

2015 Report of the Cornish School District SAU Planning Committee

At its March, 2014, annual meeting, the Cornish School District voted to create a planning committee to study the advisability of withdrawing from SAU#6 and pursuing options that could include joining or purchasing services from another SAU, pursuant RSA 194-C:2. Gwyn Gallagher, the School District Moderator, appointed Sandy Carlson, Peter Lynch, Heidi Jaarsma, Bill Palmer, and Nicole Saginor to the committee; the school board appointed Troy Simino and Holly Taft; and Middleton McGoodwin, SAU#6 superintendent, served as a non-voting member of the committee. The first official meeting of the committee was held August 11, 2014, and the committee subsequently met four more times as of the date of this writing. The terms of all committee members expire one year from the meeting at which the committee was created. Following are the goals of the Cornish School District SAU Planning Committee.

The SAU Planning Committee, in meeting the requirements of RSA 194-C:2, will

- *keep the best interests of Cornish students first and foremost in our decision making process;*
- *make decisions which seek the long term sustainability of our local school; and,*
- *recognize the fiscal impact of our decisions on the town of Cornish and its residents.*

Through studying the advisability of withdrawing from SAU#6, an SAU planning committee ultimately will recommend one of three options given in RSA 192-C:4:

1. Withdraw from SAU#6 and form a single district SAU; or
2. Withdraw from SAU#6 and reorganize, or join, with an existing SAU; or
3. Do not withdraw: remain with SAU#6.

State statute also requires that the committee study the advisability of withdrawal, estimate the cost of any new organization, investigate methods for financing any new organization, prepare an educational and fiscal analysis of the impact of withdrawal, consult with the department of education, and submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the department of education and the several school districts within the existing school administrative unit. As part of a recommendation to withdraw, a plan for single district organization or for reorganization with an existing school administrative unit (SAU) must be submitted to the state board of education.

The committee began its work with an examination of state mandated superintendent services to school districts as outlined in RSA 194-C:4. Superintendent Middleton McGoodwin provided the committee with the current SAU#6 administrative structure and with the SAU#6 administrative reorganization plan. Superintendent McGoodwin also provided the committee with the SAU#6 F/Y14 operating budget. Taking options one through three, in the paragraph above, separately, the committee first studied single district SAU organizational structures that could provide state mandated SAU services to the Cornish School District. A subcommittee met with the superintendents of Grantham, Lyme, and Plainfield, all single district SAUs, to gather information about their administrative structures, delivery of services, and the budgetary implications of their organization. The committee also examined population and enrollment trends in Cornish and the three single districts contacted. The committee found that the single district SAU option was feasible; however, the committee tabled the single district study in October and turned to the study of reorganization with an existing SAU.

The committee researched the history of the school administrative unit in NH. In 1919, the NH legislature divided the state into supervisory unions. NH School districts were assigned to supervisory

unions, and later, to school administrative units, by the Board of Education until the 1996 passage of RSA 194-C gave school districts a provision to withdraw from and to form new school administrative units. From 1919 to 1964, the Cornish School District was organized with various towns of similar size. In various configurations Cornish has been part of supervisory unions that included Acworth, Charlestown, Croydon, Goshen, Langdon, Lempster, Plainfield, and Unity. In a move toward regionalism during the early sixties, the Board of Education began reassigning smaller towns to larger area town and city SAUs. In 1964, the Cornish and Unity school districts joined Claremont in SAU#6.

In its study of the advisability of reorganization, or joining, with an existing SAU, the committee decided to study reorganization with a single district SAU of relatively comparable size to the Cornish School District. The criteria for a reorganization study were that the superintendent of the existing single district worked part-time and that the existing SAU was interested in studying reorganization. Of the several single district SAUs contacted, Plainfield SAU#32 expressed interest in studying reorganization. A subcommittee met with both the SAU#32 Superintendent and Finance Director in December and reported to the committee in January. SAU#32 has provided the committee with a cost study of administrative positions required to provide SAU services to the Cornish School District.

The committee recognizes that a possible withdrawal from SAU#6 and subsequent organization as a single district SAU or reorganization with an existing district has broad and far reaching educational and fiscal implications for the Cornish community. The next step is a careful analysis of the educational and fiscal impact of withdrawal and reorganization. This will take time. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the committee that the school board place an article on the 2015 Cornish School District Warrant to create a new SAU Planning Committee which will continue studying the advisability of withdrawal from SAU#6. Ultimately, the decision of withdrawal belongs to the voters of the Cornish School District. It is the duty of the committee to give the Cornish School District a thorough analysis of all options so that voters can make an informed decision that is in the best interests of Cornish students.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Jaarsma, Chair
Bill Palmer, Vice- Chair
Peter Lynch, Secretary
Sandy Carlson

Nicole Saginor
Troy Simino
Holly Taft

All reports made to and by the committee are available at www.cornishnh.net

Detail of appropriations request 2015 Warrant Article:

Projected 2015 SAU Committee Expenses

postage	\$	150.00
printing	\$	525.00
public hearing	\$	75.00
Total	\$	750.00