**MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE – FACILITIES/FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE**

**March 23, 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, March 23, 2016 **Time:** 6:00p.m. **Place:** Colrain Central School

**Subommittee Members in Attendance:** John Payne, Martha Thurber and Lark Thwing

**Committee Members Not in Attendance:**  None

**School Committee Members in Attendance:**  None

**School Administration:** Michael Buoniconti [Mohawk Superintendent]

**Others in Attendance:**  Ken Campbell [Buckland]

**Documents:** None

**Call to Order:** Lark Thwing called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Citizen Comments:** Comments were entertained throughout the meeting.

**Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Objectives**

Lark Thwing opened the meeting by noting that the long-term objective is to develop cost-effective operational alternatives to towns. As a start, he noted the Superintendent had done a very quick analysis of the possible cost savings associated with centralizing all school operations at Mohawk and estimated total annual savings of approximately $800,000 to $1 million, which savings would be eroded over time by rising costs.

Discussion then turned to potential splitting of lower/higher elementary grades, e.g., keeping pre-k/K plus one or more of grades 1-3 in existing schools while moving upper grades to one or more other schools. Part of this analysis would be the fixed costs associated with operating even a portion of a building, e.g. custodial, nursing staff, principal/teacher, etc. These costs have yet to be determined. Buildings/costs could be shared with towns that need space for other uses, such as library, senior center or town offices. Subcommittee members agreed that discussions with towns about potential uses should begin immediately.

Key to these discussions will be ascertaining MSBA’s willingness to forego the “clawback” provisions of MSBA-provided funding/bond guarantees used to finance the building/renovation of District schools. (Under these provisions, the District could be forced to repay outstanding mortgages held by MSBA plus all building/renovation funds provided by MSBA if the building ceases to be used for educational purposes for 50 years.) Superintendent Buoniconti noted that in recent discussions MSBA officials had indicated some flexibility on this issue. The District has a meeting with MSBA on March 31.

The group then outlined several potential scenarios for further research/financial analysis, including 1) moving grade 6 to Mohawk from all schools; retaining pre-k/K and some lower elementary grades at existing schools and moving upper elementary grades to only one or more existing schools; and further analysis of moving all upper elementary grades to a central campus at Mohawk.

**List Creation – Mandates and Costs**

Superintendent Buoniconti suggested that developing such a list is not the best use of the committee’s time and energy. He noted that the MASS and MARS had spent considerable effort developing a long list of unfunded mandates and working regularly to get relief from state politicians and regulators, to no avail.

**Discuss – Additional Members**

Not discussed

**Next Steps**

The Superintendent will work with the Business Manager to run a variety of financial scenarios. Subcommittee members will work with/through local School Committee members to get feedback from towns on town uses for potential space at local schools. He also will send the subcommittee the list of unfunded mandates as of a couple of years ago. The District Leadership Team will be asked for its thoughts on the alternatives discussed.

**Adjournment:** On a motion by Martha Thurber, seconded by John Payne, the Subcommittee voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Next Meetings:

Tuesday, April 5, 2016 at Mohawk 6 p.m.

Thursday, April 14 at Sanderson (Ashfield) 6 p.m.

Submitted By:

Martha Thurber