

# OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road  
Peterborough, New Hampshire

## CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

### Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, December 14, 2023

SAU Office Board Room  
7:00 p.m.

### Minutes

**Present:** William Kennedy, Bob Edwards, Mike Borden, Carole Monroe, George Willard, Diane Callahan, Dick Dunning, Alan Edelkind, Katherine Heck, Dr. Kimberly Saunders

#### 1. Call to Order

William Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

#### 2. Approval of November 30, 2023 minutes

Bob Edwards motioned to approve the minutes of November 30, 2023. Carole Monroe seconded. Unanimous.

#### 3. Discussion of the Prismatic Recommendation on Consolidation/Reconfiguration

Alan Edelkind reported that the finding, as it relates to the schools, was a recommendation to close Temple Elementary School, Dublin Consolidated School, Pierce School, and Frankestown Elementary School. The board itself has voted to accept the report but has not voted yet to accept the recommendation.

A warrant article would need to be developed by the end of December 29th.

At the Community Forum, people that got up to speak on the issue were opposed. It depends, mainly, on whether there is a school recommended for closure.

We have next year to plan, not to execute. The year after that would be the implementation year. Bob Edwards asked if he read the range of savings predicted correctly. Alan Edelkind confirmed. He said that the feedback is good from the community whether opposed to or in favor. There is a lot of interest.

There are some questions on the report, many focused on the finances. The most important issue is the equity of education and safety of our students. \$2.4 or \$2.5M potential minimum savings is not the most critical piece.

Bill Kennedy said that he understands that the next step would be to accept the recommendation. It would need to be decided soon to allow time to draft a warrant article.

Dick Dunning said that he has heard that the public feels that they need more time to share their feelings. People may come and it may look as though they are unsupportive but they want to know what this is going to look like.

Dick said that it is really important for the board to share what it would look like for each school that would be closed in terms of transportation and other factors. It is our obligation to share that with the community. Change is a frightening thing. Our goal is to make it clear. Dick said that his greatest concern is that he hears from a minority of people and the board needs to hear from the majority. The ConVal taxpayers need to tell the ConVal School Board what to do. Some taxpayers share that it is prohibitive to pay their bills.

If a warrant is put on the ballot and a 2/3's vote is not achieved, it will be informative to gauge the interest for change for the future. If it passes, it is a moot issue. A recommendation will be developed.

Dick Dunning said that we have never had foreign language K-12. There have been cultural experiences in middle school, but not a true foreign language. High school has foreign language. Carole Monroe said that the reality is that it isn't just about change. The premise was that the schools are so expensive that we had to do something. Yet, the savings is miniscule. The savings may be eaten up by new programs, facilities, etc. The bottom line is that savings are not expected and that is a frustration. Dublin would not see any savings for giving their school up. It has tainted the way that people look at this. When they don't see the savings come back they'll ask why they are doing this. She asked why the middle schools are not combined. Is it really the best thing for Dublin?

Bill Kennedy said that towns like Peterborough may not be able to offer programming because they are supporting the small schools.

Carole Monroe shared her surprise for the number of Peterborough residents that stood up in opposition due to anticipated housing development.

Diane Callahan said that she will not understand the difficulty because Sharon students do well at PES. There are more friends to be friends with and more opportunities at PES. She understands the concern, people can still be involved in school, they just need to go to a different place.

Mike Borden shared his disappointment with the number of people sharing opinions. Dublin shared concern about what would happen to their building. He said that no one is talking about the large expenses that are up and coming with all of these satellite schools. Saving a few million will likely be more than that when considering work that will be needed.

Bob Edwards applauded the board for going through this analysis. He hears feedback that it is great to have savings but it is not enough to offset having a school in their community.

Bob Edwards asked if the potential savings would be used for world language.

Dick Dunning said that we cannot have world language with the number of schools that we currently have. World Language is just one example of what could be done.

Dick further added that if it were \$2M in savings in the first year it would mean \$4M in year two etc. Dick shared his experience beginning with attending DCS and then teaching at it later in life. Attending SMS at the fifth grade meant that all students were new in the school for fifth grade. DCS maintained fifth grade students and once the transition took place, he heard that parents wished they had done it sooner (sent students to SMS). Socialization opportunities are possible with larger schools. For some, K-4 without friends is not a good situation. There are greater opportunities to group students together.

Dick Dunning said that Professional Learning Opportunities allow same grade teachers to look at student assessments together and learn from each other on how to improve instruction to improve student results. This is about improving the lives of students. He said that we can do more for kids with larger populations.

Dick said that he wants to hear from the taxpayers.

Carole Monroe said that people want to save some money.

George Willard said that he hears feedback from Temple residents that they want to keep their school in town.

Bill Kennedy said that he hears the passion about schools. He doesn't want to have to subsidize it for other towns. The taxpayer money that comes out of Peterborough supports other schools.

Carole Monroe said that people are not convinced about that. There are questions about the math. It creates an incohesive district when you say that Peterborough is subsidizing another town. Carole spoke about Peterborough having four board members. Peterborough benefits from having these schools in town. This divides the district.

Bill Kennedy asked that the incremental cost be addressed. Will the incremental cost be what it is for the school a student would be assigned?

Dick Dunning spoke about the upsides of having a larger class as a teacher and added that there would be downsides as well. Savings comes in staffing which reduces the overhead.

Heat, plowing, and maintenance in buildings would be saved.

Buildings are owned by ConVal. In Hancock, Hancock owns the land. In Bennington, the building is supposed to be used as a school or go back to the community. The other buildings belong to all of us. Looking at the best use of the buildings would be a focus. A budget cut would be devastating. We try to be conservative.

Carole Monroe asked if it was possible that the School Board won't recommend exactly what the recommendation came down as.

Dick said that the Board has not discussed it yet. He asked where we find the savings when the costs are mostly staff? Through attrition and retirement, we can save positions. He said that he is not talking about paraprofessionals, administration, support staff. We can't fill positions now. We wouldn't have to duplicate services or outsource for positions we cannot find people for.

Mike Borden said that he appreciates that larger classes would be beneficial and additional programming. The biggest problem is how we fund schools, through taxes. You can only cut your costs so much and still function. We have to come up with a way to end this so it is not solely on the taxpayers back.

Carole Monroe said that the recommendation to allow students to choose another small school or a large school should their school close is a good recommendation. It allows the opportunity for parents to decide where their children would best fit.

Bill Kennedy asked how the towns can support getting the word out. Select Boards have a role in getting the vote out. Can a bullet pointed list be formulated for the towns to share?

Once a decision is made on the recommendation it can be formulated. It will be done in a neutral way.

Bob Edwards asked the timeline moving forward.

Dick Dunning said that a warrant would have to include a public hearing. The plea will be both for kids and the budget. It was a conservative estimate on the savings; he believes it will be greater.

Bill Kennedy said that Peterborough has developed a strategy to get the word out.

Katherine Heck spoke about language that a savings would be realized. Work in the middle schools will cost money. That work might be offset by the savings but it might be looked at as it did not cost more. It is a harder piece to communicate. We can continue with this model. We would have to increase the budget to do work in the middle and high schools.

Kimberly Saunders spoke about needs such as interventionists for reading. We can't add what we need to add to get kids where they need to be. She said that her role in this was to give the data over. It is not about what we have to cut, it is also about what we can't add.

Diane Callahan said that when Sharon used to go vote for things, the Board would talk to the community at large. When the Board spoke, the passion for kids and education changed people's minds. They supported education. With SB2, that went away. She said that she saw a difference for her children when they went from TES to PES in a positive way.

#### 4. Other

Dick shared that Kimberly has been chosen as NH Superintendent of the Year.

Beginning in January, the SAC meeting schedule will return to the fourth Thursday.

#### 5. Adjourn

**Bob Edwards motioned to adjourn at 8:01 p.m. Mike Borden seconded. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok