

APPROVED MINUTES

PK-12 706 Study Committee Mtg

Tuesday July 12, 2016

WRVSU Office, 5:00 pm

Present:

Bethel: Todd Sears, Lisa McCrory, Rodney Rainville

Chelsea: Deborah Ackerman, Kate Willard, Joe Spinella, Jessica Anderson

Rochester: Frank Russell, Jessica Arsenault, Chris Mattrick, Andy West

Royalton: Jennifer Stratton, Jessica Carpenter, Christine Hudson, Geo Hoenerig

Bruce Labs, Superintendent, Steve Dale, Consultant

Guests: Bridget Barry, Tim Murphy, Royalton

Steve Dale called the meeting to order at 5:10pm.

Welcome and Review of Agenda: Steve noted that Lisa Floyd, Chair had noted at the last meeting that she would not be able to attend tonight. Because this is still in the formative stage and no formal activity will take place tonight, Steve will act as Asst chair. Noted right away that this room is too small for the 20+ members so an alternative meeting space will need to be found. Everyone received their notebook information except Kate Willard, so they will make sure she receives it. While reviewing the agenda, Steve reiterated that these early meetings are very important for all members to attend, and the meeting schedule plan is to have at least one lengthier meeting in August and then 2 meetings a month for September through November. He wants to reflect on the 3 documents that have been created over the past couple years, and also, what key principles are in creating a new school district. He would like everyone to start sharing hopes and desires in creating a new district so everyone is able to voice their thoughts. This will enable all to see what commonalities there are or differences there are. Finally, public comment will be opened and then preparations for the next meeting will happen.

Steve returned to the issue of voting members for Rochester and Chelsea. Frank Russell explained that the 2 Rochester votes will be split between 1 board member and 1 community member. Jeff Sherwin will be the board member with Frank as an alternate, and Andy West will be the community member with Chris Mattrick as alternate. They agreed that Jess Arsenault could be the alternate's alternate so there will be 2 votes. Joe Spinella noted that Chelsea has not sorted out the voting issue yet. They have a new member for the committee as one was not able to continue. Joe, Jess Anderson, Deborah Ackerman, Kate Willard and Laurel-student member are the Chelsea members and Steve reiterated that they will need to decide their voting members and alternates by the next meeting.

The question of meeting quorum was reviewed. As Steve sees it, a quorum must be reached in 3 ways: 51% of appointees, which means 11 members have to be here. 51% of votes, so if there are 15 voting members, 8 need to attend which makes it important to know who the voting members are for each town, and 51% of towns. Short discussion ensued regarding whether 3 out of 4 towns present would be considered a quorum, or should it be at least 1 member from each town. Consensus of the members is that there is no quorum if there is not at least 1 member from each of the 4 towns present. Geo noted that Royalton has lost two members but have appointed a new person and will appoint another next week.

Quick introductions were given. Lisa McCrory asked if there is not a quorum of towns, are we still allowed to discuss but not vote. Steve noted that he would like Chair Lisa Floyd to make this decision.

Future Meetings: Joe asked that the meetings be cross referenced. The June meeting was held the same night as the Chelsea sports banquet so no members could attend. All agreed that the next meeting will be on Thursday, August 18th from 5-9pm. Possible dates for the next meetings are September 15th and 29th, October 13th and 27th, and November 10th and 17th. These are all Thursday evenings and meetings would tentatively be held from 6-8pm.

Proposed Action Plan Draft #2: Steve reviewed this with the board. There are 5 key results for this committee to address in order to develop a successful plan.

- 1) What is the educational plan
- 2) Create articles of agreement
- 3) Support member communities in resolving issues of particular concern (this would include such things as how to deal with debt on one building but not on others, or town owned school buildings. Need to look into any complications that could arise by making one single school)
- 4) Inform and engage communities regarding this effort: Geo asked if a social media platform should be formed to work toward this. Agreed that some kind of sub-committee may be helpful, will discuss further.
- 5) Complete and submit a report to the State BOE and electorate. In order to receive financial benefits, an affirmative vote has to happen by July 1, 2017. This schedule assumes that if action is going to be taken, towns will need to vote at their 2017 Town Meetings unless it is agreed to hold off and vote at a special meeting. The study committee draft report should be completed and to the BOE by December 15, 2016.

Kate asked for clarification on Act 46 and the "side by side" districts. Steve gave an overall review of Act 46, and what all the meetings over the past year or so have been working on. Basically, the intent of Act 46 is to create fewer school boards due to declining enrollment and increasing costs per student. This study group (Bethel, Chelsea, Rochester, Royalton) was created to decide if it makes sense to come together as one district. Hancock and Granville have started a committee to discuss becoming their own district, and it is not yet clear what Tunbridge, Stockbridge, Strafford and Sharon have decided to do. Short discussion ensued. If all 4 schools come together as a district, we would be considered a RED (regional education district) and qualify for tax incentives. If 3 of the 4 come together, they would not be a RED, but could create a side by side district along with the non-operating district. Some discussion ensued about Act 153 and financial aid in constructing a new school. Steve believes that this committee should push for this, and Bruce noted that when we came together from 2 SU's to 1, part of the language was to ask to be first in line to receive funding

for a new school to be built. This committee can decide that they want to include other towns as advisable, even if that other board does not want to join. The other board can decide not to put the proposal to a vote within their town unless 10% of the electorate sign a petition asking for it to be put to a vote. Joe noted that he believes that Tunbridge would like to be invited to join this committee as they have concerns about “being orphaned” in the group they are with. Geo agreed, and would like to see a formal invite to Stockbridge as well. Discussion ensued about inviting all the other schools in the SU. The consensus is to invite Tunbridge and Stockbridge to join in the conversation with up to 2 members for each town. Steve will ask Lisa Floyd to forward invitations to Tunbridge and Stockbridge, and after further discussion, invitations will be sent to all other schools in the SU, including the non-operating to join as participants, but not voting members. They will be given a deadline to respond.

Reflecting on the three foundational documents: (SU Unification Document, Strategic plan and Act 46 Exploratory Proposal): Steve urged all to take the time to read these documents.

Guiding Principles: All brainstormed on what key principles would guide the end product of this committee. Guiding Principles given out by all members were:

Students first. Long range view, designed to perform for the next 50 years, not as they exist now or have existed in the past. **Innovation** is a MUST, and Todd noted that we should be looking at any incentives as short term transition costs. What is created has to be financially sustainable after these transition costs are no longer available. **Green Technology**, and not relying on old oil burners or infrastructures and other ways to power buildings. **Rich opportunity for students at all levels, not just those who are college bound. Teachers should be motivated and excited about the template. Teaching to a teacher’s strengths**, getting them in their best spot. **Use best practices**, incorporate what is good currently into new programs. **Create programs that attract students to our school. Measureable outcomes**-what works, what doesn’t and how to measure these. Promote community involvement. **Flexible and multiple pathways, receiving credit for learning outside of classrooms.** Bruce noted that we want to **become the school of choice for the area.** We need to attract those students from our districts that currently go elsewhere. **Developmentally appropriate programming**, especially in athletics. **Public/Private partnerships**, such as CCV teachers coming in or partnerships with businesses so kids don’t need to leave campuses. **Technology in our schools.** Steve noted that this will be continued in the August meeting.

Beginning to envision education in a new school district: Steve set this up so that the key words, concepts and elements stated by the committee members could be categorized into Overall, Elementary, Middle School and High School levels. Steve noted that a number of committees in other parts of the state have set a plan to continue doing what they have been doing in the past for the first year, and let the new school boards decide later on what direction to go in. Steve noted that the obligation of this study committee is to create an operating plan for the first year and that there seems to be a strong need to be much more clear about education improvements in the short run. Steve also urged the committee members to say exactly what they feel will be good elements, and not to be judgmental about anyone’s ideas. **Attached to these minutes are the ideas/concepts put forth for each of the categories as well as Todd’s power point presentation and Frank’s handout on Rigor, Relevance and Relationships.**

Steve urged all to read the Strategic Plan, and Bruce reiterated that the document is a year in the making, and is created based on the input from community members and administrators as well as students. He hopes to get the plan adopted and to the teachers by the beginning of the school year.

Geo: equip kids for college if they choose to go, decide what works currently and what doesn't. Critical mass-our numbers will be lacking even if we combine all 4 schools. Have one middle school, one high school and all elementary schools stay as they are. He suggested considering middle school be grades 7-9 and high school 10-12.

Rodney: asked to clarify if the direction is to have one regional high school with all 4 towns joining on one campus. Elementary schools should stay as they are. Bruce noted that the students had expressed during their community forums was that they really want more kids in high school.

Joe: possibly having 2 middle schools with gradual integration into high school. It becomes a growing experience instead of coming from a tiny class to a much larger one which could be hard on some kids. He also noted that he is not opposed to joining elementary schools, for example Tunbridge and Chelsea elementary schools are 5 miles apart. His fear is that there will be 4 elementary schools with less communication and teaming. The sharing and opportunity must be available for those kids as well.

Lisa: more movement and creativity in elementary school. Less sit in your chair teaching and outdoor exploration, discovery. Also, coming face to face with the local drug problems and offer more preventative training and mentoring

Kate: More outdoor activity, creativity. Kids need to learn without technology as well. Curriculum has to be institutionalized and dependable in order to attract tuition students. Innovative programs must continue beyond one year!

Jennifer: SoRo has good number of elementary students, and it will be necessary to help all other elementary schools be equal across the board. As well as drugs, focus on other diseases as well.

Andy: Reviewed the presentation a couple months ago about the outdoor Ed program that has been discussed in Rochester. Program would encompass high school under a union school satellite program and would cover many aspects. Could be geared toward both high school and middle school. He noted that the group has backed off to see what the transition group and this committee will be doing, but they are ready to continue moving forward. Rochester is specifically suited to this type of program as they have the building, the School Forest and the USFS services all in town. Bruce noted that this concept is included in the strategic plan. Transportation systems will need to be updated so all kids are able to access different options.

Rachel: Consolidation of middle schools. Splitting will lose whatever mass we have.

Jessica C: Pre-K classes are an issue. The ½ day programs are difficult for working parents, a full day would be easier. Also open communication so parents can be involved in their kids' education.

Christine: She would prefer to see middle school be 6-8 and high school 9-12. PK-5th as elementary.

Joe: build data collection into our schools. What are kids doing 5 years after leaving high school? Vermont has the highest high school graduation rate, but also a mediocre college entrance rate and the highest college non-completion rate.

Lisa: STEM programs, enrichment programs, project based learning, celebrate student work, more individual type athletics, and progressive programs, and i.e. follow through with foreign languages. Content area specialists for lower grades.

Chris M: scalable curriculum, progressive curriculum. Algebra I, Algebra II etc. Also, brand new school, new turf. Elementary schools stay as are, MS & HS are in a totally new building with new identity.

Jessica A: Keep elementary kids in their own towns, or in the town where their parents work. Transportation to school could be up to 45 minutes for Rochester elementary kids. Many parents agree, they want to be near their young kids. More collaboration between educational levels. Bringing back kids and keeping them in the district. Open campus.

Deborah: Agrees with elementary schools staying within each town. Important for parents and child.

Geo asked if Bruce could investigate middle school class ranges. The proposed ranges are 5-8, 6-8 or 7-9. Joe noted that grade levels don't give information needed, but what will it look like for the students. Todd noted that many of the deliverables for this committee are based on class size, ages of students, where will the schools be. These decisions need to be made first in order to move forward. He would like the administration to begin analysis now instead of waiting to see what the middle school grades will actually look like.

Discussion ensued regarding what school years should comprise a middle school. Some thought 7-9 would be good, others thought 5-8. Andy noted that we need to decide what we want out of a middle school program. Discussion ensued.

Discussion continued as to how the formation of other district groups affect us now. We need to structure decisions in a way that will make students excited to come to our school. District has to decide factors and then create structure. All were encouraged to email Bruce with ideas if they choose to. All agreed that it has to be easy to access courses in one building, and courses should be offered in all campuses of middle and high schools.

Bruce spoke about the concerns about having buildings stay open and viable in communities. Probably no elementary schools will be closed, but the committees will need to sell the plan to their towns. If a campus is closing, this could be a problem. Steve noted that this will need to be discussed in the articles of agreement. Discussion will also be necessary regarding loss of jobs and/or staff reduction.

Timeline: January-report to State board. Vote at 2017 Town Meeting, although budget will have been built. Is this to be effective for the 18-19 year, or the 19-20 year? Would likely be effective 7/1/18? Better not to take an extra year, Steve will look at the implementation schedule.

Public Comment: Tim Murphy noted that this should begin in kindergarten, 1st grade as far as community based learning and PLP's. By 5th grade, kids know what is relevant to what they want to do. Parents need to be involved early on. He also would like to see more "horsepower" in the guidance departments. There is a need for assessment teams, and focus on career or college readiness today. Post graduate achievements should be offered, i.e. master plumber apprenticeships require 10,000 hours. If we offer kids what they want and build something dynamic, they will stay.

Joe asked if we could add a comprehensive behavior program that could be added into Pre-K. Also, people are needed for communications-how do we keep boards and communities involved? Community access TV programming was mentioned. A subcommittee of Geo, Rachel, Todd and Andy was created to work on different approaches for communications.

Locations for future meeting was discussed. August 18th will be a longer meeting in Bethel, 5-9pm. Question asked about the interactive communications system, why can't it be used. Only available in this conference room.

The reaction from the group about tonight's meeting was that there is much more commonality in ideas than expected which is encouraging. No differences are insurmountable. Bruce reminded all to read the strategic plan.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McDonnell