

Voluntary Regional Education District Study Committee

July 25, 2012

Leland & Gray Library

7:00 - 9:00 PM

Bruce Parliman, – Jamaica; Antje Ruppert - Windham; Joe Winrich, April Chase-Townshend; Lee Anne Parker – Brookline; Emily Long, Bucky Pelsue, Cory Stark, Ken McFadden-Newfane; Laura Hazard- Principal Jamaica, Dorinne Dorfman- Principal, Leland & Gray, Chris Pratt- Principi- NewBrook. John Evertt – subcontractor to VSBA; Steven John, Superintendent, Frank Rucker, CFO WCSU, Samantha Bovat WCSU- Minute Taker. Board Members: Alecia O'Donnell, Kim Friedman, Lee Branson, LeeAnne Parker, Alecia O'Donnell, Lisa Harris- NewBrook Joint Board; Carolyn Partridge, Beth McDonald- Windham; Stephanie Amyott, Jake Forrester- Jamaica. Members of the public, Jerry Dyke and Patti- Dixon- Windham, David Parker Jr- Brookline; Dominic Poli-Reporter from the Reformer.

Called to order - Emily Long at 7pm

1. Review Agenda - No Changes

2. Comments from the public- None

3. Review and Approve Minutes - June 6, 2012

Bucky made a motion to approve, Antje seconded
All in favor-Motion Carries.

4. Presentation of RED Study Committee work and opportunity for questions and feedback from attending board members.

- **Introduction - Review of governance model - Emily**

- Here in Windham Central (13 boards- 51 board members)
- Enrollment is down in WCSU 975 - down from 1300 at the peak years back. Review of past studies that have been done (L&G Administrative structure study by Ray Proulx and then WCSU- Brent Kay) Question posed was: Is there a way to change structure to improve efficiencies?
- Formed RED committee in June 2011 - 1st meeting held in August 2011

- **How does the change benefit children? LeeAnne**

- 1st and foremost looking at how this will benefit the kids
- Perhaps also opportunity for the gifted and talented
- Brookline students have benefited from merging with Newfane (personal perspective)

- Interested in seeing how RED and NewBrook Board goals will merge together,
 - Alecia- Class size question about getting bigger? LeeAnne- not necessarily looking at large class size, but more combining some of the smaller class sizes. Emily- Not talking about closing schools at this point. Although talking about creating new school. Not focused on closing schools. Antje- in January, study committee determined that simply consolidating boards would not provide educational opportunities- difference would be made with a school. April - we have not talked about class size, but focused more about opportunities (currently some schools have only 7 students - isn't cost effective and perhaps larger class sizes could bring together and effectively educate larger group.
 - Alecia asked for clarification-If we voting for a RED wouldn't that guarantee larger class sizes? Emily and Ken- agree that if we consolidated schools- there would be a change in class size, but not all larger necessarily. Ken- We do have class size policy in WCSU.
 - Patty Dixon- Could provide opportunities for Differentiated Instruction
 - Kim- Referring to Report to State Board Doc. -When presenting to public, we need to connect the dots. Fewer boards would allow educational leadership by Superintendent because he won't be spending as much time going to meetings. When bringing up one student, bringing up all kids (collective responsibility and opportunities).
 - Bucky- Do all individual school boards have separate evaluation process for assessments? Steven John- Yes, not all of the school utilize the same assessment tools. Bucky- This could streamline assessment and common curriculum.

- **What would change in the organizational structure? Bruce**
 - **Article 9 page 5-** Introduces the board make-up with RED
 - **Page 6 Article 14-** Schedule for changes in board make up
 - **Page 5-** Board Composition from towns and schedules of terms
 - **Pg 6 Article 13** Australian Ballot would occur
 - - Budget development - 1st RED budget would take place in 2015

- Steven- law will prevail as far as numbers of voting members and proportional representation. That is a future agenda item and will be determined based on final outcome of this process.
- Emily- Terms on the board will be 3 year terms, just staggered. Six budgets will now be 1 budget.
- Cory - Going from 6 boards to one is pretty drastic change and for a lot of people wrapping your head around this may be a challenge. Loss of local control. Different mind set all together.
- Emily- The RED board will be made up exactly like L&G board.
- Alecia- Clarification on governance and budgets?
 - Emily- The RED would be operating multiple schools under one budget. Not looking at separate budgets for each school.
 - David P- Each community goes about educating students in different ways. How is that factored into this? Philosophical differences....
John E- Schools will certainly have different cultures. Culture is of the people in the schools not the governing body.
 - Patty D- Explain Australian Ballot? Why don't we do in individual towns? There was discussion about the logistical challenges of presenting to all towns on same day. Emily reminded the group that L&G votes Australian Ballot because towns petitioned for it to be that way. Let's let the communities decide when the time comes.
 - **KF- Article 9**-see highlights (check language),
-Parallel board structure- too cumbersome.
-Are votes weighted?- Steven J- Proportionality is already included in the membership (1 board member 1 vote)
-Article 12- Which will be more advantageous- tax rates or incentives? (John still working with DOE about which choice will most benefit towns.)
- RED board oversee operation of which schools- need clarification.

John - board is operation based on fixed date not based on opening of the school.

- Frank- in response to Cory's concern about community members having a loss of local control- not hearing a sense of being underrepresented(referring to Brookline as relates to the NewBrook Joint Board.)

- **How will the change affect the WCSU Board? April Chase**

- WCSU Board would petition state

- **What is the future of our three smaller schools?- Antje**

- **Article 16-** Please consider that this is contingent on building a new school.
- Foreign language opportunities (1.5 extra teachers in the sample budget). Facility maintenance would be decreased with one school...
- Lee- What will happen to the schools that would be left behind?
- Frank- All assets come under RED. Towns don't have to buy back anything necessarily. RED could rent out the building to businesses for example..... Often schools are becoming Municipal offices.
- Bucky- Pooling assets and liabilities.
- Frank- this RED process is coinciding with many or all of the towns paying off bonds.
- Patty- If business wants to rent a vacant school building where do profits go?...Frank- profits would benefit the RED.
- John- Remember that building a new school comes *after* the formation of a RED.
- Carolyn- Our building is in good shape, good staff, good test scores, rising population, geographically isolated....What effect would a new school have for our students? Will parents travel to a new school to events, etc.

****** Windham is not interested in participating in the RED. Changes that were made in Legislation that will allow this to take place without Windham.**

- Emily- so you want to pull out now? The new new law will allow the 4 towns to form a RED, but will change the articles (Modified Union approach., etc.

-Discussion ensued about how this affect the RED moving forward. Windham will stay as part of L&G. They will also have one member on the Modified Union....Board. In addition, they will also have their own Elementary board.

- Patty- Windham would have a vote on RED budget as well as their own town.
- Frank- RED nullifies the Union. If one of the 5 member towns pulls out - does that dissolve the L&G? YES
- Beth- Decision was not made lightly.
- Emily- Conversation will continue based on overall concept.

- **What are the financial implications? Cory**
 - Ken- Would like to see black and white numbers
 - Bucky- Don't consider the incentives...we should focus on the benefits for the students (merits of the RED)
 - Antje- perhaps it would make sense to look online to the hypothetical budget April 25th Analysis
 - Kim- Please clarify one tax rate
 - John- these articles are intended for the State Board and not for public education (keep that in mind)

- **What are the reasons not to make the change? Bucky**
 - Some people might be concerned that legislature is suggesting direction of our students' education.
 - Steven- How long can we sustain our present schools in the current economic and projected economic situation?
 - Cory- Perhaps people from NewBrook may be wondering how a new school for other towns would benefit us? Newfane and Brookline will have different set of talking points.
 - Emily- Again- shift in thinking to ALL the students NOT me and my town and my students.
 - Frank-curriculum units will be organized differently and will streamline/unify development with fewer schools.
 - Alecia- Bigger is not always better....coming from a mall town in a big school district....towns don't take ownership of their own children. Don't want to see children getting lost in a big system.
 - Patty- If RED can produce better education with decrease costs...Our houses will have more value.

- **How will the RED affect collective bargaining agreements?-Joe**

- Revised - no Windham
- Potential for centralized contracting and negotiations
- **How is a new building involved?-**
 - With Windham being out- costs would change
 - Savings may not happen immediately
- **What other questions do you have?**
 - Kim - Article 16- No school choice- contradicts Page 10.????
Please clarify language. Article 3
 - Antje- There is a concern about students moving around each year if there is school choice.
 - Steven- We need to base language on what we have right now. If two schools- choice could be option (pedagogical differences)
 - Bucky- Page 11 remove sports facilities.
 - LeeAnne- Based on change tonight with Windham. How does this effect our moving forward?
 - LeeAnne- What are the differences between RED and Modified....
(John to provide overview so can discuss at next meeting.)
 - Bruce- Jamaica doesn't meet again until Aug. 21st and this discussion tonight will have an impact on further discussions.
 - Steven- Part of our issues and why Legislature is interested in this is because they see the problems with members making meetings.
(Local control?) Quorums are even a challenge.
 - Emily- Our charge was to decide whether or not to form a RED.
We will need to go back to boards and discuss.
 - Stephanie- would be easier if we have another RED meeting so can understand what a Modified really is- then we can go back to our boards in September.
 - Wardsboro has been invited to these discussions.
- Made a motion to adjourn. 9:18

Ground Rules

Next Meetings

- Work positively through the process August 7
- Capture pro's and con's September 5
- Maintain open minds and listen
- All ideas are good ideas
- Stay focused on students
- Methodical and deliberate decisions
- Transparency to community and boards