

**Farmington River Regional School District  
Farmington River Elementary School  
555 North Main Road, Otis, MA 01253**

**Library  
Monday August 5, 2019, 7:00PM  
Meeting #375**

**Community Participation:**

**7:00-7:15 PM**

**Warrants:**

**Members Present:** Nicholas DellaGiustina, Carol Lombardo, Jess Drenga, Billie Pachulski, Deb Fogel, Jennifer Hibbins, Thomas Nadolny and Eric Jesner

**Guests:** Michael Ernst

**Meeting #375 was brought to order by Nicholas DellaGiustina at 7:00pm.**

- 1. Approval of last month's minutes #374.** Nicholas DellaGiustina motioned to approve the minutes as submitted, Carol Lombardo seconded the motion. Minutes #374 were unanimously passed by vote.
- 2. Superintendent/Principal update.** Tom updated the Committee about the progress of the summer cleaning. Everything is on track and as scheduled.

Tom submitted a grant for security cameras to the state last fall. The School received the grant for \$10,000. Tom had 3 companies come in and give a quote. The best quote was from Alarms of Berkshire County. The School already has a contract with Alarms of Berkshire County for the alarm system. The installation will not begin until December of 2019. This was the earliest date we could get.

The new playground is here. The old structure is broken down and taken away. Jeffrey Gray with the help of some staff members disassembled the structure by hand and worked very hard to get the project done. The installation will be the next step.

The School's receptionist, Monica Dingman, put in her resignation to Tom. Monica was offered a fulltime position elsewhere. The idea of hiring another fulltime receptionist was brought to the table. Tom discussed there is not enough work for a full time position. Jennifer Hibbins' concern is not having a fulltime person sitting in the office for security reasons. Eric Jesner did mention when there is no one in the front office Paula Subklew and himself watch the front entrance. Another concern that the School Committee had was the lack and content of communication being emailed to parents.

They felt the information was better when a fulltime person was there. Tom mentioned he would look into the position.

3. **Updates on the School sign.** Tom, Eric and Teresa looked into the purchase of a new electronic sign for the School. Three or four companies were called and they quoted prices that were very expensive. Cultural Council has been giving the School some monies towards the purchase, but the expense is so high. Tom will continue to look into possibilities other than electronic.
4. **Updates on the Technology Policy about Social Media.** Jennifer Hibbins researched the MASC and the policy manual they have and suggested using their manual along with our manual. The School does do that now. No other school in the area has a specific social media policy. All the policies that have been researched have a policy that cautions or discourages staff members to communicate with parents/students through social media. The School does have a technology policy for the usage of the School's equipment and internet use. The majority of the School Committee is concerned about the fine line between personal and work social media usage. The State of Massachusetts protects the Teachers and staff concerning their personal ideas and thoughts on social media, as long as the School is left out of any type of discussion then the staff can express themselves on their own media sites. Further research and discussion will follow.
5. **Discuss and vote on School Lunch pricing.** School Committee unanimously approved through a vote to raise the cost of school lunch to \$2.75 and breakfast to \$1.55. Reduced lunch will stay the same. \$.40 for lunch and \$.30 for breakfast. Reduced lunch is mandated by the State. Overall, prices increased by \$.05.
6. **Discuss and vote on the Pre School Funding options.** Eric Jesner discussed the possibility of switching Pre School from tuition to Chapter 70. This would create an Early K program instead of our Pre School Program. Eric feels this would be saving the school money even though no tuition will be charged. Through Chapter 70, the school would be receiving \$2100 per student through Chapter 70. \$5000 per school choice students. Transportation with Chapter 70 is a concern. With Chapter 70 the School would have to provide a ride for all in district students. Vans would have to transport because Early K students are not allowed on the bus. They are too young and need seatbelts along with a monitor watching the students. The School Committee unanimously voted to wait until next year to switch over to Chapter 70 Early K. They want more information and discussion about this topic.
7. **Financial updates.** Eric passed out the final expenditure report. There is a \$32,000 surplus. This will put E&D at the limit of 5%. The surplus does not have to go back to the towns due to the 5% allowable limit to E&D. This is good and can be an option to offset next year's budget.

Eric reached out to a few car dealerships to get a quote on a new transit van. It is more effective to buy a van than to lease the van. Not only is it cheaper, but the school then

would own the van in the same amount of time as the lease being up. The transit vans are now, as of 2019, are now 4 wheel drive. This would help with dirt roads in both towns.

Due to the 3 year rolling enrollment assessment, Sandisfield will have another increase by 3-4% due to the assessment. Jennifer Hibbins asked about the process and if the years can be adjusted. The state does not dictate how many years are used in the assessments. That is managed by the two towns and their regional agreement.

Eric Jesner asked for the approval from the School Committee to transfer monies from a few accounts that had a surplus to accounts with deficits to balance the ending budget. The School Committee voted unanimously to transfer monies to balance the ending budget. Nicholas DellaGiustina motioned and Carol Lombardo seconded the motion.

The lighting project is moving along. Most of the lights are finished. Unfortunately the lighting will not be complete for the start of school.

Jamie Foster received a grant that Eric submitted for a ceiling mounted projector that is WIFI enabled and an iPad for Jamie and for the class. The technology is for the Math program, 4-6 grades. Having the projector will help save money on workbooks as well.

Jennifer Hibbins asked Eric about state money. Are we going to get more money? Eric said that he does put in for the state grant monies for rural schools. We should get a little bit more this year considering the grant for the aid went up \$500,000.

Jennifer also brought up money for transportation. The transportation reimbursement percentage has not gone up, so we will not be getting more than usual. The state does notify Eric when all the numbers come in. Each year's reimbursement is based on the expenditures of the previous year.

**8. Vote to accept the School's website as its primary posting location.**

Teresa DellaGiustina asked the School Committee to approve Farmington River's Website as the primary location for posting the agenda for School Committee Meetings. With the help of Lyn O'Brien, Otis Town Clerk, Teresa reached out to the Attorney General and asked what the legalities of the posting of agendas for the meetings. Carrie Benedon, Assistant Attorney General replied in an email:

"As a regional school district committee, the Farmington River Regional School District Committee has the option to vote to formally adopt the school district website as its official notice posting method. The vote would need to be by majority vote of the school committee. Then, in the future, the only place that meeting notices need to be posted is on the school district website – anywhere else like in the local clerks' offices would be extra but not required.

If the school committee does not vote to formally adopt its website as the official notice posting method, then notice needs to be posted using whatever method each of the participating towns

uses. For Otis, that's the Otis town website, and for Sandisfield, it's a paper notice on the town bulletin board. "

The School Committee unanimously approved the School's website as the primary location for all future agenda postings. Jess Drenga motioned and Carol Lombardo seconded the motion.

- 9. Discuss the Business Manager's Position.** Eric Jesner handed his resignation into Tom. Eric's last day is August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Eric found an opportunity to further his position at another school system. Jane Gleason was called to see if she would be willing to fill in while Tom is hiring and training another manager. Jane did offer to sit in on the interviews. Eric did say he wants to complete the fiscal year's budget and feels he should not leave that work for someone new. Jess Drenga mentioned if we could look into shared services. Tom said he would look into that option. The position of Business Manager has been posted already. The Committee will meet back on Monday August 26<sup>th</sup> to start the interview process. Nick, Carol and Jess will meet on the 26<sup>th</sup>, Jennifer will be the backup if someone cannot make the meeting.
- 10. Items not anticipated by the School Committee.** Jennifer Hibbins wanted to discuss security and safety of the school. Jennifer's concern is the front entrance. She feels someone should be there all the time to greet people and make sure they sign in. Nick DellaGiustina works for several schools and many require leaving your license with the front office. The person then retrieves their license upon departure. Tom doesn't want the homey feeling to disappear. He doesn't want the feeling of an institution. Jennifer still feels there should be a tighter check in. Jennifer also feels as if dismissal is too chaotic. She would like to see a better system that is more organized. Tom said he would look into creating a more efficient method of dismissal. Nick stated that Tom needs to be more vigilant with the teachers, staff and parents making sure everyone is following protocol.

Jennifer asked if we had a two way communication device with the police. Tom stated that we do have devices, but most staff members use their cell phones to call in and ask for help. The Otis Police Department gave the school the two way devices to use.

Jennifer asked if we have lockdown drills during lunch and recess. Tom discussed how we have conducted all drills at all different times. We have even evacuated the school to the Otis Town Hall. Reunification drills have been done as well. The state police does schedule the lockdown drills as well as the evacuation drills.

Jennifer stated that the Sandisfield Selectmen want her to fill them in at the Selectmen's meetings after the School Committee meetings. She would like to know what she can tell the Selectmen about the meeting. Nick stated that until the minutes are approved you cannot talk about the meeting in depth at an open meeting. The Committee in whole explained how the draft cannot be public because there may be mistakes in the transcription. Michael Ernst, Otis Finance Committee, stated nothing should be openly discussed until the minutes are approved. Jennifer was concerned about the delay in

information if the information is emergent. Again, until the minutes are approved there should not be open discussion. Nicholas suggested if Jennifer wanted to say something, she could bring up the topics on the agenda and say this is what was talked about and full detail will be available once the minutes are approved.

- 11. Adjournment.** Jess Drenga motioned to adjourn the meeting, Billie Pachulski seconded the motioned. The School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm.

Respectively Submitted,

Teresa DellaGiusitna, School Committee Secretary

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