

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

**Library
Monday February 3, 2020 7:00PM
Meeting #382**

Community Participation: Mr. Bloomfield and his partner Joanna Harlow were in to seek aid in the transportation for Mr. Bloomfield's daughter, who is currently school choiced to Monument Valley Middle School. Nicholas DellaGiustina explained the bus policy on school choice transportation. Any student who does not attend the district contracted school will provide their own transportation to and from the school of choice opted by the parent/guardian. Joanna would like to have a copy of the policy to look over, and wants all events leading up to the policy. Teresa DellaGiustina will provide Joanna with the policy and the minutes and the MA General Law.

Warrants: Warrants were passed around and signed by Committee members

Members Present: Nicholas DellaGiustina, Carol Lombardo, Jennifer Hibbins, Billie Pachulski, Jess Drenga, Thomas Nadolny and Eric Jesner. Arlene Tolopko was via cell phone.

Members Not present: Deb Fogel

Guests: Joane Grybosh, Brandi Paige, Terry Gould, Bill Bloomfield & Joanna Harlow

Nicholas DellaGiustina called the meeting to order at 7:02pm

1. **January minutes were not ready to approve. Teresa DellaGiustina was absent from the January meeting and the recorder malfunctioned. She is trying to gather information about the meeting.**
2. **Principal/Superintendent monthly updates.** Thomas Nadolny began by mentioning the bake sale and reading night for the drama/play. The turnout was minimal, but parents who wanted to be involved in the upcoming play were here to discuss roles that are needed.

MCAS were ordered this month. Testing begins in March. All grades are testing on the computer.

Mr. Roberts no longer teaches the 4th Grade. MaryBeth Oleksak is filling in until the end of the school year. Mrs. Oleksak is already doing a fantastic job in the transition of of duties.

The Photography Program has started after school.

February 26th is our March Madness Assembly. This assembly is one of our biggest.

On an academic note, Tom proceeded to inform the School committee about discussions he had with the Teachers. They all want to motivate students academically and motivate them to improve their attendance. Every year in MCAS we get 0 points out of 4. Not that they are missing tests, it means that we have students that are out 10 or more days. A lot of parents take their children on extended vacations during the school year.

We have a small school, so anything can be exaggerated by the numbers.

The Teachers and Tom put together a learning goal with a separate goal for attendance. This will be on a monthly basis. On the academic side, Teachers will sit down with each individual student to see what their academic goal will be. This should make the goal attainable but not a slam dunk. It should stretch the achievement to reach the goal set.

Jennifer Hibbins asked what happens if the child is sick? The attendance goal cannot be reached. Tom made this very clear with the students that being sick means the student will not get a prize for attendance. They have to be here. There is always next month to work towards. They had to make the attendance goal clear cut. The student is here or not, no exceptions.

At the end of the month, students will earn a prize for meeting their goals.

Tom and the Teachers are trying to better the communication between parents and themselves regarding the progress of the students. Somewhere in-between report cards, a progress notification will be sent to the parents/guardians to inform them of the whereabouts of their children academically. This way, if a student needs to improve there is time for that student to work better their grade.

Jennifer Hibbins asked Tom about the security cameras. The company will be installing the cameras during February vacation. The company rescheduled due to an unexpected circumstance with the installer.

3. **Discuss the Student Opportunity Act.** Tom explained what the Student Opportunity Act is about and what to expect. There is a lot of information needed for the small amount of funding we will be getting. The State is reallocating Chapter 70 funds. We are a small school, we have a smaller percentage of poverty, and we do not have ELA students, we will not get much funding. The amount calculated is 30 dollars a student. Roughly we will get 7,000 dollars to spend on the students. Tom's recommendation is to use the 7,000 dollars to help offset new curriculum. The other thought would be to help the PK program, but the funding should be used towards all the grades. New curriculum would be more beneficial.
4. **Discuss Social Media Policy.** Tom spoke to our attorney. The document as written is unenforceable. The Committee has to go back to negotiations to add that in the Teachers'

Contract. The only way to reprimand an employee is if the classroom itself has its own social media page, or if the employee links themselves to the school and makes remarks. The other way is if an employee mentions a student. That is breaching confidentiality. Otherwise, it is their right of speech on their own social media site. Tom will rewrite the policy to provide guidelines recommended by the School Committee and approved by the attorney. He will then hand out the new policy at the beginning of each new year during the first Professional Day.

5. **Discuss and vote on budget.** Eric started off with a timeline for everyone to follow regarding how the budget process works. This should help alleviate any questions or concerns on where the School Committee is during the budget process.

Eric explained that tonight's meeting was to present the final budget. If all agree, then the School Committee will pass the budget, Eric will mail out the budget to both towns and go on to the hearing in late February. Jennifer Hibbins brought up the meeting with Sandisfield next week on February 11th. Jennifer thought in the future the Committee could incorporate a scheduled meeting before the passing of the budget. Eric wanted to know if this meeting is for just a discussion on budget because that is what the public hearing is for. Eric went on to explain if Sandisfield wanted a meeting before the hearing, it would not be possible considering he just received all the numbers from the state at the end of last week. There would not be enough time to have a meeting before the passing of the budget and the hearing.

Joane Grybosh, Sandisfield Town Administer, wanted to know if the objective of the meeting tonight is to pass the budget. Joane stated that she was speaking for the board at this point. The Selectboard wants to have a discussion so they can give input as to what the Town may be facing. Joane went on to state that it would be a mute point now to pass the budget and then hear the circumstances town is facing and therefore there would not be enough time for recourse if needed.

Nicholas DellaGiustina did state that there were some preliminary talks about the budget and the Selectmen knew about the meetings. Jennifer Hibbins did tell the Selectmen about the February meeting and the hearing. Jennifer did not realize a draft of the budget would be available in January.

Carol Lombardo then stated that the draft had inaccurate numbers at that point, because Eric did not have the majority of the numbers from the state. Jennifer also emailed the Selectmen after the January meeting asking if they wanted her to come in to update them on the budget. She did not get a response, so Jennifer did forward the email to Joane letting her know of the communication sent to the Selectmen. Joane stated that they want a dialog as to where the Committee is going and what the anticipation is. The Selectmen do not want to face the same scenario as last year. The Selectmen are torn as to which meeting to attend since they are both held on the same night of the week.

Nicholas DellaGiustina spoke up and informed Joane that this was discussed last year and Nick's comment to the Selectmen was that the School Committee holds one meeting a month. The Selectmen hold four, why can't the Selectmen change one meeting a year to attend budget meeting with the School Committee. Jennifer added that they could send one Selectmen if they didn't want to reschedule a meeting. Joane agreed but

thinks that someone should give the Selectmen a heads up on when the meetings are. Jennifer restated that she does communicate with the Selectmen and did send them an email without getting a response. Joane suggested sending her the emails and communications so she can forward the information to the Selectmen. Joane wants to set a process to meet and communicate before the budget. Carol Lombardo questioned last year and thought that there was someone here during the budget meetings. Billie Pachulski reminded her that there was a Selectman on both School Committee and Selectboard, so there was always someone present. The prior Town Administrator attended as well. Eric did say that he could have accurate numbers for the February meetings, but not before that. Nicholas DellaGiustina asked Joane what is being asked from the School Committee with the meeting prior to the passing of the School's budget? Do they want to pick out certain line items and review them line by line, or an overall review stating Sandisfield just cannot afford the budget. Joane replied by saying the Selectmen just want an understanding of the budget. They want to get their heads to wrap around what they are facing.

Right now they are very busy with the Finance Committee reviewing every budget. There are other needed larger expenses and/or equipment/fire trucks that may be needed as well. Joane tried to explain that the Selectmen and the residents want involvement. They want to know where their money is going. They are given the final school budget without explanation. Jennifer Hibbins stated that there are 3 members of the community that go over the line items and see where the town's money is going. The members have the best interest of both the Town and the School. This is the involvement and the explanation. Joane said they only want a recap as to what is coming. Jess Drenga then said, out of frustration, that Jennifer has, on several occasions, invited the Selectmen to come to the School and check things out. She has asked the committee if they want her to update them on anything that is going on.

Terry Gould, Finance Committee Member of the Town of Otis, spoke up. She wanted to first state the School Committee is doing and has been doing a great job with the budget. Also, the communication has always been good between the School Board and the Town of Otis. If the Selectmen want answers or wants more information, they should attend more meetings or call the School Committee in-between meeting times. That is what Otis Selectboard and Finance Committee do. People in general should attend to see how the School Committee works.

The Sandisfield Selectboard only wants to meet before the budget is passed by the School Committee. Joane stressed how residents are already stating they will not pass the School's budget. This is without knowing what the budget looks like. Terry Gould wanted to remind everyone that the school is a very important part of both communities. Without children there is no growth, the towns will be aged out.

The volunteers for the fire department, EMS and other important organizations are made up of younger men and women with children. Money comes into the community because of children. Terry feels the children are being punished by not being supported through the School budget. People forget that the community pays for the children as it has been done in the past. Terry also feels that the Selectmen are not trusting the members of the elected School Committee.

They are not letting the members do their job.

Joane stressed again that the Selectmen only want to understand the budget. The request they are asking for is the meeting to be before the vote and the public hearing. Eric Jesner spoke up to explain that they cannot have a public hearing without a passed budget. Nick explained that we would have to have the hearing the second week of March. Eric then stated if Sandisfield doesn't like the budget, he would have to redo the budget which would push the hearing back even further. Jess Drenga would like to have the Towns come in on the first Monday of February when Eric has all to most of the information. This would accommodate both Towns giving them the option to ask questions and be involved. Joane thought that was agreeable. Eric wants to make sure that the Towns understand that the vote for the budget won't be until the March meeting. Nick DellaGiustina suggests that the meeting between Towns should be the first Monday in February. The second week of February School Committee can have a short meeting to vote on the budget. Then the following month (March) have the public hearing. All agreed to this process. The public hearing will be held off until after the March meeting. At the March meeting, the committee will vote on the budget. Nick DellaGiustina, Jennifer Hibbins, Eric Jesner and Tom Nadolny will meet with the Sandisfield Selectmen Tuesday, February 11th in Sandisfield to go over the budget.

Eric summarized the budget and highlighted areas that have increased. The budget Increase is 3.03% over last year. Eric used a Level Service budget this year. All salaries increased by 2%, this was negotiated by the Teachers' Contract. The grant used to offset Pre-School is up next year, meaning the funding is now gone. There are seven teachers with column movement next year. In addition to their 2% they get compensated for their continued education. This is a big increase for next year's budget In School Choice, part of the money is being used for a new ELA curriculum so we can try to improve our testing scores. Eric did include \$1000 dollars to the library for new books. Since he has been here, no monies have gone into the library. The School pays for half of Nature's Classroom. The location has changed from previous years, which decreased the amount a little. Professional Development increased due to the Paraprofessional Contract. There will be criteria that the Paraprofessionals need to meet going forward. Utilities are level funded. There will be an average of a 3.7% increase for health insurance. The split between the staff and school stays the same. Retirees have an increase due to the cost of Medex. Tuition for Lee and Berkshire Hills increased by 4% per their contracts with us. Transportation is going to be level funded due to re-negotiations this year. The increase is roughly 8%, but we are reducing our routes by 50%. We already did this, but still had to pay for the routes that were cut due to our existing contract.

Revenue summary by Eric: Chapter 70 monies reflects a \$6200 increase which is due to the Student Opportunity Act Funds. Transportation Aid Fund reflects \$13,000 increase. The operating ratios have been changed due to the increase of Sandisfield students. The total assessment for Otis is a 1.45% decrease. There is an increase of 6.47% for Sandisfield. The percentages are based on the state local

contributions.

Eric supplied everyone 3 versions of the assessment sheet. He did use \$45,000 towards the budget to help offset the assessment due per town. Eric does purpose to use the statutory method this year. Joane asked about the methodology being used. Jennifer explained that the two towns are the only ones who can change the process of assessment. The School Committee can not do that. The contract would have to be amended. Nick explained the reason why there has been a larger increase for Sandisfield. The percentage of children have increased to roughly 59-41 Otis to Sandisfield. The percentage used to roughly be 70-30 Otis to Sandisfield.

The assessment sheets were handed out. Eric summarized the difference between each method. Eric explained the formula the State uses and how they calculated the method. The first sheet discussed the statutory method that has always been used without the \$45,000 of E&D that the School Committee is willing to apply towards the offset of the contributions. Otis will have a 1.34% decrease and Sandisfield will increase to 6.47%. This is all due to enrollment of students. It all has to do with revenue per student.

The second version: The School would provide \$45,000 from E&D using the statutory method. Otis will decrease by 1.45% and Sandisfield would increase by 6.47%.

The third version: This is the alternative method using the \$45,000 from E&D. Otis would decrease by .86% and Sandisfield increases by 5.55%.

A reminder was brought up that \$15,000 was used out of E&D to help out Sandisfield last year and now the School Committee is willing to help out again by using \$45,000 to help Sandisfield out this year. The School Committee is nervous about giving out too much of E&D each year. We do have some major expenses coming up and a possibility of another Special Needs student that could require a large expense. Eric did research back to 2007 on the assessments. This year the difference between the two methods is \$14,294.89. Benefiting Sandisfield. At the end of FY20 budget, Sandisfield has benefited \$63,500. If this budget goes through with the statutory method, Sandisfield would have still benefited by \$50,000.

Nicholas DellaGiustina asked if there was a motion to vote on which method to use: staying with the statutory way or using the alternative. This does include using the \$45,000 from E&D. Carol Lombardo motioned to stay with the Statutory Method for the FY21 budget. Jess Drenga seconded the motion. The vote was 4-1 in favor of the Statutory Method. Nicholas explained to Joane the reason for voting this way, in his opinion, is for consistency. Sandisfield has benefited over the past 14 years or so. He doesn't feel as if the School should change their method each year to benefit a couple years. The Statutory has helped

Sandisfield in the long run.

Nicholas DellaGiustina did state there has to be a vote on the \$45,000 to be used out of E&D to offset the budget. Jess Drenga motioned to use \$45,000 out of E&D to be used to offset the budget. Carol Lombardo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to use the \$45,000.

- 6. Vote to enter Executive meeting only to exit back into School Meeting only to adjourn.** Nick motioned to move into Executive Meeting. Jess seconded the motioning. Vote was unanimous.

Roll call: Nicholas DellaGiustina-yes, Jennifer Hibbins-yes, Carol Lombardo-yes
Jessica Drenga-yes, Billie Pachulski-yes

- 7. Adjournment:** Nicholas DellaGiustina motioned to adjourn meeting, Carol Lombardo seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.