

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee  
Regular Meeting

Thursday, October 9, 2008

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Kittredge School, Hinsdale, MA, on Thursday, October 9, 2008, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Bantjes, L. Chivers, Goddard, Gordon, Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Les, Morton, Welts, Yates, and Carroll-Lombardi.

Absent: Members J. Chivers and Farley.

Also Present: Superintendent Donna Harlan, Assistant Superintendent James Stankiewicz, Business Manager Marge Foster, CBEA Executive Secretary Joanne Dowling, Student Representative Kim Kirchner, Recording Secretary Mary Jo Keiper, and Members of the Audience.

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

ARTICLE 9529      RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Kerry Ryan, physical wellness teacher at Wahconah Regional High School and district Supervisor of Physical Education and Personal Wellness, reviewed the gymnasium inspection reports included in the school committee agenda packet. She reported the school gyms are, overall, in good shape. The inspector, Mike Beard of Jaypro Sports, Inc., corrected minor problems during his inspection and expressed concern regarding only one area – the divider curtain at Nessacus Regional Middle School. Full replacement of the curtain is not warranted at this time; however Mr. Beard recommended removing the divider curtain at the end of the school year, replacing the grommets and cables, and repairing some fabric.

A member asked if the outdoor playgrounds had been included in the inspection; they had not. However, Business Manager Marge Foster reported the district's carrier of property & casualty insurance did take a look recently at the playgrounds and found no issues except the mulch depth, resulting from daily use. The inspection also did not include any bleachers.

The Chair thanked Ms. Ryan for her report.

ARTICLE 9530      STUDENT AFFAIRS

A.      Wahconah Report

Wahconah senior Kim Kirchner reported students have settled into a routine. She thanked the Committee for the new desks, but noted it has been very cold in the building. Miss Kirchner asked if the heat could be turned on. She reported sports teams are doing well, drama rehearsals are ongoing, band and chorus are also doing well. Drama students are anxiously awaiting electrical improvements in the auditorium, concerned that the area would be closed off for safety reasons. The Chair and Business Manager stated the materials to correct the problems have been ordered. Chair Carroll-Lombardi thanked Miss Kirchner and invited her to stay and participate in the meeting if she wished.

ARTICLE 9531      SECRETARY'S REPORT

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 25, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of September 25, 2008, as corrected. (Correction included the addition of a motion to adopt the District Improvement Plan under Superintendent's Reports.)

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9532 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Warrants

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*To approve Warrant No. 2009-15, in the total amount of \$748,189.30, as printed.*

Warrant No. 2009-15, dated October 3, 2008

PAYROLL

<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$542,484.52
Federal Funds	\$41,539.39
Becket Revolving Account	\$1,581.69
School Lunch	\$17,593.44
FICA (Operating)	\$7,178.33
Transfers & Deductions	\$137,811.93
TOTAL PAYROLL & DEDUCTIONS	\$748,189.30

Ayes: Ten members.

Nays: None.

Abstentions: Members Hopper and Welts

Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*To approve Warrant No. 2009-16, in the total amount of \$294,610.88, as printed.*

Warrant No. 2009-16, dated October 9, 2008

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Operating Expense	\$255,209.20
State Other Revenue - Medicaid	\$1,595.17
Federal Funds	\$6,135.81
School Lunch	\$11,547.40
Athletic Independent Games	\$3,868.25
NRMS Student Activity Fund	\$3,700.00
WRHS Student Fees Revolving	\$100.00
Becket Washington Pre-School	\$178.70
WRHS Boys' Soccer Revolving	\$1,546.90
WRHS Girls' Soccer Revolving	\$1,592.37
WRHS Football Revolving	\$200.00
WRHS Cross Country Revolving	\$440.45

WRHS Cheerleading Revolving	\$95.00
WRHS Baseball Revolving	\$100.00
WRHS Volleyball Revolving	\$838.00
WRHS Renovation Total	\$5,800.37
WRHS Science Lab Total	<u>\$1,663.26</u>
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$294,610.88

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Authorization to Establish Activity Account

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes the following new activity account, as recommended by the district treasurer: PAL Baking Club, for the purpose of raising money to purchase baking and cooking supplies.*

In response to a member's question the Superintendent stated the PAL baking club would be selling to her, for refreshments at administrative meetings, and to groups within the school under the direction of the teacher and paraprofessional in the PAL classroom.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9533 COMMUNICATIONS

A. Report of the Chair

Chair Carroll-Lombardi reported the seven town advisory committee meeting has been postponed from October 16<sup>th</sup> to October 30<sup>th</sup>.

She read from the notes taken at the October 2<sup>nd</sup> School Committee planning meeting, noting that copies of the notes as well as copies of the Committee's self-evaluation were available. Agenda items at the planning meeting included the need to choose representatives to meet regularly with Representative Guyer; the make-up of the Regional Agreement ad hoc committee; the leadership initiative to be held on October 29<sup>th</sup>; review of the School Committee self-evaluation; and the changing of two items on the Superintendent's District Improvement Plan.

The Chair also reported she continues to send information to members regarding Question #1, which will be a discussion item on the October 23<sup>rd</sup> agenda.

Members Henderson, Les and the Chair recently attended a meeting on school district consolidation at the Rennie Center in Boston. Member Henderson summarized the backgrounds of the speakers and the information presented, reviewing the comments she believed to be relevant. Member Les had received mixed messages and felt some of the data presented was questionable. The Committee discussed the information reported by Members Henderson and Les. Mrs. Carroll-Lombardi noted the Regional Agreement Ad Hoc Committee would be looking at these issues.

B. Alternate Delegate – MASC/MASS Joint Conference

No one on the Committee expressed an interest in serving as the alternate delegate.

ARTICLE 9534 SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Education

The next meeting is scheduled for November 6<sup>th</sup>.

2. Finance

Member L. Chivers reported the subcommittee had met and considered a full agenda. She asked Member Welts to review the report given by the GIC committee. Dr. Welts stated his committee recommended that the School Committee not pursue Section 19 or the GIC at this time; however the GIC Committee will begin meeting again in March of 2009. Twenty towns and districts have joined the GIC; Central Berkshire is still looking to demonstrate savings.

a. Advancement of Funds to the Wahconah Building Committee

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the advance of funds from the Operating Budget in the amount of \$11,600 to the Wahconah Building Committee as follows: \$9,000 for engineering the science lab and \$2,600 for electric work in the auditorium as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.*

Member L. Chivers stated the advance of these funds would assure safety and get the high school ready for SABIC to come into the building. The money will come from E & D and be returned to that account when the bonding is secured. The Superintendent stated Dalton is pursuing it's own legislation to approve the Dalton vote in favor of the Wahconah Renovation Bond and it will include debt inclusion. The legislation filed by Representative Guyer and Senator Downing is still in process.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

b. Authorization of Paraprofessional Hours

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes the addition of one paraprofessional, 3 hours/day, for Berkshire Trail Elementary School to manage the library providing preparation time for teachers as required by the contract, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee. (Funding for these hours will come from the operating budget.)*

It was reported there is currently a substitute paraprofessional in the library one day each week; the requested position would replace the need for that coverage. Several points were made: Given the pupil to staff ratio at Berkshire Trail, the hours should be met by existing staff; Craneville was denied a paraprofessional last year; the financial situation in the State will probably eliminate the position next year; the Principal and other staff are already busy; mandated prep time must be covered; all other schools in the district have librarian and/or paraprofessional coverage in the library; cost would be approximately \$5,400/year, an additional \$2,400 over the cost of the current substitute; the Principal at Berkshire Trail is also the district's grant writer and has worked on obtaining eleven grants for the district.

Ayes: Nine members.  
Nays: Members Henderson, Hopper, and Morton.  
Motion carried.

c. FY 2010 Budget Guidelines & Preparation Schedule

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the guidelines for the FY 2010 budget as shown (in the agenda packet and attached to the official minutes) and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee, and*

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the FY 2010 budget preparation schedule as shown (in the agenda packet and attached to the official minutes) and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.*

Member Henderson referred to the request of the town of Dalton for consideration in developing the FY-2010 budget, stating we cannot continue to bankrupt our towns.

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

Member Bantjes asked if the district is watching oil prices. Business Manager Foster stated the district locked in at \$3.25 and she will talk to Lower Pioneer Valley to see if the contract can be broken if the price falls below that amount.

3. Policy Review

a. First Reading Adoption of Policy 5180: Home or Hospital Educational Services

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER HENDERSON

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the first reading of adoption of Policy 5180: Home or Hospital Educational Services, as shown (in the agenda packet) and recommended by the policy review subcommittee.*

Member Bantjes stated the policy addresses long-term medical conditions, 14 days or longer.

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

b. First Reading Revisions to Policy 5685: Approval of Scholarships

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER HOPPER

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the first reading of revisions to Policy 5685: Approval of Scholarships, as shown (in the agenda packet) and recommended by the policy review subcommittee.*

Member Bantjes noted the additions, including a nondiscrimination clause.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

c. First Reading Revisions to Policy 7520: Community Use of School Facilities

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER GRALLERT

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the first reading revisions to Policy 7520: Community Use of School Facilities, as shown (in the agenda packet) and recommended by the policy review subcommittee.*

Member Bantjes noted minor modifications in charges that were confusing.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Personnel

Member Les reported the subcommittee had not met and no meeting is scheduled at this time. The Chair made a plea for volunteers to serve on this subcommittee.

a. Superintendent's Contract

Member Les reported the superintendent has accepted the subcommittee's contract offer and the specifics would be outlined at the end of the meeting.

B. Others

1. Wahconah Building Committee

Member Henderson reported the building committee had met that week and learned Dalton Town Manager Ken Walto might get the bond authorized. SABIC is moving ahead with the science lab; the auditorium contract is signed; the committee continues to work on RFSs for the OPM and architect.

2. GIC Committee

Reported under Finance Subcommittee.

3. Health Advisory Committee

Member Hopper reported the Committee had not met but will schedule a meeting in the near future. Nurse Leader Barbara Westwood will report to the Committee on November 13<sup>th</sup>.

ARTICLE 9535 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Preliminary October 1, 2008 Enrollments

Superintendent Harlan referred to the figures on the addendum, noting the district has not lost as many students as anticipated.

Dr. Harlan also reported invitations for the leadership initiative on October 29<sup>th</sup> have gone out by email and also by regular mail to those who don't have or don't use email. She stated the large number of invitations is aimed at bringing together more hearts and minds to discuss the problems we are facing.

The Superintendent announced that Berkshire Trail's third grade MCAS math scores last year were #1 in the State, commending teacher Nancy Gokey and the rest of the staff at Berkshire Trail.

B.            Recommendations – None.

C.            Other – None.

ARTICLE 9536        PERSONNEL

A.            Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

The following personnel change was noted. All salaries are set in accordance with current contracts.

- Susana Ruiz has been appointed district wide paraprofessional for the special services department 19 hours/week, effective September 29, 2008.

ARTICLE 9537        OLD BUSINESS

A.            Signage Regarding Dogs

Assistant Superintendent James Stankiewicz reported there are no signs restricting dogs at the elementary schools, although both Wahconah and Nessacus have signs. He said he would speak to the elementary principals and encourage signage at those schools. Member Henderson suggested the district may need to adopt a policy regarding animals in the buildings, in light of allergies, etc. Member Bantjes will take it up with the policy subcommittee.

B.            Gymnasium Inspection Reports

The reports were covered under Responses from the Audience.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

*To move item C. Executive Session for strategy regarding negotiations to the end of the meeting.*

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9538        NEW BUSINESS

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER HARVEY

*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. Revised District Improvement Plan

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

*That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee approves the revised District Improvement Plan, as presented and recommended by the Superintendent and filed with the official minutes.*

Superintendent Harlan stated two changes had been made to the plan during the School Committee planning meeting on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Objective 2.2.3 - the date for submission of recommended changes to the regional agreement to the School Committee was changed to February 12, 2009; objective 2.2.5 study reorganization such as creating an elementary superintendency union as requested by a Dalton school committee member, revise language as necessary – August 2009.

Ayes: Twelve members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9539 REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Member Les stated Becket Washington School did phenomenally on the MCAS tests. He recognized former principal Laura Dumouchel for her work in that school, noting she is now principal at Berkshire Trail where students are doing very well also.

Member Henderson expressed appreciation to Crane & Company for sending the entire junior class to see “To Kill a Mockingbird”.

The Committee returned to Article 9537, Old Business.

C. Executive Session (Strategy Regarding Negotiations)

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER HARVEY

*To go into executive session at 8:20 p.m. in accordance with MGL Chapter 39, Section 23B, 3. “To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining...”*

ROLL CALL

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

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

The Chair stated the Committee would reconvene following the executive session. Superintendent Harlan, Business Manager Foster, and Assistant Superintendent Stankiewicz left the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Assistant Superintendent Stankiewicz returned following the executive session and remained until the meeting was adjourned.

The Committee came out of Executive Session at 8:46 p.m.

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*To adopt the contract with Donna L. Harlan, Superintendent of Schools, for the period July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2011, as written (and attached to the official minutes).*

Personnel Subcommittee Chair Les reviewed the contract highlights, which include a 1.5% retroactive increase and a 3.5% increase effective July 1, 2008. The health insurance provisions are the same as the teachers and all other aspects of the contract will be made public and published on the district's website.

Member Henderson stated she could not support the contract, even though the salary increases are in line with other district personnel. She feels the 10% increase awarded in the 2006-07 school year translates to a 5% average over the three-year period and she would vote "no". The committee discussed the salary offer and related comparisons of other superintendents.

Ayes: Eleven members.  
Nay: Member Henderson.  
Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER HARVEY, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

*To adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m.*

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