

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee
Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 14, 2008

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Nessacus Regional Middle School, Dalton, MA on Thursday, February 14, 2008, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Bantjes, J. Chivers (7:06 p.m.), L. Chivers, Goddard, Gordon, Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Les, Welts, Yates, and Carroll-Lombardi.

Absent: Members Farley and Morton.

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 9384 RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and thanked them for coming. She stated the audience would be allowed to speak following the budget presentation. No one spoke under this article.

ARTICLE 9385 STUDENT AFFAIRS

A. Wahconah Report – None.

ARTICLE 9386 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes from the meeting of February 7th were not available.

ARTICLE 9387 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Warrants

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve Warrant No. 2008-31, in the total amount of \$386,323.80, as printed.

Warrant No. 2008-31, dated February 14, 2008

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Operating Expenses

Accounts Payable	\$339,661.35	
Insurance Payment	<u>\$1,036.04</u>	
		\$340,697.39
Transfers		\$171.13
Federal Funds		\$10,340.40
Circuit Breaker		\$3,215.20
School Lunch		\$12,203.72

Athletic Independent Games	\$7,222.49
WRHS Student Activity Fund	\$4,232.92
NRMS Student Activity Fund	\$2,000.00
Medicaid	\$1,243.55
WRHS Football Revolving	\$200.00
WRHS Swimming Revolving	\$1,054.00
WRHS Nordic Skiing Revolving	\$580.00
WRHS Boys' Basketball Revolving	\$837.25
WRHS Girls' Basketball Revolving	\$489.75
WRHS Hockey Revolving	<u>\$1,836.00</u>
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$386,323.80

Member J. Chivers arrived prior to the vote.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9388 COMMUNICATIONS

A. Report of the Chair

There was no report from the Chair.

ARTICLE 9389 SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Education

Member J. Chivers stated he would bring motions forward under New Business.

2. Finance

a. Public Hearing – FY-2009 Budget

Member L. Chivers reported four subcommittee meetings are scheduled after the Public Hearing and encouraged anyone interested to attend. She then reviewed the public hearing document (attached to the official minutes), pointing out specific increases and stating line items that show no change from FY-2008 will be adjusted as unknowns become known. Funding for salary increases is included in line 510. Contingencies are built in for increased or decreased Chapter 70 funding and transportation funding, both as anticipated revenue and anticipated expenditures. If the revenue is not there, the expenditure will go away. Ms. Chivers reviewed the assessments to the towns, the approved cuts, and potential additional cuts. The audience was invited to ask questions regarding the FY-2009 Budget.

George Desmarais of Dalton asked several questions regarding the difference in energy costs between Wahconah and Nessacus; the \$100,000 increase in transportation costs; the plan for extra money if received; computer leases; stipends for teachers; and the increase in insurance costs. He asked about the special education cost increases, the status of the proposed collaborative to share costs in Berkshire County, and the accuracy of the estimated savings from the 19 positions vacated by those retiring. Administrators and school committee members responded to each of these questions as they were asked: the bid for electrical services did not include Nessacus; bus costs have evened out in the last couple of

years; extra Chapter 70 monies will go into E & D; 1/3 of the district's computer leases are renewed each year; stipends are paid for coaching and other activities beyond the school day; insurance rates will go up 5.8%, but overall costs will increase 12% because of retirees who pay a smaller percentage of premium; special education accounts have been increased to provide inclusion classrooms at the high school and to pay for outside tuition for a student moving into the district; the cooperative has received two grants to study special education transportation and vocational transportation; the savings for replacement of retiring teachers was based on the difference between \$65,000 and \$45,000 (20,000 X 19 positions).

Ron Sanders of Dalton asked about the health insurance options for retirees, suggesting those plans should be looked at more carefully. The Chair responded the Committee has been looking at retiree insurance benefits and continues to study options. He referred to five years of cuts in Chapter 70 funds, asking what is being done to get more funding. The district has been working with its legislators – it is a serious problem in regionals where there is little voting power.

Kate Markowitz of Windsor spoke about the closing of schools and multi age classes, noting those possibilities have been brought up before along with other ideas that came out of the restructuring subcommittee. She suggested if these options are viable, they should be implemented.

John Cramer, teacher and parent from Windsor, thanked the Committee for doing an impossible task with limited per pupil expenditures. He asked that if multi grades are used as an educational compromise, they be implemented equitably among the elementary schools.

Kay Klem of Dalton stated the budget issues are the same year after year, asking if the district has a long-range plan. Superintendent Harlan reviewed the work of the Ad Hoc Long Range Planning Committee, noting the many changes that came out of that committee's work. The Superintendent also noted that group's work is not yet done.

David Fairfield, Dalton Select Board, outlined the financial situation Dalton finds itself in based on Proposition 2 ½ and limited new growth in the town. The town's fiscal capacity for FY-2009 is \$323,000 for both town and school expenses. Dalton's budget will go up 1.3%. He urged the Committee and others to petition the legislature for more State funding.

Bill Chabot, Dalton Select Board, read a resolution adopted by the Select Board and supported by the MMA, stating the Governor and legislators must commit to full funding of all programs and provide reliable Cherry sheet figures by March 15th. He questioned the efficiencies made by the district in transportation costs in light of the dropping enrollments. The Business Manager responded the buses still must run the same routes, although a number of feeder buses have been eliminated.

Berkshire Trail Principal and grants coordinator Laura Dumouchel thanked the Committee for making as few cuts as possible, calling the proposed budget wise in terms of education. She stated multi grade classes and school closings would devastate the district.

George Bissell of Dalton endorsed the Committee's hard work, stating everyone must think about different ways of raising money in our State.

The Chair thanked the audience and invited them to attend future meetings.

3. Policy Review

Member Bantjes reported the subcommittee had not met and would schedule a meeting in the near future.

4. Personnel

Member Les reported the subcommittee had not met.

B. Others

1. Wahconah Building Needs Study Committee

The Chair stated copies of the Study Committee's report were available and the report and recommendations would be discussed by the School Committee on March 6th. Both Paul Schroeder of the MBA and the district's attorney will be in attendance on March 6th. School Committee members will join the Study Committee at a meeting to be set for March 12th or 13th.

ARTICLE 9390 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Fund Raiser Approved

The Nessacus travel club will hold a raffle during the month of February 2008.

B. Recommendations – None.

C. Other – None.

ARTICLE 9391 PERSONNEL

A. Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

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

- Kathleen Combs, school nurse at Kittredge School, initially appointed September 7, 1994, will retire on March 28, 2008.
- Kim Parker, paraprofessional at Craneville School, initially appointed December 10, 2004, has resigned effective February 8, 2008.
- Gisel Cahoon has been appointed Title I paraprofessional at Kittredge School, 3 hours/day, effective February 4, 2008.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

To move Article 9393, New Business, ahead of Old Business.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9393 NEW BUSINESS

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

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

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

A. Approval of District Overnight Field Trips

1. Apollonian Players Competitions, Various Dates

MOVED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves overnight field trips for the Apollonian Players on February 29-March 1, 2008, March 14-15, 2008, and March 27-29, 2008 to participate in various competitions, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Member Hopper expressed concern regarding equity among field trips in light of the teachers' decision to not participate in after school activities. It was pointed out the advisors to the Apollonian Players receive stipends for their time.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Academic Decathlon Competition, March 7-8, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight field trip for Academic Decathlon on March 7-8, 2008 to participate in state competition, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Student Trip to France, April 21-28, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight field trip for Wahconah students to Paris, France from April 21-28, 2008, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Although the advisors will not receive stipends, the planning for this trip began long before the request for approval and deposits had already been made. A concern was raised regarding the lost school days for student participants and the fact that it is an overseas trip.

Ayes: Eight members.

Nays: Members J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Hopper, Yates.

Motion carried.

4. Student Trip to Fenway Park, July 8, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight field trip for Wahconah Student Council to Fenway Park on July 8-9, 2008, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

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

5. Latin Students to Rhode Island, December 7-9, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves an overnight field trip for Wahconah Latin students to Rhode Island from December 7-9, 2008, as recommended by the Education Subcommittee.

Although there are no stipends for teacher chaperones, this is a traditional annual trip.

Ayes: Nine members.
Nays: Members J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Hopper.
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

To move Article 9394, Remarks for the Good of the Committee, ahead of Old Business.

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

ARTICLE 9394 REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Member Goddard reported a number of swim team members are going to Western Mass. and State competition.

Member Hopper, referring to recent letters to the Berkshire Eagle editor, asked how many double-digit pay increases there have been in the past couple of years. The business manager will provide that information at the next meeting.

ARTICLE 9392 OLD BUSINESS

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To go into executive session at 9:14 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.

ROLL CALL

Ayes: Members Bantjes, J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Goddard, Gordon, Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Les, Welts, Yates, Carroll-Lombardi.
Nays: None.
Motion carried unanimously.

The Committee came out of executive session at 9:32 p.m.

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To form a fact-finding Ad Hoc Committee of the Finance Subcommittee to study the GIC (Group Insurance Commission); this committee will report their findings to the Finance Subcommittee. The committee will begin work by March 31, 2008 and will be co-chaired by Dana Welts (School Committee) and by another representative selected by the Committee. The Committee will consist of School Committee member Dana Welts, Superintendent Donna Harlan, Assistant Superintendent Jim Stankiewicz, the Business Manager and/or designee, one unit representative from each bargaining unit (CBEA, AFSCME, Assistant Principals). The Committee will make periodic reports, the first by May1, 2008.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER WELTS

To adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.