

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Tuesday, February 20, 2018
(Snow Date: Wed., February 21, 2018)

Public Hearing
on
Petitioned Warrant Article to Amend the Articles of Agreement

7:00 P.M.
Superintendent's Office
106 Hancock Road,
Peterborough, NH 03458

MINUTES

Myron Steere called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Steere said that we cannot alter or change the wording on the warrant or ballot.

Mr. Steere read the following:

Articles of Agreement – Article 5 Currently Reads as follows:

The Contoocook Valley School District (ConVal) shall be responsible for grades one through twelve (1-12) and Kindergartens. Kindergartens were previously authorized by a vote at an annual Cooperative School District meeting. Grades nine through twelve (9-12) shall be educated at the centrally located Senior High School in Peterborough. Grades five through eight (5-8) may be educated at the Middle Schools in Antrim and Peterborough. Elementary Schools shall be maintained in Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Francestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, and Temple. As school populations change, students from the Middle Schools may be reassigned to Elementary School locations. Such reassignment needs would be determined by ConVal Administration, but each location change would have to be approved by the School Board.

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to amend the Articles of Agreement among the School District Towns of Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Francestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, Sharon, and Temple as follows (2/3 vote required):

Petitioned Warrant Article Submitted as follows:

Shall the Contoocook Valley Regional School District vote to amend the Articles of Agreement to authorize the School Board to close schools in any town in the district when there are fewer than 50 students who reside in that town enrolled for two (2) consecutive years?

Mr. Steere asked if any petitioners were present. There were none.

Mary, Peterborough, asked if there wasn't a study done on closing the elementary schools several years ago and what was the result of that study?

Kimberly Saunders reported a study several years ago and it was not unanimous that it did not want to be looked at further. The savings that would result were thought not worth the effort.

Gail Cromwell, Temple, reported that many on that study realized that the small schools were being attacked that these schools have importance to the local towns. If you take away the small schools they alter the nature of the towns. At the time, one of the solutions was to deal with the middle schools allowing the towns to maintain their schools. There are other solutions other than closing schools. If Peterborough does not understand that, Peterborough might consider closing their school and sending students to other schools.

Jon Manley, Bennington, reported one of the promises made in the Articles of Agreement was that all of the towns would have a small school. If we start messing with the small schools, it will change the nature of everything. You've been asking for the same thing for a long time and we have said no for a long time. The town of Peterborough has always had enough votes to overcome everyone else. If we close small schools, would it be a break in the Articles?

Stephan Morrissey reminded the public that this article is a result of a public petition and does not come from the administration or the board.

Crista Salamy further suggested that if there are people that oppose or are in favor of this article, that they talk to people in your community. It is critical to talk about.

Linda Quintanilha said that over the years that she has served on the board, it has created an "us vs. them" mentality in the towns. It is heartbreaking to hear talk of towns leaving and the break in this discussion. The leadership has continued to work on this issue to find a solution so that one is not pitted against another.

Kimberly Saunders reported that the reason a 2/3's vote is required is because it is a change in the Articles of Agreement. If it were to pass, it would change the Articles.

A former resident of Temple, and now a resident of Sharon, said that The Town of Sharon has never had a small school. Her kids attended Temple. She was heartbroken when her kids had to go from Temple, to Peterborough. It turned out to be the best thing that ever happened. There were more opportunities for them and more friends. To think of moving children from the middle schools back to elementary is a bad idea. Sharon is a lovely town, it has a lot of town spirit, and she feels that other towns would have the same. We need to think about all of the people in the community, those who struggle with taxes, rather than just those with children.

Sean Boise, empathizes about taxes, but this SAU was brought together by all of the small towns. These small schools are here for a reason and need to stay. It is not about us against them, it is about keeping the community together.

Rich Cahoon asked that those address the board and not the public present.

A Hancock resident, said that the warrant article says nothing about closing a school, it gives the board the option to close schools should the population become untenable. The board should have the right should it become necessary to manage the district.

Susie Faber, Hancock, said that it is important to keep the power of the people in place rather than the school board. She said that she is in favor of letting the communities vote.

Joe MacGregor, Bennington, said that the underlying thing in the agreements is that there would be equity. Smaller schools don't have the same opportunity as the larger schools. He asked if the board would take a position on the petition article based on if this is an academically beneficial aspect for the students.

Rich Cahoon said that the legal advice is that the School Board can take a position on special warrant articles that include an appropriation.

Amy Cabana, Temple, be careful what you wish for keeping in mind that when schools are closed, you may impact the larger community. How will families be attracted to the ConVal community? It will likely impact the big picture. What do you have to lose should be considered?

Chris Mackinson, Temple, said that she chose not to raise her kids in a big city because she wants her kids to have memories. Having a small school is important to her children and her family.

Key points to consider include education, economics, and environment. Many families live here to take advantage of small climate. Individualized attention is possible. Enrollment has dropped but has stabilized in recent years. Much needs to be considered other than the enrollment in our schools.

Bob Edwards, Antrim, said that this is emotional because of our children, it is emotional because of our pocketbooks. When we go to the voting booths, we need to consider the entire district and not just our town. He would like to see the school board continue studying models and finish their analysis and come back to the people with their results.

Heather Hollenbeck, spoke to class sizes. Her son has under twenty students in his class and would not like to see larger class sizes.

Jess Markum, Dublin, asked about the language in the article; where does the data come from. Myron Steere said that the article does not identify how it would be determined.

Kimberly Saunders said that there was an intent to change the language of the petitioned warrant article at district meeting as a recognition of the petitioners that the language was ambiguous.

George S., from Temple, asked how communities have input into the Strategic Plan after the vote. Pierce Rigrod said that there will be a process moving forward; public forum meetings, and video and online opportunities to get information.

Jim Fredrickson, Sharon, referenced the public visioning process petitioned warrant article.

Stephan Morrissey reminded the public that all of the School Board and subcommittee meetings are open, public meetings and invited all to attend.

No other questions posed.

Myron Steere called the Public Hearing to a close at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok