

## ***SAU6 Study Committee***

***11/18/2015***

***Attendees:*** Heidi Jaarsma, Nicole Saginor, Sandra Carlson, William Palmer, Holly Taft, Justin Ranney, Peter Lynch

Meeting called to order at 7:00 by Heidi Jaarsma

### ***Agenda:***

Heidi Jaarsma suggested we revise the agenda to include acceptance of minutes and the Monroe trip summary. This was moved by William Palmer, seconded by Justin Ranney; motion passed.

### ***Revisions to minutes:***

Nicole Saginor asked that on page 3, paragraph 8, the line "SAU 6 is just looking to absorb our students into the Claremont School District" be stricken, as she is sure she did not say that.

Holly Taft asked that page 4, paragraph 6, be changed to state, "Holly Taft thought that forming a Single District SAU at this point, was a desperate scramble"

William Palmer moved the minutes be accepted as revised, Sandra Carlson seconded; motion passed.

### ***Monroe Site Visit Summary:***

Heidi Jaarsma shared that the Monroe school is a K-8, with 80 students, and is a Single District SAU since the 1990's. The Superintendent works 2 days per week in the school. He works closely with the Principal and this arrangement seems to work well. The two administrators felt that the school should be the heart of the community.

Nicole Saginor stated that they seem to be very happy with their arrangement, and like us, their enrollment is declining, however, being a single school district makes them more nimble in dealing with challenges that may occur. She continued, "All schools have their ups and downs and it is important the community gets behind the school.

The two administrators are very proud of their school and see no benefit to going back to a joint SAU.

Nicole Saginor finished by stating that Monroe's experience mirrored every other Single District SAU she has talked to.

William Palmer asked if their tech support was in school.

Nicole Saginor believes it is in-house.

Justin Ranney asked if the Superintendent was just for Monroe or a shared position.

Nicole Saginor indicated he was just in Monroe.

Heidi Jaarsma stated that their tax base included two Hydro-Electric Dams and a large egg farm, and the school had a 3 million dollar budget.

Sandra Carlson asked if there were any other differences between Monroe and Cornish.

Heidi Jaarsma answered, they have a number of shared positions. For instance, the Art teacher is also the Music teacher and their Special Ed. Professional is also a Reading teacher.

Bill Wall asked what the SAU costs were, and asked "who would do all the paperwork".

Nicole Saginor answered, two hundred and thirty thousand dollars (178K / 52K).

Heidi Jaarsma added that there was an in-house business office and an Administrative Asst. for both the Principal and Superintendent.

***Single District SAU Proposal:***

Heidi Jaarsma presented the proposal and offered some revisions all of which can be found in [CornishNH.gov](http://CornishNH.gov).

Heidi Jaarsma emphasized that we as a committee had to act tonight so we could post warnings to Claremont and Unity before Friday, and schedule a Public Hearing in Cornish.

Ruth Rollins asked if the Principal was on board with this proposal.

Heidi Jaarsma stated that she was initially hesitant.

Nicole Saginor added that support for the principal would come from Plainfield instead of SAU6.

Ruth Rollins also asked if this was going to cost us money.

Heidi Jaarsma went over the financials on page 56 of the proposal showing a projected savings with the Single SAU plan. (See [cornishNH.net](http://cornishNH.net).)

Alicia Simino asked how we knew our costs would not go up.

Peter Lynch pointed out that under our current agreement with SAU6, we have not had any assurance costs would not go up, and in fact they do each year.

Heidi Jaarsma added that as a Single SAU we could shop for services and control the power of the purse.

William Palmer offered that we would have the ability renegotiate at the end of our contract and can shop anywhere.

Bill Wall suggested that the proposal was unfair to the Principal to have deal with Concord and that her job was to run the school. He went on pointing out that since 2011 Plainfield's teaching salaries are up ninety thousand dollars and benefits have increased 2.5%. In closing he stated, we needed to decrease the budgets in the schools and that SAU6 gives us the answers.

Nicole Saginor responded saying, "the principal will not be dealing with Concord and there will be no increase to her paperwork, this is all part of the purchased services with Plainfield and WSESU".

Heidi Jaarsma also responded that the increases in salaries would have been of concern if we would have joined SAU32, however, as a single SAU we can decide what we need.

Bill Wall asked how much of the SAU6 Superintendent Services do we use.

Heidi Jaarsma answered, she was unsure how much of the Superintendents time was dedicated to Cornish.

Ruth Rollins asked, "What makes you think a .2 or .3 FTE Superintendent can be found?"

Heidi Jaarsma answered that a full time Superintendent is difficult to find, however a part time Superintendent is much easier.

Ruth Rollins asked, "What about other positions?"

Heidi Jaarsma answered that combo were easier to fill as well.

Justin Ranney pointed out the potential issue of Plainfield needing more Superintendent time in the future.

Heidi Jaarsma pointed out their enrollment is also declining making that possibility unlikely.

Sean Hallock asked what would happen if we went forward, could we go back.

Heidi Jaarsma indicated the process would have to start again.

Nicole Saginor added, that visiting small school districts, seeing how they run, the choices they have and how happy they are eases some of the scariness that comes with change.

Heidi Jaarsma stated, they enjoy deciding what will happen with their school.

Fred Weld asked, "Why is Vermont consolidating school districts, and we are doing the opposite?"

Nicole Saginor explained that Vermont funds education, however in New Hampshire the towns fund education. Consolidation makes sense, for instance, if there are many Superintendents consolidate to just one. Superintendents in Vermont are selected by the State Board of Education.

Alicia Simino asked, "During transition who takes care of business?"

Heidi Jaarsma explained that an advisory transition team would have to be established and the School Board would oversee that.

Bill Wall stated, "If we were our own SAU and got sued, we would have to pay everything."

Heidi Jaarsma explained the school has liability insurance and Justin Ranney concurred stating that it would be the same as now.

Bill Wall addressed Heidi Jaarsma asking, "How do you feel about 66 students?"

Heidi Jaarsma responded that the proposed plan would make the school more nimble in making decisions.

Heidi Jaarsma went on to discuss the SAU6 organization Plan (see page 58 on CornishNH.net) and SAU6 proposed costs (see page 38 on CornishNH.net)

Caroline Storrs suggested that the Executive Summary address the possibility that Claremont taxes could go up.

Alicia Simino reminded the committee that our first responsibility is to the children, and if we move forward with this plan the Principal will leave.

Heidi Jaarsma assured Ms. Simino that she and Mrs. Prileson have spoken and that nothing would change in her job description.

Nicole Saginor shared that she has been a Principal and understands the challenges she faces as a new Principal. She went on to say that she would have ample support under the Proposal and would be a key part of the Transition Team.

Holly Taft said she was thrilled with the job the Principal is doing and has concerns that the Job Description might not be what the job may require. She suggested that this dramatic change might have a significant learning curve in a school with many students having issues.

William Palmer pointed out that the Principal will have two years here before any changes occurred. She would be part of the transition and have ample support.

Dr. Palmer closed by explaining that even with a .3 FTE Superintendent there would still be support during the rest of the week.

Sandra Carlson added, "Jennifer Prileson is an incredible professional. The job description is written for the job and not the person. She will do fine"

Bill Wall commented, "The principal has two goals, provide better education for the children and to bring children we lost back. Don't dump the SAU onto her. She has support now."

Caroline Storrs pointed out that if Jennifer Prileson were Principal last year she would have had to manage without a Curriculum Coordinator as the SAU did not have one.

Ruth Rollins stated that the community has no idea what the committee is talking about, and do not understand the proposal. In closing she stated she did not think the committee should move forward with the proposal.

William Palmer stated that this was a great deal of information, and it may take some time to assimilate it. This proposal is many years in the making. The town has asked that this be looked into and we owe it to everyone to present what we have whether it passes or not we should have a chance to vote. Let the town decide.

Justin Ranney said he understands the confusion; merging with a SAU or Single SAU, we need to make it all clearer.

Holly Taft stated that if we were our own SAU we might have the illusion of more control, the makers of our own destiny. I'm not sure if it will be true or not.

Linda Fuerst said things can be misconstrued and that it will be important to clear everything up.

Heidi Jaarsma suggested that this could be done at the Public Hearing.

William Palmer added that there will be opportunities between now and March to adequately educate people.

Susan Chandler indicated that she was amazed with the work that has been done, and was comfortable with the presentation. She further suggested that some clarification and education might occur at the school forum.

Heidi Jaarsma indicated that the forum was about the School and not the SAU.

Heidi closed the public comment, focusing on the committee's opinion on moving ahead with the proposal.

William Palmer stated that he was very impressed with the report Heidi Jaarsma and Nicole Saginor had prepared. He further stated that it took away his doubts and believed we should move forward. The D.O.E will like it, and we should get it to the voters and not stand in the way of the democratic process.

Holly Taft suggested it was a rush job and she would not vote in the affirmative.

Nicole Saginor said, "This all had been bandied about too long. This does not feel like a rush job at all. Heidi is a great chair and has done great work. I would put

my name on this plan and leave it to the voters. This offers an alternative to the town and is not rushed. I was nervous before with the merge idea; I did not feel it was a good plan; this is.”

Justin Ranney expressed some reservations, stating he was concerned we were not ready. He also stated he understood concerns over the Job Descriptions and the possibility the Superintendent might not always be available to us. However, he added that the information in the proposal was good and should be presented in a public hearing.

Peter Lynch said he was very impressed with the content of the proposal and commended Heidi for her efforts. He added that he agreed with William Palmer, Nicole Saginor and Justin Ranney feeling it was proper to present this to the town.

Sandra Carlson stated, we all have reservations and fear of change, however I think that becoming our own SAU might allow us to transition to future flexibility in what direction we go.

Heidi Jaarsma informed the committee that the SAU 2<sup>nd</sup> version might be subject to change, and entertained a motion on the proposal. William Palmer moved as follows:

*To present the plan to Public Hearing and send notice with the plan to all of the separate school districts of SAU6*

Nicole Saginor seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-1

William Palmer moved to adjourn at 9:42PM; seconded by Justin Ranney. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Peter Lynch, Secretary