MEETING MINUTES – FY2016

Rowe School Committee

Thursday, January 14, 2016 – 5:00pm – Rowe School

Present: Susie Zavotka (SZ) and Gail May (GM)
Absent: Lisa Miller (LM)
Also Present: Superintendent Jon Lev (JL), Principal Bill Knittle, Secretary Ellen Miller (EM)
Audience: None

I. **Call to Order**: The meeting was called to order by SZ at 5:08pm.

II. **Minutes:** SZ made motion to approve the Dec 10, 2015 minutes as written. GM seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (2/0/0).

III. **Audience:** None

IV. **Teacher Presentation:** None.

V. **Discussion Items:**

A. **Personnel Policies Regarding Non-Teaching Staff—Draft #4** (pka **Non-Certified Wage/Benefit Policy):** Reviewed document and agreed on the following (hopefully final) edits:

1) **Section I. Benefits:**
   - **Insurance:** *Category I, II and III employees who work twenty (20) or more hours per week are eligible for health, dental and life insurance coverage under the Town of Rowe's group policies.*
   - **Sick Leave Buy Back:** *Upon leaving the School System in good standing with twenty (20) or more full years of service, employees shall be paid $25.00 per day for all accumulated sick days up to a maximum of 182 days.*
   - **Holidays:** Correct punctuation (apostrophe in Patriots' Day)

2) **Section II. Grievance:** Correct punctuation (superintendent should be lower case)

B. **Substitute Pay for Paraprofessionals:** BK felt that since the pay for certified substitute teachers was changed to $80/day, that we would want to increase the pay for non-certified substitutes to $70/day—which for a 7-hour day is $10/hour (the current state minimum wage). Or should we go higher because of our remote location? Generally speaking, we do not have a lot of subs. That brought up the question about certification. BK reported that paraprofessionals are not required to be certified. JL stated that a paraprofessional can obtain a "highly qualified" distinction by either having an associates' degree or by passing an on-line test. This distinction is optional—except for fully Title 1 schools where it is mandatory. GM stated that she feels that the pay for certified teacher substitutes—which we don't typically get, so would not cost that much more—should be raised to $100/day (about $13/hr) and the pay for non-certified subs going to $80/day (about $11/hr), which is still not a lot of money. BK will talk with Carrie to see what the costs might be in several scenarios. JL stated that subs in the other NBSU schools just went to $70/day from $60/day for certified teachers. BK stated Mohawk pays $70/day. Discussion was deferred to the FY2017 budget discussions.

C. **School Improvement Plan:** SZ stated that the committee was waiting for the teachers' responses. BK reported that the teachers reviewed the plan and are fine with it. This item is now complete.

D. **Social Media/Internet Policy:** SZ: There are two or three similar policies that she and BK will sit down and meld into one or two policies. Will report at next meeting.

E. **Rowe Education Budget FY2017:** A memo was received from Marilyn Wilson of the Rowe Selectboard asking that departmental budgets be kept to a maximum 2.5% increase, and asked that a single line item be requested rather than broken out by types of expense. GM stated that the purpose of showing it separately allowed voters to see the difference between primary and secondary budgets. Handouts can be prepared for town

meeting showing detail. SZ stated the FinCom will tell us how they want to see the budget. JL stated that the town can be notified that the school budget will be kept to a 2.5% increase. BK has had discussions with staff and Carrie, and general discussions with JL. JL/CG/BK will sit down the week of Jan 25th to go over the details for discussion at next SchCom meeting.

F. **School Choice Advertising/Media Plan/Enrollment:** BK presented a proof of a full-page ad he prepared for The Recorder. He's gotten input from the staff and Choice families. A few changes will be made to the ad; i.e., may change photos, will add school address and website to the ad. It will run in the Valley Kids section of The Recorder that will come out in March. He and staff are talking about having an open house early in the spring (not waiting until May) where information about the advantages of sending children to Rowe School will be provided. **Enrollment:** This year (53): (40) K-6 students [20 Rowe/20 Choice] and (13) Pre-K. Next year's current forecast: (49): (45) K-6 students [17 Rowe/28 Choice], and (4) Pre-K. A recent email from the town clerk states that so far for next year (2016-17) there will be 1 Rowe child eligible for pre-K and the following year (2017-18) 1 Rowe child. SZ: Last night she and BK were at the Mohawk School Committee meeting where Heath residents Budget Litchfield and Ken Rocke gave a Power Point presentation about a six-member task force that has been set up in Heath to discuss the following for the education of Heath students: 1) education quality, 2) cost effective arrangements, and 3) options to maintain the community's voice. [SZ handed out a copy of the presentation.] Heath has a very small enrollment; and as Mohawk has been looking at issues, they've talked about whether Heath School should perhaps close. Heath decided to set up a task force to decide for themselves what the best course(s) of action may be. BK: They do not have a preconceived notion of where the study will go. They currently have (40) students (17 Pre-K and 23 K-6). They are looking at all options...including the possibility of closing the Heath school building (perhaps moving the town offices and library into the facility), and becoming a non-operating K-6 district, tuitioning their students to Mohawk, Hawlemont or Rowe (see Slide #12). SZ: Perhaps we may want to discuss an opportunity with them because of our enrollment numbers.

G. **Rowe School Policy Overview:** SZ is still working on her review, and is looking at Policy Handbook to see what may need to be done there.

H. **Rowe SchCom 2015-16 Goals:**
   - **School Improvement Plan**: Done
   - **Non-Teaching Wage Benefit Policy:** Done
   - **Social Media/Internet Policy:** SZ will have something for next meeting
   - **School Crisis Plan:** Done
   - **NBSU Review:** On hold
   - **Policy Handbook:** SZ will have something for next meeting
   - **Mohawk Regional Agreement:** Later on agenda (see Item VIII.8.3).
   - **Landscape/Gardening Plan:** BK will report on this during budget discussions

I. **Medicaid Reimbursements:** JL passed out a memo dated Jan 11th that Carrie Garivaltis sent to the town administrators in Clarksburg, Florida, Rowe and Savoy requesting that each town set up a revolving account for Medicaid reimbursement receipts, and to use this revolving fund to pay for the 10% processing fee charged by LPVEC to apply for the reimbursements on behalf of the towns, and to also perhaps use these funds to offset the general fund due to significant increases in special education expenses. The Town of Rowe recently received $7,939.30, and the current LPVEC fee due is about $800.

VI. **Financial Statement—July 1, 2015 thru January 11, 2016:** Statement was reviewed. BK reported that Mohawk has put a freeze on spending effective immediately.

VII. **Principal's Report: Cultural Study:** Just finished Sweden program. Went very well. **Project Based Learning:** Very happy with the results. Each class was hoping to get one complete project done—and they've completed three! **Report cards:** Coming out in February. **Website:** Done—check it out! Permission slips, breakfast menus, latest news section, etc., are available. **Winter enrichment:** Began today. Went well. Addie Loomis had a Go-Pro cam on her helmet all day. The video is going to be edited and shown to the school. **Skating Rink:** Sean Loomis is building a skating rink behind the school on the basketball court. He installed a poly liner and started flooding it today. Permission slips went home. Students need to bring in skates and helmets for use during school. **Building**

Issues: Ongoing—BK working with SZ. **Audio:** Chuck Sokol of Valley Communications measured the cafeteria, gym and kitchen noise levels while in operation and while silent. BK passed out his report. The cafeteria and kitchen do not rise to level of causing damage and meet OSHA requirements. In the gym audio intelligibility issues can be reduced with turning the fan off, closing the stage curtain, and adjusting the sound system appropriately. Tom Creen adjusted the PA system audio and the improvement was noticeable at a recent town meeting. In the cafeteria we've discussed putting up some fire-retardant fabric or panels. Chuck will get back to BK with some suggestions for the kitchen. **Snow Removal:** Haven't had a lot of snow, but what we've had was handled adequately. **Generator Shed:** We had Whitney Fence install a gate for access to the shed. It slides up rather than swinging so snow removal is not a problem. In the fall when BK had spoken to the Fire Chief about this he thought that Brandon was going to have the town pay for the fence as the generator belongs to and is for the town. BK will talk to Ed May, Emergency Management Director, about payment for the cost of the gate ($666). Last Friday the fumes from the generator stunk up the playground. The run test goes off each Friday at 1:30pm. BK will talk to Ed May about changing the run time. **CTC:** They were here this week to set up the HVAC computer modeling program. We were shown how to work with the computer controls to schedule temperature changes. BK sent the propane bills from this year, and electric bills from last year to Ben Weil for comparison. The electric bills seem more reasonable now. **Building Inspections:** BK received a note from Jim Cerone stating that the annual building inspection passed; however, BK got a call from the Fire Chief the day after the Sweden performance stating that a parent had called the State Fire Marshall's Office to express concern about the decorations on the walls and hanging from the ceilings, and blocked egress doors. There is one Assistant Fire Marshall who is responsible for all schools from Sturbridge west to the NY border. He's the same person who raised a ruckus at Hawlemont in December, and is also looking at Sanderson. He came the last day of school before holiday break. We're fine in the percentage of coverings on the wall, but all paper on walls in a school have to be either laminated or fire-retardant paper. Also, all bulletin boards have to have a glass or polycarbonate cover over them. So, every one of our bulletin boards is out of compliance. We've taken a lot of stuff off of the walls. The kids and staff are unhappy. We're working hard to comply. We received his report in the mail. We have a re-inspection next Friday, Jan 22nd by Brandon Sprague. We'll be fine except for the bulletin boards. Bill Baker is looking for covers for the bulletin boards that will meet the code. BK is concerned that the building was built in 2014 to the same code. He has talked with the school's lawyer, but he is not optimistic. BK has a call into the Asst. State Fire Marshall, but if he doesn't hear back from him soon he'll call the State Fire Marshall. JL: I would hope that if you came up with a plan to work towards compliance that they would allow that.

VIII. School Committee Business:

A. New Business:

1. **Dollar General Library Grant:** SZ reported that two signatures are required to approve expenditures from this grant. Heretofore it was SZ and Donna Flagg. Donna recently moved away from Rowe. SZ made a motion that GM replace Donna as a signatory on the grant. GM seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (2/0/0). This grant can only be used for the Library, and cannot be used for furniture.
2. **Preschool Curriculum—Letter from Jack Williams:** Resident Jack Williams sent a letter to the school committee expressing concern raised in a recent Atlantic Monthly article he had read alerting that some preschools are crushing kids with their curriculum. JL stated that the DOE has put out requirements that must be followed. BK: Rowe School uses the "Tools of the Mind" curriculum which is based on play and social interaction, and provides the programs that this article is promoting. BK will respond in writing to Mr. Williams, and will invite him to visit the preschool classroom to view the program.
3. **Mohawk Regional Agreement—Rowe Join Mohawk Gr 7-12:** SZ and BK had a preliminary meeting with Mohawk Business Manager Mike Kociela. SZ passed out several spreadsheets of calculations Mike K. prepared to discuss the financial impact on Rowe if Rowe re-joined the Mohawk District. The next step in the process would be a meeting between the Mohawk superintendent and business manager, and Rowe school committee, select board and finance committee.
   - **Capital Costs:** One question that has been raised: Will Rowe be expected to pay for prior capital costs? Per the *"Major Capital Renovation Projects"* spreadsheet prepared by Mike K, it shows that items that Rowe has paid for throughout the years (amounting to $488,947) actually are $88K higher than what

Rowe's capital costs would have been had Rowe been a member town ($400,562). If we do not join, Mike K said that he would be sending Rowe requests to help pay for capital items.

- **Bonds Authorized and Unissued:** The sheet shows Mohawk's current debt for current/proposed projects. Rowe would be expected to pay their share of this debt. Two items were already completed and other ones may be complete before Rowe were to join (no earlier than FY18), so would Rowe have to pay for the completed projects?
- **Projected Assessments if Rowe were a member of Mohawk at Secondary Level—FY2016**: This shows tuition (budgeted) from Rowe at $287,500; however, the current FY2016 Mohawk tuition budget is in fact $424,286. This discrepancy needs to be sorted out.
- **Enrollment**: This is based on current enrollments. JL: Our near future enrollments are much lower than what's used in the projection, but perhaps the other towns will be lower as well.

GM asked if we could continue with the tuition agreement and pay for items as we have done in the past? JL: Mohawk cannot break the tuition agreement with Rowe without Rowe's permission. They need to sell the advantage to Rowe for joining. SZ: The plan is to have all towns vote on this at their upcoming annual town meetings. Two other items will be voted on as well: 1) changing the voting requirements to allow 2/3 vote rather than 100%, and 2) add preschool education. SZ will contact Janice Boudreau to set up a meeting between the three Rowe committees and Mike B and Mike K. SZ will request a copy of the latest draft agreement.

IX. Announcements: None

X. Audience: None

XI. Executive Session: Not needed.

XII. Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, February 11, 2016 – 5:00pm

XIII. Adjourn: GM made a motion to adjourn meeting at 7:25pm. SZ seconded motion; passed unanimously (2/0/0).

Respectfully submitted by Ellen Miller,

Signature: Susan L Zavalton

Date Approved: 2/11/16

Correspondence/Handouts:

- Agenda
- Minutes: Dec 10, 2015
- DRAFT #4 *Personnel Policies Regarding Non-Teaching Staff*
- School Choice Ad for Valley Kids section of The Recorder
- Heath Task Force presentation to MTRSD SchCom – Jan 13, 2016
- Memo to Towns re Medicaid Reimbursements – Jan 11, 2016
- FY2016 Budget vs. Actual 7-1-2015 to 1-11-2016
- Principal's Report dated 1-11-2016
- Letter from Jack Williams re Preschool Curriculum
- Spreadsheets prepared by M. Kociela re Rowe joining MTRSD 7-12

Rowe School District

86 Pond Road, Rowe, MA 01367
(413) 512-5100

NOTICE OF MEETING

ROWE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 14th, 2016 – 5:00 p.m.
Rowe School, 86 Pond Road, Rowe, MA

Agenda

I. **Call to order**

II. **Approval of Minutes:** Suggested Motion: I move to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Rowe School Committee of December 10, 2015

III. **Audience of Citizens:**

IV. **Teacher Presentation**

V. **Discussion Items:**

- A. Non-Certified Wage/Benefits Policy for Non-teaching Employees Draft 4 (Gail May/Bill Knittle/Jon Lev)
- B. Substitute Pay for Paraprofessionals (Bill Knittle)
- C. School Improvement Plan response from teachers (Bill Knittle, Jon Lev)
- D. Social Media /Internet Policy (Bill Knittle, Jon Lev)
- E. Rowe School Budget for FY2017
- F. School Choice Advertising and Media Plan (Bill Knittle)
- G. Rowe School Policies Overview (Susie Zavotka)
- H. Rowe School Committee 15/16 Goals-(plans for February meeting (Susie Zavotka)

VI. **Financial Statement: Dated July 1, 2015 Thru Jan 1, 2015**

VII. **Principal's Report**

VIII. **School Committee Business:**

A. New Business:

Library Grant fund approval (S Zavotka)
Letter from Jack Williams regarding PreSchool curriculum

B. Old Business:

Mohawk Regional Agreement

VIII. **Announcements:**

IX. **Audience of Citizens:**

X. **Executive Session- Per Chapter 30A, Section 21 MGL**

XI. **Adjournment:**

The listing of matters is 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.

Rowe School District

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Posted:

Any person may, pursuant to the provisions of the Open Meeting Law, audiotape an open meeting. As such, please be advised that this meeting may be taped by any person present.

Rowe Elementary School – Principal's Report
School Committee Meeting – January 11, 2016

Academics:

- Cultural Study - a beautiful ending performance
- Project Based Learning
- Report Cards

School Based Activities:

- New website
- Winter Enrichment Days - start on Thursday, 1/14.
- Tuesday Afternoon Adventure Club

Building, Staffing and Professional Development/Training:

- Building Issues - Concrete, gym floor, front door.
- Building Inspections .
- Building audio/Sound system
- Shed Access, Tractor, Snow
- Electricity/Energy Usage
- Benefits

School Calendar:

January
4 - Monday, first day of school
6 - Wednesday, Professional Learning Day, 1:50 release for students
13 - Wednesday, Professional Learning Day, 1:50 release for students
14 - Thursday, first ski day
21 - Thursday, second ski day
27 - Wednesday, Bay State Reading Institute PD Day
28 - Thursday, third ski day
February
4 - Thursday, fourth ski day