

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE
March 16, 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, March 16, 2016 **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Place:** Buckland Shelburne Elementary School

Committee Members in Attendance: John Payne, Lark Thwing, Sarah Reynolds, Willow Cohen, Kate Barrows

Committee Members Not in Attendance: Karen Blom, Mick Comstock, Susan Mitchell, David Newall, Kim Orzechowski, Erwin Reynolds, Leslie Rule and Martha Thurber

School Committee Members in Attendance: Glenn Cardinal

School Administration: Michael Buoniconti [MTRSD Superintendent] and Mike Kociela [Business Administrator]

Others in Attendance: Paul Cohen, Colleen Stevens, Ken Campbell, Marie Gauthier

There being no quorum, the Committee proceeded with discussion, but to took no actions or votes.

Documents:

March 16, 2016, Agenda

March 2, 2016 Strategic Planning Steering Committee Draft Minutes

Call to Order: Lark Thwing called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Citizen Comments: Citizen comments were recognized throughout the meeting.

Subgroup Reports:

Communications Subcommittee:

Willow Cohen reviewed the communications "to-do" list, which includes short-term and long-term tasks

Short term

- Begin to develop informational sheets outlining on each school within the District.
- Plan for regular press releases in a structured way,
- Gather information on school volunteers networks
- Consider one or more All-District Open Houses - show off what the schools offer.

Kate Barrows offered to reach out to the DLT about these action items.

- Research to see if there is a full list of children within the district, whether or not they attend a district school. Does this list include where each student attends school?

Willow Cohen will to do this research.

Other short-term action items the Subcommittee is working on include preparation of informational sheets on the FY 17 budget, the pre-K program and the Restorative Justice program in time for town meetings; creating Facebook pages for each school that does not already have one; and looking into including a marketing report within each Town Report at Town Meetings to highlight all the positive offerings within the district.

Long-Term

- Create a district brochure
- Develop a plan for “packaging” Mohawk and its curriculum offerings - ie: specific academies: social justice, STEM, fine arts.

Education Subcommittee

Kate Barrows reported on the Education Subcommittee’s meeting with the Mohawk District Leadership Team (DLT). Much of the discussion at this first meeting centered on the District curriculum and changes that might be or are being made to attract and retain students, such as greater integration of project-based and interdisciplinary learning. The group also discussed ways to better “market” what Mohawk is already doing by, e.g., highlighting the middle school/ high school curriculum and culture and using student “testimony” to illustrate the positive outcomes of a Mohawk education. There was also a discussion about what makes the Mohawk district unique. The superintendent’s vision is “interdisciplinary approaches” within curriculum. This includes potentially offering parallel courses, like ELA and Art together, finding the common threads between courses, and creating more experiential and project-based learning opportunities. The group also discussed the differing roles and responsibilities of the existing two curriculum coordinators.

Finance & Facilities

John Payne and Lark Thwing reported that the Finance & Facilities Subcommittee has begun to look at the economics of various reorganization options, including the consolidation of all grades into a central Mohawk campus. Rough calculations indicate this could produce savings of approximately \$1 million a year (\$800,000 in staffing, \$200,000 in facility costs). Lark Thwing noted that he, Superintendent Buoniconti, Martha Thurber and Budge Litchfield will be going to Boston March 31, 2016, to meet with the head of the Mass. School Building Authority (MSBA) to discuss whether the agency would consider relaxing its “clawback” requirement (i.e., that if a school building fails to be used for purely educational purposes for at least 50 years, all grants and loans provided by MSBA for building/renovating schools must be repaid in full). This would permit the potential re-use of some or all of under-utilized school buildings for other town purposes, such as libraries or senior centers. This could potentially allow the District to keep elementary schools open for some grades while also helping individual towns meet other community needs. Currently all elementary schools have paid off their MSBA construction loans; however, some renovation loans for newer projects at Colrain, BSE, Sanderson and Mohawk remain outstanding. Lark Thwing also noted that the Heath Task Force will soon be presenting a detailed report on its activities with respect to the most efficient and educationally effective ways to meet the needs of Heath Elementary students.

Other:

Adjournment: On a motion by Willow Cohen, seconded by Lark Thwing, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Submitted By:
Willow Cohen

Next Meeting:
March 23, 2016 at Colrain Central School