

# OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road  
Peterborough, New Hampshire

## CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

### Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, May 25, 2023

SAU Office Board Room  
7:00 p.m.

### Minutes

**Present:** Jeff Brown, George Willard, Diane Callahan, Bob Edwards, Dick Dunning, Katherine Heck, Lori Schmidt

#### 1. Call to Order

Jeff Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

#### 2. Approve Minutes of April 27, 2023

George Willard moved to approve the minutes of April 27, 2023. Diane Callahan seconded. Bob Edwards abstained. All else in favor. Motion carried.

#### 3. Follow-up on Strategic Organization Committee Work

Dick Dunning reported that two companies were interviewed for the position to come in and take a look at the district around consolidation or reconfiguration. It was made critical that the involvement of Selectman in every town and the Selectman's Advisory Committee be involved in the sharing of information.

A timeline for the process will be shared once a contract is entered into.

The Strategic Organization Committee will be expanded, in a sense, to include representation of groups and individuals to provide input. It will be intensive.

The key part is to reach beyond parents and into the community as a whole to share the understanding of what will come out of this study to determine what is best for kids and taxpayers.

A neutral party with fresh eyes is sought for the purposes of conducting the study.

Demographics inform that there will not be a significant increase in enrollment.

The infrastructure will be looked at. It is a detailed look at the elementary and middle schools and less into the high school.

Part of the process is an economic study of the impact on property should a school close.

Bob Edwards spoke about the different agreements some of the towns have with the school district relative to the school property and building. For example, the ConVal School District owns a building but not the land the school sits on.

Safety is a key issue in this study.

An independent company to look at the demographics, geographics, and a multitude of other factors is sought.

The goal is to bring something to the voters in March. Educating the voters will be critical and to learn more about what they think.

Jeff Brown said that he hears that people are better positioned for considering reconfiguration or consolidation. Some feel that it is about time.

The Strategic Organization Committee has met regularly. Once the company is contracted with, regular meetings will resume.

Information will be shared outward to keep as many informed as possible.

#### **4. School Year End/Graduation**

June 10th is the date of CVHS graduation. Approximately 175 students are anticipated to graduate. The year end calendar for students was shared.

#### **5. Summer School Information**

Summer school is approximately four part time days for younger students. Opportunities are available for middle school and high school students as well.

Two different types of summer school; one for students who have learning loss or special education needs and the second is for students who have an interest in theater, math, or other options.

#### **6. Reserve Account Update**

Lori Schmidt referenced a document titled "Trust Fund Information" that identifies the fund, purpose, and target balance among other details.

The School Board are agents to expend funds but a Public Hearing is required.

The Budget & Property Committee meets monthly and a summary of what is anticipated to be spent, what has been spent, and what the balance is reported.

\$4.5 million is the balance among all of the trust funds combined.

Expenses have to be incurred first to be reimbursed.

Information is distributed through meeting agenda distribution. We have been saving due to the lack of desire to bond. It is a strategy, there still may be a need for a bond.

How are the balances insured? They are with Charter Trust and are collateralized. We can collateralize up to 102%.

We don't have our own trustees. The Town of Peterborough Trustees of the Trust Funds are ConVal's Trustees of the Trust Funds. They have an investment policy and consult with the district.

Target Balances are referenced. Is ConVal close to the target balance? ConVal doesn't want to go below a target balance in the event an emergency arises. Financial cautiousness is exercised. As an example, the Energy Trust is fairly new and is intended to be used to buy out the solar installation outright. It is planned and thought out deliberately.

Would you continue to fund trusts who have hit the target balance? It would depend on the plans for the fund. In addition, funds are not added to every year. A review of which funds have been added to was shared.

Funding them depends on the amount of money unencumbered at the end of the school year.

#### **7. Fund Balance Retention Policy**

Katherine Heck reported that in 2021, it was voted to adopt the ability to retain funds at year end. RSA 198:4-b allows a school district to retain up to 5% of the current fiscal year's net assessment. The Contoocook Valley School District voted to accept the RSA to retain up to 5%. The District however, will maintain an unreserved fund balance, in the general fund, of no more than 2.5% of the net district assessment.

Like the towns, we would have to talk to the Department of Revenue Administration. There are safeguards to assure the taxpayers that it is intended to be a tool in the toolbox. The district does not have any emergency expendable trusts. The budget is the only funds.

In the event of an emergency, absent the ability to retain funds, a special meeting would have to be called to raise and appropriate additional funds.

The District will only save what it needs to.

## 8. Lawsuit Update

Katherine Heck said that it can be viewed online. Kimberly Saunders did a great job representing the suit. Lawyers were brought in from out of state to defend the State.

Kimberly shared a link to a webinar about school funding fairness. The Governor proposed a budget that asked for an increase in adequacy funding. It is long overdue. There is acknowledgement at the State level that a change is needed. The Legislature would have to fund the proposal; they are the funding body. Right now, if the judge ordered it, a flip in the tax bill would be seen. There isn't a plan to fund it. Developing a framework to fund an adequate education in New Hampshire is needed.

The Lang Amendment will hopefully increase adequacy aid to our more needy towns and districts.

Katherine Heck said that the entire House, both parties, has the priority to pass cannabis. Democrats want the money to go to education. It will not be a huge revenue stream. In addition, cannabis would be permitted to be consumed at any public space. Provisions would be needed to navigate it. More to come.

What is the balance between making a decision that is law and making a decision that is political?

Diane Callahan shared that she is keeping track of the voucher system requirements. One can make up to 350% of the poverty level to qualify for education freedom vouchers.

Proving income beyond the initial qualification is under discussion. Guardrails around the program are now recognized as a need.

Jeff Brown asked if anyone has agenda items to reach out to him to let him know.

## 9. Adjourn

**Bob Edwards motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. Diane Callahan seconded. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok