

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 28, 2019

7:00 p.m.

SAU #1

Minutes

Present: John Jordan (Hancock), Dale Gabel (Dublin), John Robertson (Antrim), Karen Hatcher (Peterborough), Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Dick Dunning, Rich Cahoon, Tim Theberge, Myron Steere, Janine Lesser, Jerome Wilson, Bernd Foecking (7:20 p.m.), Alan Edelkind

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

1. Accept Minutes of February 21, 2019

Karen Hatcher moved to accept the minutes of February 21, 2019. Dale Gabel second. Tim Theberge abstained. All else in favor. Motion carried.

2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Dale Gabel moved to nominate John Jordan as Chairman of SAC. Tim Theberge second. Unanimous. John Jordan nominated John Robertson as Vice-Chairman. Dale Gabel second. Unanimous.

3. ConVal Lawsuit

Kimberly Saunders reported that a letter to the community was shared about the lawsuit. The preliminary injunction is Friday, March 29th.

Kimberly shared "how we got here". This conversation started approximately 10 months ago.

The differences afforded to different communities, in terms of education, vary drastically from one to the other. Adequacy is currently \$3,636.06 per student per year. Not much can be done with this level of funding. Choices are forced in all areas of education as a result. We can't pay for the basic core requirements by law with these funds.

The board made the decision to wait on the suit until the Commission Report came out.

In the fall, SAC made a decision to send a letter to Concord about education funding saying that it was problematic.

SAU Leadership members and School Board members went to Concord to testify.

HB 678 – We took the Commission's Factors and put in state averages and, where appropriate, ConVal numbers, which resulted in \$9,929.00. Transportation was not factored in. The cost of maintaining facilities is over \$1,400.00; ConVal comes in slightly higher.

As a result, HB 678 was retained in committee, which is where bills go to die. No action will take place this year. \$18,901.32 is the average cost per student in New Hampshire.

Present Legislation, HB 709, has the most promise. It did indicate that it will take adequacy up to \$3,709.00 for FY 20/21 fiscal year. It restores stabilization (disparity aid) for the poorest communities, which they desperately need. This isn't enough.

HB 686 raises adequacy to an approximate \$4,000.00.

The legislature has had 26 years to solve the problem. A child attends school, K-12, for 13 years. Therefore, this has passed two generations of students without resolve. We cannot continue to wait another generation. We cannot afford to wait any more. ConVal is Berlin and Pittsfield in eight years.

If not now, when? If not us, who? So far, HB 709 restores stabilization and starting disparity aid. Disparity aid will be a set number. What happens to disparity aid in the next five or ten years? More and more districts become in need. If they restore stabilization, they can take it away. Part of the Constitution is that students will receive a constitutionally adequate education.

Myron Steere said that many years ago, we had foundation aid. We put in lottery aid. As soon as lottery aid came in, they took foundation aid away.

John Jordan asked what the goal is of the lawsuit. The goal is \$9,929.00 per student from the State.

Rich Cahoon said that the most generous proposal has \$90M in it. It results in \$550 for each student.

Karen Hatcher said she has mixed feelings about all of this. She is worried about the timing. She recognizes that the legislative efforts are not sufficient. They are an interim stop with disparity aid.

Karen further reported on other education bills. The finance committee voted through 709 unanimously. The governor could veto the budget. In the long game, we need a fix. The intention is to keep legislative pressure on education funding.

Janine Lesser said that the thing pushing in the other direction is the state budget. They are always playing a shell game. There is no new revenue coming in. This is what the lawsuit is about; it is about concrete pressure that they cannot avoid.

John Jordan said that he would like to see a Legislative solution.

Rich Cahoon spoke about the attention that this suit is getting in Concord. A commission is looking at this. There are no new facts to be discovered in 26 years.

Equalized Valuation is the amount of dollars of real property that can be taxed for education. The disparity can be egregious from town to town. If the State is going to require specifics, they should be required to fund them at a reasonable level.

Tomorrow morning is the first hearing for a preliminary injunction just by scheduling before April 1st. It puts us on the record.

Contacting our legislators is important.

Karen Hatcher reported on an organized group that will continue efforts on behalf of education. Negotiating to get money in the budget is a push. This work will continue regardless.

Kimberly reported that ConVal is doing their own communication on Twitter, email, Facebook and Instagram.

Rich Cahoon reported that two districts have already joined in ConVal's suit; Winchester and Monadnock.

Kimberly said that the feedback that has been received has been significantly positive. The only negative feedback has come from politicians.

John Robertson asked what the role is of SAC in this work. Kimberly suggested that SAC hosts meetings to explain the lawsuit in an open forum. In addition, every legislator that represents the nine towns should be gathered in one room on this topic.

Rich Cahoon suggested that we have nine towns on completely different assessment cycles. If all towns could get on the same cycle it would make a big difference.

What if SAC goes back to their boards and shares the thought of working cooperatively across the nine towns. What would be the kinds of things that would benefit? Bulk purchasing, etc. Getting everyone to come together on the same assessment cycle, supporting the school district as a whole, would be topics for consideration.

Karen Hatcher suggested a regional forum of Selectpersons, SAC, and Town Administrators.

John Robertson moved to support the legal action being taken by ConVal. Tim Theberge second.

SAC is a standing committee of the School Board created by the Articles of Agreement. The specific charge is for SAC to meet with the School Board.

The Chair interpreted the charge of SAC not to permit board members to vote. As a result of not all selectpersons present, a vote was tabled.

4. Legislative Update

Discussed in agenda item three above.

5. Funding Formula

Not discussed.

6. Consolidation

Not discussed.

7. Other

None.

Karen Hatcher motioned to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Dale Gabel second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok