

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
106 Hancock Road  
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

**CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Proposed Changes to the Articles of Agreement  
Public Hearing**

**Tuesday, January 9, 2024**

**SAU #1 Office**

**6:30 PM**

**(Snow Date – January 16, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m. @ SAU)**

Livestream Link: <https://www.youtube.com/c/ConValEvents>

**Minutes**

**Present:** Dick Dunning, Alan Edelkind, Katherine Heck, Janine Lesser, Jim Fredrickson, Erin Pils-Martin, Greg Kriebel, Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Dr. Ann Forrest, Brian Cisneros

**Dick Dunning called the hearing to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.**

Dick Dunning said that this is the opportunity for the Public to speak on behalf of the proposed changes to the Articles of Agreement.

A Public Hearing on the Articles of Agreement will be held at the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, SAU Board Room, 106 Hancock Rd., Peterborough, NH, at 6:30 p.m., on January 9, 2024 (Snow Date Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.), to consider the adoption of a proposed amendment to Article 5 of the Articles of Agreement among the pre-existing school districts of Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, Temple, and Sharon.

The text of the proposed amendment is as follows:

Amend the sentence in Article 5 that reads “Elementary Schools shall be maintained in Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, and Peterborough and Temple”. as follows:

“Elementary Schools shall be maintained in Antrim, ~~Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown,~~ Greenfield, Hancock, and Peterborough, ~~and Temple.~~”

If the amendment is adopted, Article 5 would read as follows in its entirety:

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.

Sarah Cahn, Dublin, asked about the statement about “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”

Kimberly Saunders said that is the existing language in the article now and is not new.

Sarah Cahn further asked what the plan for this looks like, when would it roll out, what would transportation look like?

Kimberly Saunders said that should this pass; the board will direct administration to spend the first-year planning what it will look like.

Sarah asked if this plan is without a fiscal impact and without a plan.

Janine Lesser said that this is the first step needed in order to take any additional steps. A proposal was put forward to close schools. In order to take action, and begin planning, we need this change voted.

Kimberly Saunders said that as legally stated, this is a change in the Articles of Agreement. She read the change proposed.

It does not decide, it gives the opportunity to the board to make decisions whether schools in these towns would remain open. It does not mean that they would absolutely close.

The first year would be a planning year.

Sarah Cahn asked if there would be further public hearings throughout the process.

Kimberly Saunders said that there is no legal obligation to have further hearings. Tonight’s hearing is legally bound. The board would look for input once the planning phase was done.

Janine Lesser said that, of course, the board would have hearings.

Katherine Heck said that any work done would be noticed on public agendas and there would be opportunities for the public to comment.

As an example, the Superintendent was directed to look at this with single tier busing.

It could be any version of what is embedded in the Articles of Agreement or nothing at all.

Sarah asked what the reasonable timeline for change might be.

Alan Edelkind said that additional meetings will take place as before and they will continue whether legally required or not. An entire year will be spent to develop a process.

Sarah said that if the planning process goes through, it could be implemented in the 25/26 Year.

Susan Peters, Dublin, said that it would seem that the most fair and flexible thing to do would be to take away the guarantee for all of the towns. Why just the four towns when you are asking for flexibility?

Joe MacGregor, Bennington, said that if the voters approved this change, you would be obligated to go along with what this says. If the schools no longer exist, there is no

opportunity to review. If this gets voted “yes” the only places that you could put elementary schools are in the other towns.

Kimberly said that it says “shall” be maintained. It does not say that you can’t have a school in Dublin or other places. It does not say that those schools cannot exist. Just like it doesn’t say that we must have two middle schools.

Joe said that if this is a yes vote, you are in the same position. There is no discussion about having schools in Bennington, Dublin, Temple, or Frankestown.

We are not accomplishing the ability to have the flexibility to move children around. He asked if he is wrong. If the voters vote to approve this, it seems that you are stuck. The only place the amended articles of agreement allows you to place students is in the four elementary schools.

Jim Fredrickson said that we have an obligation to maintain schools in the four towns mentioned. We have an opportunity to maintain in the other four schools.

Kimberly Saunders said that she understands what Joe MacGregor is saying and that is not the way we have been advised or counseled.

Joe asked how the school board educates the general public that this is not a must but rather a can or a may. Has the board taken a vote to support this article?

Dick Dunning confirmed that the vote on this article was 10 in favor, 2 opposed.

Tina Kriebel, Peterborough, said that her understanding is that the year of planning is the result of the enormous cost to plan and execute this plan. This is the reason that the vote is coming ahead of the planning.

Kimberly Saunders said that to plan for school closure or reconfiguration, the administration will push everything else off of their plate to solely look at what the plan would look like. It is an immense task.

John Wood, Dublin, asked if the Articles of Agreement contain pages 17-20 of the agreement. He asked about the remainder of the articles.

Kimberly Saunders said that the report is a number of pages, but pages 7 + are the Articles of Agreement that were part of the pages of a report. Kimberly Saunders agreed to send it to Mr. Wood.

Jim Fredrickson said that there were two votes opposed but not 13 total. There were 10 members present, so it would be 8-2.

Jon Manley, Bennington, said that he agrees with what Joe MacGregor says that if this passes you will have no choice to have schools in those four towns. He urged the board to look at that. In some of the towns such as Bennington, the school is the most vital building. There are a lot of questions as to what happens to the buildings should the schools close. He said that the way it is written is pretty tight.

Blake Minkler, Dublin, asked if this passes by  $\frac{2}{3}$ 's and you begin the year long process, have you considered that a school might withdraw.

Kimberly Saunders said that would be an immense task. A town would vote to withdraw and we would have the planning done in advance.

As an example, if the Town of Sharon proposed to withdraw, they would put it on the 2024 ballot or 2025. If it passes in 2024 at the school level, the only town that could put a

withdrawal petition in is Peterborough because they vote in May at the town level. Chris Gallant, Dublin, agreed that the language about all towns should be mentioned. This relates to eight separate towns. He asked how much snow is required for this hearing to have been rescheduled. He imagines that there are a lot of people not here tonight because of snow.

Dick Dunning said that there is Deliberative Session on February 6th at the high school next.

Board members questions? None

Kimberly Saunders said that she has emailed counsel on the questions asked tonight. If there is substantive change, she will make that public.

Jim Fredrickson asked what is allowed at Deliberative Session relative to this Warrant Article.

Kimberly Saunders said that a warrant article can be changed but you cannot negate the intent of the warrant article.

For example, with a budget warrant article, you cannot zero out the budget. It is not that cut and dry.

Jim Fredrickson said that the proposal about listing all of the schools might allow us to do what we intended to do. Kimberly confirmed that counsel will be asked.

Katherine Heck said that this allows voters to come forward and discuss the budget and warrant and you cannot change the purpose so that it is no longer valid.

Any amendment around an already legal document would have to be vetted. The Department of Revenue Administration may disallow an amendment made for various reasons. There is caution to this. It is the voters meeting and the voter's budget. It has to be done in a procedural manner.

Janine Lesser said that once a proposal is made, the assembly votes on it.

Sarah Cahn asked if Deliberative Session is separate for every town. No, one meeting for nine towns on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at ConVal High School, in the gym.

Jim Fredrickson said that Bob Edwards moderates the meeting. Every article is explained and discussed. There is an opportunity to change some of them.

Joe MacGregor asked if it is possible to submit an amendment ahead of time to determine if it is legal.

Kimberly Saunders said that it could be shared early with legal to ask if it is legal. You cannot amend next week.

Joe said that someone may present an amendment and determine that there is legal terminology in it that might cause it to be resubmitted.

Jon Manley, Bennington, asked where the School Board meets for the first time, if they would introduce themselves.

He asked for a comparison for the savings in the schools and increase in busing costs to judge fairly if this is a good deal.

Kimberly Saunders said that we don't have specific transportation information at this time. The estimated savings is \$2.4M+ in annual savings.

Dick Dunning asked if there were further questions.  
There were no further questions.

**Greg Kriebel moved to close the public hearing at 7:03 p.m. Katherine Heck seconded.  
Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok