

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee held Wednesday, January 25, 2017 at Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road, Charlton, MA 01507, 6:30 p.m.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Mary N. Antocci
Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair
Raymond J. Chalk, Vice Chair, at 6:32 p.m.
Catherine M. Kabala
Joseph M. Pietrzak
Elaine M. Rabbitt
Stephanie A. Reed

Jack A. Cederberg, Student Representative

Also in attendance were Gregg J. Desto, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations; district administrators: Lorinda Allen, Karen Ares, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean W. Packard, John D. Paire; Kathleen E. Pastore, Diane Seibold; teachers Melissa Pastorello, Jodi Foley; Charlton Elementary School students and parents: Krish Verma, Nicholas DiGioia, Brylee Tycz; district auditor Richard Sullivan; Charlton resident Stefan Sage; media representatives Deb LaPlaca, Telegram, Rich Earle, audio-visual coordinator, Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. FY 2016 Audit Report, Powers and Sullivan

Richard Sullivan of the auditing firm Powers and Sullivan, reported on the FY 2016 audit. This is the second audit the firm has completed for the district. Mr. Sullivan thanked the business office staff for its cooperation during the audit, conducted in July and October. He said the staff was audit ready, held a sense of urgency, and answered questions promptly and accurately.

Mr. Sullivan said the general fund did better than expected, aided by revenue collections. He said this points to a sound budgeting process.

Issues include the district's Statement of Position, OPEB and pension liability, as well as the Health Care Trust fund deficit. The district spent \$1.9 mill in federal funds, and the lack of the SOP could be detrimental to its bond rating.

Mr. Sullivan commented on the need for accounting policies and financial procedures, saying policies point toward the district's goals. He said documenting the district's goals formalizes the budget procedures and keeps the process in line.

Mr. Mathieu said the manual is in progress, and will be ready by June. Mr. Desto said this manual will be ever changing and adaptable.

Action Item: discuss procedure and policies manual at budget and finance subcommittee meetings, as well as OPEB, and the health insurance trust fund.

Mr. Sullivan said the district was able to replace the Excess and Deficiency funds it used in FY 16, and this needs to be a goal each year.

Mrs. Rabbitt said the additional \$28,000 in preschool expenses is a concern as this is a controllable expense.

Mrs. Kabala requested a letter of thanks be sent to Mr. Mathieu's staff.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. *Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, January 11, 2017*

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by M. Antocci, to approve the minutes as corrected, was approved by a vote of 6-0, with Mr. Pietrzak abstaining.

V. Approval of Warrant

Warrant #37 in the amount of \$149,645.03 was signed by a majority of members without further comment or question.

VI. Citizens' Forum

No one spoke at this time.

VII. School Spotlight – Charlton Elementary School

Mrs. Pacheco introduced kindergarten teacher Melissa Pastorello, and grade one teacher Jodi Foley to present on the concept of looping, whereby a teacher moves to the next grade level with their class.

Ms. Pastorello and Mrs. Foley initiated the program at Charlton Elementary School. Parents are given the option to have their child remain in his/her classrooms for two years. Mrs. Pacheco said 100 percent of the parents allowed their children to stay with their teachers.

Students and parents spoke to the committee in support of the concept.

VIII. Communications

Mrs. Aucoin read a letter of thanks from James Rawson, who retired after the 2015-2016 school year.

IX. Superintendent's Report

1. Mr. Desto highlighted upcoming events:

- Shepherd Hill will host the 2017 **Central Massachusetts Show Choir Festival** Friday, February 3 at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday, February 4 at 9 a.m. (unisex and small mixed choirs) and 5:30 p.m. (large, mixed choirs). All DCRSD groups will be performing Friday night.
- **Class of 2030:** Kindergarten registration will be held at Mason Road School on Wednesday, March 1 from 9-11:30 a.m., and from 1-4 p.m.; Thursday, March 2 from 1-4 and 5-7 p.m. and at Charlton Elementary School on Wednesday, March 8 from 9-11:30 a.m. and from 1-4 p.m.; Thursday, March 9 from 1-4 p.m.

Action Item: Mrs. Kabala requested a review of the preschool tuition, with the possibility of an increase.

- Mr. Desto reviewed the notes from the January 19 Regional Budget Task Force, during which the area superintendents discussed the possible sharing of resources. The next task force meeting will be Thursday, February 9 at Uxbridge High School, 5 p.m.
- The District is holding an information night for parents to discuss the next generation MCAS, Monday, February 13 at Heritage School, 6:30 p.m. Students in grades 4 and 8 will be tested on computer this year.

X. Student Representative Report – Jack Cederberg

Mr. Cederberg was not present.

XI. New Business

A. FY 2018 Budget Presentation, Part One, Budget Priorities – Mr. Desto

Mr. Desto presented the educational vision for the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District. He said there are four main areas of emphasis in crafting the FY 2018 budget: reducing class size grades 1-3 and possibly grade 4; social-emotional/ mental health; STEAM; global awareness.

While state funding is not yet known, Mr. Desto said the budget is driven by such requirements as salaries and health insurance; transportation contracts, MCAS 2.0 and other testing requirements, special education costs and ELL requirements.

Mr. Desto reviewed the district’s accomplishments, and discussed taking the next steps forward in each of the goals. Staff, technology, infrastructure and curriculum are key elements.

Mrs. Antocci said she is in full agreement with the goal to reduce class size, and urged Mr. Desto to include grade 4.

B. Director of Finance and Operations Report (*Vote Required*)

Mr. Mathieu asked the committee to approved the following donations

Staples Corp. to Charlton Middle School -	Various office and classroom supplies
E.J. Stochaj Insurance Co. to Dudley Elementary School	\$125.00
Box Tops for Education to Dudley Elementary School,	<u>\$1,066.20</u>
	\$1,191.20

Mr. Desto thanked Mr. Stochaj for his consistent support of the district.

A motion by J. Pietrzak, seconded by S. Reed to accept the donations as presented, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Mathieu said the FY 2017 School Choice assessment is lower than originally estimated at approximately \$300,000. He said these numbers may still be adjusted, with the final information ready in in the spring.

As noted during the audit review, Mr. Mathieu said there is a need for policies regarding FY 2018 Revenue Philosophy. Mr. Mathieu presented some guidelines to the Budget and Finance Subcommittee and these will be used to construct the preliminary budget. Mr. Mathieu said we need to spend less than what is taken in,

and begin to build a reserve where possible. This is balanced with the district's need to grow and improve. Written policies will provide guidance.

Regarding the Excess and Deficiency Account, or reserves, Mr. Mathieu said it is a challenge every year to return money from the operating budget to reserves while maintaining the same level of operation.

The FY 18 Governor's Budget reveals an increase of \$76,000 for the district in Chapter 70 funds, which, with a \$48 million budget, is not significant.

Mr. Desto said this is not even close to keeping up with cost increases. Mr. Mathieu said he has not analyzed the governor's budget yet, but will have more information at the Feb. 8 school committee meeting.

C. Budget and Finance Subcommittee Report

Mr. Chalk chaired the Jan. 18 meeting during which the subcommittee reviewed the budget calendar and discussed budget goals and priorities. As previously noted, the regional task force meeting discussed the possibility of sharing the costs of personnel, (e.g. teacher of the deaf, grant writer), technology purchases, and online learning opportunities.

Mr. Mathieu presented budget updates, and also discussed the new budget document format for the upcoming presentations. The new format will group all accounts together to mirror the foundation budget. Mr. Mathieu is changing the numbering system to the accounts.

The subcommittee reviewed language in the District Agreement regarding capital expenses for reconstruction or extraordinary repairs.

The subcommittee agreed that while the state minimum wage increase to \$11 does not impact the district, the sum does come close to the current rate of pay for substitute teachers. Mr. Mathieu is gathering data regarding this impact.

The committee agreed to place the item on the school committee meeting agenda of February 1 agenda.

D. Shepherd Hill Building Committee Report (*Vote May be Required*)

Mr. Mathieu has contacted a firm regarding assistance with writing a statement of interest with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Mr. Mathieu reported there is little interest in providing this service, but the information Mr. Mathieu gained during the conversation will be useful when the administrators move forward with the SOI.

Mr. Desto said the district will review the document and rewrite with an emphasis on how the building restrains the educational process.

E. Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative Quarterly Report

The committee received a copy of the report. Mr. Desto reported the collaborative is performing well with its new director. He said the collaborative is adapting its program to changing needs.

Mrs. Kabala said the report was thorough and asked whether tuitions will rise.

Mr. Desto said it is possible. The district sends the largest number of students to the collaborative.

Mrs. Rabbitt asked if the district has studied the costs and the benefits of providing collaborative-like programs in district. Mr. Desto said the district's annual cost analysis has led to such in-district programs as Shepherd Hill's Strives program.

F. Consideration of Request for First Time Use of School Facilities, Policy KF (*Vote Required*)
The request was not submitted and this item was not needed.

XII. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meetings:

- Wednesday, February 1, 2017, Budget and Finance Subcommittee, at Shepherd Hill, 5 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 8, 2017, Shepherd Hill, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 15, 2017, Charlton Middle School (Budget Workshop), 6 p.m.
- Leaders Breakfast, February 17, Shepherd Hill, 9 a.m.
- Wednesday, March 8, 2017, Shepherd Hill, 7 p.m.

XIII. Future Agenda Items – FY 2018 Budget Presentations, 2017-2018 School Year Calendar, topics for the budget subcommittee.

XIV. Adjourn

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by S. Reed to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 8:05 p.m.

Items used for this meeting include:

Agenda for January 25, 2017	Superintendent's Report of Friday, January 20, 2017	Minutes of the Meeting of January 11, 2017
Finance Director's Report	FY 2018 Budget Schedule	MCAS 2.0 Parent Information
SWCEC Quarterly Report	Southern Worcester County Regional Budget Task Force notes	

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.