

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
MOHAWK'S BEST (STRATEGIC PLANNING) COMMITTEE
April 21, 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: Thursday, April 21, 2016 **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Place:** Sanderson Academy Cafeteria

Committee Members in Attendance: Karen Blom [Buckland]; Mick Comstock [Heath]; John, Payne [Shelburne]; Leslie Rule [Plainfield]; Martha Thurber [MTRSD School Committee], Lark Thwing [MTRSD School Committee].

Committee Members Not in Attendance: Kate Barrows [Colrain], Willow Cohen [MTRSD School Committee], Susan Mitchell [MDEA]; David Newall [Ashfield]; [Kim Orzechowski [Hawley], Erwin Reynolds [Hawlemont. Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont] joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

School Committee Members in Attendance: None

School Administration: None

Others in Attendance: Ken Campbell [Buckland resident]

Documents:

April 21, 2016, Agenda

April 14, 2016 MTRSD Mohawk's BEST Committee Draft Minutes

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

Citizen Comment: Citizen comments were accepted throughout the meeting.

Subgroup Reports:

Communications

Martha Thurber and Karen Blum briefly reviewed the discussion at the Communications Subcommittee meeting that immediately preceded this meeting, noting the progress on the school flyers and ideas for getting BEST information before town meetings. Martha Thurber noted that, with the approval of the School Committee, Superintendent Buoniconti has retained the National School Climate Center to survey parents, staff and students about various aspects of the culture and climate at Mohawk schools. The information developed should be helpful in developing strategies to attract and retain students and staff.

Plan for BEST Discussions at Town Meetings

The group then reviewed the outlines of the facilities and finance options currently under review. Materials presenting these concepts will be developed for distribution at town meetings. Among these:

- Integrating Grade 6 into the middle school.
- Keeping (at a minimum) pre-K at all existing elementary schools.
- Assigning children to elementary schools based on geography (closest school), not town lines.
- Working with towns to find/fund ways to repurpose unused school spaces (senior center, town offices, town library, business incubator space – with wifi – etc.).
- Creating expanded curriculum options/opportunities at all levels.

Lark Thwing noted Superintendent Buoniconti is working with Business Manager Mike Kociela on the financial implications of these and will have initial information within the next 2-3 weeks.

One of the options in line with these concepts is to include the now-separate Hawlemont pre-K to 6 district into the Mohawk District, making Hawlemont available as the western-most elementary school for students from Charlemont, Hawley, Heath and parts of Buckland. Sarah Reynolds noted that this had been brought up at the recent Hawlemont “pre-town meetings” discussion. Some residents favored the idea while others were reluctant unless “local control” over the school was maintained in some way. Leslie Rule suggested those resisting the inclusion of Hawlemont into the broader district need to be shown the advantages to Hawlemont students of such a combination. She also suggested that current students be brought into district sustainability discussions.

To encourage further dialogue with the Hawlemont District, it was decided to hold BEST committee and subcommittee meetings at the school in mid-May.

Schedule Next Meeting: The next BEST meeting was scheduled for Tues., May 10 at 7 p.m. at Heath Elementary School in Heath, followed by Thursday, May 19 at 7:00 p.m. at the Hawlemont Elementary School in Charlemont. (The BEST Communications Subcommittee will meet on the same evenings and places at 6:00 p.m. The Facilities & Finance Subcommittee will meet on Wed., May 11 at 6:00 p.m. with the Mohawk Budget Subcommittee at Mohawk, followed by a meeting on Wed., May 18 at 6:00 p.m. at Hawlemont.)

Adjournment: Lark Thwing, seconded by Martha Thurber, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Submitted By: Martha Thurber