

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee
Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 7, 2008

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Nessacus Regional Middle School, Dalton, MA on Thursday, February 7, 2008, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Bantjes, J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Farley, Gordon, Grallert, Henderson, Hopper, Les, Morton, Welts, and Carroll-Lombardi. Member Yates took his seat following appointment.

Absent: Members Goddard and Harvey.

Also Present: Superintendent Donna Harlan, Assistant Superintendent James Stankiewicz, Business Manager Robert Tensel, CBEA Executive Secretary Joanne Dowling, Recording Secretary Mary Jo Keiper, and Members of the Audience.

For the record, Chair Carroll-Lombardi does not vote unless noted.

ARTICLE 9373 RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Wahconah teacher and parent Aaron Robb read a statement encouraging the Committee to support a fair contract for teachers, noting it is the best thing for district students. He spoke about his family's involvement in the district and stated he and his colleagues will stand with the Committee to support an appropriate budget.

Lisa LeBeau stated she has been attending school committee meetings, hoping to learn what parents can do to support a higher budget. She said parents are willing to be at town meetings.

ARTICLE 9374 STUDENT AFFAIRS

A. Wahconah Report

There was no student present.

ARTICLE 9375 SECRETARY'S REPORT

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of January 24, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER FARLEY

To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 24, 2008, as printed.

Ayes: Eleven members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9376 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Warrants

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve Warrant No. 2008-30, in the total amount of \$706,569.50, as printed.

Warrant No. 2008-30, dated February 7, 2008

PAYROLL

Operating Expenses	\$499,388.77
Craneville Homework Revolving	\$323.74
School Lunch	\$16,000.05
Federal Funds	\$48,678.40
Sub-total	\$564,390.96
FICA (Operating)	\$6,261.91
Total Payroll	\$570,652.87
Transfers (Deductions)	\$135,916.63
TOTAL PAYROLL & DEDUCTIONS	\$706,569.50

Ayes: Nine members.

Nays: None.

Abstentions: Members Hopper and Welts

Motion carried.

ARTICLE 9377 COMMUNICATIONS

A. Report of the Chair

The Chair reminded members of the Public Budget Hearing on Valentines' Day, February 14th at 7:00 p.m. She stated that Dalton Community Cable will run the date on its local channel and thanked them for that service.

Dalton Selectman John Boyle will serve on the negotiations team, filling the vacancy left by Terry Williams's resignation.

Chair Carroll-Lombardi distributed a letter received from Representative Guyer, suggesting that every school district hoping for increased aid from the State will need to at least consider joining the GIC. She stated the district is committed to studying that option.

B. Vacancy – Washington Representative

1. Letter and Survey from John Yates - Informational

2. Interview and Appointment of Washington Representative

Mr. John Yates came forward and stated he understood the time commitment of a school committee member. He is committed to making the time to serve and his family is supportive as well. The Chair clarified that all members represent the students from all seven towns, no matter what their town of residence.

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve John Yates as the representative from the Town of Washington.

Ayes: Eleven members voting.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

District Secretary Donna Harlan administered the oath to Mr. Yates and he took his seat at the table.

ARTICLE 9378 SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Education

There was no report; however Mr. Chivers announced a meeting would be held on February 11, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office. Member Henderson requested that a potential reorganization of teams and staffing at Nessacus be placed on a future education subcommittee agenda.

2. Finance

a. Tentative FY-2009 Budget Adoption

Member L. Chivers reported the subcommittee had met on January 30 and February 6. They will meet again on February 18 and 25, March 3 and 5, 2008. On February 6th, they received the auditor's report – it was very favorable with commendations to Mr. Tensel and his staff. Ms. Chivers stated the budget has been a challenge and distributed the tentative budget document to Committee members and those in the audience. She reviewed the line items, particularly those that were not level funded from the previous year; the cuts which are incorporated in the gross operating budget proposal and additional potential reductions which could be made if necessary; conditional expenses dependent on additional state funding or excess and deficiency; anticipated revenue figures based on level funded Chapter 70; tentative net assessments by the statutory method and tentative net assessments by an alternative method.

WHEREAS, by its regional agreement, the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee must prepare a tentative budget 75 days prior to the first annual town meeting, it was

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the School Committee adopts a tentative gross operating budget for the school year 2008-09 in the amount of \$25,689,851, as prepared in the FY-2009 budget document and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

The Committee discussed the proposed budget:

- The reduction in the computer account is a delay of one year in renewal of contracts.
- Superintendent Harlan is relatively comfortable with the included cuts but sees additional reductions as impossible; children will leave and Chapter 70 funding will be lost with the lost students.
- It is time to let the state come in and tell us how to do it; no more cutting.
- The Committee has to deal with the reality in the seven towns – the challenge is to balance the needs of the students with the needs of the towns.
- If the State won't help the district, could the district file a class action suit? The chair will speak with the attorney.
- A history of cuts was shared at last year's town meetings; finance subcommittee will update it for the upcoming meetings.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

The Chair thanked Member L. Chivers for her many hours behind the scene, noting she has been serving on the negotiations team as well as chairing finance subcommittee. Ms. Chivers received a round of applause.

b. Authorization for Additional Paraprofessional Time – Becket Washington School

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an additional hour of paraprofessional time (1/2 hour each a.m. and p.m.) for supervision of a special needs student, grant funded through Additional Special Needs, for the remainder of the current school year, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

c. Authorization for Title I Paraprofessional – Craneville School

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes a 3 hour/day paraprofessional at Craneville School, effective immediately, grant funded through Title I, for the remainder of the current year, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee and the Superintendent.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

d. Award of Contract to Margaret Balzotti, Business Administrator

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER FARLEY

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee awards a contract to Margaret Balzotti as Business Administrator, effective May 1, 2008, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 41 and its accompanying regulations, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Superintendent Harlan introduced Marge Balzotti. Dr. Harlan reviewed the search process and highlighted Ms. Balzotti's background: MBA from Simmons College; BA from Indiana University; certified public purchasing official; current business manager at Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School; has held positions of assistant comptroller, assistant regional director, and in human resources at Harvard University. Her references are extraordinary.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Policy Review

Member Bantjes stated the subcommittee will meet at a later date.

4. Personnel

Member Les reported the subcommittee has not met.

B. Others

1. Wahconah Building Needs Study Committee

The study committee presented its report on January 24th and the Committee will begin preliminary discussions in March. Regarding the \$1.4 million recommendation, the Chair asked Committee members for input prior to inviting Paul Schroeder of the SBA and Attorney Bartulis to talk with the Committee. She noted the importance of the timeline if a request for borrowing is to go forward. The following discussion items were suggested:

- Borrowing authority vs. bonding authority
- Term of the bond and who makes that determination
- Rigidity in terms of a motion for amounts
- Timeline for town votes, including debt exclusions
- The advantage of making the borrowing request at annual town meetings vs. special town meetings
- Transition from study committee to traditional building committee

The Chair will invite Paul Schroeder and Joe Bartulis to the first meeting in March. It was suggested the presentation to the towns include a town-by-town table of values showing the tax impact on residents. The media will be encouraged to give coverage to an outline of basic issues.

ARTICLE 9379 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports – None.

B. Recommendations – None.

C. Other – None.

ARTICLE 9380 PERSONNEL

A. Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

The following personnel changes were noted. All salaries are set in accordance with current contracts.

- Lisa Swigart, Title I paraprofessional at Kittredge School, initially appointed September 4, 2001, has resigned effective January 31, 2008.
- Krista Makes, paraprofessional at Berkshire Trail Elementary School, initially appointed February 5, 2007, has resigned effective February 15, 2008.
- Louise Swider, grade 4 teacher at Berkshire Trail Elementary School, initially appointed September 1, 1973, will retire on June 30, 2008.
- Mary Ellen Baker, reading teacher at Nessacus Regional Middle School, initially appointed September 1, 1973, will retire on June 30, 2008.
- Mindy Chapman, science teacher at Wahconah Regional High School (currently on postnatal care leave), initially appointed August 30, 2005, has resigned effective at the end of the current school year.
- Paulette Gagnon, kindergarten teacher at Craneville School, initially appointed September 1, 1973, will retire on June 30, 2008.
- Sharon Vincent, grade 1 teacher at Kittredge School, initially appointed September 1, 1972, will retire on December 31, 2008.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

To move Article 9383, Remarks for the Good of the Committee, ahead of Old Business.

Ayes: Twelve members present.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9383 REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Member Les will set a meeting of Personnel Subcommittee in the near future to consider renewal of the Superintendent's contract.

Member Welts clarified the reason for Becket Town Manager Richard Furlong's inability to serve on the negotiating team. It was a conflict of interest, in that he had/has family members in the CBEA. Mr. Welts was pleased to know someone has agreed to serve in that capacity.

Member Hopper asked that more copies of handouts be available at finance subcommittee meetings.

ARTICLE 9381 OLD BUSINESS

Member Hopper asked about field trips for upper grades. The superintendent responded that there are many, many volunteers at all buildings and the principals are trying to organize their efforts.

Member Bantjes asked about field days. It was noted that all parent volunteers must be CORI checked. The Chair will report back at the next meeting.

It was suggested that old business items be outlined on the agenda.

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER HOPPER

To go into executive session at 8:30 p.m. in accordance with MGL Chapter 39, Section 23B, paragraph 3, "to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining..."

The Chair stated the Committee would reconvene in open session following the executive session only for the purpose of adjournment.

ROLL CALL

Ayes: Members Bantjes, J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Farley, Gordon, Grallert, Henderson, Hopper, Les, Morton, Welts, Yates and Carroll-Lombardi

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

Member Les left during executive session.

The Committee came out of executive session at 9:40 p.m.

ARTICLE 9382 NEW BUSINESS

None.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER WELTS

To adjourn the meeting at 9:41 p.m.

Ayes: Eleven members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.