

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Regular Meeting #419
Monday August 1, 2022, 7:00PM
Farmington River Library**

Members Present: Carol Lombardo, Carl Nett, Deb Fogel, Arlene Tolopko, Roger Kohler, Amanda Leavenworth, Tom Nadolny, and Eric Jesner. **Members Participating Remotely:** Jess Drenga

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Carol Lombardo.

Community participation.

- Neesha Dolan, identified herself as the former administrative assistant to the principal at FRRSD. She expressed concern over what she experienced to be a rude and disrespectful working environment. She said she had sought resolution, but the principal was unwilling to consider change.
 - Chair Lombardo stopped the comment saying that discussion of the topic required an executive session. Member Nett appealed the chair's ruling arguing that professional competence was not a reason to enter executive session and was seconded by Leavenworth. The chair's ruling was put to a vote to sustain the ruling. Drenga, Fogel, and Lombardo voted to sustain the chair. Nett, Leavenworth, Kohler, Tolopko voted against the chair's ruling. The challenge (motion) to move to carried 4-3.

Community Participation continued

- Neesha Dolan spoke with her union but she was fearful of filing a complaint. She did not believe the administration was in touch with the needs of the school.
- Barbara Cormier shared one of the conclusions of the School Options Committee that stated that the school board did not hold the school administration accountable. She also said she had no confidence in the administration.

1. Approve June's minutes #417 & #418: The motion to approve minutes was made by Kohler and seconded by Fogel. Kohler asked for a correction to the vote count. The minutes were unanimously approved with the suggested change.

2 Principal/Superintendent updates.

- Tom Naldony reported on the progress of the summer cleaning with an anticipated completion date of August 22.
- CTSB and the summer programs were described as successful.
- New staff were listed: Grace Terry-school nurse, Sarah Hopkins-food service director, Sarah Loring-kitchen assistant, and Dakota Meredith-as custodial supervisor on trial basis until 1-1-23. The majority of departures were retirements.
- Preliminary attendance data which he described as just above the state average. Preliminary MCAS data which he described as promising.

3. Financial updates.

Jesner reported that the purchase order for a van was defunct because the company was no longer offering that particular model. He will move forward on finding an alternative replacement van. He reported that the state passed FY23 budget which includes Free Lunch for all students in the state of Massachusetts. He reported that there was a small increase in transportation. He asked for prompt responses to warrant approval so that payments can be distributed in a timely fashion. He reported that there will be unspent funds from FY22 that will be moved to E&D. When asked for an estimate he posited a sum of around \$100,000.

4. Discuss the Association Survey.

The Teachers Association distributed a survey to members that had one question; How do you feel about the atmosphere of FRRS? There were 18 responses from the 26 staff members. A meeting between the principal and the association representatives resulted in a plan for addressing concerns raised in the survey. Rebecca Hamill and Sarah Tracy, the association presidents, were asked to speak about the plan. Hamill expressed the thought the plan would address issues and that there would be a review of implementation in December to ensure it was on track. Nett opined that the survey may not have captured all of the concerns of staff, based on his personal experience and having met with a group of present and former employees. He suggested the association leadership poll the membership about the plan. He further opined that the school committee and staff might not be confident in the administration's ability to execute the plan and suggested that the school committee vote on whether or not they have confidence in the administration to address the issues. Other committee members expressed agreement that the issues raised in the survey required further investigation.

The school committee opened the meeting for a second comment period.

- Denise Hardy said a third-party should be brought in to assess the situation at the school and that MASC and MTA could provide support and resources.

- Dawn Lemmon opined that the school committee was trying to, “push this under the rug.”
- Unidentified said the school committee needs to take the results of the survey more seriously.
- Lombardo then asked Naldony to respond. He said that the association had rejected a request for a vote of no confidence in December of 2021 and he did not know what had happened in the intervening time to lead to the survey results. He denied ever retaliating against any staff member.
- The topic of evaluation was raised in regard to the superintendent and it was reported that the school committee had not conducted regular evaluations every year or in a two-year cycle.
- The committee discussed surveying staff and families and reliable ways of collecting additional data. They also agreed that concerned staff and families should contact individual school committee members if they do not feel comfortable taking a survey.
- The committee agreed to schedule a special meeting for later in the month of August to consider the issues raised in the survey.

4. **Adjournment.** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Nett and seconded by Kohler. The vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Robert R. Putnam, Interim Principal/Superintendent