

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee
Regular Meeting

Thursday, October 23, 2008

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Becket Washington School, Becket, MA, on Thursday, October 23, 2008, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Bantjes, J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Farley (7:02 p.m.), Gordon, Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Les, Morton, Welts, Yates, and Carroll-Lombardi.

Absent: Member Goddard.

Also Present: Superintendent Donna Harlan, Assistant Superintendent James Stankiewicz, Business Manager Marge Foster, 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 9540 RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

None.

ARTICLE 9541 STUDENT AFFAIRS

A. Wahconah Report – No report.

B. Presentation of Certificate of Academic Excellence to Kathryn Reed

Superintendent Harlan introduced Kathryn Reed, noting the selection process was very easy this year. She read a list of accomplishments by Miss Reed, including participation in nearly all Wahconah's extra-curricular activities. She has served as captain of several school teams and is first in her senior class with a GPA of 99.43. Miss Reed read a brief statement describing the experience she felt has contributed most to the person she is today. Dr. Harlan presented the award and Chair Carroll-Lombardi stated the school committee was extremely proud of her.

Miss Reed reported on the recent induction of 31 juniors and seniors into the National Honor Society, and the honorary induction of School Committee member Billie Henderson into the NHS this year.

Member Farley arrived during the presentation of the academic excellence award.

ARTICLE 9542 SECRETARY'S REPORT

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of October 9, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER HARVEY

To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 9, 2008, as printed.

Ayes: Ten members

Nays: None.

Abstentions: Members J. Chivers, Farley, and Yates.
Motion carried.

ARTICLE 9543 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Warrants

MOVED BY L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

To approve Warrant No. 2009-17, in the total amount of \$708,139.22, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-17, dated October 16, 2008

PAYROLL

<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$506,844.04
Federal Funds	\$44,365.84
Becket Revolving Account	\$1,455.15
School Lunch	<u>\$19,490.02</u>
Subtotal	\$572,155.05
FICA (Operating)	<u>\$6,839.44</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL	\$578,994.49
Transfers & Deductions	<u>\$129,144.73</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL & DEDUCTIONS	\$708,139.22

Ayes: Eleven members.

Nays: None.

Abstentions: Members Hopper and Welts.

Motion carried.

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

To approve Warrant No. 2009-18, in the total amount of \$538,964.62, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-18, dated October 23, 2008

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Operating Expenses

Accounts Payable	\$75,711.92	
Insurance Payment	<u>\$346,573.42</u>	
		\$422,285.34
Transfers		\$83,060.04
Federal Funds		\$9,859.53
School Lunch		\$10,552.15
Independent Games		\$1,095.00
WRHS Student Activity		\$5,786.31
NRMS Student Activity		\$2,500.00
NRMS Prof. Dev. Vending		\$348.48
Berkshire Trail Preschool		\$327.20
WRHS Boys' Soccer Revolving		\$392.36
WRHS Girls' Soccer Revolving		\$668.53
WRHS Football Revolving		\$508.10
WRHS Cross Country Revolving		\$556.19
WRHS Cheerleading Revolving		\$185.55

WRHS Softball Revolving	\$100.00
WRHS Baseball Revolving	-\$100.00
WRHS Volleyball Revolving	\$564.84
Retiree Life Total	<u>\$275.00</u>
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$538,964.62

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

B. Marion D. & William H. Manning Memorial Award

MOVED BY L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee authorizes the change in name of the “William Manning Scholarship” to the “Marion D. & William H. Manning Memorial Award”, in accordance with the guidelines set forth (in the agenda packet) and recommended by the district treasurer (guidelines attached to the official minutes).

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

ARTICLE 9544 COMMUNICATIONS

A. Report from Peter Kopcha, Executive Director of the Western Mass. Collaborative

Peter Kopcha, Executive Director of the Western Mass. Collaborative, addressed the Committee. He defined a collaborative as an educational services business that provides services to members at less expense. It is his hope that over time the collaborative will save member districts money, provide services each could not provide alone, and avoid the elimination of services to students. The high need areas identified for this collaborative are special education transportation, special education services, staff development, and operational need areas. In order to determine specific direction, he is interviewing three educational groups within the membership: superintendents, special education directors, and business managers. Regarding grant availability, he is exploring congressional grant proposals, state proposals, and an ELL category training grant estimated at \$12,000. He reviewed the necessary financing for the initial \$185,000 budget, noting he hopes to receive a \$105,000 grant, and fund the remaining \$80,000 through member contributions. Central Berkshire’s share would be \$14,500.

Mr. Kopcha answered various questions from the Committee, stating that future budgets would run around \$260,000 per year. The Chair thanked Mr. Kopcha and the Committee took a brief recess.

B. Report of the Chair

The Chair has emailed Representative Guyer regarding his suggested meetings with Committee representatives.

C. Discussion on Question #1

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee opposes Question 1, a ballot initiative that would eliminate the state income tax. Passage of Question 1 would cut the state budget by 40%, cause massive reductions in local aid to cities and towns, and result in drastic reductions in school programs.

The Chair reported language for the motion had come from the town of Arlington. She stated it was not advised that the motion encourage residents to vote one way or the other. She stated the elimination of state income taxes would translate to a \$4 million reduction in Central Berkshire and a 65% reduction to our towns. The Committee debated whether it was appropriate for the Committee to take a stand. Most members believed the Committee has a responsibility to advocate for the support of funding for public education.

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Alternate Delegate – MASC/MASS Joint Conference

No member expressed an interest in attending.

ARTICLE 9545 SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Education

The subcommittee will meet on November 6, at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office.

2. Finance

a. Preliminary FY-08 Balance Sheet

Member L. Chivers reported the subcommittee had discussed the preliminary FY-08 balance sheet at its meeting just prior to the school committee meeting.

b. FY-09 Grants

Superintendent Harlan reviewed the grants later in the meeting during her report to the Committee.

c. FY-09 Budget Amendments

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

To amend the FY-2009 budget as follows, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:

- 1. Increase postage expenses by \$3,209*
- 2. Increase travel expenses by \$4,171*
- 3. Increase dues & memberships by \$3,974*

Member Chivers reported this is a lesser reduction in the cuts to the FY-2009 budget than those made originally.

Ayes: Twelve members.

Nays: Member Hopper.

Motion carried.

d. Award of FY-09 Contract for Third Party Administrator Services of 403b Employee Payroll Deductions

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To award a contract for third party administrator services for 403b investment plan compliance to Mid-America Administrative & Retirement Solutions, Inc., as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

Business Manager Foster explained that new IRS regulations increase the responsibility of organizations that offer 403bs to their employees. The cost, approximately \$22.50/year per participant, will be borne by the participant.

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

e. FY-09 Contract Award for Snow Plowing and Removal Services

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To award a contract for FY-09 snow plowing and removal services to Cormier Landscaping of Dalton, MA for the cost of \$70.00 per hour for plowing and \$80.00 per ton for sand, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

f. Approval to Return Excess Debt Fund Balances to Towns

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To return capital debt fund balances to the respective towns as recommended by John Polombo, CPA, in compliance with Department of Revenue regulations, as follows and recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:

1. Becket	\$4,332
2. Cummington	\$14,652
3. Dalton	\$30,741
4. Hinsdale	\$19,989
5. Peru	\$8,685
6. Washington	\$2,007
7. Windsor	\$16,842

Superintendent Harlan noted this is the third time this year funds have been returned to the towns. The total amount returned to date is \$433,837. There are various reasons for this, similar to the return last spring of capital expenses for other audited construction projects. The Department of Revenue requires that these funds be returned as quickly as possible.

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Policy Review

Member Bantjes reported the subcommittee had discussed the problem of animals in school yards. The issue is covered by town ordinances; therefore, a school district policy would be redundant. It is the responsibility of school principals to report a violation to the town. Regarding animals in school buildings, the subcommittee will draft a procedure for notifying parents how each school deals with animals in classrooms. A copy of the procedure will be sent out to parents in early fall. The subcommittee will meet again on November 13th at 6:30 p.m.

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

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

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

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

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

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

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

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

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

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

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

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Personnel

Member Les reported the subcommittee had not met and had no meeting scheduled.

B. Others

1. Wahconah Building Committee

The building committee had not met since the last school committee meeting and there was no report.

2. Health Advisory Committee

Member Hopper reported a very well attended meeting was held on October 16th. He apologized he had not been able to get the minutes prior to the school committee meeting. The health advisory group will meet again in a few weeks and possibly in December also.

ARTICLE 9546 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Fund Raisers Approved

The following fund raisers were reported:

- Class of 2010, bake sale during the TurkeyFest, November 21, 2008
- Music Boosters, Barnes & Noble Bookfair, December 12-14, 2008

2. Quarterly Report on District Improvement Plan

The District Improvement Plan quarterly report, including updates, was distributed to members.

Dr. Harlan continued her report by reviewing the district's FY-2009 grants. Seven are managed by the special services director, six are managed by grants manager Laura Dumouchel who assisted with three others, three are managed by the assistant superintendent, one is managed by the nurse leader, one is managed by Wahconah business department chair Cindy Durkee, and Dr. Harlan has worked on two of the current grants.

In addition to grants management, Mrs. Dumouchel is also managing Kid's Place connections, a crisis and trauma program, and a \$25,000 grant for 5th graders to work on a Green Days program for 3 years.

Dr. Harlan reported an earmark from Denis Guyer for \$15,000 early literacy at Craneville School has been cut by the Governor. She noted the district had received \$1,000 prior to the deletion of the funding.

The district currently has 12 students in out of district placements; 9 students have been brought back from out of district placements; and, special services is struggling to keep five others in the district. \$15,369 has been saved by the special services reorganization.

A thank you has been received from Superintendent Eberwein for the student desks given to Pittsfield High and Taconic.

The Superintendent reported first semester teacher-pupil ratios at Wahconah, for a total student body of 659: art – 15.7; business – 16.5; English – 17.8; family & consumer science – 17.2; math – 20.6; languages – 18.7; music – 14.5; physical education – 47.4; reading – 7.5; science – 22.0; social studies – 23.3; special education – 7.0; technology – 11.6. A total of 22 students are taking virtual high school classes.

Dr. Harlan encouraged committee members to attend the Leadership at Crossroads and to bring family and friends. The initiative takes place on October 29th at Wahconah Country Club from 6 – 9 p.m. The Berkshire Eagle will cover the event.

B. Recommendations – None.

C. Other – None.

ARTICLE 9547 PERSONNEL

A. Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

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

- David Kotowski, principal of Becket Washington and Kittredge Schools, initially appointed on August 29, 1994, will retire on June 30, 2009.
- Judith Casey, paraprofessional at Kittredge School, initially appointed January 6, 1975, will retire on October 31, 2008.
- Stephen Goetz, paraprofessional at Craneville School, initially appointed September 27, 2006, has resigned effective October 2, 2008.
- Trudy Forgea, paraprofessional at Craneville School, initially appointed April 23, 2001, has resigned effective October 17, 2008.
- Maria Loza has been appointed paraprofessional at Nessacus Regional Middle School, 3 hours/day, effective September 22, 2008.

ARTICLE 9548 OLD BUSINESS

A. Executive Session (Strategy Regarding Negotiations)

There was no need to go into executive session.

ARTICLE 9549 NEW BUSINESS

None.

ARTICLE 9550 REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chair announced it would be the last meeting for retiring members Bantjes and L. Chivers. Mr. Bantjes has served the committee since 1992, chairing every subcommittee at one time or another as well as serving on the Nessacus and Wahconah Building Committees. Ms. Chivers has chaired education and finance subcommittees and served as vice-chair during Mrs. Carroll-Lombardi's tenure as Chair. The Chair stated she had appreciated Ms. Chivers's advice and math skills. Flowers were presented to Ms. Chivers and gifts from the Committee were given to both retiring members.

Ms. Chivers expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to work with everyone, noting she had come to the Committee with concerns about special education and has seen a positive change during her time on the Committee. She stated she appreciated the time members put in and their focus on children.

Mr. Bantjes cautioned the Committee to beware of the grant. It will run out, leaving the Committee either to cut a program or find additional resources – neither of which is easy.

Ms. Chivers thanked Mrs. Carroll-Lombardi, stating she has been a "gem" to work with.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

To adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Ayes: Thirteen members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.