

## ***DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT***

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, held Wednesday, August 16, 2017, Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road, Charlton, MA, 7 p.m.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair  
Raymond J. Chalk, Vice Chair  
Catherine M. Kabala  
Joseph M. Pietrzak  
Elaine M. Rabbitt  
Stephanie A. Reed

Member Mary N. Antocci was not in attendance.

Also in attendance were Gregg J. Desto, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations; district administrators: Lorinda Allen, Karen Ares, Karen Chanaki, William Chaplin, Jeffrey Ferranti, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean Packard, Christopher Starczewski; media representatives: Rich Earle, district media coordinator; Deb LaPlaca, Telegram; Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

### **I. Call to Order**

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

### **II. Pledge of Allegiance**

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

*Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, July 12, 2017*

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by J. Pietrzak to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of Wednesday, July 12, 2017, was approved by unanimous vote.

*Minutes of Executive Session of Wednesday, July 12, 2017*

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by R. Chalk to accept the minutes of the executive session of Wednesday, July 12, 2017, was approved by unanimous vote.

*Minutes of the executive session of Wednesday, June 28, 2017*

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by S. Reed to accept the minutes of the executive session of Wednesday, June 28, 2017, was approved by unanimous vote.

#### **IV. Approval of Warrant**

There was no warrant this evening.

#### **V. Citizens' Forum**

No one spoke at this time

#### **VI. Communications**

1. Mrs. Rabbitt shared a letter received from Dave Smolski, a Charlton parent, regarding safety hazards along Center Depot Road. Mr. Smolski cited excessive speed and unsafe driving as hazards to be aware of when school opens.

Mrs. Rabbitt contacted Mr. Smolski to let him know she would bring the matter to the board's attention. Mr. Desto said the district will reach out to Interim Police Chief Daniel Charette. Mr. Desto said if the placement of a student's bus stop poses a safety issue, the district will investigate.

2. Mr. Chalk commented on the Charlton Board of Selectmen's meeting Monday evening, during which the board voted to study the feasibility of disbanding the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District. Mr. Chalk said he was surprised that the committee was not made aware of the topic as members could have been involved in the discussion. The district has contracted with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools to study school finance disbursements.

Mr. Chalk refuted some of the information offered by the selectmen: Charlton does not pay twice the amount of Dudley, but 22% above as dictated by the state's wealth formula. If the district splits, Mr. Chalk said there is presently no high school in Charlton and the town would need approximately \$50 million to build one. Charlton Selectmen said the school is creating the need for a 2 ½ override. Mr. Chalk said the override will help the town as a whole.

The selectmen agreed to form a study group, but said no school committee members can serve as it is a conflict. Mr. Chalk said school committee members are elected, and our first priority to provide education for students. Mr. Chalk said the timing was very disruptive with school starting, and the committee has twice invited Charlton officials to join in discussions about school financing. Mr. Chalk said of those two meetings, only one Charlton selectmen attended.

Mrs. Kabala said this issue was last raised in the late 1980s, and the group saw that such a move would be disastrous.

Mrs. Rabbitt said the state continues to encourage towns to regionalize for the benefit of cost savings. Mrs. Rabbitt said the committee has worked diligently to organize joint financial meetings, and initiated an override request in 2013. She said there continues to be misstated or misunderstanding of the information regarding the funding formula, which will hopefully be brought to light by the MARS study. Mrs. Rabbitt said while the funding formula is complex, it

is offset by the benefits of regional transportation reimbursement. Charlton would need to duplicate the costs as well as build a high school.

## **VII. Superintendent's Report**

1. Mr. Desto responded to the Charlton Selectmen's vote saying he has been contacted by a number of people today asking about the state of the district. Mr. Desto said we are not worried about the cohesion of our region. We are as strong as we ever have been. He expressed disappointment not because the town is looking for financial relief, but about the timing. Mr. Desto said there were several productive meetings last year, during which participants decided that the school and the towns are in need and an override is the most likely remedy. Further, Mr. Desto said we agreed we would send the message together that this is necessary. Mr. Desto said the selectmen's vote is a message of division.
2. Mr. Desto announced the schedule for Teachers' Orientation Day, on Monday, August 28, 2017, which includes a light breakfast prior to the presentation.
3. Mr. Desto said the district's YouTube channel is up and running featuring school committee meetings.
4. Mr. Desto said thanks to the committee's vote, the bleachers at the athletic complex have been upgraded.
5. The National Alliance for Mental Illness is offering a course for families of children with emotional or behavioral issues for six weeks on Wednesday evenings beginning September 20. The classes will be held at Shepherd Hill Regional High School.

## **VIII. New Business**

### **A. District Strategic Plan Update**

Mr. Desto said district administrators discussed the vision during a recent retreat. Mr. Desto is recruiting two or three school committee members to serve beginning early to mid-September. Mr. Desto said the work will begin with a model of competencies for district graduates with the goal of preparing them for college. Mr. Desto said the new strategic plan could be in place by Thanksgiving. Mr. Pietrzak, Mrs. Rabbitt, Mrs. Reed, and possibly Mrs. Antocci agreed to serve.

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

Mr. Mathieu introduced new Food Services Director Karen Chanaki, who has been a food service manager for over 10 years in a similarly-sized district. The committee welcomed her to the district.

Mr. Mathieu requested the committee approve several donations:

Kula Foundation to Shepherd Hill	\$22.52
Your Cause to Shepherd Hill	\$20.00

Kula Foundation to Charlton Elementary School	\$ .92
Dudley-Charlton Regional School District Grid Iron Club to Shepherd Hill	\$2,128

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

Mr. Mathieu asked the committee to authorize him to dispose of surplus equipment in the district using best business practices:

- Shepherd Hill vending machine
- Dudley Middle School textbooks.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by S. Reed to authorize the finance director to dispose of the obsolete equipment as presented this evening, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Mathieu will provide the committee with a final FY 17 budget report at the September 13 meeting. Mr. Mathieu projects the district will be able to replenish the excess and deficiency funds used to support the FY 2018 budget.

In a Regional Transportation Fund update, the district received \$39,180 more than budgeted.

FY 18 budget update: – regional transportation was short by \$29,686. Mr. Mathieu recommended using the excess from FY 17 to address the shortfall.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by R. Chalk to offset the \$29,686 regional transportation shortfall, by using the \$39,180 excess in the transportation revolving account, was approved by unanimous vote. This will not affect the FY 2018 budget.

Additionally, due to a change in the state factors for property percentage (0.3538% to 0.3550%) and income percentage (1.4202% to 1.4248%) the required minimum contribution for each town has increased. This may have an impact on the actual town assessments, but does not need to.

Based on the formula used to compute the assessment (required amounts per the state, then the balance divided by the percentage of students) there is potentially a slight change in assessments – Charlton to increase by \$13,497, and Dudley to decrease by the same.

Mr. Mathieu said there are three options available to the committee:

1. Vote to revise the assessments
2. Vote to lower the approved budget by \$25,414, which would keep the Charlton assessment the same, but lower the Dudley assessment;
3. Vote to keep the assessments as computed and approved at the May Town Meetings. This is legally acceptable per the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by J. Pietrzak, to lower the approved FY 2018 budget by \$25,414, which would keep the Charlton assessment the same, but lower the Dudley

assessment, was amended by Mrs. Kabala, seconded by Mr. Pietrzak to state the expenditure would be paid with contingency funds, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Mathieu said this does not change the budget but reduces the contingency line item.

The committee must now vote new FY 2018 budget figures:

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by S. Reed to approve a FY 2018 budget of \$49,920,564, with assessments as follows:

Charlton: \$12,359,091

Dudley: \$ 7,848,983

This was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Mathieu and Mrs. Reed explored the First Parent app, which allows for real time bus location. While First Student says there is a reliable GPS, the district does not presently use the necessary routing software, therefore it must be budgeted and approved before the district can consider the app.

#### C. Report of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee (Vote May be Required)

At its last meeting on August 10, Mrs. Reed was elected as chair. Topics included the proposed 2½ override, and the upcoming meeting with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools.

The subcommittee agreed proposed engaging a communications strategist, Christopher Horan, to assist the district in reaching voters. Mr. Desto spoke with a reference who worked with Mr. Horan during a recent building project. Mrs. Kabala said Mr. Horan's fee can be as high as \$7,500. The Budget and Finance Subcommittee proposed this as a cap to avoid having to go out to bid.

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by C. Kabala to retain communications strategist Christopher Horan at a fee of up to \$7,500, was approved by unanimous vote.

The subcommittee will meet on the third Thursday of each month.

#### D. Consideration of Requests for Home Instruction, Policy IHBG (*Vote Required*)

Mr. Desto recommended approval of the six requests to renew home school plans.

A motion by J. Pietrzak, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the six requests to renew home school plans, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Desto received a request from a family to establish a home school program for the 2017-2018 school year.

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by J. Pietrzak to approve the request to establish a home school program for the 2017-2018 school year, was approved by unanimous vote.

E. Consideration of Requests for Non-Resident Enrollment, Policy JF, (Vote Required)  
Mr. Desto received two requests for non-resident enrollment:

The committee will consider the requests separately.

A family is building a home in Charlton with an anticipated occupancy of late November. The family requests to enroll the child at Charlton Elementary School. The stated occupancy date meets the requirement of policy JF.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the request for enrollment at Charlton Elementary School, was approved by unanimous vote.

A second request was received from a parent of a Shepherd Hill senior who has recently moved to Spencer.

A motion by J. Pietrzak, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the request and allow a Shepherd Hill senior to complete her education in the district under policy JF, was approved by unanimous vote. The approval is granted contingent upon the parents' provision of transportation.

Mr. Desto said there have been several recent move-ins of students who require instructional support. Mr. Desto said as of this meeting date, administrators have not yet evaluated whether there is sufficient staff to take care of this in house. Mr. Desto requested the committee authorize him to hire staff as needed.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by S. Reed to authorize the superintendent to hire instructional support staff as needed, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Desto said the district has been unable to hire a school psychologist to replace the late Stephen Peters. Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Desto agree that an adjustment counselor may be more readily available and would allow for more student support.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by R. Chalk to change the current posting for a school psychologist to an adjustment counselor at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, was withdrawn amid discussion of posting it for one year vs. as a position.

Mr. Desto recommended it be posted it as a position (not just one year) and to contract out for the psychological testing that was completed by Mr. Peters. Mr. Desto said this model can be evaluated at the end of the year.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by R. Chalk to authorize the posting of an adjustment counselor at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, was approved by a vote of 5-1. Mrs. Rabbitt was opposed.

Mrs. Rabbitt said the district needs to analyze the depth of Mr. Peters' counseling work.

Mr. Desto said Mr. Peters will be sorely missed. He is indeed difficult to replace.

**IX. Next Meeting Dates**

**A. School Committee**

- Wednesday, September 13, 2017, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 27, 2017, Charlton Middle School, 7 p.m.

**B. Budget and Finance Subcommittee**

- Thursday, September 21, 2017, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 9 a.m.

**C. Wage and Benefits Subcommittee – Nurse Negotiations**

- Thursday, August 17, 2017, District Office, 9 a.m.

**X. Future Agenda Items – FY 2018 Budget, Strategic Plan, Meeting schedule.**

**XI. Executive Session –** “to discuss strategy with respect to litigation or collective bargaining if an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body.”

The chair entertained a motion to enter executive session, and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 8:19 p.m.

The committee returned to open session at 9:17 p.m.

**XII. Adjourn**

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by S. Reed to adjourn the meeting was approved at 9:17 p.m.

Items used for this meeting include:

<i>Agenda for Wednesday, August 16, 2017</i>	<i>Superintendent's Report of Friday, August 11, 2017</i>	<i>Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, July 26, 2017</i>
<i>Minutes of the Executive Session of Wednesday, July 26, 2017</i>	<i>Advisory Memorandum</i>	<i>Finance Director's Update</i>
<i>First Student app</i>	<i>Obsolete equipment</i>	

*Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary*