

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

Committee Members in Attendance: Willow Cohen [Mohawk SC – Shelburne]; David Newell [Ashfield]; Sarah Reynolds [Charlemont]; Leslie Rule [Plainfield]; Martha Thurber [Mohawk SC – Buckland]; and Lark Thwing [Mohawk SC – Hawley]. Willow Cohen left the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Committee Members Not in Attendance: Kate Barrows [Colrain]; Karen Blom [Buckland]; Mick Comstock [Heath]; Sue Mitchell [MDEA]; Kim Orzechowski [Hawley]; John Payne [Shelburne]

School Committee Members in Attendance: Glenn Cardinal [Buckland]

School Administration: Superintendent Michael Buoniconti

Others in Attendance: None

Documents:

June 7, 2016, Agenda

May 25, 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 25, 2016 Meeting:

On a motion by Lark Thwing, seconded by Sheryl Reynolds, the Committee voted to approve the minutes from the May 25, 2016 meeting.

Citizen Comment: None

Subcommittee Progress Reports:

- **Communications** – Willow Cohen briefly discussed progress of the District poster (almost ready) and noted that the Communications subcommittee would be working with the Administration to create a webpage/link (e.g., "Join Us/Learn More") on the Mohawk site that would easily guide people interested in learning more about the District to relevant information. It was suggested that student quotes be added. Parents attending this week's focus groups will be asked to participate in and, potentially, to help organize community events to spread the word about what BEST is doing and encourage more participation. Glenn Cardinal then reported on his initial review of charter school websites, some of which provide more/more attractive information than Mohawk; others do not. In response to a question, Superintendent Buoniconti said he believed he could find out where students attending competing charter schools were coming from, and he will report back.
- **Fundraising** – Sarah Reynolds reported that the Fundraising group has been in contact with a person who has set up alumni sites before and is willing to help establish one for Mohawk. A meeting has been set for the end of June.

- **Education** – Leslie Rule reported that parent response to the request for volunteers for the planned “6th Grade to Mohawk” focus groups had been good. Sessions will be held on Thursday, June 9 at Mohawk at 9am, 1pm and 6pm. Leslie will moderate these sessions and will report back.
- **Transportation** – David Newell reported that the Transportation Subcommittee has met several times with the Mohawk School Committee’s 2-D Transportation Committee to explore ways to reduce expenses under the current contract, which runs through FY2019. He noted that Mohawk is already running its routes very efficiently and cautioned that lower transportation costs also equal lower Ch. 71 transportation reimbursements, so savings are not “dollar for dollar.” Superintendent Buoniconti said getting a “hold harmless” provision in the Ch. 71 language is a high priority for the rural schools group he heads. The Transportation subcommittee is exploring several ideas, including:
 - Having Mohawk own its own buses – While this seems counter-intuitive, Superintendent Buoniconti said he would like to see the numbers on this option.
 - Whether assigning students to the school closest to them (rather than purely by town lines) would generate savings. Initially it appears that there are only a few pockets of students where that might generate some savings. David Newell also queried whether state law requires that children be assigned to the school in their town. Martha Thurber will check with the District’s attorney on this.
 - Trying to get a waiver from DESE that would allow pick-up of students only along major routes, e.g., Rt. 2, Rt. 112, Rt. 116. Willow Cohen expressed concern that some parents are not able to get their students to pick up points at the assigned times (due to work schedules) and that would mean having students walk long distances.
 - Having the District provide its own fuel for buses, thus saving federal and state taxes on that fuel. This would require the District to construct its own fuel depot or negotiate with a centrally located town (Buckland) to share a facility. Martha Thurber will talk with Buckland.
 Lark Thwing encouraged the subcommittee to continue looking at all options, test them for initial viability and pursue those that show any promise.
- **Facilities & Finance** – Lark Thwing reported that the subcommittee continues to look at a number of operational scenarios. Two of the more recent involve Heath’s joining the Hawlemont District for pre-K to 6, while remaining a Mohawk member only for 7-12 (as are Hawley and Charlemont currently). The Heath Task Force is currently talking with Hawley, Charlemont and Hawlemont about this option, but no decision is expected until later in the summer. The subcommittee has decided not to pursue any option that included Hawlemont’s joining the Mohawk District, given feedback from Hawlemont parents and citizens. The groups also has decided, for the moment, not to pursue further the “central campus” option given the many hurdles that option involves. Thus, the subcommittee has asked Mike Kociela to move to a deeper level of analysis on two options: Option 1 – Grades pre-K to 2 at all 4 schools, all Grades 3-5 at BSE and Grades 6-12 at Mohawk; and Option 2 – Pre-K only at Colrain and Heath, Grades pre-K-5 at BSE and Sanderson, and Grades 6-12 at Mohawk.

Other: None

Next Meeting: The next BEST meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, June 22. The Communications and Finance & Facilities Subcommittees will meet at 6p.m. and the full Committee will meet at 7:00 p.m. All meetings will be at BSE. (The Committee had intended to meet at Sanderson, but the rooms needed will not be available due to summer cleaning.)

Adjournment: On a motion by Lark Thwing, seconded by David Newell, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted By: Martha Thurber