

**SAU Study Committee Meeting**

**October 14, 2014**

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

**Absent:** Middleton McGoodwin

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM by Heidi Jaarsma.

The following corrections were made to the minutes of the September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Sandy Carlson not Sandi.

Beth Lum not Beth Long

Jim Borchert not Borshert

The word *next* should be inserted into the text so it reads; Heidi Jaarsma stated this was our next step,

Bill Palmer and Holly Taft moved to accept the minutes as corrected. The motion passed.

**Agenda revision:** Heidi Jaarsma asked if we could revise the agenda to first reexamine the committees' goals. Troy Simino and Pete Lynch moved the revision; the motion passed.

Heidi shared a Power Point presentation she had prepared after reviewing old Town Reports noting, the people of Cornish have always cared about our School, and suggesting that we as a committee have addressed the technical issues in our mission with complying with the RSA, but now need to move on and embrace the bigger picture. To this end, she proposed three goals for the committee.

- 1) *The SAU Planning committee in meeting RSA 194 C:2 must keep student interests first and foremost in our decision making process.*
- 2) *We must make decisions that will aid in the long term sustainability of our school*

3) *We must recognize the fiscal impact of our decisions on the Town of Cornish and its' residents.*

Comment from the committee was universally positive and accepting.

Community Comments:

*George Edson* questioned if goal 2 was appropriate asking if we should be concerned with the long term sustainability of the school in this SAU evaluation.

*Heidi Jaarsma* suggested the evaluation of SAU choices could impact how the school looks years from now, and should be part of the committees thought process.

*Bill Palmer* added that he agreed, we needed to consider what the impact of each SAU choice might mean to the future of the school.

*Caroline Storrs* stated that as a teacher and parent, she too always felt the community supported the school. She added that she hoped the school remained open in the future.

*Linda Fuerst* appreciated the committee considering the impact on residents as part of the process. She further supported the committees' efforts to find the most cost effective solution, keeping the school from hopefully not losing more programs.

*Susan Chandler* echoed praise for the proposed goals, indicating they were consistent with what other had done before; keeping the best interests of the students' front and center in decision making processes. She further shared, she hoped there would always be a Cornish school, stating it is the soul of the community.

*Troy Simino* suggested we change the second goal to read;

*Make decisions which will seek to insure the long term sustainability of the  
Cornish School*

Bill Palmer moved to accept the goals with the suggested change, second by Holly Taft. The motion Passed.

***Single District SAU Visits.***

Heidi Jaarsma and Nicole Saginor presented data associated with the Single District SAU visits conducted by the Committee. The visits were to Lyme, Plainfield and Grantham. All data presented can be found on the town website. [www.cornishnh.gov](http://www.cornishnh.gov)

Nicole Saginor stated that coming away from the meetings with all of the towns, speaking with the Superintendents and reviewing all the data, she concluded the formation of a Single District SAU by Cornish was doable.

Heidi Jaarsma pointed out that, looking at the data we needed to be careful examining the costs recognizing that some costs in other SAUs' such as Legal and Audit fees were in the School budget and not the SAU budget.

Elementary school populations for FY 2013-14 are: Grantham – 238, Plainfield – 218, Lyme – 203, Cornish – 118

There was further general discussion regarding a .5 Superintendent role, the Business Manager role, the difference in Principal roles and responsibilities, and an in school technical coordinator/ teacher role.

Heidi opened the floor to public comment.

*George Edson* commented that he thought we were investigating other possibilities, such as merging with another school, and wanted to know where that information was.

Heidi Jaarsma pointed out that this was our first step, and other possibilities would follow.

*Caroline Storrs* asked if the costs could be broken out per student.

Peter Lynch offered the Grantham / Cornish SAU costs: Grantham - \$550 / Cornish - \$926 per student. Total cost per student: Grantham \$16,986.00 / Cornish \$19,316.00

Troy Simino pointed out the Grantham SAU cost did not include the Technical service costs located in their school budget.

Heidi Jaarsma promised to break out all the cost per student numbers for the next meeting.

Heidi Jaarsma made presentation on the towns' growth history compared with the other communities, why and when they became a single SAU, and similarities and differences in our communities. Details may be found on [www.cornishnh.gov](http://www.cornishnh.gov).

Heidi suggested now was the time for the committee to discuss the advisability of Cornish becoming their own SAU and asked committee for comment.

Nicole Saginor stated based on the data gathered to date, the single SAU is possible, however she would have to look at all aspects more closely to determine if it is advisable.

Bill Palmer commented that initially he did not believe the single SAU plan could be done, however the data gathered shows it is in fact possible. He further suggested we get more information, such as; how long would it take to get staff and develop a SAU.

Peter Lynch stated that the costs were all comparable to what we currently pay and formation of the single SAU is certainly possible.

Holly Taft indicated she was wary of the plan due to the decrease in the student enrollment.

Troy Simino stated he sensed the committee members did not think a SAU startup was possible.

General discussion followed discussing:

- \* Declining enrollment
- \*The feasibility of a single SAU
- \*The possibilities of no Elementary school in the future and what impact that would have
  - \* Would there be a SAU if there were no Elementary school?
  - \* Tuition issues

Public comment was entertained.

Samantha \_ thanked the committee for its work and went on to encourage the committee to get more numbers and data. She further stated she did not feel the SAU served the Elementary schools' Technical needs well and liked the idea of technical support as part of the school staff. She closed asking if there was data correlating the formation of a Single SAU and student outcomes.

Heidi said she would look into the student outcome question.

Nicole Saginor added that no matter what the outcome of the committees' work, the School Board should look into the Technology support position within the school.

Linda Fuerst asked the committee to carefully consider the cost of starting a SAU vs joining another SAU.

Heidi Jaarsma said there would be some considerable startup costs such as computers, software hiring costs etc.

Caroline Storrs asked for some clarification regarding Troy's' sense that the committee did not think a Single SAU was possible.

Peter Lynch, Bill Palmer and Nicole Saginor all asserted that they all agreed the formation of a Single SAU was possible.

Richard Thompson offered some insight into previous explorations into leaving SAU6. He stated that as a member of a former School board, they were dissatisfied with SAU6 and entered discussions with Plainfield who were actively looking to leave Lebanon's' SAU. He said that while talks between them were productive, Plainfield had a quicker timeline and formed their own SAU.

George Edson questioned the wisdom of starting a SAU with unknown startup costs vs looking at joining another SAU that could give a definite cost.

Bill Palmer agreed with Mr. Edson, stating that unknown costs represented a large issue, and felt that looking for a marriage with another small SAU might be a better option.

Susan Chandler thanked Heidi for her presentation, and felt the committee was on the right track gather data on all options in order to make a more informed decision. She went on to share her experience in 1991 when she and Nicole Saginor served on the school board and pursued the withdrawal from the Claremont High School alliance for High School choice. At the time the town just paid the tuition bill and had no voice in the education provided by a school that had lost its' accreditation.

Samantha \_ asked the board to look at if equal costs would have equal quality. She further asked the committee to see if there was a current .5 Superintendent that might be willing to take on our .5 position.

Heidi Jaarsma asked the sense of the committee on the question of the advisability to start our own SAU given the information we currently have.

Troy Simino – no

Bill Palmer – look at joining another SAU and decide having both sets of costs.

Sandy Carlson – we need to look at other options

Holly Taft – Doable but not advisable at this time

Nicole Saginor – doable but not advisable without looking at all options

Peter Lynch – look at costs of joining another SAU, and get a better handle on the numbers we have before deciding. Also look at the direction cost are going in other SAUs'. For instance, in FY 2014-15 Grantham's budget increased 6%, while in the same time Period SAU 6 had an increase of 20%.

Heidi Jaarsma opened up a general discussion within the committee as to what steps should be taken next.

Windsor possibilities were discussed. A partnership did not seem a possibility, however we might look at purchased services from their SAU should we form a single SAU.

Other possibilities including distant statewide SAU's were discussed and generally dismissed as not being practical.

The possibility of sharing resources with Plainfield while being our own SAU was discussed.

***Moving forward:***

The committee has decided to contact Plainfield, Grantham, Lyme and Sunapee to determine if they are interested in a joint venture to be followed by meetings.

The next meeting will be determined after contacting and gaining information from the aforementioned communities.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Lynch, Secretary

DRAFT