

**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE
May 25, 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: Wednesday, May 25, 2016 **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Place:** Superintendent's Conference Room at Mohawk

Committee Members in Attendance: Kate Barrows [Colrain]; Karen Blom [Buckland]; Willow Cohen [Mohawk SC – Shelburne]; Mick Comstock [Heath]; Sue Mitchell [MDEA]; John Payne [Shelburne]; Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont]; Leslie Rule [Plainfield]; Martha Thurber [Mohawk SC – Buckland]; and Lark Thwing [Mohawk SC – Hawley]

Committee Members Not in Attendance: David Newall [Ashfield]; Kim Orzechowski [Hawley]

School Committee Members in Attendance: Glenn Cardinal [Buckland]

School Administration: Superintendent Michael Buoniconti

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

Documents:

May 25, 2016, Agenda

May 19, 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 May 19, 2016 Meeting:

On a motion by Sue Mitchell, seconded by Leslie Rule, the Committee voted to approve the minutes from the May 19, 2016 meeting

Subcommittee Progress Reports:

- **Communications**

Willow Cohen presented a brief update on Communications Subcommittee efforts. School Facebook pages are up, with the exception of BSE, and Willow will work with the Principal there. Subcommittee members agreed that pages need to be developed on the Mohawk website for parents/students interested in attending Mohawk or other District schools. Martha Thurber will contact Lynn Dole to see if there is a student who might be interested in helping on this project. School flyers will be distributed to community outlets over the next couple of weeks. Design of a Mohawk District poster for display in area businesses is underway.

- **Transportation**

There being no representative from Transportation at the meeting, this report was tabled.

- **Fundraising**

Sue Mitchell reported that she and Sarah Reynolds will be meeting this week to work on the alumni support website.

- **Education**

Martha Thurber reported that the Education group would be meeting with the DLT on Thursday, May 26 to discuss holding focus group sessions of parents to provide feedback on the concept of moving 6th grade to the Mohawk Middle School. The group then discussed the need to address how to integrate Hawlemont and Rowe 6th graders within this concept. Having those students eligible to participate in Mohawk athletics and other extracurricular activities is one idea. Sue Mitchell suggested that the District send Middle School students into elementary schools more often to discuss with upper elementary students the transition to MS.

Discussion of Facilities and Finance Options/Feedback to Date:

The Committee then reviewed the various operational scenarios under consideration (or potential consideration) by the Facilities & Finance Subcommittee and made recommendations with respect to which scenarios seemed worthy of more in-depth review.

• Scenarios including Hawlemont Elementary (Hawlemont Regional School District)

- Pre-K through Grade 2 at the 4 Mohawk District schools and Hawlemont; Grades 3 through 5 at BSE only; all Grade 6 integrated with the Mohawk MS – Given public feedback at the May 19 meeting at Hawlemont, it was the consensus of the Committee that this proposal should not be pursued.
- Pre-K through Grade 2 at Heath and Colrain; Pre-K through Grade 5 at Hawlemont, BSE and Sanderson; all Grade 6 integrated with the Mohawk MS – Public feedback on this proposal at the May 19 meeting at Hawlemont was largely negative; thus, the Committee was inclined not to pursue this option further. However, following additional discussion, it was agreed that Martha Thurber would email the Chairs of the Charlemont and Hawley Select Boards and Finance Committees to seek their input prior to the Committee’s making a final recommendation.
- All Heath students to Hawlemont – This option is currently under discussion directly between Heath and Hawlemont. It was agreed BEST should facilitate these discussions.

• Scenarios excluding Hawlemont Elementary (Hawlemont Regional School District)

- Pre-K through Grade 2 at all Mohawk District elementary schools; Grades 3 through 5 at BSE only; all Grade 6 integrated with the Mohawk MS – The consensus of the Committee was that this proposal should be analyzed in greater depth.
- Pre-K only at Heath and Colrain; Pre-K through Grade 5 at Sanderson and BSE only; all Grade 6 integrated with the Mohawk MS – The consensus of the Committee was that this proposal should be analyzed in greater depth.
- Pre-K through Grade 5 at all Mohawk District elementary schools; Grades 6 through 8 at a separate Middle School housed at BSE; Grade 9 through 12 at Mohawk, with space designated for one or more “specialty” high school programs, e.g., collegiate high school, low-cost/high local need vocational programs – The consensus of the Committee was that this proposal should be analyzed.
- Close all existing Mohawk District elementary schools; construct a new Central Elementary School complex on the Mohawk MS/HS campus – While initial analysis of this option indicates the highest potential operational savings, many on the Committee expressed deep reservations about the viability of this concept. Reasons cited included: Willingness of MSBA to forgive existing school building debt while providing funding for a new school; likelihood of gaining support from all 6 local communities affected; capital costs associated with even the minimum likely amount to be funded by District towns; and increased transportation expense. Despite these reservations, it was the consensus of the Committee that this proposal should be analyzed in greater depth largely because many town officials have expressed support for this concept.

Other: Mick Comstock expressed that members of the Heath Educational Task Force and other Heath citizens who attended the BEST May 19 meeting at Hawlemont felt that they were not being included as a group in discussions about personnel turnover at the Heath School and the concept of having Heath students attend Hawlemont. The Heath Task Force will discuss these issues at its meeting on May 26 in Heath.

Citizen Comment: Citizen comments were encouraged throughout the meeting.

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