

Dighton-Rehoboth Regional District School Committee
Special Session - July 29, 2014

A Special Meeting the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School Committee was held on July 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:

Dr. Anthony Azar, Superintendent of Schools
Gail Van Buren, Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Catherine Antonellis, District Business Administrator
Kellie Fagan, Recording Secretary

Mrs. Couture stated that the committee would enter into a special, regular session, and was being broadcast/videotaped with the help of the Rehoboth Cable Advisory Committee, at: 6:30 PM.

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

Agenda Item #3, Bills and Payroll:

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

V - #3	\$	252.82
V - #4	\$	64,429.56
V - #1005	\$	765.05
V - #1006	\$	637,280.64
V - #3000	\$	488,114.84
V - #3001	\$	800.27
V - #3002	\$	171,882.19

VOTE - AYE - UNANIMOUS

Agenda Item #4, Vote to Adjourn the Meeting at 8:30 PM:

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to adjourn the School Committee meeting at 8:30 PM. No vote taken.

It was moved by Mr. Katseff, seconded by Mr. Andrade, and VOTED to table this motion. Roll call vote:

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

AYE - 2.0 NAY - 7.0

MOTION FAILED

Roll call vote on original motion:

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

AYE - 7.0 NAY - 2.0

MOTION PASSED

Mrs. Couture explained the School Committee meeting's Public Input protocol. There will be a 3 minute limit allowance per speaker.

Agenda Item #5a, Vote to Approve the MARS Regional Agreement Proposal:

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Medeiros, and VOTED to approve the MARS, in conjunction with the Abrahams Group, Regional Agreement proposal in the amount of \$10,000.00. Roll call vote:

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

AYE - 7.2 ABSTAINED - 1.8

MOTION PASSED

Agenda Item #6a, FY '15 Budget Discussion:

Mrs. Couture reviewed the FY '15 budget as it stands. She reminded the committee that the budget has been voted by both towns.

Public Input:

Mr. Costello, Rehoboth Board of Selectmen Chair, spoke about the status of the Rehoboth budget, with respect to town services, etc. Public safety and highway will be the most impacted. Snow removal services will be decreased and may impact school openings, etc.

Mr. Costello stated that the Rehoboth Board of Selectmen is actively looking at the town budget(s) to find money. Mr. Costello noted that cuts were made (20%) that equal \$820,000.00 in savings (no increases in town salaries). He asked that the committee revisit full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Cronin, Dighton Board of Selectmen Chair, addressed the committee regarding the taxpayers vote governing the budget. Mr. Cronin noted that the taxpayers have spoken and the budget has been approved.

Skip Vadnais, Vice-Chair Rehoboth Board of Selectmen, addressed the committee regarding "other money" (i.e. public safety money), that could help the budget. They are looking for a figure that can be freed from "other money". Tomorrow night will be the Board of Selectmen's discussion on this subject. The Rehoboth Board of Selectmen is asking for fiscal assistance from the School Committee to the Town of Rehoboth.

Mr. Andrade asked about snow removal reduction. Mr. Vadnais explained that public safety is first. The town may not be able to afford the usual services, possibly causing late starts for the schools. It is currently a reduced snow removal plan that is being reviewed.

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Mr. Rapoza asked if there is there a provision that any unused money given to the Town of Rehoboth would be returned to the School Committee. Mr. Vadnais replied that this is a town meeting decision. Could the committee wait until the end of the year to consider giving Rehoboth any money. Mr. Katseff explained that Rehoboth cannot wait because they must submit a balanced budget by September 2014.

Mrs. Terry asked about the \$600,000.00+ appropriated by Rehoboth to capital projects. Mr. Costello explained that this had been used for public safety needs, free cash used. It could not be put into the FY '15 operating budget for the town.

Mrs. Couture turned the discussion over to the School Committee.

Mrs. Bartholomew noted that Rehoboth community members passed the budget at town meeting. Our transportation reimbursement could be reviewed.

It was moved by Mr. Katseff and seconded by Mr. Barrett to reduce the Rehoboth budget and the Rehoboth assessment by \$400,000.00.

Mr. Katseff detailed previous school budgets and override attempts. In the past, Dighton needed \$150,000.00 - \$200,000.00, and Rehoboth helped. Mr. Katseff stated that, 2-3 years ago, the committee reduced the assessment to the town of Dighton by \$119,000.00 (vocational/technical students). He stated that the finance advisory group was ineffective - collectively, everyone should have done a better job. Rehoboth departments cut 20%, and the School Committee should help.

Mr. Katseff said that this motion would not affect the Town of Dighton budget/assessment.

Mrs. Couture noted that it was voted that the school's budget approval is not contingent upon whether the 2 ½ override passed or not.

Mr. Medeiros asked what the legal ramifications will be if we reduce the budget in one town only. Ms. Antonellis stated that this cannot be done without affecting Dighton, based on the statutory method.

Mr. Rapoza asked if this would require a town meeting to reduce. Ms. Antonellis stated that it would, but the town decides whether there will be a special town meeting.

Mr. Katseff reviewed the statutory assessment method. The committee can reduce an assessment for one town (past practice). No town meeting vote needed, unless this changes the budget (per our Regional Agreement). In our case, there would be a vote required, as our budget is part of town's budget.

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Mr. Katseff stated that \$250,000 could be used to retain ½ day kindergarten, and keep tuition full-day kindergarten.

Mrs. Bartholomew noted that this issue may cause discrimination problems with one town. She explained that Rehoboth residents will pay for full-day kindergarten, while Dighton residents will not.

Dr. Azar stated that everything being discussed needs legal clarification. Taking funds from the E & D account is what he is recommending. Our transportation reimbursement will eventually find its way back into E&D.

Mr. Katseff said that the district's priorities may have to change, during these economically difficult times. Dighton should stay with full-day kindergarten, while Rehoboth stays with paid kindergarten.

Mrs. Cross addressed the committee regarding the kindergarten program in Dighton.

Mr. Medeiros said that this budget needs to remain the same, at any cost. He reminded the committee that they represent the district, and not one particular town.

Mrs. Bartholomew pointed out that if a mid-day bus run must be added for Rehoboth, this would impact our transportation costs/savings.

Mr. Medeiros called to question, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to call to question.

VOTE - AYE - UNANIMOUS

Ms. Fagan read the original motion made by Mr. Katseff: "It was moved by Mr. Katseff and seconded by Mr. Barrett to reduce the Rehoboth budget and the Rehoboth assessment by \$400,000.00".

Vote on original motion by Mr. Katseff. Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade - Nay
Mr. Barrett - Aye
Mrs. Bartholomew - Nay
Mrs. Couture - Nay
Mrs. Cross - Nay
Mr. Katseff - Aye
Mrs. Lorenz - Nay
Mr. Medeiros - Nay

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Mr. Rapoza - Nay
Mrs. Terry - Nay

AYE - 2.0 NAY - 7.0

MOTION FAILED

It was moved by Mr. Katseff and seconded by Mr. Barrett to take \$300,000.00 out of E&D to reduce assessment to the town of Rehoboth. No vote taken; committee discussion ensued.

Mr. Medeiros asked if this can be done for one town only. Ms. Antonellis replied that when using E&D funds, all member towns must be included (Dighton and Rehoboth). She stated that, using the statutory method, this money would go into "the pot" for both towns, and it would increase the operating budget.

Mr. Rapoza noted that E&D is regional district money, not one specific town.

Mr. Barrett reminded the committee that this has been done before (\$119,000.00 to reimburse Dighton for the vocational/technical students).

Mr. Andrade stated that it is not fiscally responsible to use E&D funds to offset an assessment.

Nancy Goulart, Dighton Finance Committee, addressed the committee regarding Dighton K-8 buildings. Those buildings belong to the towns; however, the high school belongs to the district.

She noted that the \$119,000.00 was used as a reimbursement to the town of Dighton for Rehoboth Tri-County Vocational student tuitions previously paid by Dighton (were Rehoboth students). She also stated that the Advisory Finance Committee (she was a member) had decided to use the statutory methodology for assessments.

Terry Fredericks, North Dighton, addressed the committee regarding the budget that was already voted on. This is a regional school district. The district should not take the money away from our students.

Dr. Azar is recommending the budget that is now in-place, by using E&D funds. This will lend a hand to Rehoboth, while keeping the district budget intact (\$300,000.00). The town of Dighton will benefit as well. Transportation reimbursement will filter back into our E&D account.

Mrs. Lorenz addressed the committee regarding the E&D: taking \$400,000.00 from E&D. Dr. Azar noted it would be \$500,000.00. Ms. Antonellis explained the proposed allocation for the \$500,000.00. The allocation(s) should be given using the 60/40 split method. She also noted that,

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factoring in our estimated transportation reimbursement at the end of the fiscal year, this will affect the E&D account by \$235,000.00 (net affect).

Mrs. Terry does not want to use E&D, or change full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Rapoza noted that the transportation reimbursement percentage is an estimate only.

Mr. Katseff said that the state has committed to 90% transportation reimbursement.

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Andrade, and VOTED to call to question.

VOTE - AYE - UNANIMOUS

Vote on the original motion by Mr. Katseff: "It was moved by Mr. Katseff and seconded by Mr. Barrett to take \$300,000.00 out of E&D to reduce the assessment to the town of Rehoboth". Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade - Nay
Mr. Barrett - Aye
Mrs. Bartholomew - Nay
Mrs. Couture - Nay
Mrs. Cross - Nay

Mr. Katseff - Aye
Mrs. Lorenz - Nay
Mr. Medeiros - Nay
Mr. Rapoza - Nay
Mrs. Terry - Nay

AYE - 2.0 NAY - 7.0

MOTION FAILED

It was moved by Mr. Medeiros, and seconded by Mr. Barrett to use E&D funds: dividing \$500,000 into \$300,000 from Rehoboth and \$200,000 from Dighton. No vote taken, committee discussion.

Mr. Katseff asked to amend the vote to reflect the anticipated increase in transportation reimbursement (90%); making the net effect of \$235,000 on E&D.

It was moved by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to table this motion for the purposes of defeat. Roll call vote:

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

AYE - 6.0 NAY - 2.0 1.0 - ABSTAINED

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Andrade and VOTED to lower the assessment to both towns by \$265,034.00.

Mrs. Bartholomew noted that this is the total amount of increase of transportation for each town: \$111,761.00 to Dighton and \$153,273.00 to Rehoboth.

Mr. Andrade addressed the committee regarding the transportation increase and refunds to the towns. Mr. Andrade is in support of Mrs. Bartholomew's motion.

Mr. Rapoza noted that the money will not be received immediately (January 2015).

Ms. Antonellis stated that the reimbursement should be sent to the district in January 2015.

Mr. Rapoza suggested that this issue be re-visited when the reimbursement is received.

Mrs. Bartholomew stated that the \$265,000.00 could go back to the towns immediately, while the reimbursement will come in January 2015.

Mr. Katseff noted that this transportation increase amount was unknown at the time the committee created the budget.

Committee discussion continued.

Dean Cronin, Dighton Board of Selectmen, asked about the legality of using E&D funds to pay a town's expenses.

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Mr. Andrade explained that no funds are being proposed to be transferred out of E&D in this motion.

Mrs. Bartholomew noted that this is transportation money refund (60/40) from the state.

Vote on Mrs. Bartholomew's amended motion: "It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Andrade and VOTED to lower the assessment to both towns by \$265,034.00. The assessments would be reduced by \$111,761.00 for Dighton and \$153,273.00 for Rehoboth". 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 - Nay
Mrs. Terry - Aye

AYE - 8.2 NAY - 0.8

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Andrade, and VOTED that the \$41,000.00 savings from the Dean of Student Academics and Athletics be returned to both towns using the 60/40 split.

Mrs. Bartholomew stated that this was an unanticipated savings, and could helpful to both communities and at the high school - Dighton \$16,400.00 and Rehoboth \$24,600.00.

Mrs. Bartholomew explained how the \$41,000.00 savings came about from creating that position.

The vote was amended to:

“To reduce the assessment to the both Rehoboth and Dighton using the 60/40 split, which would mean \$16,400.00 to Dighton and \$24,600.00 to Rehoboth.” No vote taken.

Mrs. Terry asked about the .75 CTE Child Care position going to a 1.0 position.

The vote was further amended to read:

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“It was moved by Mrs. Bartholomew, seconded by Mr. Andrade, and VOTED to reduce the high school budget by \$41,000.00 to ultimately reduce both the Dighton and Rehoboth assessments accordingly.” Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade - Nay
Mr. Barrett - Nay
Mrs. Bartholomew - Aye
Mrs. Couture - Nay
Mrs. Cross - Nay
Mr. Katseff - Nay
Mrs. Lorenz - Nay
Mr. Medeiros - Aye

Mr. Rapoza - Nay
Mrs. Terry - Nay

AYE - 2.0 NAY - 7.0

MOTION FAILED

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

It was moved by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to enter into Executive Session, as per MGL, Chapter 30A, Section 21, for the purpose of discussing union and non-union issues at 8:20 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

Richard Barrett