

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee

Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 12, 2009

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Nessacus Regional Middle School, Dalton, MA, on Thursday, February 12, 2009, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Chivers, Conner, Farley, Grallert, Henderson, Hopper, Lacatell, Les, Wagner, Welts (7:10 p.m.) and Carroll-Lombardi.

Absent: Members Darby, Goddard, Harvey and Yates

Also Present: Superintendent Donna Harlan, Assistant Superintendent James Stankiewicz, Business Manager Marge Foster, CBEA Executive Secretary Joanne Dowling, Student Representative Kathryn Reed, Recording Secretary Diane Koch, and Members of the Audience.

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

MOVED BY MEMBER GRALLERT, SECONDED BY MEMBER WAGNER

*To move Article 9586 – Student Affairs, A. Wahconah Report, ahead of Article 9585 – Responses From the Audience.*

Ayes: Nine members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

Kathryn Reed reported on, basketball, swimming, academic decathlon and a leadership program at Wahconah. Ms. Reed noted that the swim team is sending twenty members to the state meet next week and that academic decathlon will be competing in states this year. In response to a question from the Chair about the number of days seniors have until graduation, Kathryn responded 114.

ARTICLE 9585        RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Chair Carroll-Lombardi welcomed the audience, explained that the Committee allows one-half hour for audience responses and asked anyone who would like to speak to keep their comments brief, allowing others the opportunity to be heard as well.

Joanne Dowling, CBEA Executive Secretary, read from the June 9, 2005, School Committee minutes in which Mr. John Cicchetti asked the Committee to reject a proposal to increase the percentages retirees would pay for health insurance. In the minutes being read, Mr. Cicchetti asked the Committee to have the wisdom to not change the split retirees were paying, adding that it would cause hardship for some. Mrs. Dowling continued, saying, as a result of that meeting, the Association worked with the District to make changes to retirees' insurance splits that helped the District save money. In closing Mrs. Dowling told the Committee many of the retirees in the audience tonight have thirty to thirty-five years of service to the District and expect the same loyalty they have given.

Sue Towne, a parent from Windsor, spoke to the Committee about a study done by Duke University titled, "Sixth Graders in Middle School." According to the study, sixth grade students at the middle school level

have more discipline issues and score low on testing. Ms. Towne asked the Committee consider not moving fifth grade students to Nessacus Regional Middle School.

Heather Cupo, a parent of students at Berkshire Trail, also spoke about moving fifth grade to Nessacus. Ms. Cupo said it would further disinvest the District from the small hill town schools and questioned if it would increase funding needed.

Randy Winters, retired fourth grade teacher, spoke about her thirty-five years in the District and added that she returns twice a week to Craneville School as a volunteer. Ms. Winters asked the Committee to leave retirees' health insurance alone.

Phil Tierney, retired teacher with thirty-six years service, urged the Committee to do the right thing and not change retirees' health insurance premiums. Mr. Tierney commented that CBRSD has a great reputation throughout Berkshire County and the Committee has a responsibility to uphold that.

Meredyth Babcock read a statement in which she said the District has invested a lot in the small town schools, yet is struggling financially to give high school students the education they deserve. Ms. Babcock's opinion is that K – 8 schools might be best and save money overall.

Bev Favreau, retired teacher, spoke about health insurance premiums. Ms. Favreau invited retirees to stand and asked the Committee to look at these faces. Telling the Committee there were over four decades represented at the meeting, Ms. Favreau added that the retirees were dedicated to the towns and students and that all that is asked in return is honor and respect.

Fred Moran, retiree, told the Committee he invested thirty plus years in the District both as a teacher and as an administrator. He felt that the retirees had given their all and to be let down in the end is not a fair trade.

ARTICLE 9586          STUDENT AFFAIRS

A.            Wahconah Report – Taken up earlier.

ARTICLE 9587          SECRETARY'S REPORT

A.            Minutes of Regular Meeting of January 22, 2009

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED BY MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 22, 2009, as printed.*

Ayes: Ten members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9588          FINANCIAL REPORT

A.            Warrants

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-31a, dated January 22, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-31a, dated January 22, 2009

PAYROLL

Operating Expense

\$0.00

Federal Funds	<u>\$573.08</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL	\$573.08

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
 Nays: None.  
 Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
 Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-31d2, dated January 22, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-31d2, dated January 22, 2009	
<u>DEDUCTIONS</u>	
<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$108.91
FICA Expense	<u>\$8.31</u>
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$117.22

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
 Nays: None.  
 Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
 Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-31C, dated February 5, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-31C, dated February 5, 2009	
<u>DEDUCTIONS</u>	
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$2,400.00

In response to a question, Business Manager Foster answered that the warrant was deductions for 403b contributions.

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
 Nays: None.  
 Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
 Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-32, dated February 5, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-32, dated February 5, 2009	
<u>PAYROLL</u>	
<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$512,579.18
School Lunch	\$12,167.94
Becket Washington Preschool	\$1,455.15
Craneville Homework Club	\$264.42
Federal Funds	<u>\$37,439.05</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL	\$563,905.74

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
Nays: None.  
Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-32C, dated February 5, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-32C, dated February 5, 2009

DEDUCTIONS

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS \$1,200.00

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
Nays: None.  
Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-32D, dated February 5, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-32D, dated February 5, 2009

PAYROLL/DEDUCTIONS

Operating Expense \$103,698.05

FICA Expense \$6,713.70

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS \$110,411.75

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
Nays: None.  
Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED MEMBER CHIVERS

*To approve warrant No. 2009-33, dated February 12, 2009.*

Warrant No. 2009-33, dated February 12, 2009

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Operating Expense \$304,380.83

Federal Funds \$17,077.97

School Lunch \$4,086.02

Athletic Independent Gate Receipts \$2,822.75

WRHS Student Activities \$4,304.44

NRMS Student Activities \$2,000.00

Becket Washington Preschool \$51.85

WRHS Cross Country Revolving \$302.00

WRHS Swimming Revolving \$66.50

WRHS Nordic Skiing Revolving \$2,038.32

WRHS Boys' Basketball Revolving \$861.55

WRHS Girls' Basketball Revolving \$739.00

WRHS Golf Revolving	\$100.00
WRHS Hockey Revolving	\$1,055.40
WRHS Renovation	\$1,200.00
WRHS Science Lab	\$3,929.16
Retiree Health Total	\$436.45
Maturing Debt - Principal Craneville	\$13,654.00
Maturing Debt - Interest Craneville	\$2,165.91
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$361,272.15

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

B. Acceptance of Grants and Contributions

1. Acceptance of Grant to Berkshire Trail Elementary School

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee accepts a grant award in the amount of \$3,000, from the Central Berkshire Fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation for Berkshire Trail Elementary School, to provide transportation assistance for the Smith College Program, as recommended by the District Treasurer.*

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

2. Acceptance of Contributions to Becket SAC and PTO

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee accepts donations in the total amount of \$2,980.50 from taxpayers in the Town of Becket to the Becket Washington SAC/PTO, as recommended by the District Treasurer.*

In response to a question, Member Les read the letter from the Town of Becket regarding the donation.

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

C. Authorization to Establish Activity Account

1. Wahconah Regional High School Biology Club

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED BY MEMBER HOPPER

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes the following new activity account, WRHS Biology Club, for the purpose of fund-raising for supplies to further students'*

*knowledge in the field of biology through, labs, field trips, plant cultivating and on site exploring, as recommended by the District Treasurer.*

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

ARTICLE 9589            COMMUNICATIONS

A.            Report of the Chair

Chair Carroll-Lombardi told the Committee she had a few copies of a recent email she had sent them on Chapter 70 aid if anyone was unable to print it. The MASC “Day on the Hill” will be March 7<sup>th</sup>; she will bring more information to the next meeting and asked members to please mark their calendars. The Chair asked Member Conner to speak about the recent Leadership Training. Mr. Conner gave the Committee two handouts: Leadership - School Committee’s Perspective and Questions for Strategic Planning – January 2009. Mr. Conner explained briefly about recent trainings and told the Committee it involves a five to ten year strategic planning program for the district and communities.

ARTICLE 9590            SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A.            Reports

1. Education

Member Henderson reported that the subcommittee had met last night and asked Assistant Superintendent Stankiewicz to give the specifics. Mr. Stankiewicz reported that Kathy Buckley, Professional Development Coordinator, gave an overview of the Measured Academic Progress testing. M.A.P is an on-line testing program for grades K –10 that allows teachers to generate reports showing where additional instruction may be necessary. The first session began in December.

Member Welts reported on a very informal study on fifth grade students attending middle schools. If any issues come about with the informal study, the subcommittee may begin a more formal approach.

2. Finance

Member Chivers reported the subcommittee has met a few times and has a tentative budget proposal on the agenda tonight. He added that before moving on to the FY-2010 tentative budget the Committee needed to re-certify the FY-2009 budget and transfer funds.

a. Re-certification of FY-2009 Budget

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the School Committee recertifies the FY09 budget revenue and expenses to be \$24,971,284 as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee at their meeting on February 4, 2009.*

Member Chivers explained for the Committee the details of re-certifying the budget. In response to a question from the Chair on whether the amount was an increase or decrease, Member Chivers responded that it was a decrease of \$118,000. Business Manager Foster added that it was due to contingency funds the District did not receive.

Ayes: Eight members voting.  
Nays: None.  
Abstention: Members Hopper and Welts  
Motion carried.

b. Approval of Budget Transfers, FY – 2009

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes the budgetary transfers for fiscal year 2009, effective December 31, 2008, as shown on the attached page and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.*

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

c. Approval for Outstanding Payment to Contractor Repair to BTES Boiler

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes the payment of \$8,000 from the Berkshire Trail capital project account and \$2,000 from the contingency emergency account for a total of \$10,000 to Pittsfield Pipers, Inc. as final payment for their work on the Berkshire Trail Elementary School boiler replacement project, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.*

Member Hopper asked if this was going to be the final payment for the repairs. Business Manager Foster answered that it was.

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

d. Tentative FY-2010 Budget Adoption

Chair Carroll-Lombardi noted that members Hopper and Welts have recused from voting on this motion.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*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,*

*THEREFORE, That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee adopts a tentative gross salaries and benefits budget for the school year 2009 – 10 in the amount of \$18,275,409, as prepared in the FY-2010 budget document and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.*

Member Chivers reported that the total tentative budget amount was \$25,843,284 and explained the budget had been broken out into two motions so that members not able to vote on salaries and benefits could vote on the remainder of the operating budget. The subcommittee was working on a level service budget and a 2% overall increase in assessments. Discussion followed about the FY-2010 budget. Some members felt that the overall budget should be more than a 2% increase and that towns should vote to decide what they are willing to pay for children's education. In response to a member asking to change the motion on the floor, the Chair told members the motion can be amended, however, the total amount would stay the same because of the built in contingency and added, that it would be best to change the percentage asked for in a Finance Subcommittee meeting. Member Chivers commented that the tentative budget is fluid until final adoption and can be adjusted. More discussion followed and questions were asked if a plan for additional cuts was ready if the 10% cut legislators originally mentioned became a reality. The Chair responded that the Finance Subcommittee continues to go over possible reductions and that this was a tentative budget.

Ayes: Seven members voting.  
Nays: Member Conner.  
Recused: Members Hopper and Welts  
Motion carried.

In response to a question from member Lacatell, the Chair stated that she found nothing in MA General Laws about the tentative budget vote needing a two-thirds majority to pass.

Member Chivers informed the Committee that the Finance Subcommittee continues to look at possible reductions etc., it was important to move forward with the tentative budget to allow the public time to look it over and ask questions.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBE GRALLERT

*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,*

*THEREFORE, That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee adopts a tentative remaining gross operating budget for the school year 2009 – 10 in the amount of \$7,567,875, as prepared in the FY-2010 budget document and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.*

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

Members discussed moving fifth grade students to Nessacus Regional Middle School. Member Chivers stated that the Finance Committee was tied 3 – 3 on the most recent vote they had taken on the matter. More discussion followed and it was decided that the matter would be brought up under New Business later in the meeting.

### 3. Policy Review

#### a. First Reading Revisions to Policy 7520: Community Use of Facilities

MOVED BY MEMBER HOPPER, SECONDED BY MEMBER CONNER

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the first reading of revisions to Policy 7520: Community Use of Facilities as shown on pages 3 & 4 and recommended by the Policy Subcommittee.*

Discussion followed about changes that were made to the policy. The revisions will give the administrator in charge of the building more flexibility in the fees charged.

MOVED BY MEMBER WELTS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*A motion was made to table the motion on first reading revisions to policy 7520: Community Use of Facilities and send it back to the Policy Subcommittee.*

Ayes: Members Grallert, Hopper, Lacatell, Les, Welts and Carroll-Lombardi.  
Nays: Members Chivers, Conner, Henderson and Wagner.  
Abstention: Member Farley  
Motion carried.

### 4. Personnel

Member Les reported that the subcommittee has not met. Superintendent Harlan reminded Mr. Les that the Personnel Subcommittee would be assuming the responsibility for reviewing all contracts.

B. Others

1. Wahconah Building Committee

Member Henderson reported on the science lab renovations. The center island is in and new flooring has been laid. She told members that next Thursday and Friday, February 18 & 19, will be volunteer workdays. Mrs. Henderson invited all interested to come to Wahconah and help; SABIC workers will be there on Friday, so Thursday would be better.

Business Manager Foster reported that there were twenty responses for the Owner's Project Manager to oversee the greening of Wahconah and the athletic facility changes. There was an optional site visit yesterday and Mrs. Foster was not sure how many attended.

2. Health Advisory Committee

Member Hopper reported the subcommittee plans to meet in March and will be sending revisions of various policies to the Policy Subcommittee for review. Superintendent Harlan asked about a request that had been sent to the subcommittee about the number of nurses the District employs. Member Hopper did not have any information on that and added he would have to recuse himself from those discussions.

ARTICLE 9591 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Quarterly Progress Report on District Improvement Plan

Superintendent Harlan reported to the Committee on the progress of the District Improvement Plan, saying that several items had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The Measured Academic Progress testing and data collection will be completed on February 13<sup>th</sup> and Member Conner spoke on the strategic plan for 5 to 10 years out. Dr. Harlan spoke about the leadership training program and areas that were targeted from the summit in October 2009. Senator Ben Downing is planning to speak at the Leadership Summit on March 4, 2009, and will be addressing regionalizing school districts as well as the state/federal stimulus package. Superintendent Harlan reported that the Regional Agreement Committee has met and all towns have received the official request from Dalton concerning transportation costs. By-laws state that all towns in the district must vote on the requested change. On February 9, 2009, Cummington voted against the change. The next meeting is scheduled for April 28, 2009. Superintendent Harlan concluded by thanking the Committee for their continued support.

B. Recommendations

C. Other

1. Thank You Note From Cozeen Mayotte

Superintendent Harlan read from a note sent by Cozeen Mayotte, a paraprofessional in the district, thanking the Committee for listening to a request asking to allow paraprofessionals to donate illness days to a member of the unit.

2. Letter From Community Member Cynthia Grippaldi

Superintendent Harlan handed out and read a letter from Cynthia Grippaldi. In the letter Ms. Grippaldi talks of the responsibilities of the Committee and the budget saying that it is not unreasonable to present the towns with a budget that keeps programs intact.

ARTICLE 9592      PERSONNEL

A.              Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

There were no changes to report.

Note: All salaries are set in accordance with current contracts.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*To move Article 9594, New Business ahead of Article 9593, Old Business.*

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

ARTICLE 9594      NEW BUSINESS

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the addition of new business to the agenda.*

A.              Fifth Grade Students at Current Schools

A discussion took place earlier in the meeting about moving fifth grade students to Nessacus Regional Middle School. The Finance Subcommittee was tied in a vote at their last meeting and asked for the full Committee's decision on the matter.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER LES

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves keeping fifth grade as presently constituted.*

Ayes: Seven members voting.  
Nays: Members Farley, Henderson and Lacatell.  
Motion carried unanimously.

MOVED BY MEMBER CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*To move Article 9595, Remarks For the Good of the Committee, ahead of Article 9593, Old Business.*

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

ARTICLE 9595      REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Member Les reported on the progress of the new District website. The server is built, software is loaded and the site should be online in about a month. Mr. Les would like to schedule time for those that will be doing the data entry on the site to be trained. In response to a question about the current information on

the website, Mr. Les said the data would be moved and asked that emails be sent about information on the current site that is outdated.

ARTICLE 9593 OLD BUSINESS

The Chair stated that both matters under Old Business would be taken up in executive session.

- A. Level 3 Grievance – Retirees Health Insurance
- B. Executive Session (Strategy Regarding Negotiations)

The Chair read an outline for the grievance hearing, asking the Association whether a public or private session was desired. CBEA Executive Secretary Joanne Dowling requested a private session.

Before closing the meeting to the public, the Chair stated the Committee would adjourn at the close of Executive Session and reminded audience members that the next meeting, February 26, 2009, would be the Public Hearing on the proposed budget.

MOVED BY MEMBER LES, SECONDED BY MEMBER CHIVERS

*To go into executive session at 9:02 p.m. in accordance with MGL Chapter 39, 23B, “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining...including the resolution of grievances pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement.”*

ROLL CALL

Ayes: Members Chivers, Conner, Farley, Grallert, Henderson, Hopper, Lacatell, Les, Wagner, Welts and Carroll-Lombardi.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

Member Farley left the meeting at 9:04 p.m.

The Committee came out of executive session at 10:23 p.m.

MOVED BY MEMBER GRALLERT, SECONDED BY MEMBER HOPPER

*To adjourn the meeting at 10:24 p.m.*

Ayes: Eleven members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.