

Central Berkshire Regional School Committee
Regular Meeting

Thursday, September 25, 2008

A regular meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, held at Nessacus Regional Middle School, Dalton, MA, on Thursday, September 25, 2008, was called to order by Chair Susan Carroll-Lombardi at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Bantjes, J. Chivers, L. Chivers, Grallert, Harvey, Henderson, Hopper, Les (7:24 p.m.), Morton, Welts, Yates, and Carroll-Lombardi.

Absent: Members Farley, Goddard, and Gordon.

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 9518 RESPONSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Bill Chabot of the Dalton Select Board reported the MMA is sponsoring an essay writing contest for the state's 6th graders. Principal Dery has stated there are interested students who will participate. Dalton has committed its support on behalf of all seven towns for any entrants. Prizes include a savings bond and an opportunity to publicly present the winning essay.

Mr. Chabot also listed for the Committee the cuts made in Dalton's FY-09 operating budget to accommodate the \$250,000 amount voters did not exclude from Proposition 2 ½. Nearly every account was affected either in salaries or expenses. The cuts reflected a decrease in Dalton's operating budget of approximately 2% from the previous year. Mr. Chabot noted the MMA is predicting a \$1 billion shortfall in the state's revenues. He encouraged the School Committee to look hard at next year's budget in order to keep the member communities from going bankrupt. He thanked Committee members for their time.

ARTICLE 9519 STUDENT AFFAIRS

A. Wahconah Report

Student representatives will begin attendance at the next school committee meeting. Principal Jim Conro reported the school year is well underway with a strong senior class and over 400 students in attendance at the annual freshman dance. He announced that the science supplies, funded through a \$10,000 grant accepted by the Committee in July, have arrived and that furnishings costing \$125,000 will arrive next week. He also reported excellent MCAS scores from the class of 2010; 186 students took the exams and only 5 of those did not meet proficiency. Mr. Conro acknowledged these results are a strong reflection on the faculty and students at Wahconah.

ARTICLE 9520 SECRETARY'S REPORT

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 11, 2008

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of September 11, 2008.

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

ARTICLE 9521 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Warrants

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve Warrant No. 2009-11, in the total amount of \$177,499.72, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-11, dated September 18, 2008

PAYROLL - RETRO FY-08 SALARIES

<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$154,146.68
FICA (Operating)	\$1,627.33
Transfers & Deductions	<u>\$21,725.71</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL & DEDUCTIONS	\$177,499.72

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

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

To approve Warrant No. 2009-12, in the total amount of \$39,328.95, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-12, dated September 18, 2008

PAYROLL - RETRO SICK PAYOUT

<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$32,617.50
FICA (Operating)	\$41.55
Transfers & Deductions	<u>\$6,669.90</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL & DEDUCTIONS	\$39,328.95

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

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

To approve Warrant No. 2009-13, in the total amount of \$781,569.48, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-13, dated September 18, 2008

PAYROLL

<u>Operating Expense</u>	\$493,154.24
Federal Funds	\$40,369.08
Becket Revolving Account	\$1,391.88
School Lunch	\$17,061.29
FICA (Operating)	\$6,548.05

Transfers & Deductions	<u>\$223,044.94</u>
TOTAL PAYROLL & DEDUCTIONS	\$781,569.48

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

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

To approve Warrant No. 2009-14, in the total amount of \$242,838.51, as printed.

Warrant No. 2009-14, dated September 25, 2008

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Operating Expenses

Accounts Payable	\$178,556.62	
Insurance Payment	<u>\$917.23</u>	
		\$179,473.85
Transfers		\$161.93
Federal Funds		\$13,617.73
School Lunch		\$11,793.23
Circuit Breaker		\$17,589.00
WRHS Student Fees Total		\$1,446.69
WRHS Renovation		<u>\$18,756.08</u>
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE		\$242,838.51

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

B. Gifts and Contributions

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER J. CHIVERS

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee accepts the following gifts and contributions to the William Manning Scholarship, as recommended by the district treasurer:

\$100 in memory of Marion Manning from Peter and Cindy Bernhardt

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

ARTICLE 9522 COMMUNICATIONS

A. Senator Benjamin Downing

The Chair introduced State Senator Benjamin Downing, stating the Committee felt fortunate to have him in attendance and realized he was a very busy man.

Senator Downing apologized for his inability to attend on September 11th (it was his birthday) and thanked the Committee for inviting him. He spoke at length about the current financial crisis, noting that although it

will drastically affect the state there are other states that will fare worse. He made the following points: the Governor has asked his administrators to look for cuts in the executive office; health care reform costs will continue to rise; the administration will tie incentives to the evaluation of and/or adoption by municipalities and districts of GIC; collaboration and regionalization will be promoted by Education Secretary Reville; Massachusetts should see small growth in the next year; however, there will be no capital gains revenues this year. Senator Downing suggested the state needs to find ways to weather the storm. He thanked the Committee again, and offered to answer questions.

Member Bantjes asked if there was a plan in place to deal with possible passage of Ballot Question #1 (repeal of the state income tax). The Senator stated there is no contingency plan; 40% of the budget is funded through the income tax. If Ballot Question #1 passes, health care would be off the table, probably local aid and several other initiatives as well.

Member Hopper referred to Bill Chabot's concerns about communities' deficits and asked about the lifting of mandates to help districts until times are better. The Senator said legislators will keep that in mind.

Member Harvey asked whether adoption or the evaluation and consideration of the GIC will be tied to future funding. The Senator believed evaluation would be enough. The Chair pointed out that the collective bargaining requirement is a difficult issue, in that the actual savings could go to the employees rather than the district.

CBEA Executive Secretary Joanne Dowling expressed concern that funding for the extended school day projects might be held back; the Senator stated that program is a priority of the Governor and he would be surprised if funding were not made available.

Responding to a question, the Senator stated the bidding process used by GIC restricts the admission to the GIC to one time only during the year. The timeline is an issue that may be revisited.

The Chair thanked Senator Downing for his part in submitting the home rule petition. The Senator described the process a bill follows and stated he was trying to move it along as quickly as possible. He thanked the Committee for the work they do, stating he is always available and Committee members should not hesitate to call on him. Superintendent Harlan thanked the Senator for his commitment to speak to the leadership conference on October 29th at Wahconah Country Club.

The Committee took a ten-minute recess.

(Member Les arrived during the conversation with Senator Downing.)

B. Report of the Chair

The Chair stated she had emailed members information on the Rennie Center meeting concerning consolidation she attended with Members Henderson and Les. A report will be made at the next meeting.

She will meet with Wahconah students who will serve as representatives to the school committee prior to their beginning at the next meeting.

Members were reminded of the planning meeting at 7:00 p.m. on October 2nd. Chair Carroll-Lombardi will provide more information prior to the meeting.

Regarding Ballot Question #1, the Chair has learned that members can take a position if they choose.

C. Delegates – MASC/MASS Joint Conference

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER WELTS

That Amy Grallert represent the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee as official voting delegate at the annual MASS/MASC Joint Conference November 19-22, 2008:

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

ARTICLE 9523 SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

1. Education

There was no report; the subcommittee will meet on November 6th.

2. Finance

Member L. Chivers reported the subcommittee had just met. The group will meet again on October 1st to talk about the GIC.

a. Certified Excess & Deficiency

Business Manager Foster reported the balance sheet must be submitted to the state on October 31st. The certification will not be available until after November 1st.

b. Award of Bid for HVAC

MOVED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS, SECONDED BY MEMBER BANTJES

That the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee awards a bid for HVAC preventative maintenance services on an as needed basis: \$80.00 per hour in one year up to a maximum of 494 hours for preventative maintenance services to the low bidder, B G Mechanical of Chicopee, as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

It was reported there were three bids, BG Mechanical was the lowest and has a technician residing in Dalton.

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

3. Policy Review

Member Bantjes reported the subcommittee has been working on three policies which will come to the Committee on the next agenda: a new policy on home and hospital services, revisions to the policy on scholarships, and revisions to the policy covering use of school facilities and its fee structure. The subcommittee will meet again on October 23rd at 6:30 p.m.

4. Personnel

Member Les reported the subcommittee had met last week and was close to a new contract with the Superintendent.

B. Others – none.

1. Wahconah Building Committee

There was no report.

2. GIC Committee

Member Welts reported the GIC Committee had presented findings to finance subcommittee and their report had been sent back for additional information. The group will meet on September 29th to prepare the new information, including ties to future funding, for the finance subcommittee meeting on October 1st. The Chair, who had stated earlier in the meeting that only five school districts are in the GIC revised that number to four districts.

Member Hopper reported the Health Advisory Committee would meet in the near future and would report at an upcoming meeting. Nurse Leader Barbara Westwood will make a presentation to the Committee in October.

ARTICLE 9524 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Reports

Superintendent Harlan thanked Senator Downing again for attending the meeting and also for his weekly reports which she forwards to Committee members. She noted the other emails she had sent to members. In response to a question at a previous meeting regarding a gift from the Central Berkshire Fund, she reported the anonymous donation was specifically for science lab supplies, which have already been purchased. She also announced that Senator Downing would be the keynote speaker at the October 29th Leadership Seminar at Wahconah Country Club.

1. District Improvement Plan

The Superintendent reported she has been talking since May with education and finance subcommittees about her district improvement plan. She distributed that document and reviewed the individual goals. Dr. Harlan stated the district has adequate IT capabilities to achieve the DIP's goals. It is the duty of the Chair to appoint members to the ad hoc committee for review of the Regional Agreement. It is hoped the structure for make-up of that committee will be in place by the October 16th meeting of the Seven Town Advisory Committee.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

To approve the District Improvement Plan as printed (filed with official minutes).

Ayes: Eleven members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Recommendations – None.

C. Other – None.

ARTICLE 9525 PERSONNEL

A. Superintendent's Review of Personnel Changes

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

- Tammy Noummano has been appointed paraprofessional at Craneville School, 3.8 hours/day, grant funded, effective August 28, 2008. Ms. Noummano formerly held a 3 hour/day paraprofessional position at Craneville.
- Martine Walsh has been appointed paraprofessional at Craneville School, 3.8 hours/day, Title I grant funded, effective September 3, 2008.
- Natalie Weeks has been appointed paraprofessional at Craneville School, 3.5 hours/day, effective September 5, 2008.
- Megan Townsend has been appointed paraprofessional at Craneville School, 6 hours/day, effective September 5, 2008.
- Melissa Gelpi has been appointed paraprofessional at Wahconah Regional High School, 6 hours/day, effective September 8, 2008.
- Bonnie L. Smith, secretary to the principal at Nessacus Regional Middle School, initially appointed February 2, 1982, will retire on November 30, 2008. (Mrs. Smith also had service in the district prior to 1982.)
- Francis Majchrowski, social studies teacher at Nessacus Regional Middle School, initially appointed September 6, 1977, will retire on February 2, 2009.

ARTICLE 9526 OLD BUSINESS

The next agenda will include reports on signage regarding dogs on school property and an inspection report on the school playgrounds.

ARTICLE 9527 NEW BUSINESS

None.

ARTICLE 9528 REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Member Bantjes asked that the Superintendent be cognizant of the size of files she is emailing to members.

It was reported the policy manual would soon be available on line.

MOVED BY MEMBER BANTJES, SECONDED BY MEMBER L. CHIVERS

To adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Ayes: Eleven members voting.

Nays: None.

Motion carried unanimously.