

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
MOHAWK'S BEST (STRATEGIC PLANNING) COMMITTEE  
April 5, 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:** Tuesday, April 5, 2016   **Time:** 7:00 p.m.   **Place:** Superintendent's Conference Room at Mohawk

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Karen Blom [Buckland]; Willow Cohen [MTRSD School Committee]; Susan Mitchell [MDEA]; David Newell [Ashfield]; Kim Orzechowski [Hawley], Erwin Reynolds [Hawlemont]; Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont]; Leslie Rule [Plainfield]; Martha Thurber [MTRSD School Committee]. Kate Barrows [Colrain] joined the meeting at 8:00 pm.

**Committee Members Not in Attendance:** Mick Comstock [Heath]; John Payne [Shelburne]; and Lark Thwing [MTRSD School Committee]

**School Committee Members in Attendance:** Glenn Cardinal

**School Administration:** None

**Others in Attendance:** Paul Cohen

**Documents:**

April 5, 2016, Agenda

March 16, 2016 and March 23, 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 March 16, 2016 and March 23, 2016 Meetings:**

On a motion by Willow Cohen, seconded by Sarah Reynolds, the Mohawk's BEST Committee voted to approve the minutes from the March 16, 2016 meeting. Karen Blum, Susan Mitchell, Kim Orzechowski, Leslie Rule, Erwin Reynolds and David Newell abstained.

On a motion by Susan Mitchell, seconded by Sarah Reynolds, the Mohawk's BEST Committee voted to approve the minutes from the March 23, 2016 meeting. Karen Blum, Kim Orzechowski, Leslie Rule, Erwin Reynolds and David Newell abstained.

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

Martha Thurber introduced new BEST member Leslie Rule from Plainfield and provided a brief summary of the Committee's structure and activities to date.

**Subgroup Reports:**

**Communications**

Willow Cohen reported that the initial activities of the Communications Subcommittee have been focused on attracting and retaining students in order to reduce choice and charter costs.

- School Marketing Flyers – Rachel Porter is preparing prototype one-page flyers that highlight the strengths of each District school.

- Open Houses – the District Leadership Team has recommended that open houses at each school be postponed until the spring of 2017, given that it is already late in the “enrollment season.”
- Press releases about school events – Paul Cohen will be taking the lead in developing a standard press release format that can be used by administrators to publicize upcoming events and/or school news. Martha Thurber suggested that some central point/person be assigned to vet all releases prior to distribution and to serve as the contact person for those seeking additional information.
- School Facebook pages – the Committee is working to create a standard format for these pages and to anticipate/resolve any security issues prior to launching pages for schools that do not yet have them.
- Revamping of the Mohawk District website – after reviewing several sites from competing schools, the Committee is looking to revitalize the Mohawk website to include more photos, student testimonials and ways for alumni to connect with (and donate to) Mohawk schools.
- Connecting with students at major decision points – The Committee is exploring ways to more effectively connect with students and parents at those times where they are most often considering options other than District schools (e.g., 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades). Well-publicized orientations (such as the is held at Mohawk for 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their families) and summer enrichment offerings are among the options being explored.

### **Grants/Revenues**

- Susan Mitchell and Sarah Reynolds reported that they have been working with Rachel Porter and the Mary Lyon Foundation on identifying grant opportunities and matching those opportunities to specific needs/curriculum options at District schools. A crowd-funding page is up and running in support of purchasing Chromebooks for Mohawk students.

### **Transportation**

David Newell reported that he has met with Robin Pease (Mohawk Facilities and Transportation Manager) about the current transportation contract and will begin working with the Mohawk/Hawlemont Transportation Subcommittee to assess the options for generating savings from the current contract (which runs through 2018). One possibility is for the District to purchase fuel itself using its tax-exempt number, rather than paying for contractor-supplied fuel (without tax exemption). Martha Thurber noted that the restructuring options that the Finance/Facilities Subcommittee is exploring all include the assignment of elementary students to the school nearest them, rather than strictly along town lines. She suggested the Transportation Subcommittee take this approach as it proceeds to look at busing routes and options.

### **Education**

Martha Thurber reported that the Education Subcommittee’s latest meeting with the District Leadership Team focused on getting the DLT involved in many of the marketing ideas/activities of the Communications Subcommittee. The DLT also brought the Subcommittee up to date on its efforts to add to and/or refocus key areas of the Mohawk curriculum towards more “hands-on”/project-based and interdisciplinary learning. Edwin Reynolds suggested that Mohawk form a Future Farmers of America chapter to capitalize on the agricultural interests of students coming from Hawlemont. With respect to “vocational”-type offerings, Leslie Rule suggested looking first at what Mohawk is already doing well (e.g., wood shop, computer programming) and building on those programs, perhaps by creating internship opportunities and partnerships with local businesses and craftspeople. These ideas will be presented at the next DLT/BEST Education Subcommittee meeting.

### **Finance/Facilities**

Martha Thurber reported that the Finance/Facilities Subcommittee has narrowed the list of options it will explore in depth, with the DLT to provide input on educational implications and Business Manager Mike Kociela and Superintendent Michael Buoniconti undertaking the financial analysis. These options will be presented to the full BEST committee at its meeting on April 14. Full financial analyses will follow thereafter for options selected.

**Schedule Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for April 14 at 7 p.m. at Sanderson Academy in Ashfield.

**Adjournment:** On a motion by Willow Cohen, seconded by Sarah Reynolds, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Submitted By: Martha Thurber