

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee  
Mt. Everett Regional School  
Sheffield, MA  
December 17, 2014  
Meeting #1,484

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

Absent: Mr. Batacchi

Administrators: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner

Press: CTSB Television

Student Representative: Madison Ryan

Others: Ms. Amy Murray; Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:**  
Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, to approve the minutes of Meeting 1,483, open and executive sessions, as presented. It was so voted, unanimously.
3. **Communications from the Audience Pertaining to this Evening's Agenda**
  - A. Student Representative Report: Madison Ryan reported that Mt. Everett students had bested their counterparts at Monument Mountain in the recent competition to raise money for Charley's Fund.  
  
She also reported that members of the Student Council had held meetings with grade levels regarding unkind postings on YikYak recently. She said that the meetings were well attended and the discussion was generally positive.
  - B. There were no communications from the audience.
4. **Presentation/Updates:**
  - A. Mr. Hastings presented the 2014-15 Strategy/District Improvement Plan, which he had prepared in concert with the administrators. He explained that the first page was what the administrators want to do, and the pages that followed were the action plan to accomplish those things. He said that although it is unlikely that they will be able to accomplish everything on the list, the plan would allow the administrators to begin next year's administrative retreat with concrete data to work from.  
  
Ms. Sparhawk moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to approve the plan, as presented.  
  
In the discussion that followed, Committee members generally praised the format of the plan and the work that had gone into it. It was noted that the outcomes will become a major part of the Superintendent's evaluation, once accepted. The plan was then approved, unanimously.

5. **Business**

A. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Hastings presented the Committee with sample 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS tests.

He also presented them with a proposed job description for an extra duty position to handle all aspects of the MCAS testing in grades 7-12.

Following discussion, Mr. Valentini moved that the School Committee create the position and allow the superintendent to advertise it. Ms. Lartigue seconded the motion.

Discussion continued. Mr. Flynn expressed concern that the creation of this position would add another stipended position. He also suggested adding the duties to the role of the principal or dean of students. Mr. Sears also voiced objections because he felt the position was too wide-ranging to be effective or worthwhile at the suggested stipend of \$4,000. Mr. Hastings informed the Committee that the position had earlier been advertised in error, and that there were at least two applicants, one of which was a former principal who was experienced in accomplishing all of the duties.

Following additional discussion, and the request from several Committee members that the position be a temporary, one-year position only, the motion was approved, 6-2. The vote:

Ms. Silvers	yes	Ms. Rundle	yes	Ms. Sahn	yes
Mr. Sears	no	Mr. Valentini	yes	Mr. Flynn	no
Ms. Sparhawk	yes	Ms. Lartigue	yes		

Superintendent Hastings also reported the following:

- The New Marlborough Central School Holiday Fair and the Undermountain Elementary School Cookie Walk were both held on December 6.
- The Sheffield Kiwanis Club presented each 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at Undermountain a dictionary to take home.
- The Senior Citizens' luncheon, which was held on December 4, was wonderful.
- The elementary presentation of "A Knight at Dawn" was also wonderful.
- A meeting has been set for the select board chairs and Sheffield town administrator to select a municipal representative for collective bargaining. School Committee members agreed that it would be beneficial for Mr. Hastings to be able to inform the chosen representative whether or not (s)he would be invited to participate in the negotiations process. Following discussion, Mr. Flynn moved that the municipal representative shall serve as a member of the School Committee in all matters related to collective bargaining by the regional school district and shall have one vote in all school committee deliberations on collective bargaining matters. Further, the term of the municipal representative shall only be so long as to reach conclusion to collective bargaining. Mr. Flynn then modified his motion to include that the municipal representative shall be invited to sit in on negotiations sessions. Mr. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

Mr. Hastings continued with his report:

- Three teachers (Jaimi-Lyn Schieb, Susan Happ, and Brenda Ullrich) have been nominated by the administrative team as educator of the year through MCLA. In addition, Courtney English and Jody Burkle have received nominations from their peers.
- Jeremiah Bickford, who has been working with students on the repair of small engines, has begun working with electric motors for the winter.
- Six students have made Junior Western District Chorus. Two students have qualified for Senior Western District Chorus.

- At this point, 13% of the entire student body are involved in the band; 13% of the student body are involved in the chorus.
- There will be a middle school concert on December 18.
- The elementary winter solstice all-school sing will take place next week.
- There are two robotics teams, and 15 students are on the girls' team. Michaela White and Shana Sawyer are helping out with that effort. There are 37 students in grades 4-8 involved in robotics.
- Ms. Kuzmech is working on special projects with students.
- The Elementary PBIS monthly program will take place on December 18.
- The archery program is up and running, thanks to an *eagle fund* grant.
- Mr. Hastings shared pictures of holiday projects constructed by the Child Care children.

C. Approval of Overnight Field Trips:

- Mr. Sears moved to approve the chorus and band trip to Los Angeles in April, 2015, and to waive Policy IJOA-R regarding chaperones in order to allow 50 students to go with 8 chaperones. Ms. Rundle seconded the motion. The motion carried, 8-0. The vote:

Ms. Silvers	yes	Ms. Rundle	yes	Ms. Sahn	yes
Mr. Sears	yes	Mr. Valentini	yes	Mr. Flynn	yes
Ms. Sparhawk	yes	Ms. Lartigue	yes		

- Mr. Valentini moved to grant approval for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Washington, DC on March 4, 2015. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion. It was so voted, unanimously.
- Committee members voiced concern that a request for the senior members of the Model UN Club to go to Boston in February included only one chaperone. Their concern was that if something should happen to the one chaperone, there would be no back-up. Mr. Sears moved to not allow the trip to Boston for the Model UN Club until a second chaperone is added. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion. Following additional discussion and a request that the Policy subcommittee address this issue, the motion was approved, unanimously.

D. Subcommittee/Representative Reports:

- Mr. Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Sears, to approve the subcommittee listing, as amended (Amendments: remove C. Flynn from the Collective Bargaining Subcommittee; add Jennifer Sahn to the Executive Evaluation Subcommittee; and add Arthur Batacchi as an Alternate to the Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee.) Mr. Sears seconded the motion. It was so voted, unanimously.
- Executive Evaluation Subcommittee: Mr. Flynn reported that he had been re-elected chair in the reorganizational meeting. He said that the subcommittee had set milestone dates for the evaluation of the superintendent, and he reported that he now has an electronic program that will simplify the process.
- Transportation Subcommittee: Ms. Sparhawk was elected chair of the subcommittee for 2014-15. She reported that the subcommittee received a survey that had been conducted regarding after-school transportation from the Sheffield campus to Great Barrington, and from New Marlborough Central School to Undermountain. She said that there had been high interest indicated for the after-school bus to Great Barrington. Not many responses were received regarding transportation from NMC to Undermountain, however, and the subcommittee members questioned whether NMC parents had been able to access the survey.

The subcommittee had also discussed the District's yellow bus that has been provided to transport Sandisfield students choosing into the District. It was noted that the bus will be aging out at the

end of this year. Ms. Sparhawk moved to agree to discontinue bus service to Sandisfield at the end of the school year and to authorize the superintendent to begin negotiating with the superintendent of Farmington River Regional School District to request that they transport their students at least to the District's border. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion. Following discussion, it was so voted, unanimously.

- Finance Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini reported that the Subcommittee had reorganized and had re-elected him as chair. He said that the subcommittee had received FY'16 budget presentations from all departments. He complimented Mr. Hastings on the organization of those meetings.
- Policy Subcommittee: Mr. Flynn reported that he had been re-elected as chair. He said that the subcommittee will be reviewing all policies during the year. Mr. Flynn also reported that the subcommittee had voted to recommend to not have the MA Association of School Committees take over the policy manual on-line. He said that they felt it could be better managed at the local level, considering all the problems they had run into with the MASC. Mr. Flynn stated that a bill had been received from the MASC for on-line service, and that he would let them know that the District will be hosting the on-line manual.
- Buildings, Grounds & Technology Subcommittee: Mr. Valentini reported on the meeting of December 4. He said that the subcommittee had heard budget presentations from Mr. Turner, Mr. Finkle and Mr. Thompson. They also discussed project encumbrances going forward. Mr. Valentini reported that a significant portion of that meeting had been discussion regarding moving forward with the boilers and roof project. He said that the project is set up to be accomplished in phases; phase 1 was the feasibility study where they looked at the project, got drawings, conducted research, and came up with an absolute maximum amount of money that it could cost. He noted that the School Building Authority builds in large contingencies in order to avoid underestimating a project. The preliminary submission of the project was sent to the School Building Authority on December 2 and is near \$7.7 million, not including the \$360,000 grant from the Department of Energy Resources (DOER). He said that the School Building Authority will not review the submission until late January; however, if the District waits for them to review the project before they hire the engineers and architects, there will not be time to finish the project over the summer while the students are out of the building.

Mr. Valentini explained that in order to move forward so that the project could be accomplished over the summer, the Buildings, Grounds and Technology Subcommittee had approved the idea of a short-term loan in order to provide a cash flow to pay the architects and engineers to accomplish the design phase of the project. He said that the architects and engineers involved with the project had assured the subcommittee that they had never seen the SBA not approve a project once it reached this stage.

Mr. Valentini then moved: That the southern Berkshire Regional School district (the "District") appropriates Four Hundred Thousand dollars (\$400,000) for the purpose of paying the costs of design and engineering services and the preparation of design and engineering documents for repairs to the Mount Everett Regional High School, located at 491 Berkshire School Road, Sheffield, Massachusetts (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 has applied for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"), and said amount to be expended under the direction of 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 MGL Chapter 71, Section 16(d), 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 if the MSBA's Board of Directors votes to invite the District to collaborate with the MSBA on this proposed repair project, any project costs the district incurs in excess of any grant that may be approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the district and its member municipalities; and that, if invited to collaborate with the MSBA on the proposed repair project, 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.

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 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.

Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion.

A lengthy discussion and question/answer session then took place.

Ms. Rundle left the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Committee members expressed a desire for this request to be discussed with the member town select boards prior to taking a vote of the Committee. They were concerned that there could be a loss of good will with member communities, should they vote to borrow prior to informing them. Members also expressed a wish that the select boards be informed in person, and not through written communication. It was the consensus of the Committee to postpone voting until the January 8 meeting. A Buildings, Grounds, and Technology Subcommittee meeting will be held on January 6 at 6:30 p.m. to explain progress on the project and the plan for borrowing. School Committee members will contact their town select boards, in person, as soon as possible, to be sure they appreciate the importance of attending that meeting.

- Food Subcommittee: Ms. Sahn reported that at the December 17 meeting, she had been re-elected as chair. She said that the subcommittee discussed bringing school lunch prices into compliance with national and state requirements. The Subcommittee voted to bring forth a motion to raise elementary lunch price to \$2.75 following the February, 2015 break. Ms. Sahn then moved to raise the elementary lunch price to \$2.75, following the February, 2015 school vacation. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion. Following discussion, which included concerns about raising the prices mid-year, the motion was approved, unanimously.

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

F. There were no communications from the public.

On a motion by Mr. Flynn, seconded by Ms. Sparhawk, the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

***Documents presented at this meeting:***

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,484*
- *Minutes of School Committee Meeting #1,483*
- *Preliminary Listing of 2014-15 Subcommittee Members*
- *Overnight Field Trip Requests:*
  - *for the Mt. Everett Band and Chorus to Los Angeles, CA, April 16-20, 2015*
  - *for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 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*