

The Mohawk Trail School System
Mohawk Trail Regional School District | Hawlemont Regional School District

Michael A. Buoniconti, Superintendent of Schools
Michael Kociela, Business Administrator
Leann Z. Loomis, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

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**Mohawk Trail Regional School District
School Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 8, 2017
7:00 p.m. – Superintendent’s Conference Room Mohawk**

Agenda

- I. Call meeting to order
- II. Statement of Trust
- III. Student/Staff Presentation/Reports
 - A. Melissa Pincus of the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement re. the CFCE grant
- IV. Approve minutes of the meetings of February 15 and February 27, 2017
- V. Presentation/Citizen Comment
- VI. School Reports
 - A. Principal Reports
 - B. Director of Pupil Personnel Services
 - C. Directors of Curriculum & Assessments
- VII. Subcommittee Reports – included in packets
- VIII. Action Items

1. **Vote to approve changes to policy GBED Use of Tobacco Products, E-Cigarettes and Vaping Devices on School Property by School Employees and Visitors**
2. **Vote to approve changes to Policy GBED-R Use of Tobacco Products, E-Cigarettes and Vaping Devices on School Property by School Employees and Visitors Procedures**
3. **Vote to approve changes to Policy GBED-R2 Drug-Free, Alcohol-Free, Tobacco-Free Workplace Agreement**
4. **Vote to approve changes to Policy IHAMB Teaching about Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs**
5. **Vote to approve changes to Policy IJNDB-R Internet use Policy Regulations**
6. **Policy KFA Community Wi-Fi Use—First Read and Revisions**
7. **Vote to approve lighting upgrade for Mohawk Trail Regional High School**
8. **Vote to approve the amount of \$28,690.61 to be awarded in 2017 Nilman Scholarships**
9. **Vote to approve a budget transfer of \$1295.00 from Teacher General Supplies to Copier Maintenance Contract (Sanderson Academy)**
10. **Vote to approve School Choice Guidelines for 2017 – 2018 School Year**

	Single Grade Classes		Combined Classes
Grade K	17	K-1	15
Grade 1	17	1-2	15
Grade 2	19	2-3	17
Grade 3	19	3-4	17
Grade 4	21	4-5	19
Grade 5	23	5-6	19
Grade 6	23		
Grade 7	120 enrollment maximum		
Grade 8	120 enrollment maximum		
Grade 9	100 enrollment maximum		
Grade 10	100 enrollment maximum		
Grade 11	100 enrollment maximum		
Grade 12	100 enrollment maximum		
11. **Vote to approve MTRSD District Calendar for 2017-2018**
12. **CD and/or Nilman Fund Transfer(s), if necessary**

- IX. School Committee Chair Report
 - A. Pioneer Regional "HEART" Sustainability Effort
 - B. Inter-District Sharing of Services
 - C. Progress on School Committee Goals
 - D. Update on Heath tuition

- X. Superintendent's Report
 - A. School Choice 2017-2018
 - B. District Vision
 - C. Heterogeneous Math Classrooms
 - D. Pre-School Grant Update
 - E. School Improvement Plans
 - F. MA Rural Schools Coalition Update

- XI. Business Administrator's Report
 - A. Bartholomew and Company Presentation—Nilman Scholarships' Fund
 - B. FY18 Budget Update

- XII. Unfinished business

- XIII. Correspondence/Handouts
 - A. MTRSD Letters to Towns re. Town Assessments, February 23, 2017
 - B. February 2, 2017 "How to Double Your Class Time With a Collaborative Course," by Kelly Phillips in The Art of Education Journal
 - C. February 4, 2017 "Heath school officials question Mohawk budget," by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
 - D. February 10, 2017 "Heath, Mohawk ponder new plan for schools," by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
 - E. February 14, 2017 "Classrooms Chalk Talk: To be known, to tell stories," by Andrea Griswold in The Hampshire Gazette
 - F. February 16, 2017 "Hinds files bill to increase school bus safety in wake of Sanderson Academy student's death," by Richie Davis in The Recorder
 - G. February 17, 2017 "Heath, Mohawk struggle with school closure," by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
 - H. February 22, 2017 "Applauding leaders for looking out for future children," Editorial in The Recorder
 - I. February 24, 2017 "Spelling Bee raises \$9,000 in mini-grants," in The Recorder
 - J. February 24, 2017 "Heath students may go to Hawlemont in fall," by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
 - K. March 2, 2017 "Salmon Falls Gallery showcases students' art," in The Recorder
 - L. March 3, 2017 "HEART Committee forms to 'create a sustainable school system'" by Shelby Ashline in The Recorder
 - M. March 5, 2017 "Mohawk's 'Capstone' students learn by doing," by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
 - N. Adams Scholar Announced, in The Independent
 - O. December 2016 "Mohawk to discuss consolidation plan," by Virginia Ray in The Independent
 - P. December 2016 "11th Annual Spelling Bee a Blast," in The Independent
 - Q. December 2016 "Rocke resigns from SC," in The Independent
 - R. January 2017 "End of an Era for Heath School," by Virginia Ray in The Independent
 - S. January 2017 "Winter Recovery Intensive weekend offered," in The Independent
 - T. January 2017 "Unhappy with superintendent's decisions," Letters in The Independent
 - U. January 2017 "Parents question Mohawk heterogeneous classrooms," by Virginia Ray in The Independent
 - V. January 2017 "New playground planners seek feedback Jan. 16," in The Independent
 - W. January 2017 "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ADAM!" in The Independent
 - X. January 2017 "Community conversations coming in Heath," in The Independent
 - Y. February 2017 "School Closures not the answer," in VIEWPOINT in The Independent
 - Z. February 2017 "Mohawk looks at \$19.4 million operating budget," by Virginia Ray in The Independent
 - AA. February 2017 "Short-term solution offered re Mohawk math," by Virginia Ray in The Independent
 - BB. February 2017 MOHAWK NEWS in The Independent
 - CC. February 2017 "Mohawk to host MA Rural Communities Summit," in The Independent
 - DD. February 2017 "Dyslexia," by Ben Tobin in VIEWPOINT in The Independent

XIV. Executive Session, if needed

XV. Adjournment

School Committee Meeting Dates:

Next Regular Meeting – April 5, 2017 at Sanderson Academy

Minutes

MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Mohawk High School Wednesday March 8, 2017

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 are recorded to provide a brief overview that reflects the subject matter discussed and any decisions made. Motions made are to clearly indicate who made the motion and who seconded the motion. Record who was in favor, who opposed, or who abstained. The names of any person(s) appearing before the committee are to be indicated.

The Mohawk Trail Regional School District School Committee met at the Mohawk High School on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

Members present at the meeting: Poppy Doyle and Emily Robertson [Ashfield 8.5 each], Martha Thurber [Buckland 9.4], Evelyn Locke [Charlemont 6.2 each], Joe Kurland and Nina Martin-Anzuoni [Colrain 8.2 each], Budge Litchfield and Robert Gruen [Heath 3.5 each], Jason Cusimano [Shelburne 9.3].

100 is the total weighted vote with 50 being half and 50.5 being the majority for a quorum. Members present at the beginning of the meeting total [76.4], which constitutes a quorum.

Members absent from the meeting: Julia Aron and Heather Davis [Plainfield 3.2 each], Suzanne Crawford [1.7], John Payne [Shelburne 9.3], Leslie Rule [Plainfield 3.2].

Administrators present: Superintendent Michael Buoniconti; Business Administrator Michael Kociela; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Leann Loomis; Director of Curriculum and Instruction 7-12, Sarah Jetzon; Director of Curriculum and Instruction PreK-6, Rachel Porter; Lynn R. Dole, Co-Principal Mohawk Trail Regional High School; Emma Liebowitz, Principal of Sanderson Academy; Amy Looman, Principal Colrain Central School; Jacqui Goodman, MDEA/BSE.

Staff/Students present: Ada Jacobson-Carroll and Mary Monohon, Student Representatives

Others present: Virginia Ray, The Independent; Bob Hinds, Kate Barrows, David Parrella.

Documents:

Agenda for March 8, 2017 Meeting

CFCE Grant document

Draft Minutes from School Committee Meeting of February 8, 2017

Draft Minutes from School Committee Meeting of February 27, 2017

Director of Pupil Personnel Report, March 2017

Curriculum Directors' Report, March 2017

Principals' Report-Mohawk Trail Regional School, March 2017

Principal's Report-BSE, March 2017

Principal's Report- Sanderson Academy, March 2017

Principal's Report-Colrain Central School, March 2017

Principal's Report-Heath Elementary School, March 2017

2016 Annual Report-Special Education and Pupil Services

2016 Annual Report-Mohawk Trail Regional High School Co-Principals

2016 Annual Report-Buckland Shelburne Elementary School Principal

2016 Annual Report-Sanderson Academy Principal

2016 Annual Report-Colrain Central School Principal

2016 Annual Report-Heath Elementary School Principal

2016 Annual Report-Carl H. Nilman Scholarship Fund

2016 Annual Report-Mary Lyon Foundation
 Draft Minutes Budget Subcommittee Meeting of February 15, 2017
 Draft Minutes Heath Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Meeting of February 2, 2017
 Draft Minutes Personnel Subcommittee Meeting of February 17, 2017
 Draft Minutes Policy Subcommittee Meeting of February 8, 2017
 Draft Minutes Rowe Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Meeting of December 15, 2017
 Draft Minutes 2-District Transportation Meeting of February 27, 2017
 GBED Policy: Use of Tobacco Products, etc.
 GBED-R: Use of Tobacco Products, etc.
 GBED-R2: MTRSD Drug-Free, Alcohol-Free, Tobacco-Free Workplace Agreement
 IHAMB: Teaching About Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs
 IJNB-R: MTRSD Acceptable Internet Use Policy Regulations
 KFA: Community WiFi Use Policy MTRSD
 Mohawk Lighting Upgrade Project Overview
 Eversource Terms and Conditions
 Bartholomew and Company Portfolio Review
 Budget Transfer
 MTRSD Draft Calendar 2017-2018
 MTRSD School Committee Goals 2016-2017
 Superintendent's Report, March 8, 2017
 MTRSD Current Vision, Mission, Core Values
 Department of Early Education and Care Letter, February 15, 2017
 MTRSD Pre-School Budget/Expenditures
 MTRSD IPLE Grant Awards
 BSE School Improvement Plan 2016-2017
 Sanderson Academy School Improvement Plan 2016-2017
 Colrain Central School School Improvement Plan 2016-2017
 Heath Elementary School School Improvement Plan 2016-2017
 MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Ashfield
 MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Buckland
 MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Charlemont
 MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Colrain
 MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Hawley
 MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Heath
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I. **Call meeting to order:** Martha Thurber called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. **Student/Staff Presentation/Reports:**

a. Leann Loomis introduced Melissa Pincus of the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement organization. Ms Pincus explained that the CFCE grant is currently supporting thriving programs in every school district. The number of participants in play groups is growing, Ms Pincus reported, adding that she was optimistic that kindergarten classes soon would be too, because of the large numbers of small children and expectant mothers coming to CFCE events. An Education Fair is planned for May at BSE, an event that is typically well attended—at least 100 people every year. Community members are also involved with CFCE through REACH, Red Gate Farm, libraries and the Trolley Museum, as examples. An important part of the CFCE plan is to encourage parents to be the first and best teachers for their children, Ms. Pincus concluded.

III. **Minutes:**

On a motion by Emily Robertson and seconded by Bob Gruen, the Committee voted to approve the February 15, 2017 School Committee Meeting minutes.

On a motion by Poppy Doyle and seconded by Evie Locke, the Committee voted to approve the February 27, 2017 School Committee Meeting minutes.

IV. **Presentation/Citizen Comment:**

Martha asked if there were any comments. None.

V. **School Reports:**

A. **Principal Reports**

Superintendent Michael Buoniconti asked the school principals to share some of the highlights of the School Improvement Plans that they had included in the packet for the meeting.

Colrain Principal Amy Looman and Sanderson Academy Principal Emma Liebowitz spoke about the new science standards and their goal to design strong science units. Colrain’s SIP will focus heavily on math as well, Ms. Looman explained. Both educators expressed their own and their teachers’ appreciation for the professional development offered through Sarah Jetzon and Rachel Porter. They noted specifically the Ken Pransky workshop that had addressed working with children who have suffered trauma—described as influences such as poverty, abuse, death of a loved one, divorce or another specific event—and the resulting effects on brain development and a child’s ability to learn.

NEAC Assessments were received coolly by teachers, Ms. Liebowitz added. Teachers were almost solely focused on MCAS 2.0 now. Rachel Porter added that the actual tests are very different from the ones that anyone has seen before and that because of that, there is a lot of work for teachers to do in order to understand the new platform. Principal Amy Looman described it as a huge project.

Discussion followed regarding the question of whether MCAS is a useful tool for student learning or not. Rachel Porter said that primarily it was more valuable as an accountability tool for the public. MCAS requires an enormous amount of classroom teaching time and it adds to students' stress, Ms. Porter explained but added that it also allows educators to see where their own strengths and weaknesses are.

Joe Kurland asked if data regarding student progress was being collected in other ways. Principal Emma Liebowitz answered that it is and that it long had been collected pre-MCAS.

While transitioning to the newer PARCC testing formula, the District will be "held harmless" until 2018, meaning that negative results will not be responded to with a reduction in services. Amy Looman pointed out that in these small schools, attendance at the test has a major impact on the results for the entire school, relating that in 2016 two Colrain students had been absent. If a third had missed the test, the school would have had less than 90% participation and therefore would have been subject to receiving a Level 3 rating and the resultant reduction in services.

- **It was suggested that the issue of using such a formula for student participation in the test in these small, rural schools has serious consequences and that it should be on the list of topics to address with legislators.**

Kate Barrows spoke as a parent concerned about the pressure these tests place on children, adding that because of that, some parents were opting out of the tests. Evie Locke asked about the effect of the new testing method on 10th Grade students who were only familiar with the former method of testing. Sarah Jetzon assured parents present and Committee members that the transition to the newer testing was gradual enough that the older students would not be negatively impacted.

Addressing the Family and School Engagement part of the SIP, Principal Amy Looman described the Art and Literacy Family Night that Colrain Central School would host on March 17 as a way of building community and highlighting the work that goes on at the school. Principal Emma Liebowitz noted that out of the tragedy of the death of Summer Steele, all of the hilltown communities had come together and continued to support one another. Ms. Liebowitz invited any and all to join her for the annual May Jump in the Ashfield Lake on May 7th.

Martha Thurber asked if principals and teachers were looking ahead to moving 6th graders to Mohawk and how that would affect changes in curriculum. Ms. Liebowitz expressed her own and others' concern for the Mexican Exchange Program that has been on-going for 42 years and the effect of the 6th Grade move on that. The parents, a grandparent and teachers of former students who had participated in the program voiced their agreement that the program should continue and expressed their commitment to helping to ensure that, either with 5th Grade students now participating or with Mohawk now sponsoring the exchange for the 6th Graders.

Martha Thurber thanked the principals for the Annual Reports saying that they too were well done.

- B. Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Martha Thurber asked Leann Loomis who was responsible for paying for the adaptive technologies. Ms. Loomis answered that MTRSD was.
- C. Directors of Curriculum & Instruction
Rachel Porter encouraged School Committee members to come to the **Open House on March 9th**. Martha applauded the wide-spread publicity for the event.

VI. **Subcommittee Reports:** Subcommittee minutes - included in packets.

VII. **Action Items:**

1. **On a motion by Joe Kurland and seconded by Evie Locke, the Committee voted to approve changes to Policy GBED: Use of Tobacco Product, E-Cigarettes and Vaping Devices on school property by school employees and visitors.**
2. **On a motion by Joe Kurland and seconded by Evie Locke, the Committee voted to approve changes to Policy GBED-R: Use of Tobacco Products, E-Cigarettes and Vaping Devices on school property by school employees and visitors' procedures.**
3. **On a motion by Evie Locke and seconded by Joe Kurland, the Committee voted to approve changes to Policy GBED-R2: Drug-Free, Alcohol-Free, Tobacco-Free Workplace Agreement.**
4. **On a motion by Joe Kurland and seconded by Evie Locke, the Committee voted to approve changes to Policy IHAMB: Teaching about Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs.**
5. Evie Locke moved that the Committee vote to approve changes to Policy IJNDB-R: Internet use Policy Regulations.

Superintendent Buoniconti suggested that the technology administrator is not the person who should be making the decision, but the school principals. Principal Lynn Dole agreed.

On a motion by Joe Kurland and seconded by Bob Gruen, the Committee voted to approve the changes to Policy IJNDB-R: Internet use Policy Regulations with the amendment to Point #3: "Degrade, damage or disrupt equipment or system performance, e.g., by listening to Internet radio or viewing movie trailers *unless directly related to education or curriculum or with direct permission of the principal.*"

Leann Loomis noted that in Point #8, *technology administrator* should also be changed to *principal*.

On a motion by Robert Gruen and seconded by Poppy Doyle, the Committee voted to approve changes to Policy IJNDB-R: Internet use Policy Regulations with the amendment to Point #8: "Download, install, load or use programs without written permission of a *principal.*"

6. First Read of Policy KFA Community Wi-Fi Use. Joe Kurland explained that the point is that the Policy Subcommittee would like to have it in writing that there is an approved process for community use of WiFi.
7. Martha Thurber moved that the Committee vote to approve a lighting upgrade for Mohawk Trail Regional High School. Budge Litchfield seconded.

Discussion followed. Budge Litchfield explained that a proposal had come before the Building Subcommittee to install LED lights at Mohawk. Several questions were raised:

- Is there a way of dimming LED lights? Evie Locke said that those installed at Hawlemont are especially bright and that teachers have resorted to unscrewing some of them in order to reduce the brightness.
- Were other contractors given the opportunity to bid on doing the installation, especially a local business? The listed contractor, JK Energy Solutions is from Connecticut, Jason Cusimano noted.

The Committee made the decision to pass over approval of the motion pending further information. Robin Pease will be asked to attend the next School Committee meeting.

8. **On a motion by Bob Gruen and seconded by Nina Martin-Anzuoni, the Committee voted to approve the amount of \$28,690.61 to be awarded in Nilman Scholarships in 2017.**

Emily Robertson, Joe Kurland and Poppy Doyle abstained.

Principal Lynn Dole explained that Mohawk graduates who have gone on to college are eligible to apply for the scholarship every year throughout their college career and many of them do. Robert Gruen asked if it could be reinforced to the students applying that if they are receiving a full scholarship to the school they are attending, that they are not eligible for the Nilman Scholarship. Ms. Dole confirmed that the school administration does provide that information but that she would make a note to be even more attentive to getting that word out.

9. **On a motion by Emily Robertson and seconded by Poppy Doyle, the Committee voted to approve a budget transfer of \$1295.00 from Teacher General Supplies to Copier Maintenance Contract (Sanderson Academy).** Evie Locke abstained.

10. **On a motion by Poppy Doyle and seconded by Bob Gruen, the Committee voted to approve the School Choice Guidelines for the 2017-2018 school year.**

Superintendent Buoniconti added that other than the high school figures, these numbers have been the same since 2011 and that principals say this formula has been working.

11. Approval of the MTRSD District Calendar for 2017-2018 was passed over until the next School Committee meeting in April in order to give everyone a chance to review.

VIII. School Committee Chair Report:

A. Pioneer Regional "HEART" Sustainability Effort

Chair Martha Thurber reported that various subcommittees had been involved in several things in the previous week, among them participating in a meeting with community and school representatives from the Pioneer Valley Regional School District, who are beginning a process similar to BEST. Martha Thurber, Kate Barrows (BEST), and Michael Buoniconti attended the meeting of the HEART Committee, *Honest Education and Retaining Trust*, answering questions and giving them an overview and history of BEST. The group also discussed ideas about sharing services, for instance payroll, purchasing, transportation and did some preliminary brainstorming about how it might work to share language classes and to expand educational offerings. HEART is driven by town officials and not by the School Committee, was one significant difference that Ms. Thurber noted.

B. Inter-District Sharing of Services

Ms. Thurber reported that the Personnel Subcommittee has been in the initial stage of talking about sharing superintendent positions across districts.

C. Progress on School Committee Goals

Martha Thurber asked if there were any further comments on the current proposed goals, saying that she felt it was time to check in to see where everyone was with this.

Goal #1 Both Chair Martha Thurber and Superintendent Buoniconti expressed their thanks to the School Committee members who had been meeting with the superintendent to continue the work to develop a vision for the District.

Goal #2 Committee members agreed that it was still a work in progress. Ms. Thurber expressed her hope that the Heath committees would reach an agreement soon.

Goal #3 A number of strategies have been developing. School Committee members have met with a number of staff but have not yet established a regular meeting schedule. Together they

have agreed that they need to formalize a process to collect info on school choice students, i.e., where they choice to.

D. Update on Heath tuition

Ms. Thurber assured the committee that everyone involved in the Heath negotiations was working hard to come to a fair agreement and that they continue to make progress. Attorneys for both sides have also been actively engaged in the process. Budge Litchfield announced that both lawyers would be speaking together the following day on a conference call with some of the Heath Educational Task Force, adding that the legal counsel for Heath believed that March 15 was a reasonable goal for completion. Ms. Thurber reminded everyone that they hoped to have a draft amendment by then and that a special School Committee Meeting was being called for March 15 to address the amendment.

Jason Cusimano raised the concern that on such short notice they may not have a quorum at this meeting and asked if it were possible to participate in a vote via tele-conference. Ms. Thurber agreed to find out if that were possible.

IX. Superintendent's Report:

A. School Choice 2017-2018

(Topic addressed earlier as part of the Action Items). Superintendent Buoniconti announced that the next Hawlemont School Committee meeting would take place on Wednesday, March 15, at which time the Heath School transition would be discussed.

B. District Vision

Again Mr. Buoniconti thanked those who have stepped up to be on another committee. This task force, he explained, has an assignment to go through several materials. In April they plan to go to each building and engage in conversations with staff. In May they plan to bring their findings back to the School Committee and in June they will have a draft proposal to be voted on.

C. Heterogeneous Math Classrooms

Superintendent Buoniconti said that in addition to what he and educators are doing internally, that they are also continuing to communicate with parents on the issue. Another meeting is scheduled for March 13. The Education Subcommittee continues to monitor the topic as well.

Evie Locke raised the concern that perhaps this small group of parents did not represent a whole other group of parents and that outreach needed to happen with them as well. Principal Dole agreed and said that she and Principal Mendosa would discuss this and find a way to make it happen.

D. Pre-School Grant Update

Referring to the packet document Preschool Grant Funding and to the letter from the Department of Early Education and Care announcing their plan to phase out funding for the preschool programs, Superintendent Buoniconti indicated that the portion of the tuition that had been added in 2016 was the Free Portion. That figure would have to be eliminated from the current FY18 budget now because it represents the grant portion of approximately \$30,000. Leann Loomis added that the grant is used for paying staff. While it was not sustainable, Mr. Buoniconti explained, to raise tuition yearly, the Budget Subcommittee, Mr. Kociela and he agreed that in order to keep the program running this next year, the District could reasonably raise the tuition from \$4 to \$6 an hour, which is comparable to other preschool rates in the area. First, however, Superintendent Buoniconti said, he would push back against the DEEC decision.

Superintendent Buoniconti listed three things that he will be lobbying legislators to address:

1. Reinstatement of the Preschool Grant
2. Request special legislation to get the Nilman funds to be opened up to investing more broadly
3. Status of special legislation to make Mohawk PK-12 district (so-called clean-up warrant)

E. School Improvement Plans

Superintendent Buoniconti thanked the elementary school principals for the good work they have done in putting together their SIPs and said that the secondary principals' SIPs would be in next month's packet.

F. MA Rural Schools Coalition Update

Mr. Buoniconti reported that he is pleased to be getting access to people such as Secretary of Education Jim Peyser and Commissioner Chester through this coalition. Mr. Buoniconti announced that he would be speaking at the MASC/ MASS Conference the following week, as part of a panel addressing "The Three Faces of Poverty." Mr. Buoniconti would speak about rural poverty and asked for input from the School Committee to come up with a workable list of topics they would like to see him focus on. School Committee members agreed to follow up via email

Mr. Buoniconti reminded School Committee members to contact a principal about visiting a school, if they are interested.

X. Business Administrator's Report:

A. Bartholomew and Company Presentation—Nilman Scholarships' Fund Report

Business Administrator Mike Kociela reported on the meeting that the Budget Subcommittee had had prior to the School Committee meeting with two representatives from Bartholomew and Company, financial managers of the Nilman Foundation and with members of the Nilman Scholarship Subcommittee. What they had learned was that in 2016 the portfolio had been a strong performer and that Bartholomew and Company have been very pleased with a yield that had netted a return that exceeded inflation. The outcome has been that with the \$1.2 million portfolio, they had been able to increase the funds by approximately \$30,000 in 2016, keeping at just about the same amount yearly since 2011. Mr. Bartholomew explained that because of Chapter 41 restrictions (which covers "education and equalized wealth levels"), there are parameters that restrict the amount that such portfolios can grow. Special legislation that would exempt the school district from Chapter 41 restrictions is under consideration currently. Superintendent Buoniconti asked for examples of organizations that had successfully been granted the exemption legislation. Mr. Jamros answered that the Athol Public Library and the Forbes Library both had. MTRSD is interested in looking into this question, Mr. Kociela explained.

The subcommittee had also been given assurance, Mr. Kociela said, that none of the investments were in stocks of questionable ethical standing. Mr. Jamros had answered that while he could not immediately list all of the stocks, he knew that when they invested for schools, they used the "No ATF," rule: No Alcohol, Tobacco or Firearms investments. The subcommittee asked for something in writing to confirm this.

B. FY18 Budget Update

Mr. Kociela reported that he and Superintendent Buoniconti would be preparing to attend annual town meetings. Superintendent Buoniconti said that he would send out a letter prior to these meetings to the School Committee to help everyone to be prepared to address questions.

Jason Cusimano asked for someone to take his place at the Shelburne Annual Town Meeting because he will be out of town.

XI. Unfinished Business:

Chair Martha Thurber reminded everyone that there would be a Professional Development meeting on Monday, March 27 and asked if there were any suggestions for the training. Budge Litchfield suggested using that meeting to explain the details of Heath transition. All agreed.

XII. Correspondence/Handouts:

MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Ashfield
MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Buckland
MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Charlemont
MTRSD Town Assessment Letter, February 23, 2017 to Town of Colrain
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February 16, 2017 “Hinds files bill to increase school bus safety in wake of Sanderson Academy student’s death,” by Richie Davis in The Recorder
February 17, 2017 “Heath, Mohawk struggle with school closure,” by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
February 22, 2017 “Applauding leaders for looking out for future children,” Editorial in The Recorder
February 24, 2017 “Spelling Bee raises \$9,000 in mini-grants,” in The Recorder
February 24, 2017 “Heath students may go to Hawlemont in fall,” by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
March 2, 2017 “Salmon Falls Gallery showcases students’ art,” in The Recorder
March 3, 2017 “HEART Committee forms to ‘create a sustainable school system’” by Shelby Ashline in The Recorder
March 5, 2017 “Mohawk’s ‘Capstone’ students learn by doing,” by Diane Broncaccio in The Recorder
Adams Scholar Announced, in The Independent
December 2016 “Mohawk to discuss consolidation plan,” by Virginia Ray in The Independent
December 2016 “11th Annual Spelling Bee a Blast,” in The Independent
December 2016 “Rocke resigns from SC,” in The Independent
January 2017 “End of an Era for Heath School,” by Virginia Ray in The Independent
January 2017 “Winter Recovery Intensive weekend offered,” in The Independent
January 2017 “Unhappy with superintendent’s decisions,” Letters in The Independent
January 2017 “Parents question Mohawk heterogeneous classrooms,” by Virginia Ray in The Independent
January 2017 “New playground planners seek feedback Jan. 16,” in The Independent
January 2017 “HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ADAM!” in The Independent
January 2017 “Community conversations coming in Heath,” in The Independent
February 2017 “School Closures not the answer,” in VIEWPOINT in The Independent
February 2017 “Mohawk looks at \$19.4 million operating budget,” by Virginia Ray in The Independent
February 2017 “Short-term solution offered re Mohawk math,” by Virginia Ray in The Independent
February 2017 MOHAWK NEWS in The Independent
February 2017 “Mohawk to host MA Rural Communities Summit,” in The Independent
February 2017 “Dyslexia,” by Ben Tobin in VIEWPOINT in The Independent

XIII. Adjournment: On a motion by Poppy Doyle, and seconded by Bob Gruen, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

School Committee Meeting Dates:

School Committee Professional Development – Monday, March 27, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. – Mohawk
Next Regular Meeting – April 5, 7:00 p.m. – Sanderson Academy

Patricia Donohue
MTRSD School Committee Secretary