted that the form is set up to be completed and submitted electronically.
- Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini moved to approve the acceptance of a batting cage as a gift from Black Thumb Farm. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

Mr. Valentini explained that the School Building Authority has invited the District to participate in an accelerated repair program and will accept the District's application for aid for a new roof and new boilers at the Mt. Everett/Undermountain campus. He noted that one caveat to their helping is that they will not pay if the District installs a new boiler prior to completing the process with the SBA. Mr. Valentini said that the Subcommittee had split off the two major projects and wished to deal with installing air conditioning in the second floor of Mt. Everett this year. He said that the anticipated cost is \$150,000, to be paid through a one-year loan. He noted that the District will need permission from all five member town select boards in order to proceed with the loan, and he said that they are hoping that the towns will treat it as a capital excluded debt.

Mr. Valentini then moved that the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (the "District") appropriates One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000) for the purpose of paying costs of installing HVAC units to the Mount Everett Regional School, located at 491 Berkshire School Road, Sheffield, Massachusetts (the "Project"), said amount to be expended under the direction of the District School Committee (the "Committee"). To meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Chair of the Committee, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to MGL Chapter 71, Section 16 (d), or pursuant to any other enabling authority.

Further, that within seven (7) days from the date on which this vote is adopted, the Secretary be and hereby is instructed to notify the Chairs of the Boards of Selectmen of each of the towns of Alford, Egremont, Monterey, New Marlborough, and Sheffield as to the amount and general purposes of the debt herein authorized, as required by the District Agreement and by said Chapter 71, Section 16(d) of the General Laws. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion.

It was noted that Mr. Turner wished to send the project out to bid within the next week so it could be accomplished prior to the beginning of school in September, 2014. The motion was then approved, unanimously.

Mr. Valentini also informed the Committee that as the District will participate in an SBA project for the roof and boilers, they will not install another boiler prior to the winter of 2014-15. He said that they will hope for the best, but should another boiler become necessary, one can be rented. He said that the \$68,000 received from the insurance company for the broken boiler will be used for some of the upfront costs of the SBA project to pay for the design, etc. Mr. Valentini also reported that the subcommittee is working on new signage for all District schools, which will include the District logo on each.

- F. Approval of Memorandum of Agreement / Furlough Day: This item was postponed until the June 26 meeting.

- G. Financial Updates / Transfers: Mr. Flynn moved to approve transfers in the amount of \$180,000, as listed by the Business Administrator in his memo dated June 12, 2014. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion. It was so voted. (Mr. Batacchi voted in opposition.)

Mr. Turner explained that the Sheffield Council on Aging (COA) had requested permission to borrow the District's "marshmallow" buses for one or two trips during the summer. Mr. Miller, Director of the Sheffield COA, explained that they are trying to set up a couple of trips for grandparents and the children that they care for over the summer. He noted that the trips will be advertised to all five towns. Mr. Turner will check to be sure that the District's insurance will cover the trips. Mr. Batacchi moved to approve the use of one or two buses by the Sheffield COA on August 22, 2014. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

5. **Communication from the Public / Requests for Future Agenda Items**
A. There were no communications from the public.

On a motion by Mr. Flynn, seconded by Ms. Silvers, the meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Documents presented for this meeting:

- *Agenda, Meeting #1,476*
- *Minutes, Meeting #1, 475*
- *Letter from Alford Select Board, dated May 12, 2014*
- *Letter from the New Marlborough Select Board, dated March 17, 2014*
- *Letter from the Sheffield Select Board, dated March 11, 2014*
- *Draft: Policy File: ADDA*
- *Draft: Policy File: ADDA-R*
- *Draft: Policy File: IJOA-R*
- *"Motion to Close Schools" by V. Valentini*
- *Memo from Bruce Turner, Business Administrator, requesting transfers in the amount of \$180,000*