

Farmington River Regional School District

School Committee - Special Meeting

Meeting #448

Farmington River Elementary School Library

Monday, April 1, 2024

MINUTES

7:00 PM

Members Present: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett

Also Present: Tim Lee, Carol Sauerhauser (via Zoom), Caroline Stamm

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Carl Nett
 - A. **Roll Call:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett
- II. **Public Comment:**
 - A. Denise Hardie would like to thank members of the Otis Selectboard who received a request to the Otis Recreation Committee to not charge students from other communities who are participating recreation activities.
 - B. Denise Hardie would like to bring to everyone's attention regarding MASC:
 1. MASC is creating a Rural Schools Committee. The Committee would be meeting every other month via Zoom looking at issues common to rural schools. If anyone is interested in joining the committee, they should let her know.
 2. MASC is holding a Berkshire Legislative Forum on April 11th.
- III. **Public Comment:**
 - A. Carol Lombardo made a motion to accept the minutes from Meeting #447 held on 3/25/24. Deb Fogel seconded the motion.
 1. **VOTE:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to accept the minutes from Meeting #447 held on 3/25/24.
 - B. Phil Magovern made a motion to accept the minutes from Meeting #446 held on 3/4/24. Deb Fogel seconded the motion.
 1. **VOTE:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. Denise Hardie (via Zoom) abstained from the vote. There were no objections, and the motion passed to accept the minutes from Meeting #447 held on 3/4/24.
 - C. Phil Magovern made a motion to accept the minutes from Meeting #445 held on 2/26/24. Deb Fogel seconded the motion.
 1. There was discussion around verifying a few of Carol Lombardo's votes during the meeting. The tapes will be reviewed and edits will be made to the minutes to reflect the correct votes.
 2. Carl Nett made a motion to amend the motion to approve the minutes from Meeting #445 held on 2/26/24 with the amendment to review the video of the votes and edit the minutes accordingly.

3. VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to accept the minutes from Meeting #447 held on 2/26/24 with the amendment to review the video of the votes and edit the minutes accordingly.

IV. Superintendent's Report:

A. 2024-2025 School Year Calendar, Review/Approve:

1. The calendar presented was vetted by the Educators Union with the school year beginning before Labor Day.
2. Tim reviewed significant dates within the school calendar, including the start of school on August 28th, and noted that this calendar closely follows the Lee Public Schools Calendar.
3. There was a discussion of adding religious holidays of different faiths to the calendar. The committee decided to remove the Christian holidays from the body of the calendar and add them to a list of religious holidays at the bottom of the calendar. Tim will locate a list of high holidays from the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and other religious holidays to add the bottom of the calendar.
4. MOTION: Carol motioned to accept the 2024-2025 School Calendar, with the addition of religious holidays at the bottom of the calendar. Phil seconded the motion.
 - a) VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to accept the 2024-2025 School Calendar with the addition of religious holidays at the bottom of the calendar.

B. Superintendent's Work Year:

1. Tim brought forward his Superintendent contract to discuss the number of contracted days. He reached 95.5 days by the end of March, which currently exceeds his contracted number of days. Because of this, he is seeking consent from the School Committee to utilize the provision in his contract continue the remainder of the school year at 2 days per week at the rate of \$550.
2. Denise, Carl, and Tim have briefly discussed this out of session.
3. Moving forward, Tim feels confident that he should be able to maintain a schedule of 2 days per week.
4. Tim is asking the SC to approve additional work days under item 8 of the Superintendent work agreement, as not to exceed 24 work days for the remainder of the school year, or as not to exceed the amount of \$13,380.
 - a) MOTION: Deb Fogel, so moved. Carl, Phil, and Denise seconded.
 - b) Into the next school year, Tim should be able to work at a more consistent schedule – Denise referenced a learning curve that Tim overcame and compensation for the loss of institutional knowledge during the changeover that required additional time to catch up.
 - c) VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to to approve additional work days for Tim Lee under item 8 of the Superintendent work

agreement, as not to exceed 24 work days for the remainder of the school year, or as not to exceed the amount of \$13,380.

C. School Choice Flyer:

1. Tim presented the School Choice flyer that was distributed across the county publicizing to promote the school as an options for School Choice. The School Committee would like a image or PDF version of the flyer to aid in promoting/sharing the flyer.

D. Budget Update:

1. Carol Sauerhauser was asked to walk through our budget update on expenditures, School Choice, and ESSER III funds, and other grant balances.
2. There was a discussion on the ESSER III funds that will need to be used by September 30th, 2024, which was mainly used to fund the after school and summer programs. There was a discussion of charging tuition to PK/EK students that are school choice to offset the loss of this funding. They also acknowledged the benefit of pulling in PK/EK School-Choice students for free with the intention to retain them for K-6.

E. School Business Administrator Search, Verbal Update:

1. There were interviews this morning for the School Business Administrator. Tim reviewed the numerous places that the job was posted, and the process that narrowed the search down to two finalists, and he presented the resume for Julia Saari-Franks, who is a strong candidate for the SBA position.
2. Tim asks the School Committee for their endorsement and permission to enter into discussions with Julia about a job offer to start either the end of this year for overlap with TMS or on July 1st, 2024.
3. The discussion involved the benefit of hiring this position over keeping TMS, including the salary/benefits cost, as well as aiding Tim in maintaining his targeted contracted days for his contract. Tim answered various questions following Julia's interview regarding her expertise vs. tapping into TMS' expertise, and the hybrid/in-person role.
4. The School Committee also discussed the contracted term length – with the plan to present a 3-year contract with a termination clause.
5. Douglas asks why she is leaving her current position.
 - a) Tim explains that she's been in the quasi-leadership roles for a while. Phil explained that the impression given is that she would like to step up to the administration role and is frustrated with her current role, and looking at a small district would be a good fit.
6. MOTION: Denise makes a motion to support Tim to pursue hiring Julia Saari-Franks as the School Business Administrator. Carol Lombardo seconded the motion.
 - a) VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to support Tim in pursuing hiring Julia Saari-Franks as the School Business Administrator.

V. Wellness Committee:

- A. Denise provided context behind how and why this policy is being presented to the School Committee – noting that there is a review from the Food Service division of

DESE of the FRES cafeteria that requires this policy be reviewed. Tim also explained what would happen if the policy didn't meet the audit's requirements.

- B. MOTION: Douglas Miner made a motion for the SC to temporarily suspend the Policy Adoption policy for the duration of this meeting. Melissa Bye seconds the motion.
 - 1. VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to suspend the Policy Adoption policy for the duration of this meeting.
- C. MOTION: Carol Lombard made a motion to adopt the Wellness Policy presented with the necessary grammar/spelling corrections as needed. Deb Fogel seconds
 - 1. VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to accept the Wellness Policy presented with the necessary grammar/spelling corrections as needed.

VI. Subcommittee Reports:

- A. Finance: Discussed the apportionment methodologies, purchase of a 7D van, and capital at the last Finance meeting.
- B. Facilities: They have not met since the last School Committee meeting, looking to have a meeting at the end of the month. Still dealing with the short-term issues of the boiler, and long-term capital stabilization fund. They are not planning to meet every month, but doesn't seem like there are pressing issues that are not currently being addressed.
- C. Policy: They will be meeting before the next School Committee meeting to look at a Civil Rights policy (brought forth by Sarah Hopkins as part of her Food Service Audit).
- D. RAAC: There hasn't been a meeting since the last School Committee general meeting, but there is another on April 18th, 2024.
 - 1. Withdrawal & Termination Amendments Terms:
 - a) Denise recommends to table this discussion of the withdrawal & termination amendments until after the discussions on apportionment methodologies have come to an agreement.
 - b) MOTION: Denise move to table the discussion on the withdrawal & termination amendments to a later date to be determined. Deb Fogel seconds.
 - (1) Discussion: Douglas would prefer to table this to a specific date rather than indefinitely. The committee discussed tabling the discussion to be reviewed no later than a specific date.
 - (2) WITHDRAWAL: Denise Hardie withdrew her motion to table the discussion on the withdrawal & termination amendments to a later date to be determined. Deb Fogel withdrew her second.
 - (3) VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed allow Denise to withdrawal her initial motion to table the discussion on the withdrawal & termination amendments to a later date to be determined.

- c) NEW MOTION: Denise Hardie made a motion to table the discussion on the withdrawal & termination amendments to be readdressed no later than the February School Committee Meeting 2025. There was no second and the motion fails.
- d) The discussion continued on whether this discussion should be tabled indefinitely until the apportionment methodologies are resolved versus setting a specific date to review this discussion.
- e) Denise Table this discussion until they have converge on decision on apportionment methodologies and will revisit this discussion no later than the July 2024 Meeting
 - (1) Denise Hardie, so moved, Deb Fogel seconded the motion.
 - (2) VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to table the discussion on the withdrawal & termination amendments to the July 2024 Meeting.

E. Evaluation of the Superintendent:

- 1. Carl and Denise are the Subcommittee, and have a meeting with Tim on April 24th to discuss Superintendent Goals. Tim will follow the DESE guidelines to establish 2 goals and they will discuss indicators to focus on for these goals. They are looking at finishing the evaluation at the end of next school year.

VII. RDA Discussion - Data RE: Apportionment:

- A. Carl presented the updated data to be included/updated in the Financial Sustainability Document from the previous school committee meeting.
- B. MOTION: Melissa Bye motioned to ratify the Financial Sustainability document with the updated data presented by Carl Nett. Phil Magovern seconded the motion.
 - 1. VOTE: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, and Carl Nett voted in favor. There were no objections, and the motion passed to ratify the Financial Sustainability document with the updated data presented.
- C. Carl presented his explanation of the baseline data and the variables that will go into determining changes in apportionment methods. He presented 11 different options for apportionment methodology changes and explained how each one differed.
- D. Highlights of the discussion included:
 - 1. The overall discussion weighed the pros and cons of a few apportionment methodologies that Carl presented, and what is best for the sustainability of the district.
 - 2. Douglas Miner made a point of clarification that as School Committee Members that they represent the school and is in the best interest of the town and should look at the data through the lens of what would be the best for keeping this district and school open.
 - 3. Phil notes that we need to keep this as simple as possible in order to be able to explain this to town members to be able to vote.
 - 4. Carol Lombardo expressed concerns that changes should be done in moderation.

5. Denise emphasized that they need to keep the financial sustainability of the district and what is best for the children of the district in mind.
6. Phil would like to see an example of how this would be written into the RDA.
7. Douglas noted that choosing a EV-based apportionment method accounts for future changes should the evaluation of either town change drastically.
8. Carl Nett emphasized that this isn't a one-vote issue, if it doesn't pass, the School Committee would have another opportunity to readdress the issue, and cautioned against speculating what the outcome of the votes will be.

VIII. Other items not reasonably anticipated:

- A. Nothing at this time.

IX. Suggested items for future agendas:

- A. Nothing at this time.

X. Adjournment:

- A. Carol Lombardo made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 PM.
- B. Phil Magovern seconded the motion.
- C. Vote - Roll Call: Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie (via Zoom), Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Stamm