

Feb 1, 2012 Act 153 Voluntary Merger Study . 7 pm Leland & Gray DRAFT

In Attendance:

Bruce Parlman, Drew Hazelton – Jamaica; Antje Ruppert, Beth McDonald - Windham; Joe Winrich David Dezendorf – Townshend; Lee Anne Parker – Brookline; Corey Stark, Emily Long, Bucky Pelsue, Pam Meihak - Newfane. John Everitt – subcontractor to VSBA; Steven John Superintendent. Members of the public, Nancy and Jerry Dyke. Ryan Hockertlotz from Townshend

Emily Long called the meeting to order at 7:02.

Review of the Agenda - Move #7 up to #4

Review and approve minutes. Nov 2nd , Jan 4th moved to approve by David D. All agreed. Motion passes.

Review Act 153

Antje suggests going through recommendations one by one.

Vermont House has agreed to all or most all of the recommendations. Being considered in the Senate.

Task force recommendations:

- 1) Vote repealed that required results of the vote to go to the Commissioner by 10.1.2012
- 2) Incentives having cash options or tax rate incentives. Bucky voiced his interest in no cash incentives, let the merger stand on its own
- 3) Consulting services. Currently state is reimbursing John Everitt's time so long as we move thorough the RED process. Reimbursement does not require articles being presented to the taxpayers. Other possibilities for consultation reimbursement are being considered.
- 4) Choice/non choice school district incentives.
- 5) (Addison/Northwest solution) One of 5 districts bows out, allows the union high school to stay and the interested K-6 districts to form a RED. The state is trying to influence tax structures and large scale consolidation. (Lots of discussion around this.)
- 6) Amend Act 153 to allow for schools to split and spin off into smaller districts
- 7) School Closure – Can articles forming a RED govern? How binding? How much freedom are we willing to give RED studies/towns. Two articles: who's in the pool, grades served. Can a third be added – process for closing schools for example. Unanimous vote of the RED instead of a vote of the town.
- 8) Our RED can take a report right to the State Board of education, bypassing the town. We decided long ago we wanted to go to our towns first. (Or was the understanding to keep the towns deeply informed?)
- 9) Doesn't apply
- 10) Recommendations – Special ED
- 11) Recommendations from Legal council
- 12) DOE Template
- 13) Statewide summit
- 14) Vaughn Altemus will continge to provide support from DOE.

Corey wanted to review #12 – improve student opportunities. Rearrange template to put more emphasis on this.

Reviewed the Legislative report from Kerri Lamb regarding Committees Developing Modifications.

7:43 Review Committee progress and next steps. Examine what community engagement process is, are we ready to do that? Are we ready to answer their questions?

Antje – still struggling with the distances involved between towns. Likes the idea of further examining the option of merging K-6 schools.

Joe Winrich wants to try and figure out what form a RED would take.

John E. and Emily suggested we don't go to our towns to recommend anything, just inform what we've talked about. Get them to ask questions we may not have considered. Put together multiple options.

Bucky is puzzled. The reason we are here is because the DOE was directed by the legislature to go out and create RED studies. Initially we discussed RED, now we've branched out a bit. Biggest challenge is how to get out of the individual town mentality. Do the towns want change?

Beth – our communities have come together as evidenced by Leland & Gray. Good reference point to use as a basis for discussion.

Emily – responding to 'do communities want change?' Communities want outcomes. The 5 boards that got together said we believe we have some issues that warrant studying. Thought this study came out of the house ed committee, not DOE.

David and Antje thought worth considering the Jamaica Boards K-6

David – hard work of looking at the cost of maintaining buildings in all these towns.

Moving the RED study forward seems to be the general consensus.

8:10 – Where are the savings? Will this benefit the kids? John said he would do more study and come back to the board.

8:15 Discuss committee members proposal for a new K-6 Building. Identify a central location for the schools of Windham, Townshend and Jamaica. Windham originally thought they would never consider moving locations, but sees some advantage to this idea. Is there funding for a new structure? Decided to invite WCSU Business Manager Frank Rucker to assist with this discussion at the next meeting.

Transition money? References make to Floodbrook. Since 1966 3 SU's to 2 SU's.

David D. mentioned we are spending \$ for rent @WCSU, we should look into the possibility of housing SU staff. Amendments to Act 153 would still incentivize a K-6 with the single tax rate advantageous.

8:40 John Everitt will begin drafting a "Why are we here and what are we trying to do" . Looking for benefits to students while keeping costs down. What happens if we stay the same? Can we use this change to strengthen our educational program and attract tuition students. Without consolidation no need to continue with these meetings. Steven J. – what is our towns' interest in providing "choice" between 2 elementary schools – enrollment options.

9:08 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lee Anne Parker

