

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE
July 12, 2016
DRAFT MINUTES**

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: Tuesday, July 12, 2016 **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Place:** Superintendent's Conference Room - Mohawk

Committee Members in Attendance: Mick Comstock [Heath]; Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont]; Leslie Rule [Plainfield]; Martha Thurber [Mohawk SC – Buckland]; and Lark Thwing [Mohawk SC – Hawley].

Committee Members Not in Attendance: Kate Barrows [Colrain]; Karen Blom [Buckland], Sue Mitchell [MDEA]; David Newell [Ashfield]; Kim Orzechowski [Hawley]; John Payne [Shelburne]; Erwin Reynolds [Hawlemont];

School Committee Members in Attendance: Glenn Cardinal [Buckland]

School Administration: Rachel Porter [Elementary Curriculum Coordinator]

Others in Attendance: Citizens Lynn Kelsey [Buckland] and Ava Hunkler [Charlemont]

Documents:

July 12, 2016, Agenda

June 22, 2016 MTRSD Mohawk's BEST Committee Draft Minutes

Call to Order: Martha Thurber called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Review and Accept the Minutes of the June 22, 2016 Meeting:

On a motion by Leslie Rule, seconded by Lark Thwing, the Committee voted to approve the minutes from the June 22, 2016 meeting.

Subcommittee Progress Reports:

- **Communications – Schedule for Meetings with Staff and Community:**

Glenn Cardinal noted that the Communications subcommittee had met informally and without a quorum to reorganize in the wake of the resignation of Willow Cohen. The group also discussed whether some very small recognition of commercial donors willing to fund the Mohawk District poster was permitted under District policy. After reviewing the policy, Lark Thwing said such recognition would be allowed. Martha Thurber will ask the poster designer to revise the final copy to include such a space once donors are identified.

The group also discussed the positive tone of last week's meeting among representatives Heath, Hawley, Charlemont and the Hawlemont School Committee regarding the possibility of Heath's joining that District and sending its elementary pupils to Hawlemont.

- **Facilities & Finance – Update from Heath/Hawlemont Meeting:**

Lark Thwing reported that the subcommittee spent time at its meeting reviewing scenarios that assumed Heath students would go to Hawlemont and only a pre-K would be retained at Colrain Central School, with Grades K-5 being sent to BSE. He noted that having only a pre-K at Colrain was

very inefficient. The subcommittee will meet with Colrain stakeholders on July 20 to discuss various options for the Colrain school.

Rachel Porter asked the amount of cost savings to be realized by moving all 6th grade students to Mohawk, noting that if the team teaching model were to be retained for the 6th graders, it is possible more teachers would be required than if 6th grade remained in the elementary schools. Martha Thurber said she had not seen numbers limited specifically to that component; however, there were a number of non-financial reasons as well why moving the 6th grade made sense. Rachael Porter also suggested that renovations would be needed to accommodate large numbers of pre-K students at any one school. Martha Thurber will ask Mike Kociela to compare specifically the financial elements of a 6th grade move to Mohawk.

- **Transportation – Update:**

No update. Transportation is meeting with the 2-D Transportation Subcommittee on July 21.

- **Education – Follow Up to Focus Groups; Meeting with Staff:**

Leslie Rule reported that she has had ongoing contact with a number of parents involved in the 6th Grade-to-Mohawk Focus Groups, largely around research on the efficacy of various middle school configurations and plans for transitioning to this model, should that be the recommendation. She said the research is not definitive with respect to any particular model, except that a K-8 model seemed to produce slightly better outcomes. However, the Mohawk District cannot physically accommodate a K-8 configuration. Martha Thurber noted that additional discussion about scenarios and their educational (as well a financial) implications need to be held with the DLT and with educators. Rachel Porter suggested that staff likely would be available for such meetings at the middle/end of August. Martha Thurber said she would ask for time on the agenda of the next DLT meeting (August 5) and would ask Principals for their ideas on the best format/timing for meetings with staff.

- **Fundraising/Revenue**

Sarah Reynolds reported that Beth Bandy, Select Board member in Charlemont, has volunteered to help set up a Mohawk alumni website designed to create ongoing interest in and contributions to the District. She also has had offers to help in this effort from several Mohawk graduates solicited through Facebook.

Begin Discussion of Timeline & Deliverables:

Martha Thurber noted the Committee needs to begin to identify specific goals and timetables in order to meet its overall goal of having one or more recommended options for community consideration by mid-December. She encouraged the Communication subcommittee to begin consideration of the nature and timing of community forums, which should begin to be held in the early fall. There also was much discussion about the need for the financial scenario information to be repackaged into a clear, accessible format that will be understandable to parents and townspeople. Lark Thwing and Martha Thurber will pull together a new format prior to the July 20th meeting with Colrain representatives.

Citizen Comment:

Lynn Kelsey noted that she had attended the Heath/Hawlemont meeting and found it very constructive and well run. She noted that some Heath parents had said they felt disrespected by Mohawk and that “no one wants us” so they need to find their own path forward. She did not believe the Greenfield Recorder’s article had accurately reflected the sentiments of the meeting. She also said in light of the Colrain pre-K issue she was reminded of the term “Bochi,” which means what you ask for may come back to bite you.

Adjournment: On a motion by Lark Thwing, seconded by Leslie Rule, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by: Martha Thurber