

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional District School Committee
Regular Meeting ~ January 28, 2014

A Regular Meeting of the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee was held on January 28, 2014, in the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional High School Auditorium.

Present:

Richard Barrett
Christopher Andrade
Tiffany Bartholomew
Eliza Couture
Peter Hebda
David Katseff
Susan Lorenz
Raymond Medeiros
Janice Terry

Also:

Michael Malone, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Gail Van Buren, Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Catherine Antonellis, District Business Administrator
Dr. Stephen Hemmens, MARS
Kyle Riley, Special Education Director
Kellie Partridge-Fagan, Recording Secretary

Absent:

Timothy Rapoza

Mr. Medeiros stated that the committee would enter into open session at 6:35 PM, and was being broadcast and recorded with the help of the Rehoboth Cable Advisory Board.

Mr. Medeiros led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance. Broadcast by Rehoboth Cable Advisory Committee.

Agenda Item #3, Vote to Approve Minutes:

It was moved by Mrs. Terry, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to approve the Executive Session minutes of January 08, 2014 meeting.

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Terry, and VOTED to approve the Executive Session minutes of August 13, 2013 meeting.

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Terry, and VOTED to approve the Executive Session minutes of June 25, 2013 meeting.

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

Agenda Item #4, Bills and Payroll:

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Terry, and VOTED to approve the following bills and payroll:

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V - #19 \$ 112,266.89
V - #1032 \$ 805,109.93
V - #1600 \$ 684,908.11
V - #1601 \$ 327,567.87

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

Agenda Item #5, Public Input:

None at this time.

Agenda Item #6, Correspondence & Enclosures:

Mr. Malone highlighted the following:

- ✓ The Whitsons Food Services report – showed participation numbers, financials, etc. for the month of December 2013
- ✓ 2013 Cross Country All Academic-All State Boys Team: Ty Enos, DRRHS student, named to MA Division 2
- ✓ Various newsletters
- ✓ All remaining correspondence will be addressed during the meeting

Mr. Andrade requested that a Whitsons financial report be included in School Committee packets once per month.

Agenda Item #7a, Student Advisory Committee:

Student representatives: Mrs. Striano, and representatives from the high school Student Advisory Committee, updated the committee on recent issues/happenings at the high school:

- ✓ Mid-terms were held the week of January 13th
- ✓ DRRHS goes “viral” with blogs, Twitter, and Facebook (social media and school news are now combined)
- ✓ Spirit Week was the extremely successful this year: food collections tripled, and many gifts for needy families were collected
- ✓ The Nation Honor Society has 45 new inductees
- ✓ D~R made the AP Honor Roll: there are significant improvements and additional classes available to students
- ✓ The fall play was “12 Angry Jurors”
- ✓ The winter play will be “The Drowsy Chaperone” ~ the play will run March 26th, 27th, & 28th
- ✓ All winter sports are in full swing: basketball, swim, hockey, track, and wrestling

Mr. Andrade gave kudos to the high school for getting into social media.

Mr. Medeiros thanked the students for their presentation.

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Agenda Item #7b, Hockey Team Update:

Ron Botelho, team president, and Tim McGovern, team coach, addressed the committee regarding the hockey team:

- ✓ The team asked the School Committee for any financial support available
- ✓ This is a parent-funded sport
- ✓ Costs per year can run from \$900 to \$1,000 per player
- ✓ The team cannot travel by bus to all their games, as transportation costs are too high

Mr. McGovern then gave an update of the team stats.

Mr. Medeiros responded that the original agreement with the team was for a parent-funded sport. A hockey team has never been in the budget. Mr. Medeiros suggested a team representative send the School Committee a proposal, to be reviewed at a future date.

Agenda Item #7c, DRRHS Proposals ~ GPA/MCAS:

Ms. Striano addressed the committee on a proposed increase of the high school GPA system:

- ✓ Ms. Striano brought forth a GPA increase proposal that will give all students equitable credit for courses taken (i.e. AP credit will be increased by 1.2 points)
- ✓ The boost in the GPA number will result in an increase in the number of students applying to upper-tier colleges, while also recognizing students at all levels for their achievements
- ✓ The increase will be in-line with other schools and the College Board

Mrs. Couture asked if this proposal would be instituted right away. Ms. Striano stated that the new system will be in-place for next year.

Ms. Striano is asking for approval of the new grading system for the high school handbook. Mr. Malone is recommending the change/conversion.

By committee consensus, the new GPA policy was approved as presented.

Mr. Katseff stated that he would like more information on this change.

Mrs. Martin explained that there are no uniform policies for GPA scores across the state, or throughout colleges/universities.

Ms. Striano stressed that the new system will equal out all student.

Ms. Striano pointed out that over 50 students have gotten early admissions to the college of their choice. This is an excellent statistic.

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Jill Saxon, DRRHS Science teacher, talked about the current MCAS Science portion of the test:

- ✓ The school is proposing one common and inclusive assessment of Biology be taken in the 10th grade
- ✓ Currently, high school students take either the Physics portion or the Chemistry MCAS test
- ✓ Testing with a consistent assessment will help in closing the achievement gap, raise school scores, improve state ranking, and increase individual student achievement
- ✓ Ms. Saxon provided a chart showing Biology MCAS scores in participating schools, versus scores from students taking the Physics MCAS only

Mrs. Lorenz asked if this was a choice that D~R can make as an individual high school. Ms. Striano stated that the choice is ours.

Mr. Medeiros stated that this is a principal/building issue, but thanked the Ms. Striano and her staff for informing the School Committee of this recommendation.

Agenda Item #7d, Superintendent's Report:

Mr. Malone highlighted the following:

- ✓ Congratulations to: Curtis Letourneau, Donovan Burtan, Matt Haynes, and Madison Burtan, who were chosen, by audition, to participate in the MA Music Educators Association Southeast District Concert Festivals
- ✓ Congratulations to Kyle Arietta, DRRHS Senior, who has been awarded the Gridiron Club of Boston Courageous Player Award
- ✓ The district has been approved for a Student Exchange Program with The Cambridge Institute:
 - Tuition fees go directly to the high school - \$10,000/student is the proposed tuition
 - The program should earn the district approximately \$100,000
 - Exchange student per-pupil expenditure costs will be included in our Chapter 70 reimbursement
 - There will be five students coming next year as seniors and five from freshmen to juniors
 - This addition of students will not upset class rankings
 - Students can come for 1 year only
 - The Cambridge Institute will take care of screening prospective host families, collecting tuition fees, etc.
 - Program will be reciprocal for us to send our students abroad
 - There may be a possible sister school in China in the future

Mr. Medeiros asked if The Cambridge Institute will be our sole source for an exchange program. Mr. Malone stated that they would be, as part of our agreement with the company.

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- ✓ PARCC testing starts this spring; there will be a PARCC/DDS presentation at a future meeting

Mr. Medeiros asked for the schedule for PARCC testing. Mr. Malone noted that PARCC testing will be scheduled close to testing – should be in the Spring of 2014

Mr. Medeiros addressed the committee regarding a PARCC follow-up with students and teachers. The School Committee will be looking for an overall assessment of the test, not just test results.

Mr. Malone talked about the FY '15 budget:

- ✓ The state , transportation, etc. funding will be level-funded for FY '15
- ✓ There is a 13% increase in reimbursement for kindergarten
- ✓ There is a MA state budget deficit of over \$500 million dollars ~ can't expect a great deal of financial support from the state for FY '15
- ✓ In general, the district is not being funded at the level that we should (i.e. transportation costs)
- ✓ Mr. Malone encouraged School Committee and community members to contact their local legislators for additional funding support

Agenda Item #7e, MSBA Project(s) Report:

Mrs. Bartholomew updated the committee on the status of the MSBA projects:

- ✓ There will be a meeting of the Capital Projects Task Force on February 04, 2014 @ 6:00 PM
- ✓ On February 11, 2014, there will be a MSBA presentation in the auditorium
- ✓ The entire monetary amount required will be put into a bond figure, and then the district will be reimbursed at 52%

Mrs. Lorenz asked if the 52% reimbursement figure is guaranteed. Mr. Malone assured the committee that this percentage is guaranteed, and there is approximately a six month turn-around for reimbursement.

Agenda Item #7f, Policy Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Hebda stated that Section "F" was included in the committee folders for tonight's meeting. He asked that committee members to review same section, and be prepared for a vote on Section "F" at the February 11th meeting.

Agenda Item #7g, Chairperson's Report:

Mr. Medeiros reported on the following:

- ✓ There were 22 applicants for Superintendent Search
- ✓ Semi-final interviews will take place the week of February 03, 2014
- ✓ The Search Committee will bring 3-4 names forward to the School Committee at the February 11th meeting

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Agenda Item #8a, FY '15 Proposed Budget:

Mr. Malone and Mrs. Antonellis led a discussion on the FY '15 budget.

- ✓ The proposed budget is now at a 5.5% increase
- ✓ Mr. Malone and Mrs. Antonellis are reviewing all budget lines - everything is on the table
- ✓ There will be a Public Hearing of the proposed budget in March 2014

Mr. Riley updated the committee on the Special Education budget for next year. He reminded the committee that the Special Education budget is flexible. It changes on a regular basis. He will be researching other school districts for structure/budget recommendations. There may be staff reorganization proposed within the district.

Mrs. Van Buren addressed the technology budget. The district is looking to maintain district technology, not purchase new. The district is also looking at grants for financial support.

Mr. Medeiros addressed the committee regarding the Financial Advisory Committee that needs to be put together. The committee will need members from both the Dighton and Rehoboth communities to participate.

Agenda Item #8b, MARS Presentation on Allocation Methodology:

Mrs. Lorenz introduced Dr. Stephen Hemmens, MARS, who gave a presentation on the district assessment allocation methodology.

Dr. Hemmens reviewed both the statutory methodology as created by the MA Department of Education and the alternative methodology. Dr. Hemmens reminded the committee that any alternative method used must be by agreement of both towns, and notification to the Department of Education.

- ✓ Dr. Hemmens reviewed various Chapter 70 terms for clarification (i.e. foundation budget, funding foundation budget, etc.)
- ✓ He explained that a statutory method is the member town's required local contribution to the regional school district, as determined by the commissioner;
- ✓ He reviewed:
 - Local contributions
 - Additional share of the region's net school spending
 - Transportation and other non-net school spending costs allocated to each member town, pursuant to the assessment provision of the Regional Agreement

Dr. Hemmens showed a model of the statutory method compiled using per-pupil expenditure. The School Committee has to vote to affirm this method each year, but the district does not have to notify the Department of Education for using a statutory method.

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Dr. Hemmens gave an example of an alternative method. The community 'wealth factor' is not taken into account in this example. The district has to be able to justify to the state the reasoning behind using an alternative method, and the district must be consistent.

Next, he reviewed the FY '14 assessment methodology used. The district has three budgets, that do not allow for the individual towns to help each other out (i.e. Dighton K-8 and Rehoboth K-8). Dighton was assessed \$1 million+ dollars, while Rehoboth was not assessed their share.

Mrs. Antonellis and Dr. Hemmens noted that the method used is neither the statutory method (as written in our Regional Agreement), nor an approved alternative method. However, the budget was voted and approved; therefore it is a legal budget.

Dr. Hemmens addressed our Regional Agreement. He recommended that the district form a Regional Agreement Amendment Committee.

Mr. Andrade asked if both towns vote an alternative method down, then what happens. Dr. Hemmens noted that at that point, the district will not have a budget. The School Committee must go back to the towns with another proposal to vote on. If by June 30th there is no agreed-upon budget, then the state takes over.

Mr. Katseff asked if one town approves an alternative method and the other town does not, then what happens. Dr. Hemmens explained that the budget will default to the statutory method for both towns.

Mr. Hebda asked if the Chapter 70 funds were previously allocated with any direction from the state. Dr. Hemmens stated that the MA DESE does not choose an allocation method for a district.

Ed Swartz, Dighton Finance Committee Chair, addressed the committee regarding the methodology. Mr. Swartz understood that when Dighton paid over the minimum contribution, that those funds went directly to the Dighton schools. In actuality, the excess was distributed throughout the district.

Ron O'Connor, Dighton resident, asked that the Dr. Hemmens PowerPoint presentation be put onto our website.

Mr. Katseff stated that since 2007, Rehoboth has voted to pay the local, minimum contribution, plus transportation costs. Dighton, however, voted to pay the local, minimum contribution, transportation, plus additional money to fund their budget.

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Howard Horsman, Dighton resident, asked that the School Committee go back to 2007 to see where the discrepancy(ies) started. He noted that Dighton has always paid over the minimum local contribution required, and that it is the committee's obligation to go back to 2007.

Mr. Malone explained that the committee could go back to 2007; however, the district needs to focus on a budget for FY '15. He noted that any previous budgets are legal.

Mr. Malone also spoke about revising our Regional Agreement.

Mr. Horsman noted that the School Committee has an obligation to see if there were discrepancies for the past 7 years.

Mr. Medeiros stated that the district needs to complete a budget for next year, and also needs to review our Regional Agreement. The budget, however, will come first.

Mr. Medeiros asked if there are any other district budgets that are designed like Dighton~Rehoboth. Dr. Hemmens noted that there are no other districts with 3 separate budgets.

Nancy Goulart, Dighton Finance Committee, noted that the 3 budgets were created so that towns will have input as to how their K-8 funds were spent. She recommended that our Regional Agreement be amended to reflect current methodology. Mrs. Goulart asked about our FY '14 budget. Dr. Hemmens stated that, since the budget was voted in, it is a legal budget as is.

Gerald Schwall, Rehoboth Finance Committee, addressed the committee regarding the high school funding.

Mr. Katseff responded that the high school budget is built first, and then the K-8's.

Mr. Barrett asked that the Regional Agreement be addressed sooner, rather than later.

Mr. Katseff explained that for over 7 years, the committee has followed the "statutory" methodology that was recommended to them. The committee was told that this was the correct way: however, this method went from a 60%/40% split, to more of a 50%/50% split.

Mrs. Lorenz said that what was used was not the "statutory" method, but simply past practice. The School Committee only recently discovered any discrepancies.

Dr. Hemmens reminded the committee that it is, in actuality, one budget that the towns will vote on (they are only presented one number). Dr. Hemmens noted that, if this is done, than the district is "hog-tied"; therefore, an individual town cannot financially assist the other town, in case of an emergency.

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Mr. Swartz addressed the committee regarding the FY '15 budget. Mr. Malone explained that it will be created using the "statutory method". This should mean a reduction in the assessment for the Town of Dighton.

Mr. Hebda read a portion of the Regional Agreement that highlighted the wording for budget construction.

Mr. Malone stated that the Chapter 70 allocations is a lump-sum payment from the state, and cannot be split. He stated that the district needs for both towns to work together for a FY '15 budget. Amending the Regional Agreement can begin after a budget is built and voted on.

Thomas Pires, Dighton Board of Selectmen, addressed the committee regarding the Regional Agreement, and an alternative method of budgeting. He asked if the School Committee is planning on using an alternative method this year. Mr. Malone explained that the district will use the statutory method for FY '15.

Mrs. Lorenz recommended that both the statutory and alternative methods of the proposed FY '15 budget be presented to the public. Both methods can go in front of the towns for a vote.

Mr. Medeiros again recommended the formation of a Financial Advisory Committee and a Regional Agreement Amendment Committee.

Mr. Pires asked if there are any Rehoboth Financial Committee members yet. Mr. Medeiros stated that no one from Rehoboth has volunteered; however, there are 2 volunteers from Dighton, and they are looking for a 3rd.

There was continued budget methodology discussion, along with questions about proposed budget cuts in either town. Mr. Medeiros stated that the FY '15 budget is not complete yet, so potential cuts have not been debated yet.

Mr. Schwall asked if all administration will be instructed to zero-base the budget for FY '15. The School Committee must tell the administration to put together a zero-based budget, and has not done so. Mr. Malone stated that every principal has reviewed their budget and recommended only what is needed. Mr. Malone also noted that all line items are being reviewed. The budget consists mostly of mandated costs (salary increases, health insurance, transportation costs, etc.).

Mrs. Bartholomew asked when the School Committee will have a budget in-hand. Mr. Malone stated that the budget will be presented to the committee at the February 25th meeting. Mr. Medeiros would like to have a Financial Advisory Committee meeting before that presentation.

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Dr. Hemmens finished his presentation and left the meeting at: 9:45 PM.

Mr. Medeiros stated that the committee would take a two minute break at: 9:45 PM.

The committee reconvened at: 9:50 PM.

Agenda Item #8c, Director of Buildings, Grounds, and Operations Discussion:

Mr. Malone and Mrs. Antonellis led a discussion on a proposed Director of Buildings, Grounds, and Operations position. Mr. Malone stated that he is recommending this position for next year. In the long run, this will be a cost-savings measure for the district.

Mr. Katseff asked for a job description for this position before any discussion take place.

Agenda Item #9a, Vote to Accept Donation Requests:

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to accept a monetary donation of \$38.89 from the Coca-Cola Company, to the Beckwith Middle School.

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to accept a monetary donation of \$120.00 from the Terracycle, to the Dighton Elementary School.

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to accept a monetary donation of \$195.00 from the Box Tops for Education, to the Dighton Middle School.

VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS

Agenda Item #10, Executive Session:

Mr. Medeiros stated that the committee would enter into Executive Session as per MGL (Chapter 30A, Section 21), for the purpose of discussing potential litigation, union issues, and security.

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Barrett, and VOTED to enter into Executive Session, as per MGL (Chapter 30A, Section 21), for the purpose of discussing potential litigation, union issues, and security, at: 9:58 PM. Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye

Mr. Hebda ~ Aye
Mr. Katseff ~ Aye
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

MOTION PASSED

Janice Terry, Secretary