

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee  
Mt. Everett Regional School  
Sheffield, MA  
October 29, 2015  
Meeting #1,499

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

Absent:

Administrators: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner, Ms. Burgess, Ms. Burke, Ms. LeBlanc, Mr. Devoti

Press: CTSB Television; Ms. Julie Ruth, Berkshire Record; Mr. David Scribner, Berkshire Edge

Student Representatives: Maya Neski, Marina Germain

Others: Ms. Nadine Hawver, Chair, Mr. David Smith, and Mr. Andrew Peterson, Members, Sheffield Select Board; Ms. Rhonda LaBombard, Sheffield Town Administrator; Mr. David Macy Ms. Julie Hannum, and Mr. Colin Smith, Sheffield Finance Committee members; Ms. Michele Shalaby, Chair, New Marlborough Select Board; Ms. Zoe Marinelli; Ms. Cathy Jo Willig; Mr. Anthony Bleau; Mr. Jamie Foster; Ms. Alice Tortoriello; Ms. Christina Carlson; Ms. Kari Giordano; Mr. Steven Weisz; Ms. Amy Gallagher; Ms. Mara Handy; Ms. Marie Massini-Reynolds; Ms. Dawn Massini; Ms. Linda Higgins

1. Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Before beginning the meeting, Mr. Stewart made a statement concerning recent requests from some town officials for the release of opinion letters from the School District's attorney. He noted that as a general rule, such documents are subject to attorney/client privilege and are confidential. He said that the release of such documents, although not unheard of, is rare.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Silvers moved, seconded by Ms. Lartigue, to approve the minutes of School Committee meeting #1,498. It was so voted.
3. **Communications from the Audience:**
  - A. Student representatives Maya Neski and Marina Germain reported on ongoing and planned activities of student government. They discussed with the Committee how to get the word out about fundraisers they are planning.
  - B. Ms. Nadine Hawver, Chair, Sheffield Select Board, read a statement reviewing the communication between the town and the District regarding recent assessment issues and meetings that followed (copy on file with these minutes). Mr. Valentini apologized for any miscommunications or lack of communications on the part of the Finance Subcommittee.

There were no further communications from the audience.

4. **Updates/Presentations:**

- A. Ms. Burgess and Ms. LeBlanc presented the 2015-16 Elementary School Improvement Plan (copy on file with these minutes). A question and answer session took place. Committee members requested that the document be edited to remove the education jargon to make it more understandable for parents and community members. Following additional discussion, Mr. Flynn moved to approve the

Elementary School Improvement Plan. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

- B. Mr. Sears moved that the Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee during the meeting tonight take a vote of no confidence in the business manager and set up an ad hoc committee to work with the superintendent to seek resolution and to report back at each School Committee meeting. Further, that the ad hoc committee would consist of Mr. Sears, the School Committee Chair and Vice Chair, and Ms. Sparhawk. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion.

Mr. Flynn objected to the motion, and he stated that he believed it was a violation of the Open Meeting Law.

Mr. Sears stated that as it was an unanticipated item, he believed the Open Meeting Law allowed flexibility.

At Chairman Stewart's suggestion, Ms. Lartigue moved to amend the agenda. Ms. Silvers seconded the motion. The vote:

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

Mr. Valentini suggested amending Mr. Sears' motion to state a "lack of confidence in the business office", rather than a lack of confidence in the business manager. Mr. Sears accepted the amendment. Ms. Silvers objected, stating that the business office entails other people who should not be included. Mr. Valentini agreed, and withdrew his amendment.

Discussion then took place regarding the original motion.

Mr. Flynn stated that the District's superintendent should review everything that comes out of every office. He said that one person should not be targeted.

Mr. Sears suggested that due to the relationship between Mr. Flynn and the business manager (i.e., that they both sit on the Egremont Select Board), Mr. Flynn should recuse himself from the discussion.

Mr. Flynn refused to recuse himself, and suggested that Mr. Sears consult the Attorney General's Office.

Following additional discussion, a vote regarding the issue of "no confidence" was called. The vote:

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

The Committee then discussed the make-up of the ad hoc committee. It was decided to request volunteers. Mr. Sears, Ms. Silvers, Ms. Sparhawk, and Ms. Lartigue volunteered. Mr. Valentini moved that they become the ad hoc committee. Mr. Stewart declared the motion as carried. (Mr. Flynn voted in opposition.)

- C. FY 2016 Budget Assessment Issues: Mr. Valentini moved that the Committee release for public consumption the communication from the District's attorneys dated October 20, 2015. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion, and it was so voted. Mr. Valentini then distributed copies of the letter to those town officials present.

Mr. Valentini then reviewed the current budget situation, noting that the Committee had voted on October 1 to reduce the budget by \$216,000. He said that appropriate notifications had been made to the towns but a clerical error in the transportation assessment negated the seven-day window, in which it was necessary to notify the towns and finance committees. Therefore, he said, the District does not have an amended budget because the requirements of the law were not met.

Mr. Valentini said that the Finance Subcommittee had voted to rescind the vote of October 1<sup>st</sup> and re-vote an amendment to the existing (original) budget reducing it by \$216,000.

Mr. Valentini then moved to rescind the vote taken at the October 1 meeting reducing the budget by \$216,000. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion.

Mr. Sears suggested that a different number should be voted.

Mr. Valentini then withdrew his motion.

Mr. Valentini then moved that the School Committee approve an amendment to the existing school budget reducing it by \$216,700. Mr. Flynn requested that the first vote be rescinded prior to a new number being voted.

Mr. Valentini withdrew the motion.

Mr. Valentini moved to rescind the vote regarding the budget taken at the October 1 School Committee meeting. Ms. Lartigue seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

Mr. Valentini then moved to amend the FY'16 budget, reflecting a reduction of \$216,700. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lartigue, and it was so voted, unanimously.

Mr. Valentini reviewed possible scenarios regarding the final outcome of the budget situation, depending upon whether the town of Sheffield proceeds to approve the new budget or not. He appealed to Sheffield town officials to support the newly voted budget, noting that in order to not have any town pay more than their original assessment, reductions of \$415,000 would have to be made, requiring the elimination of six or more staff positions. Mr. David Smith, Sheffield Select Board member, countered that in order to come up with the additional assessment monies, the town may need to reduce its own work force.

(At the request of Mr. Flynn, the Committee agreed to move to Item D3, Policy Subcommittee Report.)

## 5. **Business**

- D3. Policy Subcommittee Report: Mr. Flynn moved to approve Policy JKAA, Restraint Prevention and Behavior Support. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted, unanimously.

(Mr. Flynn left the meeting at 7:31 p.m.)

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

- The Southern Berkshire Child Care Program has resumed weekly visits to the Sheffield Senior Center.
- There was a blood drive earlier in the day, sponsored by SWAG (Students Who Achieve Goodness).
- Angel Rote recently coordinated with staff from Fairview Hospital to conduct a flu clinic for community members.
- The Berkshire Eagle is providing free subscriptions to students in the journalism class.
- An art reception for photographers Dan Mead and Sally Eagle, plus the National Art Honor Society Induction Ceremony, will take place from 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. on November 5.

- The Chamber of Commerce Breakfast will also be held at Mt. Everett on November 5.
- A PTA Fun Day will be held on October 30 after school at South Egremont School.
- This is Administrative Assistant Linda Higgins' last School Committee meeting. Ms. Lynette Gagnon will join the staff next week as Linda's replacement.
- Mt. Everett teacher Jess Murtagh has been inducted into the CIAO Soccer Hall of Fame.
- Math professional development has begun in the elementary schools and will continue for the year. Ms. Patricia DeAngelis, a math curriculum specialist from the Collaborative for Educational Services, will coordinate the work.
- A full day of staff development will be held on November 3.
- Shakespeare & Co. will direct the play, "The Merry wives of Windsor". Performances will be held in mid-November.
- Nine members of the Mt. Everett FFA are attending the national convention in Louisville, KY.
- Middle school students are working on a UNICEF fundraiser for Halloween.
- Time capsules will be buried on October 31 by classes in both the elementary and high school.
- Global education students will meet up with friends from Hong Kong in Germany next February.
- Middle school students attended a talk by astronaut Stephanie Wilson, of Pittsfield.
- Teacher Julie Steuernagle took the Life Skills students on the Millerton, NY bike trail.
- Juniors and seniors attended the college fair at Berkshire Community College.
- October is bullying awareness month, and a special program has been planned for students in grades 7-12.

B. FY 2017 School Committee Calendar: Mr. Sears moved to change the November 18 meeting to November 19. Ms. Sparhawk seconded the motion, and it was so voted. Following discussion, it was agreed to take up the remaining dates at the November 19 School Committee meeting.

C. Financial Updates/Transfers: Mr. Turner updated the Committee regarding the building project. He said that the skylights should be put in over the next few months. Also the oil furnace is ready to be put on line with the building management system, and the pellet boilers should be up and running in the next week or so.

School Committee members asked that the administration develop a better system of keeping track of vacations in order to be sure that the proper personnel are in attendance at key times.

Following brief discussion, Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Mr. Valentini, to sign the solar net metering agreement, as presented. It was so voted. (Mr. Batacchi voted in opposition.)

Mr. Valentini moved *"That David B. Hastings, as Superintendent of Schools of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, is hereby authorized to complete, sign and submit an application with supporting documentation to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities to seek qualification for the District as an "Other Governmental Entity" for Net Metering pursuant to 220 C.M.R., §1800 et. seq.; to make revisions to such application and to such supporting documentation; and to correspond with and respond to the DPU and any other necessary parties, all on behalf of the District in connection with such application."* Mr. Sears seconded the motion, and it was so voted.

Mr. Turner and Mr. Valentini informed the Committee about a problem with the sprinkler system in the auditorium. They said that during the roofing project it was discovered that the system had not been working for quite some time. They are working on obtaining proposals to install a 40,000 gallon tank and a pump system. The cost will be in the \$250,000 to \$300,000 range, and the money will be taken from the building project contingency fund. In the meantime, whenever there is a performance in the TAC/PAC, a fire truck and uniformed firemen will be standing by. They also said that although the money is available in the contingency fund, it is not likely that it will be reimbursed by the MSBA.

Berkshire County Ad Hoc: Mr. Stewart reported that the group will meet on October 31 in Dalton. He said that the committee had voted to ask each district involved to pledge a sum of \$500 as a show of support. Mr. Sears moved to pledge \$500 to the Berkshire County Ad Hoc Committee. Mr. Valentini seconded the motion. Following discussion, it was so voted.

Farmington River/Southern Berkshire Regional District Planning Committee: Mr. Sears reported that the Planning Committee met on October 26. He said that members had volunteered to work on four different areas, including transportation, survey, shared services, and technology. The next meeting will be held on December 8.

Finance Subcommittee: There was no additional Finance Subcommittee business.

Chairman Stewart noted that the Committee would like to talk about Food Service at the November 19 meeting. Mr. Hastings asked that the Food Subcommittee get together prior to that meeting. Ms. Lartigue offered to set that up.

On a motion by Ms. Silvers, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

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

- *Agenda, School Committee Meeting #1,499*
- *Minutes of Meeting #1,498*
- *Statement by Nadine Hawver, Chair, Sheffield Select Board*
- *Correspondence from Atty. Michelle McNulty, Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C., Rre: Additional Information for Adoption of Amended Budget for Fiscal Year 2016, dated October 20, 2015 Development Calendar – Draft*
- *School Committee Meeting/FY 2017 Budget Development Calendar (DRAFT)*
- *Language for Vote Re: Designation of a representative to complete, sign and submit an application to the MA Department of Public Utilities to seek qualification for the district as an “Other Governmental Entity” for Net Metering.*
- *Policy JKAA, Restraint Prevention and Behavior Support Policy and Procedures (Draft)*
- *School Improvement Plan, 2015-16*
- *Elementary School Improvement Plan, 2015-16*