

PK-12 Study Committee Mtg

Thursday, August 18, 2016

WHS, 5:00 pm

Present:

Bethel: Lisa Floyd, Lisa McCrory, Todd Sears, Rodney Rainville, Rachel Irish

Chelsea: Deborah Ackerman, Jessica Anderson, Joe Spinella

Rochester: Andy West, Jess Arsenault, Jeff Sherwin, Frank Russell, Chris Mattrick

Royalton: Jennifer Stratton, Bridget Barry, Jessica Carpenter, Geo Honigford,

Bruce Labs, Superintendent, Steve Dale, Consultant

Public: Tim Murphy, So Royalton

Lisa Floyd called the meeting to order at 5:20 pm. Everyone introduced themselves and spoke one word about their feelings regarding this process. All members are encouraged and excited with the process.

Minutes from the July 12, 2016 meeting were reviewed. Geo made motion to approve, seconded by Rachel. So voted.

Steve will send an updated meeting schedule with placeholders for public meetings in upcoming meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for September 15, and again on September 29, 2016. It was suggested to Lisa that we switch meeting places between Bethel and South Royalton schools. All agreed this would work. September 15th will be at South Royalton School. Meetings will now be from 6pm to 8pm. Steve also noted that he is available to answer questions by email

Steve reiterated that there are three study groups meeting simultaneously. PK-12, Non-Operating, and PK-6/8. Steve proposes in December we submit one single report that oversees all the committees, or to have all 3 reports included within one. A conference call was held between the three committee chairmen, and they agreed to share meeting minutes and to keep in touch on how each group unfolds. At a prior meeting, this committee agreed to invite the other districts to attend as non-voting members. A letter of invitation will go out tomorrow.

Review of Summary Documents: Steve reviewed the sample study committee report outline. Eventually we will need a name for the proposed district, but can spend more time on that in the future. The outline contains items agreed on at the last meeting: **Description of the proposed new district, Committee membership and charge, Vision for providing education for students in the new district, Articles of agreement and the Appendix.** Steve noted that he will try to guide the committee to get the overall job done without getting too bogged down in the details. If our proposal passes, the goal will be to create working programs that will engage students and staff within 1 1/2 years.

District Name: The group agreed to table district name discussions until a future meeting. Joe asked that members bring ideas for names to the next meeting to keep this moving forward.

Review of summary document: Proposal to create three side by side districts: Strong adult/student relationships was discussed. It was agreed that this should be a goal for all grade levels, and administrations should also work to accomplish this. Lisa noted that having to create PLP's has helped students gain stronger relationships with advisors. Ask administrators to find best practices and relay to staff, coaches, and administration within each school. Chris noted that the community and parents have to feel comfortable enough to be involved on all grade levels and it may be a challenge to keep parents on board on all levels. Frank noted that there has to be PK-12 continuity in the flow of programs from one grade to the next.

Elementary School: All agreed that it is a goal to maintain an elementary school in individual towns. Question to be answered is what grades will define a school in the community. Discussion ensued. Andy noted again that we need to avoid lengthy transportation for our younger students and we have to define what grades we mean to comprise an elementary school. Discussion continued. Lisa noted that aligning the curriculum in elementary schools is necessary so all students hit middle or high school with the same level of knowledge. Jess noted that choice within a district should be allowed so working parents are able to have their young children nearby during the day. Transportation was discussed again. We will revisit again at a future meeting.

Middle School: There are many configurations of grades that create middle schools in Vermont, so what configuration of grade will be best for our students? What this committee decides will affect the PK-6/8 committee as well. Lengthy discussion continued. Bruce handed out samples of some configuration information that points to different studies that were done. The committee will have to keep in mind that some 7th or 8th graders that will be able to access courses they are ready for. We will need to be flexible in order to continue to challenge them. At the same time, we shouldn't create 9th or 10th grade classes for 7th grader to take. He noted the importance of keeping the kids young as long as we can. Some kids mature early but may not be socially ready for high school. Teachers should be sent to middle school conferences. Geo noted that we may lose sending kids if they leave middle school in one town and end up going into middle school at WRVSU. All agreed that middle school should END with grade 8, not beyond. Discussion continued. Frank asked about certification for teachers.

For tonight, the majority agreed that Elementary School should be PK-5, Middle School should be 6-8 and High School 9-12.

Question arose as to whether there should be one middle school or two. It is a long bus ride for students from Hancock/Granville/Rochester/Chelsea to get to a centralized location. There could be a single unit with single administration in two locations, or centralized pickup and drop off location, which makes the bus ride shorter. Joe noted at the school he teaches at, parents drop off and pick up at a specific spot which makes the bus ride shorter. Discussion continued.

The majority agreed that the middle school curriculum education should be administered under one administration and principal, regardless of the number of buildings. Bruce noted that when discussion began to merge the two SU's, they talked to the state board for "first dibs" on a new building. Unfortunately, there is no money for building at this time. Bruce will do more research and check in to ridership numbers as well.

High School: Tonight the majority agreed that there will be a single high school within the first year. Joe voiced concern about how to deal with that handful of students who just can't fit in. The ability to attend school on different campuses with and using local resources within the region for specialized programs would work for those kids who can't fit into the traditional classroom learning. Satellite programs were included in the ensuing discussion.

Public Comment: Tim Murphy noted that RTCC has a model that they use. There is a book with every student's name in it, and any time a teacher interacts with a student, they mark in the book. It makes it easy to see which students are lacking that adult interaction. He also noted that he would not like to see the extracurricular activities drop, and he likes the 6-8 grades as a middle school. Also, middle school kids ride the bus, high school kids drive which is a concern during the winter. TSA offers no transportation, and he feels if we offer good programs, students will attend. He would also like to see technology taught by 6th grade.

Articles of Agreement: Will be tabled to the next meeting.

Communications Strategy: Geo told the committee that during the communications group meetings, they agreed that it would be best for one person to be the spokesperson with the media or at public meetings and Lisa Floyd agreed to be that person with the committee's approval. There will be a Facebook page created, and Rachel and Todd will "police" it. Posts will be reviewed before being made public, and no slander or disrespect will be allowed. Mark Klein will set this up. The committee approved this. Discussion ensued about more coverage. Possibly a monthly article could go in the Herald, or radio newscasts. The Communications group did not think that Town Meeting was advisable for the vote, but more to be a time to give further information to the public. They feel that the vote should be in April which would allow time for all school votes. Holding more public meetings within towns was mentioned and will be discussed further in the future. Possibly a member from each of the 4 towns could meet within each town to give information. Having a table at public events such as the Harvest Fair, Bethel Forward Festival was also discussed. Student participation will be discussed later in the meeting. Joe noted that he has been approached by community members who have a hard time finding information about these meetings. Mark Klein will be asked to set up links to the WRVUS site to each school's home page so community members can easily find the information.

Public Meetings: Steve recommends scheduling four public meetings between now and December which should involve committee members. First meeting should help people to understand what Act 46 really is, second-responses from attendees as to what they think is important, third-present the draft of articles and fourth-present the product that will be forwarded to the state board. Lengthy discussion continued. All agreed if we provide the opportunity, people will come if they want to, and possibly we could get on agendas of existing meetings such as selectboards. Todd recommends going forward with what the committee has done so far. He feels no need to go back over Act 46 or the other information that has already been discussed. Community members should be given the information and asked what they think we are missing. A team was formed to attend these meetings made up of Frank, Geo, Rodney, Jess Carpenter and Chris. Goals will be to make sure Act 46 is understood, explain what the study committee is trying to accomplish and to explain how the strategic plan will bring this about. It was noted again that there are a lot of meetings already scheduled. Meetings should begin in mid-September.

Staff Engagement: Andy noted the staff should be brought into this. Possibly committee members could go into the school and discuss with the staff. Lisa and Bruce will look into how to structure this. Lisa noted that there are some grants that could be applied for and possibly some high school and middle school teachers could work together on this. This info could be included in messages to staff members.

Advisory Group: board members from each of the four towns met and agreed that an advisory board is needed. Staff member from each town as well as a freshman or sophomore should be included. This group should be the sounding board for ideas. If the kids are enthusiastic, they will help sell the program to adults. Each town should find their members as soon as possible. Andy gave an overview of how the student congress worked last year. He will facilitate the advisory group. Todd read the charge from his power point presentation and administrators will be asked to choose members so they will be ready to attend the September 15th meeting. Once the group is formed, Andy will lead the group. He will email the administrators and get the names of group members, and will try to get all of them here on the 15th to accept the charge. There was general agreement with the committee that we should move forward with an advisory group.

Bruce will do more research on middle school configurations and also on the numbers requested.

Next Meeting is on September 15th at 6pm at South Royalton.

Meeting adjourned 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McDonnell