

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional District School Committee  
Regular Session ~ May 29, 2014

A Regular Session of the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee was held on May 29, 2014, in the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional High School library.

Present:

Christopher Andrade  
Richard Barrett  
Tiffany Bartholomew  
Eliza Couture  
Heather Cross  
David Katseff  
Susan Lorenz  
Raymond Medeiros  
Timothy Rapoza  
Janice Terry

Also:

Michael Malone, Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Gail Van Buren, Asst. Superintendent of Schools  
Kellie Fagan, Recording Secretary

*Mrs. Couture stated that the committee would enter into regular session, and was being broadcast/videotaped with the help of the Rehoboth Cable Advisory Committee, at: 6:35 PM.*

*Mrs. Couture led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.*

Agenda Item #3, Vote to Approve Minutes:

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2014 Regular session.

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2014 Executive session. No vote taken.

Mr. Andrade noted that Mr. Rapoza was absent and his vote is on the roll call. The minutes need to reflect his absence in this vote.

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2014 Executive session, as amended.

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to approve the minutes of the May 06, 2014 Executive Session.

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 2

Agenda Item #4, Bills and Payroll:

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to approve the bills and payrolls as presented:

V - #27	\$ 106,852.61
V - #2400	\$ 681,032.88
V - #2401	\$ 175,652.26
V - #1069	\$ 8,078.28
V - #1070	\$ 2,610.00
V - #1071	\$ 699,929.99

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

Agenda Item #5, Public Input:

Stephen Patrick, DRRTA Co-President, and Timothy Kelly, DRRTA Co-President highlighted the following:

- The Dighton Elementary School arbitration has not been completed
- The union is asking for a list of personnel budget cuts (DRRTA union members have “bumping rights”)
- Beckwith remains a school “in crisis”; the DRRTA is looking for guidance and assistance from the School Committee
  - This is an on-going problem at the school (not recent), that the committee should be made aware of

The committee was addressed regarding half-day day kindergarten at Palmer River. Will this program will be available in the future, or will the district offer full-day kindergarten only. Mr. Malone will meet with the principals next week, and he will update the committee on this issue at the June 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mrs. Lorenz encouraged everyone to attend that meeting for more information.

Mr. Katseff spoke about the recommendation for full-day kindergarten at Dighton and Rehoboth. There may be some transitional options available, when the full-day program begins.

Mrs. Bartholomew asked for a clarification of any options that will be available. Mr. Malone stated that the transition plan will be presented at the June 10, 2014 School Committee meeting.

Agenda Item #6, Correspondence & Enclosures:

All correspondence would be addressed during the meeting.

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 3

Agenda Item #7a, DESE Presentation:

Christine Lynch, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Office of Regional Governance, gave a presentation on amending Regional Agreements:

- MGL Chapter 71, Sections 14-16I addresses Regional Agreements; additional information can be found the DESE website
- Dighton~Rehoboth has not amended its' agreement since 1987
- A Regional Agreement should provide guidance to the committee and the towns; it must demonstrate how the district "operates", and any changes must be approved by the towns and the DESE commissioner
- Ms. Lynch is available to help the district, if the committee agrees to amend the agreement in any way (MASC may be helpful as well)
- Amendment process:
  - Need to review the original Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School District Regional Agreement
  - The School Committee can appoint a Planning Committee to do this: will need to involve other town officials, stakeholders, community members, etc. (there can be multiple committees, if necessary)
  - It is helpful for the towns to have public hearings on the process ~ involve as many people as possible
  - ANY amendment proposed must be approved by the DESE commissioner ~ a provisional approval from the commissioner first, then town meeting approval, then the formal approval by the DESE commissioner
  - The district should stay in contact with DESE/Christine Lynch during this process
  - The agreement must be amended and presented in total; in other words, the DESE requires an agreement "in whole", not just the amendments
  - Requirements for every agreement can be found in MGL Chapter 71, Section 14-16I, and the Regional School District Regulations 603 CMR 41.00
  - The School Committee must first have unanimous agreement, before any amendment goes forward to the towns and DESE

Mrs. Lynch noted that the DESE looks very carefully at our budgetary process language, as well as the assessment methodology language. Dighton~Rehoboth's original Regional Agreement has out-dated laws and references, so the DESE will look for a current agreement. The language needs to be informational, but should not "tie the hands" of the School Committee (stay away from word/phrases such as: never, ever, cannot, will not, etc.). Make sure that the language will withstand the test of time.

Mr. Katseff discussed an alternative form of assessment.

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 4

Mrs. Lynch addressed assessment methodology. She stated that in the past, assessment methodology was based on the number of students. However, the Education Reform Act of 1993 changed that to a minimum net school spending amount (local contribution), assigned by the state.

Any amount paid over the minimum contribution amount needs to be apportioned by a certain method ~ a way in which to divide the costs between towns. Dighton~Rehoboth has been using a statutory method of assessment (60-40 split). Any alternative method must be approved by both towns and the DESE.

Mr. Andrade asked about amendments to the agreement, and how to appoint members to the Planning Committee. Ms. Lynch explained that the School Committee has the authority to propose any amendment(s) to the agreement. It also has the authority to form a Regional Agreement Planning Committee to review the agreement. The School Committee can appoint members to the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee can consist of School Committee members, community members, town officials, etc. There are no restrictions when forming this committee.

Mr. Malone asked if an outside consultant would be beneficial. Ms. Lynch stated that she will be available for assistance during the process, and that she could periodically come to the School Committee with updates. She also noted that an outside consultant is good for on-the-spot guidance, and that a 3<sup>rd</sup> party perspective is always a good thing.

Mr. Katseff asked about any monies available from the state for a district to amend their Regional Agreement. Ms. Lynch said there may be a grant that encourages cooperation between towns and school districts. There may be some money available in this grant for financial assistance. Ms. Lynch will have to check the criteria for that grant, and get back to the committee.

Mr. Rapoza asked for a clarification on the difference between amending the agreement, and replacing it altogether. Mrs. Lynch stated that there is no difference, as the DESE must receive any amended agreement "in whole".

Mr. Katsesff led a discussion regarding de-regionalization ... taking out either the K-8's or having a complete dissolution of the agreement. What is the timeline for this type of process? Mrs. Lynch explained that the DESE has never had to approve the dissolution of a Regional Agreement. The only two dissolutions in MA were legislative. Sometimes a region will need legislative approval to explain exactly how everything will be split up. Withdrawal from a regional school district needs a new "arrangement" plan, before it is approved by DESE. When you dissolve an agreement, you must create a new school system proposal.

Mrs. Lynch reiterated that the DESE commissioner must approve any de-regionalization process.

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 5

Mr. Rapoza asked how the DESE addresses the 3 budgets of the district, if de-regionalization takes place. Will they make sure that this does not happen again, with a new agreement? Mrs. Lynch explained that the DESE wants to see one education plan, and ideally one budget.

Mrs. Lorenz stressed that the district is balancing academic programs throughout all the schools for educational continuity.

Glen Jefferson, Dighton, asked what the main reason is for looking at our Regional Agreement. Mr. Andrade answered that the Regional Agreement is not current (with the towns as well as with the state regulations. The Planning Committee will address methodology, as well as the other issues pertinent to our agreement.

Mike Costello, Rehoboth, assured the committee that the Town of Rehoboth is not considering dissolving the Regional Agreement.

Mr. Costello asked if the town's 'Aggregate Wealth Formula' is reviewed annually by the state. Mrs. Lynch stated that it is. Mrs. Lynch noted that the formula does not look at the differences by town, as each town is reviewed individually.

Mrs. Lynch explained that Education Reform changed the per-pupil costs to the 'Aggregate Wealth Formula'.

Nancy Goulart, Dighton Finance Committee, addressed the committee on the following:

- Proposition 2 ½
- The Regional Agreement
- The state law superseding our agreement

She stressed that the Planning Committee for the Regional Agreement review should include community input. Any new agreement/amendments need to be "sold" to each community.

- Agreements should have an implementation date of July 1<sup>st</sup> of the following fiscal year

Mrs. Philips, Rehoboth, asked if there is a deadline for looking at regional agreements. Mrs. Lynch explained that because the state laws/regulations always supersede an agreement, there is no deadline for a district to become current with the letter of the law.

Ellen Cordon, Rehoboth, asked about district operating cost and if there is a check and balance system between the state and the school district. Mrs. Lynch stated that the DESE checks the town's minimum amount paid, not anything over and above.

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 6

Agenda Item #7b, Capital Projects Task Force Report:

Mrs. Bartholomew updated the committee on:

- Met with MSBA representatives for the roofing project update
- The bids are out and should be back July
- Construction will begin in early September and must be completed by the end of October
- The schools must plan for Fall 2014 construction projects

Agenda Item #7c, Negotiations Subcommittee Update:

Mr. Katseff updated the committee on union negotiations:

- The MOA with the DRRTA, regarding Teacher Evaluation and the Parent Portal, has been accepted and signed by all parties
- The Custodians' union has requested that negotiations begin ~ Mrs. Lorenz is the Chairperson of the Custodians Negotiations Subcommittee

Mrs. Couture re-appointed the following to various negotiations subcommittees:  
David Katseff, Susan Lorenz, Christopher Andrade, Richard Barrett, and Eliza Couture.

Agenda Item #7d, Superintendent's Report:

Mr. Malone reviewed the following:

- Mr. Malone talked about the transition period with Dr. Azar ~ they have been working together in April and May
- Dr. Azar's official start date is June 2<sup>nd</sup>; however, Mr. Malone will be here until June 30<sup>th</sup>
- District staff lists will be released after the Dighton budget is passed ~ there will be a list for the School Committee by the next meeting
- Employees are being notified of positions that were re-organized, etc.
- Transfer Request Lists, maintained by Ms. Fagan, are being reviewed
- Dighton town meeting is Monday night (June 2<sup>nd</sup>) in the high school auditorium
- Mr. Malone thanked the voters of Rehoboth

**NOTE:** All DRRTA grievances have been addressed, by Mr. Malone.

Mr. Andrade asked if the school budget in Rehoboth is still pending on the Proposition 2 ½ override. Mr. Malone explained that once the budget is passed, it is passed legally. It does not matter if the town has an override or not. Only the town services portion of the budget will be effected by a Proposition 2 ½ override.

Agenda Item #7e, Chairperson's Report:

Mrs. Couture reviewed the following:

- The District Treasurer applications deadline is June 06, 2014
- The CTE Director's position will be addressed next week, after Dighton Town Meeting

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 7

- Rehoboth passed the budget, thank you; Dighton needs to support their budget as well

Mrs. Couture then discussed:

- Town officials discussion group (round-table):
  - Dialogue started in the spirit of compromise
  - Communication on the budget needs to start sooner in the year, and include details about the budget process for each community
  - Everyone agrees that we need to review the regional agreement ~ Ms. Antonellis is looking at a possible consultant for amendment advice/direction
  - Fine Arts Night was very successful and showcased the excellent artwork and musical talents of our high school students
  - The Memorial Day dedication took place at the high school, in order to honor students and faculty of Dighton~Rehoboth who have served in the armed services. Thank you to everyone involved
  - Principals' reports ~ please review these as there are loads of good things happening in all of our schools
  - Congratulations to the CTE Vocational Department for this years accomplishments and awards

Mr. Medeiros highlighted the Unified Basketball Game that was held last week at the high school. This was a very positive and enjoyable game for everyone.

Agenda Item #8a, Vote to Accept Donation Requests:

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to accept a monetary donation in the amount of \$643.37 from Box Tops of Education, 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 in the amount of \$829.26 from Box Tops of Education, to the Palmer River Elementary School.

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

Agenda Item #8b, Vote to Approve the Revised Last Day of the 2013-2014 School Year:

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mr. Medeiros, and VOTED to approve June 25, 2014 was the last day of the 2013-2014 school year.

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 8

Mrs. Couture noted that this issue will be going under review for the next school year. This is a contract negotiations issue.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Nay  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Aye  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

AYE ~ 8.0    NAY ~ 1.0

MOTION PASSED

*Agenda Item #8c, Vote to Approve the READS Board of Directors Appointment:*

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to approve the READS Board of Directors appointment as follows:

Voted that Dr. Anthony Azar, Superintendent of Schools, is appointed to serve as the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School District representative on the Board of Directors of READS Collaborative, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 4E, as amended by Chapter 43 of the Acts of 2012 for the 2014-2015 school year.

Mr. Katseff noted that this appointment is not effective until July 01, 2014.

**VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS**

*Mrs. Couture stated that the committee would enter into Executive Session, as per MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21, for the purpose of discussing potential litigation, union and non-union issues, and security, and would not return to open session.*

Ellen Cordon, Rehoboth, stated that the town officials "discussion group" is very important, in order for the towns and the school department to rebuild confidence and trust in each other.

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Regular Session  
May 29, 2014  
Page 9

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 purposes of discussing litigation, union and non-union issues, and security, and would not return to open session at: 9:05 PM. Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Aye  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

MOTION PASSED

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*Richard Barrett, Secretary*