

# Farmington River Regional School District

## School Committee

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**Meeting #458**

Farmington River Elementary School Library

Monday, November 4th, 2024

MINUTES

7:00 PM

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**Members Present:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett, Stacey Schultze

**Also Present:** Timothy Lee, Caroline Stamm

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Denise Hardie
  - a. **Roll Call:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett, Stacey Schultze
  - b. The meeting was recorded for archival purposes.
2. **Public Comment:**
  - a. Denise wanted to put out a comment to anyone listening in person or online that as we look at the future of our district, she would appreciate hearing from parent/grandparents/anyone that has been affected by the district to please come forward to let us know what FRRSD has meant to them and would like to hear what the community's opinion currently is on the future of the district.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
  - Meeting #456 from October 7th, 2024
  - Meeting #457 from October 16th, 2024
  - a. **MOTION:** Carl Nett made a motion to accept the minutes from Meeting #456 (10/7/24) & Special Meeting #457 (10/16/24).
    - i. Deb Fogel seconded the motion.
    - ii. There was no discussion.
    - iii. **VOTE to accept:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett, and Stacey Schultze were in favor. Phil Magovern abstained from the vote. The motion passed to accept the minutes from Meeting #456 (10/7/24) & Special Meeting #457 (10/16/24).
4. **Superintendent's Report:**
  - a. **School News**
    - i. 10/31 Halloween Costume Parade & Staff Pumpkin Carving Contest: Students eagerly celebrated Halloween with classroom parties, and a Costume Parade for grades PK-1st, and a Staff Pumpkin Carving Contest (where the Caramel Apple pumpkin won this year).
    - ii. 11/5 is Election Day - there is no school for students, but is a PD day for staff (more information to come later in this meeting).
    - iii. 11/11 is Veteran's Day Observation - no school
    - iv. 11/12 is the Annual Veteran's Day Brunch & Assembly beginning at 9:00 AM, all veterans are invited to attend, and Tim invited School Committee students

- v. 11/14 is a half-day for Parent-Teacher Conferences. These conferences take place both in the afternoon and the evening.
  - vi. Overall, Tim views this time in the school year as a very productive learning time, with students settling into routines and are moving forward towards the holidays.
- b. FY24 & FY25 Financial Update
- i. FY24 is balanced and closed-out, and is submitted to DESE.
    - 1. Carol noted that it looks like we ended FY24 around 4-5% under budget.
    - 2. We do have some contracts that are scheduled for renewal - such as transportation and snow plowing.
    - 3. Our tuition agreement with Lee is due to be renegotiated this year - Carol reached out to the Lee business office today to begin the process.
  - ii. The next step for FY24 is to get E&D certified (throughout the month of Nov.)
  - iii. FY25 is moving along nicely, with nothing of note at this time.
- c. Proposed FY26 Budget Calendar
- i. Carol reviewed the proposed budget timeline, beginning at the public Hearing date in early March and working backwards from that date all the way to November/December of 2024.
- d. 2024 MCAS Overview
- i. Tim presented a presentation on the MCAS Data Overview from the Spring 2024 MCAS testing.
  - ii. The presentation also included a historical look at how the district has performed across 3rd - 5th Grade levels, prepared by Jamie Foster, who is also leading a Professional Development session tomorrow to discuss the data with other classroom teachers.
  - iii. Tim also reviewed the Accountability Percentile for 2024 (Moderate Progress) and also reviewed the past few years' accountability percentile.
  - iv. There was a discussion on factors that may have affected the MCAS scores and the Accountability Percentile.
  - v. Tim noted few things on the horizon that will hopefully positively impact MCAS Scores for both Math and ELA such as the alignment of curriculum. Tim also discussed the implementation of PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) where teachers in adjacent grades are able to focus discussion on student growth and improvement.
- e. November 5 Professional Development Day
- i. November 5th is a County-Wide professional development day. In addition to the PD selections offered across the county, we will also be hosting PD at the school.
  - ii. This year, we have asked that the classroom teachers are at the school to review and discuss the MCAS performance data led by Jamie Foster.
  - iii. There is also a PD focused on the "Productive Struggle" and encourage students to persevere on academic tasks led by Bethany Mather.
- f. PUBLIC COMMENT: Susan Ebitz, Otis resident and former teacher, shared her experience on teaching for the MCAS and her support of the PD's offered tomorrow.
- i. Denise concurred this support of the PD and the opportunity for all the grade level teachers to come together collaboratively.
  - ii. Tim also wanted to acknowledge the work of the Professional Development Committee, who helped create the priorities and sessions for the 11/5 PD.

- g. Transportation Update
  - i. On Oct 28th, there was another adjustment to a few of the bus routes. There was a goal since the beginning of the year to have all students (including Middle & High School students) are on a bus for under an hour.
  - ii. One of the big changes was to begin the Sandisfield bus closer to Otis and working towards a new exchange point at the Monterey Community Center.
  - iii. There was an addition of a “Dufour Van,” which is a vocational van already in operation that picks up an Otis vocational student. We will be picking up a portion of the cost of this van that the town of Otis already pays for to pick up 2 students who live near the Blandford-Otis town line
- h. School Choice use of FRRSD Transportation to/from Pre-Existing stops
  - i. Tim brought up a discussion on providing transportation of school choice students at pre-existing stops. The School Committee’s understanding is that as long as we have capacity on the bus and if the school-choice parent is willing to drive the student to a pre-existing stop, that we will permit that student to ride a bus on as long as space is available.

**5. School Choice State Policies Discussion:**

- a. It was brought to Stacey’s attention (and verified with the MASC) that the MA law states that when you accept a school choice student, you become the student’s home district and are responsible for schooling them through grade 12.
- b. Tim shared his understanding of discussions that are happening across Berkshire County regarding this law. While Stacey is correct that there is a law that requires the district to be responsible for a school-choice student’s education through grade 12, this has not been the practice of the administration of our partner districts, as they have previously acted as viewing our FRES school-choice students as school-choicing into their district. The discussion around this school-choice law appears to be less about tuition, but appears to be more about guaranteeing space for school-choice students in districts that are closed-to-choice.
- c. The committee discussed reaching out to our elected representatives as well as considering this in upcoming renewal negotiations with Lee Public Schools.

**6. Subcommittees:**

- 1. Membership Review:
  - 1. There was discussion about holding off on any subcommittee business until after the RDA discussion has settled with the exception of any urgent matters - such as long-range capital planning and budgetary discussions.
  - 2. POLICY: **Stacey Schultze (Chair)**, Melissa Bye, Denise Hardie
  - 3. FINANCE: **Carl Nett (Chair)**, Denise Hardie, Douglas Miner
  - 4. FACILITIES: **Phil Magovern (Chair)**, Deb Fogel, Stacey Schultze
  - 5. SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION: **Melissa Bye (Chair)**, Deb Fogel, Phil
- 2. Reports:
  - 1. FINANCE: There will not be any meetings until further into the budget process.
  - 2. FACILITIES: There is a meeting planned for December 2nd, 2024.
  - 3. POLICY: There are no upcoming meetings planned.
  - 4. SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION: There are no upcoming meetings planned.

**6. Regional District Agreement**

- 1. Update on Status:

1. On Thursday of last week, Tim received some written feedback from the DESE representatives reviewing the RDA. Tim reviewed the edits/suggestions that they provided, and there was a discussion on a few items they suggested.
2. Tim is prepared to meet with Michelle Griffin and Christine Lynch from DESE later this week to review/address their suggestions and answer their questions. He is already charged by the School Committee to make moderate alterations to the RDA based on their suggestions to move forward to gain approval from the DESE legal team.
3. Tim plans to keep the School Committee updated via email following his meeting with Michelle & Christine, and following his edits. He also plans to reach out with the chairs of each town's selectboard to update them on the status & timeline.
2. **Public Information Planning and Public Information Sessions:**
  1. Barring any substantial changes from Tim's meeting with DESE, the School Committee can move forward with preparing educational materials to distribute with the community on understanding the RDA.
  2. There was a RDA narrative prepared for tonight's meeting, but in the interest of time, the Committee opted to entrust Denise, Stacey, and Melissa to continue work to improve the narrative.
2. **Timeline:** Looking at the proposed budget timeline, the Committee discussed that RDA will need to be ready for presentation to the towns by end of December for a vote by January and implementation in February to make it into the upcoming budget.
7. **Future Agenda Items:**
  1. Nothing at this time.
8. **Other Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of meeting:**
  1. Nothing at this time.
9. **Adjournment:**
  1. Carl Nett made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 PM.
  2. Deb Fogel seconded the motion.
  3. **Vote - Roll Call:** Melissa Bye, Deb Fogel, Denise Hardie, Phil Magovern, Douglas Miner, Carl Nett, Stacey Schultze

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Respectfully submitted,  
Caroline Stamm