

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, January 25, 2024

**SAU Office Board Room
7:00 p.m.**

Agenda

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Congrats Kimberly!**
- 3. Approval of December 14, 2023 minutes**
- 4. Status of reconfiguration/consolidation and warrant article**
 - a. What happens next if warrant article passes or doesn't pass?**
- 5. Budget highlights**
- 6. Other Business**
- 7. Adjourn**

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CONTOOCCOOK 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

WARRANT

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

To the Inhabitants of the Contoocook Valley School District consisting of the Towns of Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Francestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, Sharon, and Temple qualified to vote in District affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet at **ConVal High School** at 184 Hancock Rd., (Route 202 North) in Peterborough on the **sixth day of February, 2024, at 6 o'clock in the evening** for the first session of the Annual School District Meeting (snow date: seventh day of February next at 6 o'clock in the evening), to deliberate upon the warrant articles listed below. Warrant articles may be amended subject to the following limitations: (a) warrant articles whose wording is prescribed by law shall not be amended; (b) warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote on the main motion, as amended; and, (c) no warrant article shall be amended to eliminate the subject matter of the article. An amendment that changes the dollar amount of an appropriation in a warrant article shall not be deemed to violate this provision.

You are further notified to meet at the following places in the Town of your residence:

Antrim	Antrim Town Hall	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Bennington	Pierce Elementary School	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Dublin	Dublin Town Hall	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Francestown	Francestown Town Hall	10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Greenfield	Greenfield Meeting House	10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Hancock	Hancock Town Office	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Peterborough	Peterborough Community Center	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Sharon	Sharon Meeting House	11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Temple	Temple Town Hall	7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

on the **twelfth day of March** next for the second session of the Meeting (polls will be open for voting by official ballot at the second session)

Article 01: Operating Budget-School District-SB2

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$58,370,749? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$57,822,135 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Contoocook Valley School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 02: Accept the Collective Bargaining Agreement

To see if the Contoocook Valley School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the ConVal School Board and the ConVal Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2024-2025	\$1,229,388

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,229,388 for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 03: Special Meeting for Defeated/Amended Collective Bargaining Agreement

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District, if Warrant Article 2 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Warrant Article 2 cost items only? (Majority vote required)

Article 04: Appropriate to the Health Maintenance Trust Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$350,000 to be added to the Health Maintenance Trust Fund, previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 05: Appropriate to the Building Capital Reserve Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$500,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund as previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 06: Appropriate to the Technology Trust Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the Technology Trust Fund as previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 07: Appropriate to the Equipment Trust Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the Equipment Trust Fund as previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 08: Appropriate to the Energy Trust Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the Contoocook Valley School District Energy Trust Fund, previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 09: Appropriate to the Building Capital Reserve Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$200,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund as previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024, with no amount to be raised from taxation. In the event that Article 05 passes, this appropriation shall be in addition to any appropriation to the Building Capital Reserve pursuant to Article 05. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 10: To Amend Article 5 of the Articles of Agreement:

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to amend Article 5 of the Articles of Agreement among the School District towns of Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, Sharon, and Temple as follows:

From the present language of:

The Contoocook Valley School District (ConVal) shall be responsible for grades one through twelve (1-12) and Kindergartens. Kindergartens were previously authorized by a vote at an annual Cooperative School District meeting. Grades nine through twelve (9-12) shall be educated at the centrally located Senior High School in Peterborough. Grades five through eight (5-8) may be educated at the Middle Schools in Antrim and Peterborough. Elementary Schools shall be maintained in Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, and Temple. As school populations change, students from the Middle Schools may be reassigned to Elementary School locations. Such reassignment needs would be determined by ConVal Administration, but each location change would have to be approved by the School Board.

To the language as follows:

The Contoocook Valley School District (ConVal) shall be responsible for grades one through twelve (1-12) and Kindergartens. Kindergartens were previously authorized by a vote at an annual Cooperative School District meeting. Grades nine through twelve (9-12) shall be educated at the centrally located Senior High School in Peterborough. Grades five through eight (5-8) may be educated at the Middle Schools in Antrim and Peterborough. Elementary Schools shall be maintained in Antrim, Greenfield, Hancock, and Peterborough. As school populations change, students from the Middle Schools may be reassigned to Elementary School locations. Such reassignment needs would be determined by ConVal Administration, but each location change would have to be approved by the School Board.
(2/3 Vote Required) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.) (8 in favor, 2 opposed)

Article 11: Accept Reports of Agents and Auditors

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District accept the reports of Agents, Auditors, Committees, and Officers chosen?

Article 12: School Board Salaries

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District appoint the salaries of the School Board and fix the annual compensation of any other officers or agents of the District as follows: School Board Chair, \$1,500; each member, \$1,000; Treasurer, \$1,500; Assistant Treasurer, \$500; Moderator, \$300? (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Article 13: School Board Members

To choose Contoocook Valley School District Officers as follows: Five (5) Members of the School Board; one (1) from the Town of Antrim for a term of one (1) year; one (1) from the Town of Bennington for a term of three (3) years; one (1) from the Town of Greenfield for a term of three (3) years; one (1) from the Town of Peterborough for a term of three (3) years; one (1) from the Town of Temple for a term of three (3) years. One (1) Moderator for a term of three (3) years.