

Approved April 13, 2020

Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting

March 9, 2020

Present: Will Singleton, Kelly Cusson, Wes Gadson, Barbara Mahony, Art Alpert, Hugh Guilderson

February 26 presentation to the Pittsfield School Committee:

Will's presentation, as outlined to the committee at its Feb. 10 meeting, was favorably received by the Mayor, the committee, and the Superintendent. The Berkshire Eagle's report of the presentation was favorable also.

Update on Calmer Choice in Pittsfield Schools:

The district will use Second Step for their S/EL Curriculum. Like Calmer Choice, which the committee recommended for consideration, Second Step is designed to develop self-regulation and self-management. Will will contact Superintendent McCandless later in the Spring to ask about the district's progress with Second Step.

Berkshire Compact Aspirations Group:

Hugh attended the meeting on Feb. 3 (report submitted), and Will went to the March 2 meeting. The Compact will hold a Career Fair in April for students at Drury, Hoosac Valley, and BART high schools. Will and Hugh will attend the April 6 meeting of the Compact Aspirations Group. The committee decided that, at their meeting on April 13, they will discuss ways to publicize opportunities for post-graduate employment and professional training so that every student we serve is aware of these opportunities. The committee also decided that on April 13 they will discuss ways to publicize opportunities for college scholarships offered by Scholly and Quest Bridge. More information can be obtained by connecting to the links below.

<https://www.questbridge.org/> <https://myscholly.com/>

Taconic High School teams' names:

Kelly reported that she brought the issue of the derogatory stereotype to the attention of the superintendent and the chair of the school committee in June, 2019. They responded that the logo, an image of a Native American man in ceremonial dress, had been discontinued several years ago; that they were reluctant to engage the issue given the reactions by some Pittsfield citizens to changing the name of the October 12 holiday to Indigenous Peoples' Day; and they

preferred to wait for the State to pass legislation that will require a change. The committee decided to ask the Executive Committee to approve a formal request, by the committee or the Branch, that the offensive team name be discontinued; that the students be allowed to choose the new name. The committee also decided, at Kelly's suggestion, that the committee organize a community meeting for the summer that will include Native American guest speakers, students, parents, and other interested members of the community.

Student Resource Officers in Pittsfield Schools:

This issue arose as part of the debate about the Superintendent's proposed budget for the 2020-21 school year. Dr. McCandless wants to hire more administrators and some student counselors. Some members of the community want to fill the empty SRO position at Reid elementary school and hire more SRO's. The Police Department has been understaffed for years. The committee would like to see specially trained student counselors, intervention counselors, hired because that is the critical need in the district. One of the consequences of poverty in the city is the high number of students with trauma, traumas that interfere with their ability and desire to learn.

On Feb. 26, the school committee scheduled a meeting for March 18 to discuss this issue.

Eagle Street Academy:

Eagle Street Academy is an alternative high school for students at risk. Not much information is available on the district's website. Several members of the committee want to visit the school. Will will contact the Superintendent to arrange a visit.