

**Voluntary Regional Education District Study Committee
Leland & Gray Room Library
7:00p.m. – 9:00p.m.
Approved Minutes as Amended for 1-22-2014**

Present: Emily Long, Cory Stark, Neil “Bucky” Pelsue, Bruce Parliman, Heather Hallenbeck, Joe Winrich, LeeAnne Parker. Ken McFadden joined the meeting at 7:13p.m.

WCSU: Dr. Steven John, Dr. Frank Rucker,

Members of the public: Nancy Dyke, Jerry Dyke

Call to Order: Emily Long called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

1.) Review Agenda: Emily removed agenda item #6.

2.) Comments from the public: No comments from the public.

3.) Review and Approve Minutes – November 6th, 2013:

Bucky Pelsue made the motion to approve the minutes from the November 6th, 2013 meeting as distributed. Joe Winrich seconded the motion. All in favor. 0 opposed. 1 abstention from LeeAnne Parker. Motion passed.

4.) Review Local Board Activities – Superintendent, Dr. Steven John, Ed.D.

Dr. John reported on the discussion of collaboration between the Jamaica School Board and Townshend School Board. Tom Tolbert, a member of the Jamaica Board, transformed a 25-Question questionnaire (previously prepared by the Voluntary RED Study Committee) into a survey utilizing www.SurveyMonkey.com. Tom sent the survey to members of those two boards and their schools’ administrators. It’s clear from the survey results that there are some questions that are more controversial than other questions. The Boards agree to extend their focus on the controversial questions that remain.

Heather Hallenbeck represented the Jamaica Board’s decision to continue to move forward with discussions on collaboration between the two school districts of Jamaica and Townshend. The Jamaica Board would like to continue both the discussion of collaboration with the Townshend Board and the discussion of the RED Study.

Dr. John reported on FY15 Proposed Budgets within the WCSU. Marlboro’s budget is at a 21% increase due primarily to Special Education costs. Dover Board is attempting to utilize their reserve to keep their tax-rate low.

Emily Long reported on state-level education discussions. Steven Dale was approached on Governance by the House of Education; Governance will definitely be taken into consideration this year by the Legislature. Status Quo can't continue any longer. There's a lot of discussion pertaining to income sensitivity. Emily has been concerned with the status of what's happening in Governance and with the discussions of what's going on in the local sense of Governance amongst our school boards. It's time to re-assess.

Emily raised the question to the RED Committee: "Do we hold off with moving forward with this Committee until after we see what the Legislature does?"

"If something is going to happen at the state-wide level, I think we're ahead of the game because of the discussions we've been having for years around Governance structure within our SU." – Emily Long

Two specific topics that may be addressed by the Legislature:

- 1.) There may be a bill to establish minimum class-size. To control costs, the legislature can require that schools meet a student: teacher ratio.
- 2.) Restructuring all of the SU's and altering them to School Districts, to form 14-16 School Districts state-wide versus approximately 60 SU's.

Also, the VEA (Vermont Educator's Association) may explore the process of teacher licensing from the Local Standards Board, etc. to the Secretary of the State. There is a new Secretary of Education, Rebecca Holcombe. She spoke to the standards board and said the AOE is not planning on having additional funds; they will need to figure out how to do more with less.

There is talk about taking away the Small School Grants. NewBrook just outgrew their Small School Grant. If the legislature takes away the Small School Grants this change would drastically impact many of the small schools in the WCSU.

More discussion ensued around Board Governance and upcoming possibilities from the legislature.

Bucky would like to take an approach in which the Study Committee starts with small successes and segues naturally into larger changes around governance.

Dr. Frank Rucker presented a financial analysis comparison of Townshend & Jamaica combining in the similar manner that Brookline and Newfane School Districts combined to form the Brookline-Newfane Joint School Board.

Brookline-Newfane joint board is in their fourth year at NewBrook Elementary; there are solid statistics to look at from the past four years that the two joint school districts have been combined.

On a simply financial level, not taking educational opportunities into consideration, the proposed FY15 budget for Brookline-Newfane is approximately \$2.17 million. With the exact same numbers of students enrolled in Jamaica & Townshend combined, as there are in NewBrook, there would be a projected \$2.60 million FY15 budget for Townshend and Jamaica. There could be a new building with similarly expanded programs as in NewBrook. Dr. Rucker confidently stated that there's a good shot at increasing educational opportunities for students, creating cost-savings, and building a new school building for the two school districts of Townshend and Jamaica should the boards decide to pursue restructuring their systems of Governance.

5.) Discuss and Plan Mailing:

Joe made a motion to delay submitting the Articles of Agreement to the State Board of Education pending further consideration at a meeting of the RED Study Committee to be held on May 7th, 2014. Bucky seconded the motion. Discussion ensued around the mailer and the June vote. The vote will no longer take place in June (not until late Fall) and the mailer will not be sent out to the public at this time. All in favor. No opposed. No abstentions. Motion passed unanimously.

7.) Plan Agenda for May 7th, 2014 Voluntary RED Study Committee Meeting:

Next Meetings:

RED Study Committee Meeting to be held on Wednesday, May 7th, 2014 at 7:00p.m. in the Leland & Gray Library. Purpose of the Meeting: To discuss next steps of the RED Study Committee.

Lee Anne made the motion to adjourn. Bucky seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:45p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alison Hescok