

**BERKSHIRE HILLS REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Great Barrington Stockbridge West Stockbridge**

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MONUMENT VALLEY REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

June 19, 2014

Present:

**School Committee: D. Adler, S. Bannon, R. Bradway, F. Clark, R. Dohoney, D. Kain, J. Krahm, C. Kuller,
C. Shelton, D. Weston**

Administration: P. Dillon, S. Harrison

List of Distributed Documents:

June 19, 2014 School Committee Meeting Agenda - Revised
March 11, 2014 Meeting Minutes – Re-vote Meeting
April 10, 2014 Meet and Confer Meeting Minutes
BHEA Unit A Working Contract 2014-2017 as revised 06-04-14
Cooperative Contract Changes for 2014-2017 as of June 11, 2014
Greenhouse Operations Assistant
Draft – FS Receivables Clerk
PWD PartVI Sup Eval 61714
June 19, 2014 Personnel Report

Any additions, deletions and/or corrections to these minutes can be found at the beginning of the next School Committee Meeting minutes.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Steve Bannon called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.

The listing of agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed, and other items not listed may be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. This meeting is being recorded by CTSB and will be broadcast at a later date. Minutes will be transcribed and made public, as well as added to our website, www.bhrsd.org once approved.

Eileen Mooney may also be recording.

MINUTES – March 11, 2014 – Re-Affirm Vote
April 10, 2014 Meet and Confer

Mr. Bannon – In your packet you have the minutes of March 11, 2014 and April 10, 2014.

Mr. Krahm made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kuller to approve the meeting minutes, as amended, of March 11, 2014 and April 10, 2014.

9 members voted approval of March 11, 2014.

Mr. Dohoney abstained.

Unanimous approval of April 10, 2014.

TREASURERS REPORT – None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a) Good News Item(s)

Mr. Dillon – We have some transition news. Thad reminded me today that today is his last School Committee meeting, and that is a shame and it is sad and I wanted to say a couple of nice things about Thad. There will be other opportunities to say more nice things about Thad, and I might even roast him, but that is not for tonight.

I really like to thank Thad for his four years of service to the district. Thad has been a tremendous instructional leader. He has done a ton with learning at Muddy Brook and it is a big deal. Thad has worked hard on grants and has had some real success there, and that is also a big deal. The work that Thad has done around report cards with his staff is also quite significant and a real shift. And the last thing, and maybe the thing I am most appreciative of, is how he really activated the parents and the community. So the PTA at Muddy Brook is really quite exceptional. There are lots of volunteers there and there are lots of really good stuff going on. It is always a team effort, but it is really nice when the leader leads that. I could go on and on about all of these other things. I have many more bullet points to share with you, Thad, and put in a letter, but I thought those four things, the instructional leadership, the grants, the report cards and the high level of parent engagement are worth publicly recognizing. You have done a really good job and you are passing the baton to Mary, another thoughtful leader, and the school is in much better shape for having had you there than it was when you got here, and that is all that one could hope for from somebody. So thank you very much.

Mr. Dingman – Quickly, thanks back to the School Committee for four years ago bringing me into this district. This is my first Principalship. I never take anything for granted. I hope I have gotten it right a lot of the time, and I have learned in times when I haven't. I have loved the school. I have given the staff and students everything I have had. I am better at what I do because of this opportunity and I owe that to you for taking a chance on me. This has been life changing in a lot of ways. We are rooted in many ways in the Berkshires. This is not a goodbye. It is a so long, and I will see you around. I will come back, maybe to a School Committee meeting and harass you all sometime.

But genuinely, from my heart and from my family and from myself, thanks to all of you. Continue to please support your schools and do your great work. You are a really thoughtful group, and I have watched in the last four years, as I have worked to grow Muddy Brook I have watched you grow also. So, thanks back.

Mrs. Kain – I always felt badly that you came here with blonde hair and are leaving with gray.

Mr. Dillon – The other person I would like to recognize is Tom Simon. This is also his last School Committee meeting. I don't think he is here, but I will say it for the record anyway.

Tom impressed me in a number of ways. In particular, three things really stood out. The creation recently of the Bridging the Gap Program. It is a really neat alternative for a particular group of young people and it is just getting going. They are finishing their first year this year. There was some nice coverage recently in the newspaper about it, but it is really progressive and forward thinking.

I also very much appreciate the Aloha Program down at Muddy Brook and that has really taken off the last couple of years.

And then a sort of behind the scenes thing that is important is, the state comes and reviews us in all of these different ways. And one of the things they do is this big, exhaustive civil rights review. They pull files and they look at stuff and it is really a pain and quite difficult. We got the early report back on that and that is very positive. It is my understanding that there were years when we didn't do so well on those reviews, and it is almost spotless now, and that is no small feat.

So I appreciate Tom for working on all of those three areas.

b) PARCC or MCAS Determination

Mr. Dillon – If some of you on the School Committee are on the MA List Serve, which has really been a circus lately around comments around this.

Essentially, you all are charged with making the choice, and the Principals are going to make a recommendation about this, it is around which assessments we recommend using going forward with students. I alluded to this last time we met.

By state regulations we are obligated to use the MCAS for high school because the MCAS are part of the graduation requirements. Not just ours, but the statewide graduation requirement. So the recommendation is to continue to use the MCAS at the high school level. It is also high stakes, so to change the rules of the game for the kids who are in

high school who need to pass the English one, the Math one and the Science one to graduate seems inappropriate. So for this next year we are recommending using MCAS for high school.

On the other hand, we would also like to recommend using the PARCC for grades 3 to 8, which the exception of the Science assessments because there are not PARCC Science assessments yet, for 5th and 8th grade where we would stay with the MCAS assessment.

About half the state is going one-way on this and half the state is going to the other. We would like to get ahead of the PARCC and use it as an opportunity to understand it better. Both tests are going to be increasingly more aligned with the common core standards. We piloted parts of the PARCC this year, so we are starting to become familiar with it.

So that is a little bit of an overview. I have talked to some of you separately on the phone about this at great length. I thought you might have questions about it. I am happy to respond to those questions, and I will also have the Principals respond.

Mr. Clark – Is this a one year commitment? Will it be coming back to the School Committee in one year, or are we essentially voting to adopt a program for four years?

Mr. Dillon – No, we are not voting to adopt a program for four years.

Mr. Clark – I guess the thrust of my question is, is it a multi-year program that we are talking about? Are we going to be re-examining this annually, and can you then give us some sort of a schedule going forward as to what you see evolving, from today.

Mr. Dillon – So, by June 30th I have to tell the Commissioner what we are doing, and there is an on-line survey that I fill in. There is a possibility going forward, the requirements for graduating from high school might change from MCAS to PARCC if the state formally adopts PARCC. We are not there yet, but they are planning to vote on whether they formally adopt it a year from now. What they are trying to do as an incentive for districts to do PARCC in grades 3 to 8 is they have promised to hold them harmless in accountability in numbers perspective. So as we are moving to a new system they are going to try to correlate it with the old system so the numbers match up, but we all know they haven't figured out how to do that yet, and that is going to be an inexact science at best, so the trade off is to hold us harmless from an accountability standpoint, which makes me more willing to do this so we don't sort of flush our scores down the toilet.

In the immediate thing we are really looking at one year. My sense is maybe three things could happen at the state level. They could adopt the PARCC as it is, and we could formally move to it as a state going forward. They could choose not to adopt the PARCC, and perhaps something else comes up. And/or the MCAS could change dramatically to be more "PARCC like" going forward. But whatever happens there is going to be change, and to try to get ahead of that change as a group of administrators we think it makes sense to do that now and not let the train leave the station and then try to play catch up later.

There are some thoughtful districts who are making the opposite arguments for a variety of reasons. Most of the districts that are making the opposite argument I think are making it because they "cracked the code" on MCAS and they are having some level of success there and they don't want to take the risk going forward. I think looking at when the kids were taking the pilot test I sort of sat and sort of looked over their shoulder, and happened to look over

my son's shoulder who is in 7th grade because I thought, it is my son, and it doesn't matter and it would be OK. From an assessment perspective it looks significantly more interesting than the current assessments.

Mr. Clark – So, is it going to be an annual discussion with the School Committee?

Mr. Dillon – Yes, we will come back to you next year, and the year after until.... At some point the state might make a formal decision, but even if the state does, there will likely be some sort of phase in period.

Mrs. Kuller – I think the rationale you used for moving forward to the PARCC that you used at the last meeting was good. I think kids getting used to different types of tests is OK. And if most of them are going to be adjusted to the common core anyway you are going to have differences in the results based on the new standards then you would have had if everything was the same. So everything is changing anyway.

Mr. Dillon – They are going to pay Psychometricians a ton of money to try to align them and have them make sense, and it will or it won't. It is going to be an inexact science, and I think that is why they are doing the hold harmless thing.

Mr. Dohoney – To follow up on Fred's questions about when it comes back next year are we married to this divide between high school and middle school or could we start phasing this in, like next year or the year after say, OK, Seniors, Juniors and Sophomores are doing MCAS and switch Freshman to PARCC.

Mr. Dillon – I think we very well could do that. What will have to change in the context of that is the state's requirements around graduation. So if the state adopts PARCC my assumption will be all the language that MCAS is a graduation requirement will shift to some conditional language, so initially there will be MCAS and/or PARCC and something where MCAS gets phased out by a certain time. Next year is the 2014-2015 year, so for the 2015-2016 year it might be MCAS or PARCC, and then for the Class of 2018 it will solely be PARCC. And they haven't figured that out, but that is what is going to happen.

Mr. Dohoney – OK.

Mr. Bannon – Any other questions?

Mr. Bradway made a motion, seconded by Mr. Krahm that the BHRSD School Committee supports the administration's proposal to use the PARCC Assessment in 3rd through 8th grade, and to continue with the MCAS Assessment in 9th through 12th grade, with the exception of 5th and 8th grade Science assessments, which will continue to be MCAS.

Mr. Bannon – Any further discussion?

Unanimous approval.

c) Ratification – Unit A Contract

Mr. Dillon – The next couple of things on the agenda are the proposed ratification of two contracts.

As you know, and we talked about this last time when we did the Unit C, we used intra-based bargaining this year formally with two of the three groups and really informally with the third group because they are the Cooperative group, and by their very nature they are about interest-based bargaining. And in all cases with a wide range of success, and Steve you can speak to this if you want, but that the Unit A contract passed among your members 104 to 7, which is quite remarkable. And those meetings were very thoughtful, very serious. There were times when we thought we might be going down that slippery slope of mediation or something else, but we came back together and kept talking and landed in a place that everybody was quite comfortable with.

So the first contract in front of you is the Unit A one.

Mr. Krahm made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kain to approve the Unit A contract.

Mr. Bannon – Any discussion?

9 members voted approval.

Mr. Clark voted present.

d) Ratification – Cooperative Contract

Mr. Dillon – The next one is the Cooperative contract.

Mr. Bannon – I am going to recuse myself on this one, so Rich, you will handle the task of the vote.

Mr. Bradway took over as Chair of the meeting for the vote of the Cooperative contract.

Mr. Dillon – The Cooperative contract is a little different because it represents many sub-groups and they come together to work on things. So it is a very diverse group. There are people who work on technology. There is skilled maintenance, there are custodians, there are food service people and secretaries. It is a wide range of folks.

Mr. Krahm made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kain to approve the Cooperative contract.

Mr. Bradway – Any discussion?

9 members voted approval.

Mr. Bannon recused himself from the vote.

Mr. Bannon – resumed as Chair of the meeting.

Mr. Dillon – Thank you.

Mr. Gibbons – If I could just comment for a moment. I want to thank the members of the School Committee that were on the negotiating team. This is probably the fourth, the third anyway, Cooperative contract that we have had. It went very smoothly. I think both sides were very welcoming to suggestions. Thank you.

Mr. Clark – We don't say it enough, but both to the teacher's group, the collaborative group and the paras group that we did last time, this School Committee and this administration really realizes that you guys are the heart of the system and really admires and appreciates your dedication and professionalism to the schools, and it showed in the collaborative way we were able to negotiate all three contracts this year because everybody was in it for the same reason. The same goal. So thank you.

Mr. Bannon – Thank you very much.

- e) Job Description Revision:
 - Greenhouse Operations Assistant
 - Food Service Receivables Clerk

Mr. Dillon – You have two job description revisions in front of you. One is for the Greenhouse Operations Assistant and the other is for the Food Service Receivable Clerk. The changes are fairly straightforward as outlined here. The second one, the Food Service Receivables Clerk, is sort of a mouthful, but that is a stipended role, and that person helps to organize accounting and receipts for meals. Lots of documenting things and trips down to the bank.

Mr. Bannon – The only questions I have, and we have said this in other job descriptions, and it is not real important, but it says here, "Reports to Director of Food Services". Is Cook/Supervisor crossed out? It was very hard for me to read.

Mr. Dillon – It is.

Mr. Bannon – Thank you. That was my question.

Mrs. Kuller – So, is this a position of someone who works in Food Service and it is an additional responsibilities to that?

Mr. Dillon – Yes. It could be any one of the other Food Service people. It could be a Cook or an Assistant Cook or a Helper.

Mrs. Kuller – Well, it is relay nice to see a job description for a stipend. It might be an example.

Mr. Dillon – I couldn't mention this in the context of the Unit A contract. As an **cannot hear on tape** four subcommittees to work in different areas. One is on stipends. Two are on time in the elementary school and in the high school, and then the fourth one is on compensation and compensation models. I think you are right. This is a good example for a stipend, and hopefully that subcommittee will be able to do some more work across the 60 + stipends in the district.

Mr. Krahm made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kain to approve the Food Service Receivables Clerk job description.

Mr. Bannon – Any other discussion?

Unanimous approval.

Mr. Krahm made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kuller to approve the Greenhouse Operations Assistant job description.

Mr. Bannon – Any other discussion?

Mr. Clark – Peter, was this part of the consolidation of multiple job roles?

Mr. Dillon – Yes. It was.

Mr. Bannon – Any other questions?

Unanimous approval.

f) Superintendent's Evaluation

Mr. Dillon – It would sort of be improper for me to lead the discussion on this, so I am going to defer to Dan, the Chair of that subcommittee.

Mr. Weston – The Superintendents Advisory Subcommittee meet a couple of times during the year and then at the end of the year to work on the evaluation. We met a few times and discussed the goals the Superintendent wanted to set for the year and then reviewed the data that he had accumulated to demonstrate or not demonstrate his progress towards those goals. There is a state form that I think you have in front of you. I like to look at the bottom half. We ranked four areas. Three areas we ranked exemplary and one of them we ranked deficient. There are a number of comments that committee members shared that we tried to correlate into the review.

In summary, we think the Superintendent is doing an excellent job. The area that was deficient, if I can remember correctly, we are waiting for the data from the student's testing to demonstrate all the work the staff has put into curriculum and data, organizing. We are kind of waiting for the payback on that. But overall we think he is an exemplary example of a Superintendent. Before I talk more, are there any questions about the evaluation?

Mr. Clark – I have a couple.

This is the first year, I guess, Dan, that you are using this new form?

Mr. Weston – Second.

Mr. Clark – I like the form and it seems like a good evolution from the one that the committee had developed with the matrixes and things like that. Do you find this to be sufficiently flexible and sufficiently in-depth to be able to provide an evaluation?

Mr. Weston – It is a lot better then I thought it would be for something that came from the state. I am not trying to be flip, but one size fits all doesn't work. It actually is not a bad **cannot hear on tape.**

Mr. Clark – I guess the other question comes out of an evaluation, have you are will you be discussing goals? When I got to my annual evaluation it becomes more of a goal setting then a scorecard or a report card or what you did. It is kind of like you are strong here and you are strong here, but maybe this is an area you need to work on.

Mr. Weston – That is the first meeting we have in the fall.

Mr. Clark – It will grow out of it.

Mr. Dillon – And that will be sort of infused in the District Improvement plan, and then the School Improvement Plans.

Mr. Clark – I like this evaluation. I think the committee did a great job of capturing the nuances of Dr. Dillon’s tenure here. So thank you for your work.

Mr. Bannon – Any other discussion?

Ms. Shelton – I just want to thank the committee. I was absent for this entire process. I am sorry I wasn’t a part of that.

Mrs. Kain – Dan was very focused and he kept everybody on track. And he pulled all the comments that everyone made into a really cohesive thing.

Mrs. Kuller – I think it shows it is a very thoughtful document and well done.

Mr. Weston – So the areas where the district, through Peter’s leadership, has excelled are family and community engagement. Over the past few years it has just been tremendous growth. I just want to go through the areas that we have done very well in. Professional culture and the comments that keep coming from the evaluators are their professional development has stuck to a path over multiple years, and that is one of the reasons why we think it has been so effective. In education we know that if you don’t stick to a professional development plan for a number of years they tend to not be effective. And for instructional leadership we also ranked that area as exemplary. The focus.... It is very tangible, particularly for somebody like me who is an educator, a member of the School Committee and has a child in all three buildings, I hear people come, administrators, teachers come to talk to us, I hear Dr. Dillon speak to us, and then I hear what my children are saying and I can see how the work filters down all the way to my child, and that emphasis on learning. Not teaching, but learning has made it all the way through down to my child. All of my children.

So in addition to this evaluation, I would recommend at this time that we enter into negotiations with Dr. Dillon to renew his contract for an additional three years.

Mr. Weston made a motion, seconded by Mr. Krahm to recommend that the BHRSD School Committee enter into negotiations with Superintendent Dr. Peter Dillon to renew his contract for an additional three years.

Mr. Bannon – Any discussion?

Mr. Adler – How long was the last contract? Do we normally do three-year contracts?

Mr. Dillon – Yes. Historically we do three-year contracts. So we are ending my fifth year, so this year starting in September is the last year of the second three-year contract. So this would be the appropriate time.

Mr. Adler – Is that what we normally do as a district? We don't wait until the end of the contract to negotiate?

Mr. Bannon – Typically we do not wait until the end of the contract.

Mr. Dillon – Because, in some other context, if you waited until the end of the year then some other Superintendent, not me, might use that year to start looking for another job.

Mr. Bannon – What I will do is we will ask a School Committee member or myself to sit down with Peter and hopefully in short order, come up with another contract.

Mr. Adler – Does then that contract have to be approved by us? Right?

Mr. Bannon – Yes.

Unanimous approval.

Mr. Dohoney – Do we have to vote on the evaluation now?

Mr. Bannon – We just vote to accept the evaluation.

Mr. Dohoney – So we accept the evaluation, but the evaluation isn't final... as voted on by Dan's committee is a done deal.

Mr. Bannon – We obviously could change it. But the amount of work that has gone into it...

Mr. Dohoney – I was just curious. So it is not final until we vote on it.

Mr. Clark – It is a recommendation.

Mr. Bannon – Yes.

Mr. Dohoney made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kuller to accept the performance evaluation of Superintendent Dr. Dillon as presented by the Superintendent's Evaluation Subcommittee.

Mr. Bannon – Any discussion?

Mr. Clark – I think it is a great evaluation.

Mr. Bannon – It really is.

Mr. Dohoney – I agree.

Unanimous approval.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Policy Committee

Mr. Dillon – I have just a quick thing on Policy. My recommendation is.... Much of the Policy Subcommittee is also much of the Negotiations Committee, and we have been really busy with negotiations. My hope is we would use late July and early August to try to fine tune our policies, and then we come back to the Committee potentially in our August meeting with a lot of policies, and then the first meeting in September with the remaining ones. But that we bring our policy.... It is like painting the bridge and then you finish and start the other end, but that we bring our current round of work to closure.

Mr. Clark – We have actually done a lot of work that we really should bring forward to this Committee at some point. The man who came last night from MASC said, “Oh by the way, Pat asked to be remembered to you”, as she was driving out to Drury or North Adams or something. She said she hasn’t forgotten us.

Mr. Dillon – Oh, good.

Mr. Bannon – So what I would ask, could you have Doreen send out a couple of dates so that we could start to meet with Policy? So we could get them on our calendar.

Mr. Dillon – Yes.

b) Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee

Mr. Krahm – Nothing further to report.

c) Superintendent’s Evaluation Subcommittee

Mr. Weston – Nothing further to report.

d) Technology Subcommittee

Mr. Bradway – We just met today and are continuing our work on refining information on the **cannot hear on tape.**

e) High School Building/Renovations Committee

Mr. Dillon – So, really quickly on this.

We have asked Representative Pignatelli and Senator Downing to file special legislation to extend the voting hours for the proposed renovations and additions at the high school from 8 hours, which is the maximum in the MA General

Law, to 13 hours. So I went and spoke to the three Select Boards of our three towns and each of those Select Boards unanimously approved a motion supporting that request. So that is in committee now and we hope to hear back shortly from them around this special legislative act. Once we hear from them then I will go back to the Secretary of State's office and ask that our ballot questions for the high school project be put on the same ballot as the local School Committee races and the Governor's race and anything else, and that people have to opportunity to vote on November 4th for the full 13 hours. So that is moving along and we are working through the process.

Mr. Bannon – Any questions?

PERSONNEL REPORT

Mr. Bannon – You have a personnel report. Are there any questions?

Mr. Clark – Yes. I just want to comment that again it is the end of the year and to get these more timely. These are referencing the school year that is ending.

Mr. Dillon – Agreed. And I think part of our stipend committee will set up additional procedures so that doesn't happen.

PERSONNEL REPORT

Certified Appointment:

Kathryn Burdsall	Director of Special Education/Student Services District Office	effective \$85,000 202 days <i>(replaces Thomas Simon)</i>
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Non - Certified Appointment:

Joseph Powers	Custodian Monument Valley Regional Middle School	effective 7/1/2014 @ \$15.00/hr - 8/hr/day after 90 days - increase .50 cents <i>(new position)</i>
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Resignation:

Rhiannon Hagen	Para-Professional Monument Mountain Regional High School	effective 6/25/14
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Extra-Curricular Appointments:

(2013-2014 School Year – unless stated otherwise)

Eugene Kalish	Club Advisor – Chess Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School	Stipend - \$1,852
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Thomas Brown	Club Advisor – Taekwondo	Stipend - \$1,852
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	Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School	
Barbara Minkler	Mentor Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School	Stipend - \$500
Kathy Erickson	Mentor Monument Mountain Regional High School	Stipend - \$1,000
Carol Way	Title I Tutor Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School	\$40/hr <i>(grant funded)</i>

BUSINESS OPERATIONS – None

EDUCATION NEWS – None

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Adler – I went to the school choice forum last evening. About half of us were there. I thought it was very educational. The gentleman who was there was Michael Gilbert. He is from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and he gave us pretty much a background on school choice. How we came to have it in our Commonwealth here. And we talked a little it about going forward, what the opportunities might be or possibilities for change.

The brief history of it was, the \$5,000 limit was supposed to originally be conceived as 75 of the costs, with no more then \$5,000. Twenty years ago that was fine. Unfortunately, that 75% is not really 75% anymore, as we all know. So that \$5,000 really doesn't represent it.

I don't know going forward if the legislature is going to bring it up any time soon. I kind of bounced an idea. Basically I talked to Steve and Peter about it. One opportunity we might want to consider, this is what Michael talked about last night, is that often times legislation comes out of litigation. So we might want to consider the possibility of suing the Commonwealth. My suggestion would be, and I am not a lawyer, but my suggestion might be to find a Kindergartner whose family lives in the district and they might be able to turn around and sue the Commonwealth saying that \$5,000 limit doesn't really cover 75% of the cost anymore.

I don't know if anybody has any thoughts about it. Going forward, I did talk to Peter about it and he is going to maybe look into it a little bit. Maybe we can get a law firm to do a pro bono or something. Unfortunately, it is not a short-term solution. There really isn't a short-term solution.

The \$5,000 limit came up from... it was basically a case that was working itself through the courts at the same time the legislature came together and decided that number, basically. So that is how that number came out.

Mr. Krahm – And he actually said no legislation happens without a lawsuit.

Mr. Adler – Exactly right. So I almost think.... I am not too sure how we want to go about it. I don't know whether our school district can go ahead and sue the Commonwealth, and I don't know if we want to find a student who can do that. I don't know that either.

Mrs. Kuller – How many districts might join that action?

Mr. Dillon – One suggestion I have, and I thought of this since we talked earlier today, but there are 12 or 15 districts that are in a similar situation around school choice, but there are many, many more districts who are in a similar situation about the foundation formula. I think the notion of a lawsuit is interesting and compelling, but in playing the odds, 13 districts versus several hundred, we might want to explore the lawsuit around the state's constitutional obligation to fund all districts appropriately. So the better argument might be around the current funding formula deprives individuals of a ... the language in New York was a "sound and basic education". There is similar language in Massachusetts. Either way, I think it is worth starting dialog and reaching out to people about how to frame it, but making it bigger about the formula might be better then about the choice, and changing the formula might in turn inform how the choice formula is created.

Mrs. Kuller – Good idea.

Mr. Clark – In addition to the school choice forum last night, which was very helpful, I attended the Regional Monthly MASC meeting a week ago Monday in Pittsfield, meeting with our legislative delegation and members of all Berkshire County school districts. We spent 2 ½ hours talking about choice with Ben Downing, Smitty Pignatelli **cannot hear on tape** and Glen Coucher from MASC was in attendance as well.

Suffice to say, there is no real solutions that came out of that meeting, although Ben Downing has some very interesting ideas about....he almost didn't want to talk about them because they are only in their infancy or their incubator stage at this point, but doing something like a Berkshire compact modeled legislatively on the Cape Cod Commission. But working with all of the... creating the argument that Berkshire County is a special case, like Cape Cod is for development and water, and doing something jointly throughout the whole county. As I said, it is a very **cannot hear on tape** at this point.

One thing that came out of meeting with the other School Committee's is school choice really depends upon.... Your attitude towards it depends upon where you sit. The people in Pittsfield are very concerned because they don't want to lose kids to Lenox and to Dalton. They want to keep their own kids. And they say they find out about it when a student transfers and the first thing they get is a request for records. They want the opportunity to have a rich, compelling school community with all citizens and be able to talk to people and show them what is going on and all the opportunities that are available.

So it is a very different thing when you talk to each different town about it. I think from our point of view, school choice has been around, and its partner, tuition, for as long as I can remember, and in the tuition situation, going back to the beginning of our high school in the 1960's. In a lot of ways it is part of the business model that we create of our school system. I think it works in a lot of ways. I think it doesn't work financially and I think it is important to kind of separate that and maybe figure... I applaud your ideas, David. I think they are good. I think that some of the other

ideas are good. I think in the meantime we need to look at.... I imagine the point of getting a Kindergartner is that by the time the lawsuit gets heard the kid will be in high school?

Mr. Adler – Yes, there are no short-term solutions at all.

Mr. Clark – I understand. But, there may be. There may be “work arounds”. For instance, I think we are going to talk later in the year about our long-range plans for the district. Whether this educational and financial model... everybody is looking at me blankly, but that is what I understood we were going to do. That we are going to look at the long-term plan for this district and see if it really makes to what we are doing. One of the things that I would suggest that might work is that if we could figure out how to get the same number of choice in and choice out students then it really wouldn't matter what the score card is of \$1.00 or \$5,000 or \$10,000. I don't know if it would work.

Mr. Bradway – I don't want to discredit anything that David or Fred has said because I am actually in agreement about it. One observation I had from last night's choice meeting, and I kind of go back to the forums that we had in response to the “no vote” in Great Barrington for the high school renovation project, as well as just the sort of scope of time that the choice discussion has consumed as part of the annual budget process, whether it is here or at individual towns, and one of the things that I found interesting was the.... I don't know that I would say that meeting last night was well attended. And for those people that did attend, I think a large portion of those people actually have a good concept of what choice is. So one of the things I was kind of disappointed about was the fact that everybody wants to use choice as a crutch for the woes of the world, and yet, I didn't see the people that had these problems with choice show up to actually get an understanding of it. So I don't know if it is a function of they didn't have the time or they refuse to believe what choice is or what it is about, but that was one thing that I found disappointing about last night.

Mr. Bannon – So let's focus on David's suggestion. I would ask, Peter, could you do a little work on this, maybe with other Superintendents, kind of?

Mr. Dillon – The world is so small and interesting, there is actually a whole group of people nationwide who focus on equity lawsuits, and I am aware of at least six or seven across numerous states. They are happening all over the place. So I can reach out to people and get sort of the lay of the land and what is going on and report back.

Mr. Dohoney – And I am fine with all of that, and I think David's proposal is good, but I think this is the conclusion of kind of a year of fits and starts of finally realizing we are dissatisfied with a process that we have no control over and how do we advocate for ourselves? Fred has had a lot of good proposals of kind of just requests for the state legislature and I think the lawsuit is good. I like just civil disobedience and just doing things the way we want to do it, but no one agrees with that. But I wonder if... and I agree having Peter look at it is a fine thing, but maybe we should formally assess our own advocacy plan going forward. Do we want to.... I have complaints about our various organizations who supposedly lobby for us and don't seem to get results. I don't have an opinion on any of these things. It seems that we are all kind of asking.... All wanting to change things and no one really knowing how to do it. So rather than just a bunch of kind of proposals maybe we should sit down and discuss that. We all know what we want changed. Let's get a plan of how to change it. And maybe that is getting different people elected. Maybe finding out what our many gubernatorial candidates position is on this is. Maybe it is filing a bunch of lawsuits.

Mr. Clark – Smitty Pignatelli said that he talked to the Chairwoman of the Education Committee in the House and told her that his districts are all talking to him about choice and the inequity. He said he was absolutely floored that

she had no idea. She had no idea that there was anybody who had any problems with choice whatsoever, and that he urged the group to write directly to the Chairwoman, whose name I don't know, and tell her we have an issue.

In the eastern part of the state everybody is focused on Charter Schools. The parallel for choice, but amplified many, many times because it is \$16,000 that they have to pay instead of \$5,000, is the Charter School problem.

Mr. Adler – I just want to get back again to what the gentleman said last evening, which was going through legislature is a fine idea, but that his exact words were, as John said, if you want something to change we are going to have to file a lawsuit to get it changed.

Mr. Bradway – He said in the 16 or 17 years he has done it, he has never seen anything happen through legislative action.

Mrs. Kuller – Can the districts succeed and become a Charter School?

Mr. Dillon – There actually is... there is language. The whole district could become a Charter District. Yes, we could.

Mrs. Kuller – That could be part of the exploration of things to do.

Mr. Clark – I know I have been vocal on this issue, but I think we do need to quantify what kind of an issue we are talking about. After doing some “back of the napkin” calculations, I don't think it is as big an issue as maybe I was lead to believe earlier, when we take the number of students' choicing in and the number of students' choicing out and the delta is large, but it is not prohibitive. We get \$5,000 for all of those kids, what would be the best case that we could get? I don't think we are ever going to get \$131,000 or \$15,000, but the best case might be the same as tuition, \$7,500. Or maybe \$9,500, closer to our foundation rate.

The point is when you actually run the numbers it is not going to solve our budget and it is not going to solve the high school. Yes, it would provide more fairness and a better equity and we could certainly use the money for our education, but it is not going to be life changing.

Mr. Adler – An extra million dollars might be life changing.

Mr. Clark – No, it is like \$400,000.

Mr. Bannon – Any one thing may not solve it, but a number of small things, as you call it, will help to solve it.

Mr. Dohoney – More importantly, to Fred's point too, and Rich's point about how in our district the school choice argument has taken on a life of its own and this over-arching importance... I agree with Fred. Whatever incremental increases we get isn't going to solve all of our problems, but this idea that school choice is costing us so much extra expenses is false. It is false. If we eliminate school choice our budget the assessments to the towns will skyrocket. Even if we keep it at level, same in same out, assessments to the town will go up.

Mr. Bradway – Imagine if the people who complain about it where there last night and heard that.

Mr. Dillon – For the people who didn't hear that, the big take away this fellow explained in this town where he was on the School Committee and lived, they had a similar situation. They had a large number of choice students, not super large, but 15%. They intentionally cut it in half and their assessments went up dramatically.

Mr. Adler – I was just going to say, we have to take a long-term now. I agree with Fred is saying is it won't solve all of our problems, but the problem is, we are going the wrong direction here and we have to take the 10 to 15 year deal here. It is \$5,000, imagine what that \$5,000 is going to look like in 10 years. Our School Committee in 10 years is going to be looking at this as what potentially be a bigger problem at that time if we keep it at \$5,000. So I think the key is we have to look at it in the long-term. If they are not going to make the adjustment we may need to force it somehow.

Mr. Bannon – So we will come back to you. It probably won't be the next meeting, but the one after that with some information.

Mr. Dillon – Just something I want to put.... And I will send this out when we do the agenda for our next meeting, but our next meeting is on July 31st. We did go to a lightly simpler schedule in July and one of the things we will be talking about then, so you can think about it between now and then, are our process for minutes. So by the open meeting law we are supposed to have minutes available 10 days from when the last meeting was. Within 10 days. And we are one of maybe a handful of districts, maybe no other districts that still do verbatim minutes. The law says we have some latitude around that and there is a particular description, and I will send it out to you, about the minimum standard for minutes, and we are way exceeding the minimum standard for minutes. So we can have a discussion about what the law is, what our hopes are, what makes sense, what doesn't make sense, what the impact of it is and sort weigh the pro's and con's of that.

Mr. Bannon – So that will be one of the things on the next agenda.

Mr. Dillon – The administrators and I set some dates, so we will be doing some administrative retreats in August, and that will inform all sorts of things from budgeting and the budget process to the District improvement plans and the school improvements plans. So we will give you a heads up on that.

Mr. Bannon – Also, the July meeting is the start of a budget discussion. That is the time that we said we would start it, and we will.

Mr. Dillon – The last thing I wanted to share, you know we hired Kate Burdsall for the role of Director of Special Education. I am concluding conversations with a very strong candidate that the committee all agreed to for the Director of Learning & Teaching. And so, stay tuned to your email. I will be sending out an email about that shortly. But we have a very strong person. We are very excited about that person.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION – None

PUBLIC COMMENT –None

Mr. Krahm made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kain adjourn the public meeting at 8:02PM.

Unanimous approval.

Debra E. Brazie, Recorder

Secretary