

**DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, held Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley Oxford Road, Dudley, MA 01571, 7 p.m.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Mary N. Antocci  
Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair  
Raymond J. Chalk, Vice Chair  
Catherine M. Kabala  
Elaine M. Rabbitt  
Stephanie A. Reed

Joseph M. Pietrzak was not in attendance.

Rebecca Moore, Student Representative, 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, William Chaplin, Jeffrey Ferranti, Dean Packard, Robin Parmley, Diane Seibold, Christopher E. Starczewski; media representatives Rich Earle, audio visual coordinator, Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Approval of Minutes**

A. *Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, December 13, 2017*

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by M. Antocci to approve the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, December 13, 2017, as corrected, was approved by unanimous vote.

B. *Minutes of Executive Session of Wednesday, December 13, 2017*

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by S. Reed to approve the minutes of the executive session of Wednesday, December 13, 2017 as corrected, was approved by a vote of 5-0. Mrs. Antocci abstained.

**IV. Approval of Warrant**

Warrant #	Amount
65	\$302,693.62
66	\$2,295.85
68	\$10,260.00
69	\$907,357.17
70	\$1,078.94

71	\$261,515.33
72	\$574.96
73	\$888.00
1177PV	\$-750.00
1181D	\$467,663.54
1181P	\$1,191,298.85
1182Padj	\$750.00
1183D	\$466,144.75
1183P	\$1,174,474.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,786,245.90</b>

**V. Citizens' Forum**

No one spoke at this time.

**VI. School Spotlight – Dudley Elementary School**

Mrs. Seibold introduced the children involved with the school's garden program led by teacher Elizabeth Waye Betz.

The students shared their most memorable moments working with the garden through the spring and summer. The project will culminate in the fall with a harvest dinner with all the vegetables. Will connect with the Dudley Garden Club and get on their garden tour

**VII. Communications**

Neither Mr. Desto nor any members had any communications.

**VIII. Superintendent's Report**

1. Mr. Desto reported on the first annual *John Paire Be Better Basketball Tournament*, which featured many teams of varying skill levels competing at Charlton Middle School, Dudley Middle School and Shepherd Hill throughout the day Saturday, January 7. Mr. Desto thanked the participants and volunteers who helped make this a huge success.

2. Mr. Desto noted the Dudley-Charlton Education Foundation Annual Appeal is underway. The proceeds from the fundraiser are used by teachers throughout the district to provide enriching activities in our schools.

3. Mr. Desto thanked Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Ares for their organization, and staff members who provided professional development on January 2. The day began with a session with Alan November, a foremost expert in closing the gap between what students learn in public schools and what they will need after graduation. Mr. Desto said the day was well organized and outstanding.

4. Weather related items:

Last week's blizzard was followed by extreme cold and high wind. There was no damage locally as in other regions. A pipe did burst on the third floor of Shepherd Hill. No classroom space was lost, thanks in large part to the custodians.

Mr. Desto thanked the Charlton Elementary School custodians for their attentiveness over the frigid weekend. One of the custodians was in the building on Saturday checking every heating unit in the building. He found that two that were not functioning and got them running, thereby preventing a potential disaster.

5. Mr. Desto said the district has reached an agreement with the Massachusetts Nurses Association, which is representing the seven district nurses. The employment contract document is currently being reviewed by both parties.

**IX. Student Representative Report – Rebecca Moore**

This item was tabled as Miss Moore is not present this evening.

Mrs. Kabala noted that the University of Massachusetts band played at the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, California. The band contains at least five Shepherd Hill graduates, including former school committee representative Jack Bugar.

**X. New Business**

**A. FY 2019 Budget Update (*Vote may be required*)**

Mr. Desto presented this item for discussion. The school district has been discussing for many months that it will be requesting a budget that is likely to necessitate approval from the boards of selectmen for a Proposition 2 ½ override. This matter has been discussed with Dudley and Charlton officials as well. Concerns have been raised by Charlton officials concerning the budget timeline discussed at the last meeting. The committee had agreed to wait until February 14 to set its initial budget when figures are readily available and can be used to construct a realistic number for the override. The key numbers are the governor's budget, the new busing contract, and health insurance estimates.

Mr. Desto said this time frame would allow a special election on or around April 3. Specifically, the Charlton Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee are concerned that this would give them only two weeks to discuss and render a decision by Feb. 27.

Mr. Desto said the Charlton's town election is May 5, and the closer the district's vote is to that, we are told that this will be more difficult for the town clerk to pull together two elections in that time frame.

Mr. Desto said Dudley does not have an issue on the far end of that schedule, but would have a quick turnaround time when the district gives them the number and they approve it.

Mr. Desto suggested moving the committee's initial budget presentation up to Feb. 7 or Jan. 24. Either of these scenarios would base the numbers on predictions rather than hard information.

Mr. Mathieu and Mrs. Rabbitt agreed that the committee has discussed the figures with town officials; therefore they will not be surprised by the amount sought for the override. Mrs. Rabbitt said officials know the need is real. There will be no debate on whether the override will

be sought, it will be a debate on the number and whether officials and voters will support that number.

Mr. Chalk said the committee would be remiss if it did not present the governor's budget information.

Mr. Chalk said the committee should not be premature in setting its budget only to find out the bus contract and governor's budget brings us up short. Mr. Chalk said both town boards can be flexible and hold a special meeting to discuss the request.

The committee is not in favor of tying the override request in with the annual elections as the general wisdom is that we have a special election will work in the district's favor. Additionally, Mrs. Rabbitt noted that waiting for the town meetings does not provide sufficient time for the committee to respond if the override does not pass and we need to complete a budget in our time frame.

Mr. Desto agreed to inform town officials that the committee will vote its initial budget on Feb. 14, and will request a special election on April 3 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The initial budget will trigger the override figure.

The committee agreed to set a special budget working meeting on Wednesday, February 7 at Shepherd Hill at 6:30 p.m.

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

1. Mr. Mathieu asked the committee to approve the following donations:  
Heritage School received a \$500 donation from a parent to offset student lunch balances.  
Charlton Middle School received a \$100 donation from a parent to offset student lunch balances.

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

Shepherd Hill received a donation of \$1,500 from Commemorative Brands, to offset the cost of the first honors dinner.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by S. Reed to accept the donation as presented, was approved by unanimous vote.

2. Mr. Mathieu presented the results of a follow-up with the Attorney General's Office concerning requirements for warrant signing. Mr. Mathieu said the Attorney General's office indicated the committee's current practice of appointing a subcommittee to sign warrants during the weeks in between meetings, was acceptable. There is no need to post the meetings; however, any discussion about a particular warrant must be conducted at an open meeting.

Mrs. Rabbitt said this advice was contrary to that provided during a recent training sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools. She said she is still unclear about the

process, and requested the matter be discussed by the budget and finance subcommittee, who will bring a recommendation back to the full committee for its approval.

Mrs. Rabbitt said she finds the current process distracting to sign warrants while the meeting is going on. She proposed setting the agenda for 10 minutes prior to allow for those to sign the warrants. Any concerns or questions can be addressed at that time.

Mrs. Kabala noted that members are emailed copies of the warrants in advance.

The subcommittee will discuss this issue at its next meeting of Wednesday, January 17.

3. Mr. Mathieu reported that the district's quarterly reports will be ready on January 24.

4. The district's excess and deficiency has been certified as \$1.8 million. Mr. Mathieu said the increase is due to the lack of deficit in the health trust fund.

5. The FY 2017 audit has been completed and copies are available in the district office. Mr. Mathieu asked the committee to invite the auditors, Powers and Sullivan, to the January 24 meeting. The committee agreed to start this meeting at 6:30 p.m.

6. Mr. Mathieu has been exploring with other communities the possibility of a Joint Procurement for transportation. He said the meetings had been going smooth, as districts explore partnering with each other as one procurement for the five communities of Leicester, Webster, Oxford, Southbridge and Dudley-Charlton. This approach has not always been successful as other areas have experienced it, according to Mr. Mathieu. There are some barriers and questions, such as any requirements of Mass. General Law, and the prevailing wage. This initial bid document has been reviewed by legal counsel.

Mr. Mathieu asked the committee for any guidance for this process. He said there is fear in the unknown, and where there may be unforeseen issues. He said some or all of the towns could ultimately drop out of the process, which could negate any possible savings.

Mr. Mathieu asked the committee if he should proceed with the joint procurement. The committee agreed to go forward if the district will realize savings. Mrs. Rabbitt said the district can't not try something new in the hopes of saving money.

C. MSBA: Core Program vs. Accelerated Repair – *Discussion (Vote Requested)*

The district learned last month that it has not been accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority CORE program. Shepherd Hill has been rated a 2 of 4, with 4 being the worst.

Mr. Desto said the district can opt to reapply for the CORE Program or apply for the Accelerated Repair Program. He said the district applied for this program several years ago, which resulted in funds to upgrade windows and doors at Shepherd Hill. The AR program application deadline is in February. An application to the Accelerated Repair program precludes an application to the CORE program.

Mr. Desto said Shepherd Hill needs a new roof, as the current one is 25 years old. He said the Heritage School roof is also 25 years old.

The debt incurred by construction of two new middle schools and renovations/additions to two elementary schools is paid off in June 2019. The district also plans to seek a Proposition 2 ½ override this spring.

Mr. Desto recommended the committee approve an application for the Accelerated Repair program.

Mrs. Kabala agreed she is in favor of repairing the Shepherd Hill roof. Mrs. Antocci noted the MSBA has stated there is a lack of funds for the CORE program.

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by E. Rabbitt to authorize the superintendent to submit an application to the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program, and this was approved by unanimous vote.

D. Consideration of Request for First Time Use of Facilities, Policy KF *(Vote Required)*  
Aspire Dance Company of Oxford has requested to use the Shepherd Hill auditorium to conduct a showcase performance fundraiser for its Booster Club. The ADC Booster Club is comprised of the parents/guardians of the Aspire Dance Center competition team. According to Mandy Christenson of ADC, the competition team is made up of 49 girls mostly from Oxford, Dudley, Charlton, and Webster. Their parents hold several fundraisers over the course of the year to raise funds to offset the expenses incurred in competitive dance. The ADC Booster Club covers approximately 50% of the girls' competition fees and without the fundraising efforts, many of the girls would no longer be able to dance competitively. In recent years, the showcase has been the most successful fundraiser and has been held at Oxford High School, but this year Oxford discontinued its nonprofit rate so ADC Boosters are seeking another auditorium with a discount for nonprofit organizations so the girls can hold their show. Mr. Desto recommended approval of the request to use Shepherd Hill (or, if necessary, one of the middle schools) at the non-profit (Policy KF Group A and B) rate. With the committee's approval, the group will pay only for associated costs – custodians, lighting operation, etc.

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the request by the Aspire Dance Company to use Shepherd Hill or another school as may be available, February 11, 2018, per its request, was approved by unanimous vote.

E. Consideration of Request for Home Instruction, Policy IHBG *(Vote Required)*  
Mr. Desto presented the request of a Charlton family to begin home schooling their children, in kindergarten and grade 2, for the remainder of the 2017-2018 school year.

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by S. Reed to approve the home school plan as presented, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Rabbitt asked if the district follows up to find out why a family withdraws to home school. Mr. Desto said in this particular case, the reason is known to the district. The district conducted a survey several years ago to determine the reasons why families home school.

F. Consideration to Approve 2018-2019 School Year Calendar (*Vote Required*)

Mr. Desto presented the calendar as drafted by Mrs. Antocci, Mrs. Reed, Dudley-Charlton Teachers' Association President Kevin Foley, Mrs. Allen, Dudley-Charlton Teachers' Association member David Deremian. Mr. Desto said the calendar is essentially similar, with some changes, including two additional half days of professional development. Mr. Desto said because the new strategic plan requires staff to make radical changes in their practices, additional time is necessary.

In addition, parent conferences will be held in the spring for PK-4 only. For grades 5-12, each school will set up a student work demonstration night. The need for conferences is lessened by the fact that methods of communication with teachers have never been easier.

Mrs. Kabala voiced concern that this would create more work for teachers, and put the burden on the administration. Also, in the past, parents had complained that there are too many half days.

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by M. Antocci to approve the 2018-2019 school year calendar as presented, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Rabbitt said this change in focus for the grades 5-12 parent conferences in in line with the goal of the strategic plan. She said more work is always required to implement new ideas.

G. Consideration of Request for Overnight Travel, Policy IJOA (*Vote Required*)

The Shepherd Hill Varsity Cheerleaders have requested the committee's approval to travel to Orlando, Florida in March 2018, for the Ameri-Cheer High School Nationals held at Walt Disney World, Florida. The three-day overnight request necessitates the cheerleaders be dismissed at 11:10 a.m. on Friday, March 23, with a return date of Monday, March 26. The cost of the trip is \$870 per student. Citing the facts that the cheerleaders have earned the right to participate in this event (teams must qualify) and the valuable nature of the experience, Mr. Desto recommended approval.

School days missed:	1.5
Cost per person:	\$870 (Costs may be defrayed through fundraising)
Number of students:	11
Number of chaperones:	2

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by C. Kabala, to approve the request of the Shepherd Hill Varsity Cheerleaders to travel to Orlando, Florida, to compete in the Ameri-Cheer High School Nationals, in March 2018, was approved by unanimous vote.

**XI. Next Meeting Dates**

School Committee Meetings:

- Wednesday, January 24, 2018, Charlton Middle School, 6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 7, 2018, Shepherd Hill, 6:30 p.m. Budget
- Wednesday, February 14, 2018, Shepherd Hill, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 28, 2018, Charlton Middle School, 7 p.m.

Budget and Finance Subcommittee:

- Wednesday, January 17, 2018, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 9 a.m.

**XII. Future Agenda Items – Budget, MSBA, Nurse’s Agreement**

Warrant item, transportation bid,

Mrs. Rabbitt noted the MASC is holding a training on cyber security at Assabet Regional Vocational High School, 6 p.m. Some districts are inserting cyber-security as a line item.

**XIII. Adjourn**

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by E. Rabbitt, to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 8:57 p.m.

Items used for this meeting included:

Agenda for January 10, 2018	Minutes of December 13, 2017	Superintendent’s Report of Friday, January 5, 2018	Strategic Plan Update
2018-2019 School Year Draft Calendar	Overnight Travel Request	Finance Director’s Report of January 5, 2018	Minutes of the Executive Session of December 13, 2017

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary