

Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #406
Monday, September 13, 2021, 7:00PM
via ZOOM

Members Present: Carol Lombardo, Carl Nett, Arlene Tolopko, Jennifer Hibbins, Deb Fogel, Roger Kohler, and Jess Drenga.

Guest: Tracy Novick

Before the meeting started, Roger Kohler motioned to add Community Participation to the agenda. Carol stated no because tonight's meeting is a presentation to explain to the School Committee the Open Law Meeting and the responsibilities of the members. Roger stated that he can motion to add a topic to the agenda. Carl Nett seconded the motion. Carol asked a guest (Tracy Novick from MASC) if this could be done. Tracy was invited as a speaker to explain the laws and regulations of Open Meetings. Tracy stated that this could cause danger by adding something to the agenda without posting it to the public 48 hours before the meeting. She recommended not adding to the agenda. Jennifer Hibbins thinks we should add Community Participation because a lot has happened within 48 hours since the agenda has been posted. The community wants to be heard. Carol stated no, because the Committee would not be able to discuss anything because it is not a topic on the agenda. Jennifer then asked if a vote could be done to add the topic of school closing to the agenda. Carol asked Tracy Novick if that would be okay to do. Tracy commented this is the reason why you have an Open Meeting Law. You are undermining the community by adding such a topic as the school closing. The full community was not given the 48 hours' notice to attend, only the residents tuning in to the meeting this evening can listen and speak. Jennifer asked if the Committee can schedule another meeting addressing this concern. Carol was not against doing so.

1. **Approval of minutes #402, 403, 404, and 405.** The motion to approve minutes #402, 403, 404, and 405 was made by Jess Drenga, Arlene seconded the motion. Jennifer asked if they were amended. Teresa DellaGiustina stated that all suggestions were revised. A vote was taken. The minutes were approved unanimously by all seven members.

2. The Farmington River Regional Educators' Association has voted to allow the Principal's Secretary to join the Education Support Professionals unit. They need a vote from the School Committee to accrete this position into the Farmington River Regional District Educators' Association—Educational Support Professionals unit. A motion was made by Arlene Tolopko and seconded by Jess Drenga to accept a member of the staff to join the Educator's Association. Jennifer Hibbins asked if it is necessary to have the School Committee vote on this topic or is it just a blessing. Tom answered by saying the position is eligible for joining the union, so it is just a blessing. We can not stop the position from joining. Alex from the MTA spoke stating it is a consent recognition. The School Committee does have to vote on it. If the Committee votes no, then the MA Labor Relations Commission is notified and paperwork will be filled out by this person to petition the School Committee's vote. Ultimately, the person would be allowed in the union. Carl Nett asked if anyone can make an argument as to why it is in the best interest to vote in favor of this motion. Jennifer Hibbins asked if there is a conflict of interest with this position when it is time for negotiations, and are there other support professionals as well that are allowed into the union? Alex spoke up again and stated that the Superintendent's Secretary is not eligible to be included in the union, because by statute he/she is a confidential employee. The Principal's Secretary is not considered a confidential employee. Due to the confidential circumstances and duties the Superintendent's Secretary has during negotiations, sets the two positions apart. Carl asked his question again. Does voting yes to let this individual in the union benefit the district? Tom replied to Carl by stating that there is no direct benefit for the district, it just means the position is entitled to be part of the union. Roger Kohler asked Alex if his vote is unethical since he belongs to the MTA? The answer is no, so Roger can vote. Teresa DellaGiustina asked for the School Committee to vote on this motion. The motion was approved 6-1. Carl Nett being the only nay vote.

3. Discussion on future ZOOM meetings: Roger Kohler wanted the opportunity to speak about this topic. He would like to continue to have School Committee meetings to be conducted via ZOOM for the communities. Roger mentioned that this could be done by setting up a computer so the community could participate if anyone had questions. Microphones could be used for easier listening as well. Jess Drenga suggested to ask Laurie Flower, (Farmington River's IT Specialist) to help set this up. Carl Nett stated that Sandisfield's Selectboard is doing this

already. You can use multiple computers if wanted. At this point, Carol asked Roger if they can table the topic until next month, because she feels we will still be having meetings via ZOOM for a bit longer. Roger agreed to postpone this discussion until next month.

- 4. Speaker from MASC, Tracy Novick, will be in to speak regarding the Open Law Meeting Rules/Regulations.** Tracy Novick presented a slideshow on the School Committee Members' Ethics and Regulations. Tracy reviewed and answered all material and questions thoroughly. A link to the slideshow will be posted on the website for anyone who is interested in listening to Tracy speak on the topic of School Committee responsibilities, rules, and regulations.

- 5. Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn at 8:40 P.M. by Arlene Tolopko. Jess Drenga seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa DellaGiustina

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