



**QUABBIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Committee Minutes
Wednesday, August 1, 2018
Educational Support Center**

PRESENT

Chair	Lee Wolanin	Member, Barre
Vice-Chair	Mark Brophy	Member, Barre
	Debra Chamberlain	Member, Hubbardston
	David Correia	Member, Hubbardston
	David Deschamps	Member, Barre
	Fred Jean-Francois	Member, Oakham
	Ned Kelly	Member, Hardwick
	David Marsh	Member, Barre
	Walter Nutter	Member, Oakham
	Peggy Thompson	Member, New Braintree
	Mark Wigler	Member, Hubbardston

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Sheila Muir	Superintendent of Schools
Cheryl Duval	Director of Administrative Services
District Administrators/Staff	Kristin Campione; Andrew Walsh; Clare Barnes
Press:	Brad Miner, T & G
Townpeople/Parents	Randy Walker, New Braintree Selectboard; New Braintree & Oakham parents

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion made by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mrs. Chamberlain to approve the minutes of June 26, 2018. The motion passed with Mr. Deschamps abstaining.

3. DISCUSSION OF NEW BRAINTREE & OAKHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS – Update

Mr. Wolanin gave a brief synopsis of the vote taken at the School Committee meeting on June 26, 2018 which authorized the district to survey parents as to moving grades K – 6 together to the Oakham Center School. Since that time the district has been made aware that the New Braintree selectboard is not on board with this decision.

Chairman Wolanin then turned the discussion over to Superintendent Muir. Dr. Muir shared the survey results with the committee. This survey asked three questions – the town you reside in, current grades of children, and whether or not you would support moving all students in K – 6 to OCS for the 2018-2019 school year. Overall, parents were overwhelmingly in favor of moving the students. Surveys were mailed to all parents with students in grades K – 6 for the upcoming school year. Of the 47 surveys mailed to New Braintree parents, 27 were received back with 19 supporting the move and 8 opposed to the move. Seventy-five surveys were mailed in

Oakham, 53 were received back with 51 supporting the move and 2 opposed to the move. Five school choice parents received the survey and 5 received back with 4 supporting the move and 1 opposed to the move.

As recommended at the June meeting, Superintendent Muir contacted the law firm that was consulted when the Regional Agreement was revised in August of 2014. At that time, Attorney Ed Lenox worked with the district on the agreement, and he has since left the firm. Dr. Muir spoke with Attorney Kevin Bresnahan who is able to speak to the legal requirements of the Regional Agreement.

Attorney Bresnahan spoke at length with Dr. Muir in regard to Section IX: Pupils, Subsection A4, which discusses "reassignment of one or more grade levels, but not all grade levels, of students to schools other than those located within the town in which students reside is necessary to continue to provide the best possible educational programs for students within the district". There had been discussion of having a high school transitional program at the NBGS as well, however Attorney Bresnahan feels that this refers to elementary grade level students. If the district were to move all of the students out of NBGS, then the procedures in Subsection A5 would need to be followed for closing an elementary school.

The district also received a letter from the Town of New Braintree's Town Counsel and their legal opinion is congruent with the opinion of the district's lawyer. If the district decides to move all of the students to OCS, the Town of New Braintree will take legal action against the district.

Mr. Brophy spoke to the reason as to why the students were moved for the 2017-18 school year due to asbestos at OCS. The vote taken at the meeting on June 26th authorized the administration to move all grades k – 6 to OCS for one year contingent upon a positive survey response from NB and Oakham parents while the district aggressively pursues alternative educational opportunities for the New Braintree Grade School. Mr. Brophy then spoke to the Subsection A4 which specifies that "no grade level and/or grade levels of students residing in a member town shall be required to attend a school and/or schools in another member town and/or towns, except by a 2/3 vote of all the members of the School Committee, which will occur only after at least one joint public meeting of all of the Boards of Selectmen of the member towns along with representatives of the District, as well as at least one joint public hearing to be held by the Committee on the issue of the proposed grade level reassignment". Mr. Brophy stated that the steps outlined in Subsection A4 were not followed.

Question was raised as to what the added expense would be to keep grade K & 1 at NBGS. Mrs. Duval did not have an actual dollar figure, but the district would need to add a custodial person, secretary, and additional equipment for a STEM classroom at OCS.

There has been no further discussion with Center of Hope without reasonable assurance that space would be available to be leased. Until the district receives that assurance, we will have to wait on moving forward.

Mrs. Thompson questioned why the preschool cannot be moved back to New Braintree instead of moving to Hardwick. Dr. Muir explained that the decision was not made to move preschool out of Barre. The district has been considering moving one preschool class to Hardwick due to the needy population and the opportunity to service these students. However, that decision has not been made at this point.

Dr. Muir explained that a K – 6 school allows more educational opportunities for our students, and the students of New Braintree and Oakham would have the same educational opportunities as the other elementary schools if they were able to be together in one school.

Parents addressed their concerns with the committee about their children's education and safety. Dr. Muir and Mr. Wolanin wholeheartedly agreed with the parents with their concerns that the children should be together in one school, as did other committee members. They agreed that the K – 1 and 2 – 6 separation is not educationally sound for students.

Parents questioned why the committee would care if the town of New Braintree wanted to take legal action against the District. It was explained that the Committee has a fiduciary duty to the schools and to the district.

Mr. Wolanin proposed entertaining a motion to withdraw the vote made on 6/26/18 which authorized the administration to move all grades k – 6 to OCS for one year contingent upon a positive survey response from NB and Oakham parents while the district aggressively pursues alternative educational opportunities for the New Braintree Grade School. After that vote, if it is withdrawn, the Committee revisits the motion Dr. Allan made to keep grades K – 1 at the New Braintree Grade School while pursuing other educational options for the building. After that vote, if approved, the Committee entertain a motion that the Superintendent consult with the District's attorney as to the next steps involved in closing an elementary school.

Motion made by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Brophy to withdraw the motion made on June 26, 2018 which authorized the administration to move all grades K – 6 to OCS for one year contingent upon a positive survey response from New Braintree and Oakham parents while the district aggressively pursues alternative educational opportunities for the New Braintree Grade School.

Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Motion made by Mrs. Chamberlain and seconded by Mr. Kelly to vote to authorize the administration to keep grades K – 1 at NBGS and grades 2 – 6 at OCS for the 2018-2019 school year while the district vigorously and assiduously reviews, surveys, and looks for more educational programs to be part of New Braintree.

Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Parents again raised the question as to why the Committee won't just go against the wishes of the town and move all students to OCS. It was again explained that the District's attorney came back and said he will be unable to defend that decision as it would be a breach of contract with the Regional Agreement.

Question was raised as to whether or not the Regional Agreement could be amended. Mr. Wolanin explained the process in 2014 when the agreement was amended, and that it would a 12 – 18 month process to amend.

Parents expressed their disappointment in the town of New Braintree officials for not putting the educational needs of the students first, especially if they had agreed to move all of the students. Mrs. Thompson stated that the selectboard never agreed to move all of the students. Dr. Muir explained that she had attended a meeting with Dr. Marshall and the Board of Selectmen and the impression she took away from that meeting was that the selectboard was open to discussion and that they suggested hearing from parents.

A question was raised about the safety of the students at the NBGS with so few teachers. Dr. Muir explained that the doors are kept locked and that all of our teachers are trained in the ALICE protocol.

Motion made by Mr. Brophy and seconded by Mr. Deschamps to direct the Superintendent to work to consult with the district's attorney as to outlining the sequential steps and timeline necessary to move forward with closing an elementary school for the 2019-2020 school year.

Motion passed by a roll call vote with Mrs. Thompson opposed.

Discussion ensued with the request to look at closing one or more schools as had been discussed with the Collins Center and CMRPC. Mr. Wolanin agreed that that discussion would take place at the September meeting.

4. REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

- To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining

Executive session was not necessary as the discussion was in regard to adding a position in the cafeteria at the high school, not in respect to collective bargaining. The position would be that of Nutrition Team Leader at a salary of \$18,500, reporting to the Middle/High School Cook/Supervisor. This would be a pilot position for one year until the district enters into negotiations with the cafeteria next year.

Motion made by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Deschamps to add the position of Nutrition Team Leader at the Middle/High School.

Motion passed unanimously.

5. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Brophy and seconded by Mr. Deschamps to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Bennett
School Committee Secretary