

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, Wednesday, February 8, 2017 at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley Oxford Road, Dudley, 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
Joseph M. Pietrzak, was not in attendance.
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, William Chaplin, Jody O'Brien, John D. Paire, Diane Seibold; teacher David Deremian; 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 7 p.m.

The chair called for a moment of silence in honor of a Dudley Middle School student who died on Friday, February 3.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, January 25, 2017

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, January 25, 2017, as corrected, was approved by unanimous vote.

IV. Approval of Warrant

- Warrant #39 in the amount of \$340,226.82 was distributed and signed by a majority of members without further comment or questions.

V. Citizens' Forum

No one spoke at this time.

VI. School Spotlight – Mason Road School

Mason Road School is unable to present this evening as the kindergarten show was rescheduled to this evening due to yesterday's school cancellation.

VII. Communications

Mrs. Rabbitt praised the Show Choir Festival held last weekend at Shepherd Hill Regional High School. Dudley Middle and Charlton Middle School choruses were featured with Shepherd Hill's Fantasy and Illusion choirs. Mrs. Rabbitt said she was proud to witness the talent on display, and the professionalism and grace exhibited throughout the performances. She said the students work very hard, and thanked those who work behind the scenes as well.

Mrs. Antocci attended the *Story of a Building* program at Bay Path Regional High School with Mr. Mathieu and Mr. Chaplin. Mrs. Antocci said the speakers offered great information on how to proceed with a building project. The MSBA discussed preparing the Statement of Interest, all the way up to outfitting a building with furniture, and how to formulate the subcommittee and the type of people who should be involved.

VII. Superintendent's Report

1. The Budget Task Force meeting originally scheduled for Thursday evening has been cancelled due to an impending snow storm.

2. The Massachusetts Nurses' Association has informed Mr. Desto that the majority of the district nurses have voted to be represented in collective bargaining. The district will be contacted for dates and times to begin bargaining. Mr. Desto will keep the committee informed.

Mrs. Kabala and Mrs. Aucoin agreed to serve on that bargaining committee.

3. Mr. Desto said he plans to post the Dudley Elementary School Principal vacancy on March 1 with interviews beginning March 20. While Mr. Desto said the search committee members from the interim round will be retained, he would like to add at least one school committee member. Mrs. Kabala volunteered to serve.

4. Show Choirs from **Dudley Middle School and Charlton Middle** School will perform at Tantasqua Regional High School Saturday, February 11. This is the first time Tantasqua has ever hosted a Show Choir event for middle school, unisex and a small choirs.

5. Mr. Desto will host the **Leaders Breakfast** Friday, February 17 at Shepherd Hill, 9 a.m. The group will look at the state budget. Mrs. Reed, Mrs. Kabala and Mrs. Aucoin will attend.

VIII. Student Representative Report

Jack Cederberg was not in attendance this evening.

IX. New Business

A. FY 2018 Budget Presentation (*Vote Required*)

Mr. Desto presented an overview of the preliminary FY 2018 budget, which represents no loss of jobs. Mr. Desto said the driving force is the governor's budget as released Jan. 24.

The preliminary budget is built on \$24.2 million from Chapter 70, \$1.6 million in transportation, and \$2.4 million to pay debt on the completed school construction. The district will contribute \$1 million of its reserves.

Mr. Mathieu said the towns would need to contribute more than the mandatory minimum local contribution.

Mr. Desto said the district has been in this position before, having been dealt a blow by the state as the governor's budget has proposed a \$25 per pupil increase, or \$76,000 for the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District. Mr. Desto said the situation requires creativity.

Mr. Desto said the primary focus of the budget is to ensure that our students will not feel the pain of this budget, and will receive an even better academic experience than the year before.

Mr. Desto outlined the budget goals as:

- Ensure safety and security
- Reduce class sizes in grades 1-3
- Increase social emotional / mental health support
- Progress toward Strategic Planning Objectives:
- Support Global Awareness and STEAM programming

The preliminary budget represents six new positions:

- 1 Grade 1 at Charlton Elementary School
- 2 teachers of grade 4 at Heritage School and Dudley Elementary School
- 1 teacher of ELL
- 1 teacher of the deaf
- 1 adjustment Counselor at Shepherd Hill

The proposed assessments exceed the minimum amounts required by law by a total of \$2,903,379.

Mr. Mathieu said the state is shifting the burden to local assessments. Charlton has gone above its target share this year, Dudley remains below.

The district is facing a \$2.7 million increase in revenue with no help from the state.

Additional revenue will be provided by circuit breaker, school choice, athletics, cafeteria, state/federal grants, payments on the field project, preschool tuition and parking fees.

Mr. Desto has sent a letter to town leaders informing them of the large increase, but notifying them that they are aware there is much work to do to present a workable budget.

Possible solutions:

- Increase revenue from state
- Staff/program reductions, creative use of staff
- School Choice
- Use of grant funds
- Monitor / review health insurance

The committee needs to vote a preliminary budget this evening:

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by R. Chalk to approve a preliminary FY 2018 budget of \$51,578,858, with assessments totaling \$22,164,074, or \$13,384,425 to Charlton, and \$8,779,649 to Dudley, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Kabala said everything in this budget is justifiable, and it is not a spending problem, but a revenue problem.

Mr. Chalk said as the committee makes its cuts to the budget each year, the need is compounding.

Mrs. Rabbitt said once the budget is set, unlike a municipality, the school committee cannot make any increases to the budget until the following year. She urged caution until better information comes in from state.

Mrs. Antocci asked Mr. Desto to stress to town officials that there is no “fat” in this budget, and that they need to truly understand what the district is up against. There is no leeway here.

Mr. Desto said he and Mr. Mathieu communicate with town officials regularly.

Regarding the need for technology to comply with the online testing requirements of the MCAS 2.0, Mr. Desto said the district can request a waiver if they are unable to purchase a sufficient number of computers.

Mrs. Reed noted that joint conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents urged communities to prepare for the MCAS 2.0.

Mrs. Rabbitt said that while the district needs to prepare for MCAS 2.0, it is important to note that the goal of a technology plan is to have computers available every day in the classroom, not just at testing time.

B. Budget and Finance Subcommittee Report

The subcommittee met Wednesday, February 1 and in view of the information from the state, the conversation centered on how to move forward in substantiating the need for increases to town officials.

The subcommittee discussed the substitute teacher rates as well as preschool tuitions.

The subcommittee discussed the district independent auditor's recommendations for documented accounting procedures. This project is underway.

The subcommittee reviewed OPEB and pension liability.

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

1. Mr. Mathieu presented two donations for the committee's approval:

Stochaj Insurance to Dudley Elementary School
for its *Caring Continues* program \$125

Mrs. and Mrs. Bromage to Dudley Elementary School
for its *Caring Continues* program \$50

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

2. Mr. Mathieu presented analysis of the district's preschool tuition, which last increased in 2013, and the substitute teacher rate, which was last increased in 2006.
3. Mr. Mathieu presented the Quarterly Report for the period ending December 31, 2016, which indicates the district is in good financial shape at this point half way through the school year. The report format is undergoing revisions.
4. Mr. Mathieu reviewed the grants and revolving funds, saying that School Choice is listed in the negative as the salaries charged there are encumbered. Revenue from the state will replenish this account.
5. Regarding the FY 18 budget and health insurance, Mr. Mathieu said the guidance we received was preliminary, and this budget cycle is pointing out the need for adopt a multi-year solution.

D. Consideration to Increase Substitute Teacher Pay Rates (*Vote Required*)

The rate of pay for substitute teachers currently stands at \$70 per day without a four-year degree; \$75 with a BA/BS, and \$80 per day for certified teachers. These rates have been in effect since 2006.

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee recommends a \$10 increase per category, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

This adds \$21,500 to the budget.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the recommended increases to the substitute teacher pay by \$10, was approved by unanimous vote.

E. Consideration to Increase Preschool Fees (Vote Required)

The district's preschool tuition rates rank at the bottom among local districts. The last increase was in 2013 to \$800 per year.

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee recommended a \$200 per year increase to \$1,000. This will provide \$12,500 in additional revenue

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by C. Kabala, to increase preschool tuition to \$1,000 per year, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, was approved by unanimous vote.

F. Consideration to Approve 2017-2018 School Year Calendar (*Vote Required*)

Mr. Desto presented the calendar, which was revised to reflect the committee's Jan. 25 discussion concerning March parent-teacher conferences. Mr. Desto said the current conference model is working well at elementary level, and there are no alternatives for the practice at the high school.

Mr. Desto recommend approval of the 2017-2018 school year calendar, which schedules parent-teacher conferences on March 15, 2018.

The Dudley-Charlton Teachers' Association has approved the calendar.

A motion by E. Rabbitt, seconded by S. Reed to approve the 2017-2018 School Year Calendar as presented, was approved by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Antocci agreed the parent-teacher conferences are beneficial at the elementary level, and participation seems to be wavering at the high school. She said work needs to be done to determine an alternative. Also, Mrs. Antocci said she has heard from parents regarding eliminating the February and April vacations in favor of one vacation in March.

G. Consideration to Dispose of Obsolete Materials, Shepherd Hill Library Books (*Vote Required*)

Library/Media Specialist Anya Kennedy has been working hard to weed out the books to allow the district to modernize the John Canavan library. Using accepted practices, Mrs. Kennedy has compiled a lengthy list of obsolete titles.

Mr. Chaplin said there are no outlets thus far that have expressed interest in the books.

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by R. Chalk to accept the items as obsolete and to authorize the finance director to dispose of the items using good business practices, was approved by unanimous vote.

X. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meetings:

- Wednesday, February 15, 2017, Charlton Middle School (Budget Workshop)
6 p.m.

- Wednesday, March 8, 2017, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 7 p.m.
- *Leaders' Breakfast* - Friday, February 17, 2017, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 9 a.m.
- *Budget and Finance Subcommittee* - Wednesday, March 15, 2017, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 5 p.m.

XI. Future Agenda Items – FY 2018 Budget Presentations – District Administrators / Building Principals.
 School Choice discussion on March 8.

XII. Adjourn

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

Items used for this meeting include:

Agenda for Feb. 8, 2017	Superintendent's Report of Feb. 3, 2017	Minutes of the School Committee Meeting of Jan. 25, 2017
Finance Director's Report Substitute Teacher Rate analysis Preschool Tuition analysis	Shepherd Hill Library Collection Development Program	Capital Assessments
Budget Review and Assessments	2017-2018 Draft Calendar	2017-2018 Budget Summary

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary