

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, September 23, 2021

SAU Office Board Room

7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Present: John Robertson, Jeff Brown, Bill Kennedy, George Willard, Bob Marshall (7:06 pm),
Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Tim Theberge

1. Call to Order

John Robertson called the meeting to order 7:01 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes of August 26, 2021

Bill Kennedy moved to accept the minutes of August 26, 2021. Jeff Brown second.

The word "all" under School Reopening Update, eight line down, was removed. The word "that" was corrected to read "than" in the first line of page two.

Unanimous as amended.

3. Lawsuit Update

Kimberly Saunders said that there has been some turnover of members of the Selectmen's Advisory Committee.

Jeff Brown exited at 7:06 p.m.

In 2019, ConVal began down the road of suing the State of NH over school funding.

ConVal got to the point of suing because most communities can get kids to the mid-point of the mountain with education funding. Some towns can get their kids to the top. There are towns that don't get a chance based on what they can raise locally.

Based on the states funding formula, transportation is allocated at \$315 per child per year. In ConVal, it costs \$944.60 per child per year for transportation. In Manchester, the transportation cost is \$411.32. Manchester has over \$600 more dollars that they can spend per child before the child even walks in the door. For ConVal, that is \$600 dollars that we cannot spend on a child.

The premise of the lawsuit is this; we are not asking for real costs. ConVal is asking the State to use their own data and apply it to their own formula.

In the formula, the State says that the salary for a teacher is \$33,647. Salary and benefits total \$47,267. In addition, teacher ratios are 1 teacher for every 25 students. The actual State ratios reflect 1 teacher for every 9.96 students grades k-2 and 1 for every 12.6 students grades 3-12.

Actual teacher salary according to the State is \$66,105.

For every teacher, \$20 is allocated for professional development. State data says that it is about \$30. Facilities operation and maintenance in the formula is \$195. Actual is \$1,400.

Present adequacy is \$3,786.66 per student per year provided by the State.

If we use the states own data and the states own formula we calculate \$9,929.00.

The average cost of an education is \$18,901.32 to educate a child, according to the state.

ConVal filed suit for the \$9,929.00.

HB678 was sent to committee. Legislation is a moving target.

If adjusted systematically, and we go back to 2008 and only adjusted for inflation, ConVal would get \$4,139.03.

The judge ruled that ConVal is right and the problem has never been solved. He was unable to put a number on it. The history of judicial restraint compelled him not to rule that the State had to pay.

The State took it to the Supreme Court where they did not grant attorney fees.

A judge was not appointed by the Governor as a result of the ConVal lawsuit.

Supreme Court sent it back to the judge. ConVal signed up 18 partners across the state representing 25% of the student population across the state. This could be a tipping point and was a major push back to the state.

The State hired outside counsel. The judge was transferred by the State. The Supreme Court said that the ConVal case followed the judge and was not reassigned.

Recently, a bulleted list of information was requested of ConVal. It included 48 points resulting in hundreds of requests for information.

It has been 26 years since the Claremont suit. It encompasses two generations of school children. A child gets 2,340 school days from kindergarten to grade twelve. Think about what has been lost for these children.

So, if not now, when? If not us, who? ConVal said....not one more year. We filed suit.

John Robertson asked Kimberly if there is a message that can be taken back to the towns.

Kimberly said that Concord has done a fantastic job of pitting the towns against the schools. The real argument is the towns against the State. The State has downshifted costs forever.

It is important to stay together. It is not the school's fault that the taxes are so high, it is Concord's because they are not adequately funding education and they are downshifting costs.

The State requires water testing, requires a flagpole, testing and teaching of specific classes, and so many other mandates.

It is about maintaining local control of our schools. It is about providing a quality education.

It is anticipated that ConVal will be back in front of a judge in 2023.

Discussion took place about drafting a letter to the State about education funding and to the newspaper first to remind communities and second to Executive Council and to the Governor as well.

85% of the schools overseen by the Department of Education are public schools. More rules are continually being added, funding is being pulled back. Talk to Executive Council to effect change. Bill Kennedy suggested vetting this with the select boards in all of the towns and not just from this committee.

Kimberly Saunders offered to meet with select boards or have one meeting of all the select board on the topic of the lawsuit and adequate funding.

Discussion took place about retaining students to continue to live in the district post-ConVal as well as attracting and retaining staff.

4. Committee Reports

Policy – focus on financial policies . The fall update has just been received. Work on the Superintendent evaluation policy has taken place. Several policies are coming back from the nurses.

Budget & Property – Capital Improvement Plan budgeting has been a discussion. Potential bond in 2023 has been talked about. Recommendation of the board is a 2% increase over last year's operating budget while CPI is 5.3 to 6.1%. Solar is still moving forward.

Education Committee – looks at curriculum on a review cycle. Citizenship testing requirements was a discussion recently and how that will be approached. Math is a challenge for ConVal.

Equity Committee – looks around all things related to equity. Opportunities must be equitable for all students.

Strategic Plan – subcommittees are scheduled to meet.

Bob Marshall asked what the status of mental health education was in the ConVal School District. Cari Coates is the Director of Student Services who is the best contact to discuss this topic. Social emotional coaches are being put in place for staff.

5. 2022-2023 Proposed Budget Expectations

Expectation is 2% above operating budget not counting the Collective Bargaining Agreement. A minimal capital investment needs consideration within the budget.

What is the latest word on consolidation? The Strategic Plan facilities group is charged to develop a pathway for that discussion.

Is the current school board prepared to go down the consolidation road? Yes.

Is there a plan to do so? The Strategic Plan is in the creation process. July 2022 is the date for plan completion. A consolidation goal is in place as part of the plan.

6. Roll Call Vote

John Robertson identified those present at tonight's meeting.

7. Other

None.

Bill Kennedy moved to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. George Willard second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok