

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, November 29, 2018

7:00 p.m.

SAU #1

Minutes

Present: John Jordan (Hancock), Dale Gabel (Dublin), John Robertson (Antrim), Henry Kunhardt (Francestown), Gail Cromwell (Temple), Carl Newton (Sharon), Karen Hatcher (Peterborough), Kimberly Saunders (Superintendent), Bernd Foecking (Dublin School Board Rep.), Rich Cahoon (Antrim School Board Rep.), Jerry Wilson (Peterborough School Board Rep.), Myron Steere (School Board Chair., Greenfield), Janine Lesser (Peterborough School Board Rep.), Kevin Pobst (Francestown Community Member), Alan Edelkind (Dublin Community Member)

John Jordan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Accept Minutes of October 25, 2018

Gail Cromwell moved to accept the minutes of October 25, 2018. Dale Gabel second. Karen Hatcher and Carl Newton abstained. All others in favor. Motion carried.

2. 2019-20 Budget

John Jordan shared that he was having difficulty matching the revenue and budget numbers to add up. He said that the budget includes the bond sale. Kimberly Saunders confirmed that the bond information should be included on the revenue sheet.

Kimberly further said that it is money that goes in and out and is needed for the DRA on the revenue sheet. She offered to sit with anyone to explain the numbers. There is a gross budget, which includes everything. Then there is the operating budget and general ledger sheets.

In January, Selectmen's Advisory Committee (SAC) will make a recommendation on the proposed budget.

Gail Cromwell said that it looks like district assessment is going up 5%. People are suffering from the recent budget impact. Gail asked that the lines in the budget be reviewed. Kimberly said that she is not prepared to go through the line by line tonight. This budget has absorbed \$1.7M for the teacher's contract as well as mandated requirements for students. Kimberly said that she is concerned about the budget as well.

Gail Cromwell spoke about what she called "the proposals to cover up incompetence in budgeting" in today's paper. She said that she read the proposal to charge additional money to towns who have small schools. Towns who have a school with fewer than 65 students in their school would pay additional money to continue to have a small school in their town under this proposal.

Rich Cahoon reported that he has never had anyone argue reasonably why a person in one town who owns a home valued at \$200K pays a different tax on that home than another who owns a home of the same value in another town. What the cost per pupil in a town is does not matter. They are ConVal pupils who happen to live in Hancock or any other of our other towns.

Karen Hatcher asked if we could agree that the nine towns came together because it made more sense to come together to fund education rather than separately. What gives the towns strength is that it gives a town the choice to maintain a small school and fund it rather than close it. It would be the choice of the town to absorb the additional cost or close it.

Karen Hatcher asked if the warrant has been written. The response was that it had not.

Rich Cahoon said that this is another approach.

Discussion took place about why the School Board was looking at this approach.

Janine Lesser said that declining enrollment is a problem across the State. The School Board is looking at how small is too small for a school. What is the impact on education in multi-grade classrooms?

Birth rates are down near zero.

John Jordan reported that he has asked for data on the schools through MAPS score results.

Karen Hatcher reported that this District took the first step and sent a letter to the State about funding education. What can be done next to support those in office to take steps toward fixing the problem? We have to help the people we have elected to have good information and provide support to help them with the issue.

There is a feeling that something was promised to bring forward to help solve the tax issue in the towns.

Myron Steere said that it was found that it would be difficult to pass a consolidation warrant.

Keven Pobst said that it sounds like Gail Cromwell values the local school in her town. If we value the localness, we have to eat the inefficiency and absorb that cost. Some feel that excessive localness is producing ineffectiveness.

Carl Newton said that the small towns have little to no say in what happens. Sharon has no say in what happens with approximately 150 votes.

Kimberly Saunders said that dissolving the district is always an option, but you came together for a number of reasons. A major driver was the long-term benefit to all of the towns in being together. In any given year, Dublin benefits as being a part of ConVal. In another year, a town could lose. In any given year, every single town would have lost as a result of student cost. It is not a year to year endeavor. It is a long term investment.

Bernd Foecking said that both proposals that came forward at the last board meeting are causing towns to look at each other as advisories.

Jerome Wilson said that better services can be provided more efficiently in a larger school setting.

Gail Cromwell said that the option to her is to move grades 7 and 8 to the high school and move 5th grade back to the elementary schools. She said that the middle schools are the issue.

Rich Cahoon said that six years ago a vote took place to close a middle school. The idea that the small schools are being bullied carries to the idea of closing middle schools.

Discussion took place about the proposal to charge a surcharge to smaller schools, to the value of education, and about the services provided in small schools and how it is often shared.

A decision is needed on where everyone wants to spend their energy on this topic. Adequacy that we receive from the State is not adequate. In terms of evening things across the State, we are in a worse condition.

Karen Hatcher asked that those present be more active and contact legislators.

John Robertson asked if there is a way that people can be notified if there is a bill that affects education is coming.

The action item is for Kimberly Saunders to share bills coming forward, related to education, to SAC.

Lengthy discussion took place about decisions to bring something forward in terms of consolidation or a more cost effective way to deliver education.

Bernd Foecking spoke about the evolution of the process that has taken place with the board on this project.

Rich Cahoon said that he would not be surprised if a warrant article came forward to close a school(s) from the public.

Town gatherings were suggested to share information about what change would mean.

John Robertson said that if he were to develop a proposal, he would make sure that the information about what a public school system is required to do educationally would be communicated out to the group to be proposed to.

3. 2019-20 Default Budget

The default is not yet complete.

4. Staffing Changes

John Jordan asked the Superintendent to review proposed staffing changes.

Kimberly Saunders reported a proposal that salaries are down over \$600K as a result of reduced positions.

We are not reducing staff significantly; but when asked to add staff the district tries to offset somewhere else.

The State and New England region are seeing a significant increase in behavioral issues at the elementary level.

Bernd Foecking said that an increase in these behaviors will increase over the next five or so years as a result of the opioid crisis. Extra services for these kids will jump up significantly.

5. Teacher's Contract

Not discussed.

6. Other

Alan Edelkind reported that we have an answer, consolidation. The public does not seem to know the question. What is wrong with the current state? Then a solution can be developed.

The issues are being looked at vertically. An outside person might be considered to look at the state objectively.

Dale Gabel said that one area of lack of understanding is that costs are going up and at the same time enrollments are declining.

Dale Gabel motioned to adjourn at 8:31 p.m. Second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok

