

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 28, 2024

SAU Office Board Room
7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Present: William Kennedy (Peterborough), John Robertson (Antrim), Betsy Villaume (Hancock), Carole Monroe (Dublin), George Willard (Temple), Mike Borden (Greenfield), Richard Dunning (School Board), Dr. Kimberly Saunders (Superintendent) (electronically attended)

1. Call to Order

William Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Approval of February 22, 2024 minutes

Mike Borden moved to approve the minutes of February 22, 2024. **Seconded. Unanimous.**

3. Review of the recent district ballot results

The ConVal Official Voting Results were referenced. Dublin soundly defeated the vote on consolidation (e.g. Changes to the Articles of Agreement)

Carole Monroe said that a feasibility study will provide information. They are not set on withdrawing but the study will give answers. In order for change, a $\frac{2}{3}$'s vote will be required.

4. ConVal Withdrawal Studies – Dublin, Frankestown

Bill Kennedy said that the options, as he understands it, are to withdraw from the District and SAU completely. Another option is to take over their own school.

Carole Monroe said that Dublin is paying more per student than any other town. Even if we were to take over the school it would require modification to the Articles of Agreement.

Carole shared that Dublin is moving forward with a withdrawal article to get the data out of the feasibility study. There does not seem to be options without a change to the Articles of Agreement by two-thirds. Apportionment cannot be changed without two-thirds vote. There does not seem to be a way for Dublin to facilitate change without first withdrawing from the District and a plan for the students.

The assignment to all of the schools is not to consider sending students to those schools. There are models where middle and high school students might attend ConVal and not the elementary. How many K-12 students that do not attend ConVal schools is not positive. There might be over one hundred students who do not attend. Census data reflect students not accounted for in the ConVal system. They want to know why they don't attend public school. What is it about the school that might change their mind? There is extensive work on

the committee to do. The fact that tax apportionment went up last year factors in. We cannot sustain that in Dublin. The key piece is navigating this. There are a lot of questions.

Bill Kennedy asked George Willard if there is a similar effort in Temple of this type. George said that there is not at this time. There is talk about it.

Bill Kennedy said that there is a similar effort in Frankestown. Antrim has not talked about leaving the ConVal School District.

John Robertson said that the voting was very close. He said that he thinks that is a result of no talk about closing Antrim's Elementary School.

Dick Dunning said that in 2005 there was a study done in Dublin to consider withdrawal. Kimberly Saunders said that there was a vote in Dublin to do a feasibility study. The law has changed since then.

Kimberly Saunders shared what a feasibility study looks like. The initial vote from the previous district, Dublin in this case, to request the present district to conduct a feasibility study. That committee is made up of one Select Board member and one School Board member from each town. The study has to be to the State Board within 180 days. The possibilities are to recommend withdrawal, not recommend withdrawal, or ask for more time.

If they recommend withdrawal, that would go on the next vote. Part of the withdrawal study has to include a plan of how students would be educated, where students will go and a timeline, among other things.

At the School Board meeting on Tuesday, Kimberly will provide a draft of the letter to send to the Select Boards asking for a rep and identifying the first meeting date. From the time of the vote, the initiating meeting has to take place within 60 days. Right now, one question that exists is can the two feasibility studies take place at the same time.

Carole Monroe said that if it is not recommended, it stops there. Can't the town put together a minority report? Kimberly confirmed that could take place and has happened before. Carole said that the New Hampshire School Board Association put together a presentation back in 2013, they have identified RSA 195 to be clear about the process.

Kimberly Saunders said that a lot has changed since then. She has asked counsel to break this down.

Carole Monroe said that the study from 2005 didn't proceed because the district had a lot of bond debt at that time and would have had to be divided making it impossible for Dublin to proceed at that time.

Kimberly confirmed.

Carole said that the district doesn't have that kind of debt leaving the opportunity for Dublin to move forward at this time.

Kimberly said that the first meeting must take place no later than the beginning of May. The SAU will be delivering the data piece. We had to contract for additional staff to get this work done. We are recording a recommendation of what should come off of the plate to

accomplish the feasibility study. Attention will be diverted to providing this massive amount of information. This information will go before the board on April 16th.

George Willard said that at Tuesday's Select board meeting there was talk about starting up a study.

Mike Borden said that Greenfield was in favor of consolidation.

Bill Kennedy said that both Sharon and Peterborough were in favor of the changes to the Articles of Agreement. Overall, district wide, only 45% voted in favor so it wasn't even a majority.

Bill said that the Select boards are concerned that this be solved in the future. The tax rate and property taxes are high.

Kimberly Saunders said that she appreciates that the select boards want the problem solved. This is not just a school problem. We have towns that have five-acre minimums that do not encourage families.

Carole said that it is a chicken and egg problem. We can't attract people into town because it is not affordable. We are all spending a lot of time and money determining if we have affordable housing. This is a piece that we don't have control over.

Betsy Villaume said that it goes beyond affordable housing. People are just not having children. Affordable housing will not populate the schools. Addressing affordable housing is not going to create a doubling of school age children. It will not solve the problem.

Kimberly said that is accurate. We know that people are having children later in life and not as many.

John Wood, Dublin, said that he has asked community members to define affordable housing in different towns. It is easy to say but trying to create equity can create inequity in other areas. This group, and the school board at large, is going to have a conversation about apportionment. When we start talking about donor towns, you need to understand the hard facts. His position is that he wants to see an investment in the community that he purchased property in. He said that grades 5 and 6 should be at the elementary level. He suggested starting with the original Articles of Agreement and looking from there.

Blake Minckler, Dublin, said that one of the factors that continues to be talked about is that we are utilizing 50% of apportionment from property values. We use that and apply value to associate a cost by town. A big divide is created with cost per student. He would like to see an apportionment where towns are paying the same amount for every student. If you could push the elementary school control to each town and they own and pay for it, it would cost that town whatever they want to invest in it. Towns could make decisions on their own to close their elementary schools. Put the responsibility back on the towns for the elementary school. Blake further said that if you bought your house 20 years ago, the value may have tripled but your income has not.

Betsy Villaume said that the State tells ConVal what the determination is based on property value and number of students. She said that she was shocked that this SAU covers K-12. If you want to take on apportionment, good luck to you.

Carole Monroe said that the State determines equalized valuation. The 50/50 apportionment is part of the Articles of Agreement. Things have changed since 1967. For larger towns who are trying to change the regions within their town for economic development, like TIF districts, the other towns will have to pick up the difference. It would be hard to set up TIF districts in smaller towns. Those values are not included in equalized value for property; this did not exist in 1967. She said that Dublin understands that the other towns would have to pick up what Dublin would no longer be contributing.

John Wood said that this feasibility study will provide an understanding of leaving the ConVal School District, but not the SAU. How does a multi-district operate since this has been a single district? Resetting back to zero and moving forward was his suggestion.

Bill Kennedy said that he looks forward to seeing the result of the feasibility study.

Kimberly Saunders said that a report is likely in October. She said that she is familiar with multi-district SAU's. The SAU provides services to all of the districts. Special education costs do not come at the SAU level. The SAU would run a business; payroll, health insurance, making sure there is a Superintendent, Special Education Director etc.

5. Other

Bill Kennedy said that he asked Kimberly to provide an overview of district test scores next month.

Kimberly confirmed that she and Dr. Ann Forrest will share information at the next meeting.

Bill asked Select board members if they have anything for upcoming agendas to let him know.

Carole Monroe asked who to contact about why the tenant who contacted the district about moving into the elementary school and did not and money was budgeted. She referenced information from Jim Fredrickson. Kimberly Saunders asked that Carole send that to her; she believes it to be trust money.

6. Adjourn

John Robertson motioned to adjourn at 7:56 p.m. George Willard seconded. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok