

Voluntary Regional Education District Study Committee

DRAFT Minutes April 4, 2012

Leland & Gray Library

7:00 - 9:00 PM

In Attendance: Bruce Parliman, Drew Hazelton - Jamaica; Antje Ruppert, Beth McDonald - Windham; Joe Winrich, April Chase - Townshend; Lee Anne Parker - Brookline; Corey Stark, Emily Long, Bucky Pelsue, Pam Meihak - Newfane. John Evertt - subcontractor to VSBA; Steven John Superintendent. Members of the public, Nancy and Jerry Dyke. Samantha Bovat- WCSU Minute Taker

Emily L.- Called meeting to order at 7:01

Review Agenda - No changes

Comments from the public- None

Review and Approve Minutes - February 1, 2012

- Bucky noted that Wes Ameden and April Chase were at the meeting.
- LeeAnne also noted that the word decided was misspelled on 2nd page.
Bucky made a motion to approve minutes with amendments, Joe W. seconds. Motion passes- all in favor.

Update on any changes in committee from town board reorganizations.

- Pam M will stay on until such time when a board member steps up, perhaps. Pam is no longer on Newfane Board.
- Townshend, April Chase has replaced David Dezendorf
- Beth should be replaced with Antje on the spreadsheet. Beth will remain as community member.

Feedback from committee members about the discussions held at recent board meetings about the RED study (Talking points are attached.)

- **Pam M** representing **Brookline-Newfane Board**- with some reservation, everybody agreed to continue studying. No real feedback about talking points. Comfortable with representation on committee. (LeeAnne was not at NewBrook meeting)- low attendance at this meeting. LeeAnne did include some talking points in her letter from the School Board Chair in the Brookline Town Report about the RED study.

Antje- Windham- Consolidating boards will not lead to financial or educational benefits. The board and public *are* interested in the discussion about schools merging. No details discussed.

April- Townshend- Regularly discussing this topic. Town meeting, Joe W. and David D briefed public on talking points. Joe- encouraged input and assured no decisions have been made. April will bring up talking points again at next week's meeting. Townshend Board strongly supports discussion.

Emily- L&G doesn't play a decision making role, but the topic is discussed at each board meeting.

-“Bucky” questions the non-role. Emily assured him that they are interested in curriculum, etc, but don't have a decision making role. Emily is here representing Newfane. It's the law. If the committee wants L&G to take a position on a matter- this committee should ask the L&G board to do so.

-Bruce P- [Act 153](#) is the law that prevents L&G from voting on a RED Study Committee

-Emily- L&G's board did encourage L&G board members representing their communities to participate here.

Drew- Jamaica- Has discussed this with the board and at town meeting and did not get any inquiries or questions. Even presenting the idea of a new school and closing Jamaica's was not enough to get people engaged. We were blunt. **Bruce P** - After the meeting, people indicated that they liked the idea...Drew's presentation was good.

Windham- Antje- not an overwhelming reaction to idea of a new school.

John E.-Do you make anything of these discussions?

- AR- If Wardsboro is not interested, are we still in a position to look at a new school with only three towns?
- EL- Suggests that once a proposal is out there, perhaps we will see other schools becoming interested.
- SJ- Wardsboro board is pretty happy with their school at this time.
- JW- We could present a financial plan including them to see if that would prompt interest.
- AJ- What other schools would there be?
- SJ- Winhall and Stratton would perhaps be interested in sending students.
- JE- Transportation is a big factor in encouraging more students.
- BP- Can we approach Athens if this goes farther?
- EL- They are not in our SU (7&8) have choice in Athens and Grafton, 9-12 go to BF.
- SJ- 5 students, grade 9, coming in to L&G from Athens and Grafton (working with other Supers to ADM stays in the town from which they are from, including tuition)
- LP- What's the attraction?
- EL- Bellows Falls has an interest in the process and school choice, etc. Increased interest in L&G over BF (7&8) RED seems to be somewhat of a cloud where school consolidation is still at the forefront of discussion.
- EL- Boards are looking more broadly throughout the state at options and opportunities. SU consolidation, RED's....

- JE- What's the order of business moving forward?
Keep in mind the two approaches to the idea of a new school
 - 1. Form a RED and they develop a new school proposal
 - Try to do it as separate boards, *then* form a unified school district.

Could it be done as a RED with only 3 towns?

Discussion ensued about the number of towns that need to participate in the RED in order for it to be approved by the state. Currently- 4 towns are needed create a RED [H.753](#) may change this requirement.

John cautioned that it may be wise to decide what is best for the towns involved and then look at incentives from the state instead of the other way around. You can create a K-12 RED and still propose a new school.

There was clarification that a RED results in one single board and the new school building is a bit different and comes underneath the governance of the RED.

John added that it is possible to create an article when forming the RED to indicate a new school is an option.

Important Info:

- RED has a lot of authority once formed.
- Can't close a school until 4 years after a RED is formed. (You can close a school with town voting approval.)
- Any article voted on by citizens would have to be undone by the citizens of all member towns.
- If towns do not vote to participate- can something still happen? ACT 753- if it passes, one town can turn it down and rest of towns can still move forward. - Also can look to other towns to join- perhaps (still in Senate....action pending).

Information from WCSU Business Manager Frank Rucker about consolidating schools into a new building. (Without a specific proposal and a cost study, this discussion can only be conceptual.) See informational spreadsheets provided)

- Overview of cost trade offs
- State aid for construction

John walked through information provided by Frank. Based on the number of students that are currently in the pipeline. This is based on maximum numbers on bond expense and sq footage.

BP- For real savings, does it make a difference if you use Total Cost per Student or Net Cost per Equalized Student.? Which one makes a difference on the tax rate?

Based on small schools grant. Equalized student- is based on total amount of spending.

JE- Reminded the group that even if you formed a RED, the CLA always will impact towns differently.

Equalized tax rates for WCSU.

- 1.41 K-6
- 1.49 Non Union
- 1.44 L&G

Substantial savings to be had by creating a new school.
Choice towns are looking for a good "purchase" for their students

BM- What is student/teacher ratio for NewBrook?- not sure, but we know that it is the highest in the WCSU. 14/1???

Antje- Is there a way to look at these numbers which includes incentives? (still and either or scenario- take tax rate reduction or \$400per pupil one year)

Discussion ensued about costs savings based on Franks document.

We need to look at how many staff members it would take to run a school for the three towns (Jamaica, Townshend and Windham).

Steven- What are the premises? K-6, Pre-K, look at natural staff attrition, when would this school be in operation (looking at the same). Based on 3 towns- we are also looking at a timeline of 3-4 years down the road. This lends itself to looking at things based on certain parameters.

General discussion about retirement and overall staff attrition rates for teachers.
Clarification on forming a RED timeline

- November- vote from towns to form RED
- July 2013 would create the Board/governance model for the RED.
- Fiscal management of facilities would stay in place until the end of the fiscal year June 30, 2013).

**Questions to be addressed at next meeting:
Predicted savings for Central Office?**

SJ- Accounting would be biggest savings (simplified operation based on fewer budgets) Purchases- joint, office space lease, etc.

Plan next steps and next agenda

1. John E. will bring back some articles to next meeting and proposed road map
2. Bucky would like to discuss specific school proposal 1st- before the Articles.
3. Please title the articles so we know what we are looking for quickly

Next Meetings

- May 2 at 7pm, L&G (Bucky will not be able to make this meeting)
- June 6 at 7pm, L&G

Bucky motion to Adjourn, April seconded- 8:41pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Samantha Bovat

