

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Mohawk's Building, Education, Sustainability and Trust (BEST)**  
**Strategic Planning Steering Committee Meeting**  
**August 31, 2016**

The Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requires minutes for all school committee and subcommittee meetings. The recorded minutes are open to the public for inspection within 10 days of the meeting. Minutes recorded provide a brief overview that reflects the subject matter discussed and any decisions made. If any motions are made clearly state the motion and indicate who made the motion and who seconded the motion. Record who was in favor, opposed, or abstained. The names of any person(s) appearing before the committee are to be indicated.

**Date:** Wednesday, August 31, 2016     **Time:** 7:00 p.m.     **Place:** Superintendent's Conference Room at Mohawk

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Kate Barrows [Colrain]; Karen Blom [Buckland]; Sue Mitchell [MDEA]; Leslie Rule [Plainfield]; Martha Thurber [Mohawk SC – Buckland]; and Lark Thwing [Mohawk SC – Hawley].

**Committee Members Not in Attendance:** Mick Comstock [Heath]; David Newall [Ashfield]; Kim Orzechowski [Hawley]; Erwin Reynolds [Hawlemont]; Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont]

**School Committee Members in Attendance:** Glenn Cardinal [Buckland]; Jason Cusimano [Shelburne]

**School Administration:** Superintendent Michael Buoniconti; Principal Amy Looman [Colrain Central School]

**Others in Attendance:** Diane Broncaccio [Greenfield Recorder]; Kendra Canaday [Colrain]; Marie Dunford [Shelburne]

**Documents:** Agenda August 31, 2016  
Draft Minutes from MTRSD Mohawk's BEST Committee Meeting August 11, 2016  
Timeline/Issues (handout)

**Call to Order:** Martha Thurber called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**Review and Accept the Minutes of the July 26, 2016 Meeting:**

On a motion by Lark Thwing, seconded by Leslie Rule, the Committee voted to approve the minutes from the August 11, 2016 meeting. Sue Mitchell abstained.

**Subcommittee Progress Reports:**

- **Communications**  
Because virtually everyone present had also attended the Communications meeting (held immediately prior), no report was necessary.
- **Transportation**  
As no one from the Transportation group attended the meeting, this item was passed over. The next Transportation meeting has been posted for September 15 at 10 am and Martha Thurber will attend.

**Timeline for Recommendations:**

Martha Thurber distributed a draft timeline that set forth "To Be Done By" dates and lists of tasks to be completed if the Committee is to meet its goal of presenting recommendations to District Towns by the end of the year. In general, the outline projected a narrowing to 2-3 possible scenarios by the end of September, with initial feedback from all constituencies coming in October/early November, the rollout of a final recommendation in November/December, and School Committee approval sought at the December meeting. The timing of Heath's decision relative to the education of Heath children within or outside of the District is a critical issue. The group also discussed the impact on the District's budgeting process, which normally begins in November and concludes in mid-February. The nature of the budget

could be very different if any of the recommendation(s) are to be implemented in FY18. Martha Thurber will check with Attorney Russell Dupere on the latest permissible date for School Committee approval of a budget.

This led to a discussion whether to ask Towns to address final BEST recommendation(s) in a Special Town Meeting rather than waiting for the Annual Town Meeting process in May/June. Ultimately, it was the consensus of the group that having Special Town Meetings as early in 2017 as possible would be best, thus allowing for preparation of a single budget reflecting the outcome of those meetings. It was also felt that having the recommendation(s) addressed at Special Town Meetings would focus citizens' attention on the specific issues and allow time for thorough discussion.

Martha Thurber noted that the first item to be completed is to get staff input on the educational components of the five scenarios currently under consideration. That feedback will be forthcoming on September 21 at sessions for elementary teachers (to be held at BSE) and for 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers (to be held at Mohawk). Superintendent Buoniconti and Elementary Curriculum Coordinator Rachel Porter will facilitate the BSE sessions and Co-Principals Lynn Dole and Marissa Mendonsa will do so at Mohawk. It was agreed that Glenn Cardinal and Lark Thwing would represent BEST at the Mohawk session and Karen Blom, Leslie Rule and Martha Thurber will do so at BSE. Superintendent Buoniconti said the BSE session will begin with an overview of the scenarios followed by discussion in smaller groups which would then report back to the full session. Information and suggested questions for consideration and discussion will be sent to staff members prior to the meetings. Jason Cusimano asked how we will aggregate comments to "know" what staff input is. Superintendent Buoniconti said notes will be taken at all sessions. Leslie Rule described the parent focus groups and how the sense of those sessions emerged. If staff input is decidedly negative on the concept of integrating 6<sup>th</sup> grade into the Middle School, then other elements of the scenarios will need to be thoroughly revisited.

**General Discussion of Regional Agreement Changes as part of the Implementation Process:**

Martha Thurber noted that whatever the final recommendation of BEST might be, one or more amendments to the Regional Agreement will be necessary, requiring the approval of all Member Towns. A discussion ensued about whether the final recommendation(s) should be implemented all at once or in "phases," e.g., integration of 6<sup>th</sup> grade into the Middle School as Phase 1 and further consolidation of grades/schools completed in one or more subsequent phases. The consensus of the group was that phasing was likely the correct approach, depending upon the nature of the final recommendation(s). It was also noted, however, that it will be important to make the entirety of the proposal clear at the outset, as well as the time period for implementation and the ultimate cost savings expected. The group then discussed whether Towns should be asked to approve the necessary Regional Agreement changes all at once (perhaps with different effective dates) or sequentially as phases. Attorney Russell Dupere will be consulted about these options.

**Other:** None

**Citizen Comment:** Citizen comments were encouraged throughout the meeting.

**Set Date for Next Meeting:** September 28, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at Mohawk.

**Adjournment:** On a motion by Lark Thwing seconded by Karen Blum, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m..

**Submitted by:** Martha Thurber