

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE  
February 24, 2016  
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:** Wednesday, February 24, 2016 **Time:** 6:00 p.m. **Place:** Superintendent's Conference Room

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Kate Barrows [Colrain], Karen Blom [Buckland], Willow Cohen [MTRSD School Committee], Mick Comstock [Heath], Susan Mitchell [MDEA], David Newell [Ashfield], Kim Orzechowski [Hawley], John Payne [Shelburne], Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont], and Martha Thurber [MTRSD School Committee]

**Committee Members Not in Attendance:** Edwin Reynolds [Hawlemont School Committee]; Lark Thwing [MTRSD School Committee] and Michael Buoniconti [MTRSD Superintendent]

**School Committee Members in Attendance:** None

**School Administration:** Principal Lynn Dole [Mohawk MS/HS]; Principal Amy Looman [Colrain Central School]; and Principal Joanne Giguere [Buckland Shelburne Elementary School]

**Others in Attendance:** Paul Cohen [Shelburne]; Jason Canaday [Colrain]; Ken Campbell [Buckland]

**Documents:**

February 24, 2016, Agenda/Meeting Posting  
Draft Statement of Purpose  
MTRSD FY17 Budget Summary  
Interim Planning Subcommittee Minority Report December 28, 2006  
MTRSD Interim Planning Committee Final Report January 3, 2007  
Breaking the Fall: Cushioning the Impact of Rural Declining Enrollment  
Dollars & Sense II: Lessons from Good, Cost-Effective Small Schools

**Call to Order:** Martha Thurber called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

**Introductions:**

At the suggestion of Martha Thurber, each member introduced himself/herself and provided a bit of background.

**Statement of Purpose:**

The group reviewed the draft Statement of Purpose and several members made suggestions for revisions. A revised draft will be presented for approval at the next meeting. The group also discussed the need for a more dynamic name for the group. Suggestions will be considered at the next meeting.

**Discussion of Potential Subgroups and Chairs:**

Martha Thurber then presented a concept for the group's organizational structure, suggesting the need for a number of potential subgroups to study various issues, each chaired by a Steering Committee member. Discussion then centered on the topics to be addressed by the subgroups and/or the Steering Committee. John Payne suggested that the group needed to focus on things that can be achieved in the short-term to both maintain the quality of education in the District and addressing the need for revenue. He suggested, for example, working to stem the outflow of local tax dollars to charter and choice by

working to understand why students are leaving the district and finding ways (e.g., curriculum revisions/enhancements) to keep those students here. There was also much discussion of potential new sources of revenue, other than increased state aid, such as grants targeted to specific curriculum initiatives, harnessing the support of Mohawk graduates and local community fundraising around specific needs like technology or STEM. Several members discussed the need to understand what students are looking for in order to both develop new courses and to better “market” Mohawk’s existing educational and cultural advantages to students and parents, many of whom may be unaware of what the schools currently have to offer. Ideas for “hands-on”/vocational courses also were discussed, as well as the need to serve college-bound students.

Other areas needing study and additional data included local demographics (where existing school-age kids live and in what numbers), transportation alternatives, and the efficiency of existing and potential alternative operating (facility) models and, importantly, community outreach and communication. Willow Cohen noted that gaining the ideas and support of parents, community leaders and taxpayers will be key to the success of any proposals for change.

The group also made note of the efforts of previous strategic planning groups and agreed that these efforts should be leveraged to the maximum extent possible. Among the issues that have been already been studied and documented are declining enrollment, under-utilized buildings, rising fixed costs, inadequate levels of state aid, increases state mandates for required services, and the tax burdens falling upon an increasingly older general population, many of whom are on fixed incomes.

The group decided to reflect on these issues and determine at the next meeting the number, composition and leadership of necessary subgroups.

**Gaining Community Participation:**

Willow Cohen will work to develop a strategy to bring more community members into the process and to communicate frequently to the community about the Steering Committee’s efforts. As a first step, Ken Campbell agreed to develop a Google-based website as a way to post agendas, background materials, and other information about the Steering Committee and its work.

**Tentative Calendar for Meeting our Objectives:**

Not discussed

**Schedule of Strategic Plan Steering Committee (SPSC) / Locations:**

Not discussed

**Other:**

None

**Citizen Comment:**

None

**Adjournment:** The Subcommittee adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Submitted By: Martha Thurber

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 2 at 6:00 p.m.