



**Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District School Committee
Regular Meeting**

***DATE: ~~Tuesday, February 7, 2017~~**

***NOTE: Should the meeting be rescheduled for inclement weather, the date will be Wednesday,
February 8, 2017 at the same time and location***

TIME: 6:00 PM

LOCATION: Auditorium, Southwick Regional School, 93 Feeding Hills Road, Southwick, MA 01077

MINUTES

The listing of matters 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 also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law

A. ROUTINE

A. Attendance

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson of the School Committee, Mr. Houle at 6:00 pm

The Following were present:

School Committee:	Jeffrey Houle, Chairperson
	George LeBlanc, Vice Chair
	Theodore Locke, Secretary (Tolland Rep.)
	Jean McGivney-Burelle
	Kelly Clendenin
	Pamela Petschke (Granville Rep.)
	Maria Seddon
Administration:	Jennifer Willard, Superintendent
	Stephen Presnal, Business Manager
	Amy McLaughlin, Recording Secretary
Student Representatives:	none
News Media:	Southwick News, Westfield Evening News, WWLP
Observers:	approx. 90

B. OPENING CEREMONY – Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Houle addressed the observers and stated that any audio and video recording of the meeting must be disclosed to all of those in attendance. He then requested that anyone who was recording the meeting to please identify themselves. William Fluhr, Granville, MA and Nicole Berndt, Granville, MA both identified themselves and disclosed that they were recording audio and video of the meeting.

Mr. Houle stated that in the future, the School Committee would be audio recording the meetings and the recordings would be available with the meeting notes on the District website.

C. Secretary's Report

2/2/2017 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Petschke asked that an edit be made to the minutes of the 2/2/2017 meeting to note, under Action Items, Motion to Modify the Timeline, to please add in paragraph three the question that Ms. Petschke asked regarding mid-year school closure "Would that be a School Committee Decision? Ms. Willard responded 'yes'".

Approved as amended

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

D. Warrants - Circulated

E. Correspondence

Superintendent Willard apologized for the lack of a 2-hour delay that morning of 2/8/2017. The road conditions were worse than anticipated. Ms. Willard thanked the Bus Drivers for their commitment to the safety of the students. Ms. Willard stated that some parents chose to keep their children home or send them to school late because of concerns over road conditions. Ms. Willard stated that is always the parent's decision and all absences and tardies related to weather would be excused.

Superintendent Willard stated that due to anticipated snowfall, school was cancelled for 2/9/2017.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT – excluding personnel issues

Mr. Houle opened public comment by stating that he was notified that someone was offended by his actions at the 2/2/2017 School Committee meeting in which he asked a member of the Public not to discuss their child during Public Comment. Mr. Houle stated that he did not mean to offend but that his goal is to protect the privacy of students. Mr. Houle reviewed the rules for Public Comment.

Ted Sussmann, Granville, MA, stated that the Town of Granville has and continues to offer to pay for repairs to the school at previous meetings and was not noted in meeting minutes. He stated that he spoke to a Southwick Businessman who stated that if closing the school was about repairs, the businessman was willing to contribute to a fund to donate a significant amount of money to do so. Mr. Sussmann stated that he believed there was sympathy in all three towns to keep the school open.

Steve Cook, Granville, MA, stated that he questioned the recent information regarding the Fiscal Analysis and that he still questioned the enrollment decline indicated in the NESDEC study. Mr. Cook also stated that costing was only provided for one Woodland School reconfiguration option and questioned why Granville Village School teachers cost more than Woodland Teachers.

Bill Fluhr, Granville, MA, stated that he sent a letter to Mr. Locke and wished to identify himself. Mr. Fluhr asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open. Mr. Fluhr stated that there was a lack of outreach and information provided to Southwick and Tolland residents and they are unaware of what is happening and that there is more opposition to the closing of the school in Granville.

Adrian Berndt, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to vote to keep the school open because more value than can be put on paper.

Charity Barger, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to vote to keep the school open because the District has drastically inflated the cost of the repairs to the Granville Village School and the Town of Granville has offered to pay for repairs.

Paul Rescigno, Granville, MA, stated that his daughter moved to Granville so that he children would be able to attend the Granville Village School when they are old enough. He stated that they moved from Agawam for smaller class sizes.

Jessica Ripley, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open to ensure shorter bus rides for Granville and Tolland students.

Danielle Sullivan, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to vote to keep the Granville Village School open because it will be a permanent decision and the building will become unavailable to the District as a future resource.

Julia Ellinger, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open. She stated that she was a student at the school for eleven years and the small class sizes at the Granville Village School are what enabled her to place in the top ten in her class at Southwick Regional School.

Meg Putnam, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open because nothing but good will eventually come from it and because of the anxiety it is causing in the students as well as her own children.

Laura DeGray, Southwick, MA, asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open so all parents in Southwick and Tolland have the opportunity to choose the school that is best for their children.

Emily Bauer, Tolland, MA, asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open to keep the teachers' jobs.

Jessica Shanti, Southwick, MA, stated that she had sent a letter to the School Committee and also some student letters. She stated that she was a student at Granville Village School, Powder Mill School and the High School. She also stated that she was a teacher at the Granville Village School for thirteen years and her daughter now attends the Granville Village School via intra-district school choice because of the smaller class sizes and community of Granville. She stated that she believes there are lots of children in Southwick that could also benefit and asked the Committee to keep the school open.

Dorothy Grimaldi, Granville, MA, stated that her three children, their father and grandparents attended the Granville Village School. She stated that the school is a big part of the heart of the town and the town feels like they are losing their self-determination. She asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open.

Erin O'Brien, Granville, MA, stated that her family moved to Granville in 1995 solely because of the school system and her children and her brother's children all received very good educations from the Granville Village School. She asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open.

Tracy Florida, Southwick, MA, asked the Committee to keep the Granville Village School open because she is a Southwick resident whose children attend Granville Village School through the intra-district school choice program. She stated that she does not believe the District did their due diligence in informing parents and making it easier for them to send their children to the Granville Village School through the intra-district school choice program with transportation options. She stated that Southwick residents don't know that it is an option. She stated that she believed the due diligence was not completed on the report, which she does not agree with and she feels the financial analysis was incomplete. She stated that keeping the school open benefits everyone and closing it benefits no one.

Jean Reopel, Southwick, MA, stated that she believes the District owes it to everyone to provide a private school education at a public school price. She stated that the District should be realigned so that students are distributed throughout the District. She stated that if the District had 18 children per classroom people from outside the District would want to send their children here. She stated that 25 students per classroom is not beneficial. She stated that more should be done to bring the communities together.

Abby Houschouer, Granville, MA, stated that she is a freshman at Southwick Regional School and that she credits her education at Granville Village School for her being top 2 in her class.

Jennifer Francis, Granville, MA, asked the Committee to vote to keep the Granville Village School open because not one person had asked to close it.

C. STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT - none

D. EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION - none

E. ACTION ITEMS

1. Policy Revisions AC and ACAB

Superintendent Willard noted that the policy revisions were edits only that would change John Barry to Jennifer Willard.

Move to waive the three (3) readings for the revised AC- NONDISCRIMINATION Policy

A motion was made to approve:

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

Move to approve Policy AC - NONDISCRIMINATION.

A motion was made to approve:

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

Move to waive the three (3) readings for the revised ACAB- Sexual Harassment Policy

A motion was made to approve:

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

Move to approve Policy ACAB – Sexual Harassment.

A motion was made to approve:

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

2. 2017/2018 School Year Calendar

Move to approve the 2017/2018 School Calendar, as presented.

Ms. Petschke asked if the October and March ½ days post-conference were a result of language in the Teachers contract. Ms. Willard stated that she believed they were but would verify. Ms. Petschke stated that if those days were in the contract she'd like the Committee to work to remove them during the next negotiation period because the half days can be difficult for families.

A motion was made to approve:

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

3. Approve School Choice seat for 12th grader to remain at SRS

Move to approve 1 Grade 12 School Choice Seat for the 2016/2017 School Year

A motion was made to approve:

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

4. Vote on School Use Study Recommendation

Superintendent Willard summarized the process of the Best Use of Facilities study, fiscal analysis and presentation of options for educational organizational schemes. She stated that letters were received from community members stating why the Granville Village School should remain open or be closed. She stated that the District understands the emotions that are involved in the situation. She stated that for the District to move forward academically and prepare students for the 21st century job market, it needed to make educational changes which would affect the entire District PreK-12. She stated the motion was based on the needs of the District today and in the future.

Move to close the Granville Village School pursuant to Section III of the Regional Agreement, said closure to be effective June 30, 2017.

Superintendent Willard stated that if approved, the District promised to work with the families who are affected by the decision to make the transition for children as smooth as possible.

School Committee Chair Houle noted that the motion requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Regional School Committee with representatives from at least two towns voting to support closure, as outlined in the Regional Agreement. Mr. Houle noted that per Mass general law it is one person, one vote and the Committee would use weighted votes as outlined in the Regional Agreement – Southwick members are worth 16.4 votes per member; Tolland member is worth 4 votes, and the Granville member is worth 14 votes.

Ms. Petschke expressed her appreciation to the audience members for attending the meetings and for their passion and dedication, and for participating in the civic process. Ms. Petschke stated that the issue the Committee was voting on was not simply closing a school and reappropriating funds to remaining schools. She stated that the issue is the removal of the only school within a town. She stated that the school has been the lifeblood of the town for over 250 years. She stated that closing the school would have immediate and long term consequences for the townspeople of Granville and will also deepen Granville's growing distrust and resentment toward the school district and widen the political wedge that has formed among the three communities. Ms. Petschke stated that the decision will affect the entire District. She questioned whether it will lead to advancements in curriculum and instruction and whether proposed changes will lead to student success. She questioned whether Woodland and Powder Mill can absorb the Granville Village School students while maintaining class sizes in the optimal range. She questioned the long term economic and political implications and stated that the results of closing the school are unknown, but will not be good. She said that the closure was not a result of an underperforming school but rather an underfunded regional district. She said that closing the Granville Village School is not the solution to the problem and in the interest of all three towns the Committee should find a different solution.

Jean McGivney-Burelle stated that in her 8 years on the School Committee this is by far the hardest decision she's had to make. She stated that she would be casting her vote with a heavy heart especially because of friends she has in the audience and because of the respect she has for fellow committee member Pam Petschke who she said had fought so passionately and diligently to keep the Granville Village School open. Ms. McGivney-Burelle stated that as School Committee members they are charged with doing what is best for all students in the District while being fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars. Ms. McGivney-Burelle highlighted some changes that have taken place in the District over the past five years, since Regionalization with Granville including renovated buildings and a new superintendent as well as decline in enrollment both for the District and the Granville Village School. Ms. McGivney-Burelle stated that the decline in enrollment at Granville Village School has resulted in drastic inequities between class sizes at Granville Village School vs. the same grade at Woodland and these small class sizes are not sustainable. She stated that she cannot support an option which forces parents from Tolland and Southwick to send their students to the Granville Village School when they would not otherwise do so voluntarily. She stated that if we have the capacity at the Woodland and Powder Mill Schools for the Granville students, while maintaining current class sizes, it does not make sense from an efficiency standpoint to try and increase enrollment at the Granville Village School. She stated that funds from the closure of the school would be used to improve staff training and educational opportunities for all students in the District. She said moving from a four to a three building District would create equity in class sizes and redundancies in services and make better use of space. She stated that she has

heard the concerns of the community members especially around class size and special needs. She urged the Committee members to be mindful of class sizes, especially at PreK-3 and 4-6. She also asked Committee members to keep in mind the services for students with special needs as well as increasing academic rigor. She stated that she respects the people who have fought to keep the school open and even though they may disagree with the outcome of the meeting she hoped that they would stay engaged in the educational process of the students.

Mr. Houle acknowledged hand written letters the Committee received from Granville students. He stated that he and Superintendent Willard would be responding to each of the students with a letter.

Mr. Houle stated that reflecting back on his tenure on the Committee, this is by far the most difficult decision he's had to consider. Mr. Houle thanked the Committee and the District for their commitment to the education of all students in the District. He stated that the Committee members have had to repeatedly remind themselves that they had to think, act and decide as a District and keep focus on the educational goals. Mr. Houle acknowledged the impact of the decision on the Granville community and thanked the community for their passion. He stated that to make educational strides the District needed to make changes such as strengthening staff with professional development and coaches. The District needs to focus on technology the supports today's teaching practices and electronic assessments. Mr. Houle stated that he is on the Committee to represent all of the students of the District and that is what is vote will be based upon.

Mr. Houle stated that the motion requires 67 votes to carry in addition to representatives from at least two towns voting in favor.

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke

With the members Jeffrey Houle, George LeBlanc, Theodore Locke, Pamela Petschke, Kelly Clendenin, Jean McGivney-Burelle and Maria Seddon being present and voting individually:

Five votes in favor: Houle, LeBlanc, Locke, McGivney-Burelle and Seddon

Two votes opposed: Petschke and Clendenin

With a two-thirds majority vote, 69.6 votes, of the Regional School Committee and representatives from at least two towns voting to support closure, Southwick and Tolland, the motion passes: 5/2/0

F. REPORTS

A. Superintendent

Superintendent Willard stated that the first Cherry Sheet came out from the Governor's office. She stated that there was a mistake on the District sheet because they did not include the vocational students. She stated that the numbers were also down because the District had a net loss of 92 students from last year. This is from the graduation of a large senior class and small kindergarten numbers. This will affect the budget but the District committed to working within the limits of the foundation budget.

Superintendent Willard stated that a meeting was required of the District sick bank and the Committee is asked to send a designee. Ms. McGivney-Burelle is designated.

B. School Business Manager – no report

C. Sub Committees and Liaisons

- *Negotiations*: Transportation Negotiations next meeting scheduled for 2/10/2017.
- *Finance*: no report
- *L.P.V.E.C Bd. Gov and Bd. Dir*: no report
- *Policy*: no report

- *School Building Committee*: no report
- *Technology*: no report
- *Curriculum and Instruction*: no report
- *Legislative Liasion*: no report
- *SPED Liason*: no report
- *Southwick Capital Committee*: no report

D. Policies – no report

G. PUBLIC COMMENT

Debbie Van Etten, Southwick, MA stated that she sent an email to the Committee on February 6, 2017 requesting an apology from Mr. Houle and she received no response. She asserted she was owed an apology for inexcusable behavior relating to being asked not to share information about her children. Mr. Houle told her she was out of order and he asked her to sit down and when she refused, Mr. Houle closed public comments.

H. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Old Business

Closure of Granville Village School

Mr. Houle stated that the District will be committed to making a smooth transition for all students and will be incorporating some of the traditions from Granville into Woodland and Powder Mill events and programs. He stated that with the evening’s decision, the District will focus on finalizing the 2017/2018 budget and putting a plan together to transition students. Mr. Houle reminded the Committee to focus on the children and working together.

New Business

The February 21, 2017 School Committee meeting is cancelled due to school vacation.

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION - none

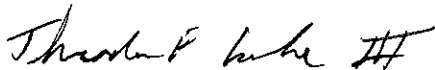
At 6:42 p.m., a motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

With the members Jeffrey Houle, George Leblanc, Theodore Locke, Pamela Petschke, Kelly Clendenin, Jean McGivney-Burelle and Maria Seddon being present and voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes.

Motion by LeBlanc, seconded by Locke 7/0/0

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Theodore Locke, Secretary

STAFFING

Appointments

Resignations

Retirements