

Unofficial Minutes
SAU6 Study Committee
January 14, 2015

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

Absent: Middleton McGoodwin

Meeting was called to order at 5:35PM by Heidi Jaarsma

Review of previous meeting minutes:

Heidi Jaarsma requested the item under Report and Discussion Of reorganization Request that read, "Heidi Jaarsma contacted Lyme, Sunapee, Grantham and Plainfield by letter", be changed to "by phone".

Nicole Saginor pointed out a grammatical error and asked that Siminos' be changed to Simino's.

The acceptance of the minutes with corrections was moved by Troy Simino, 2nd by William Palmer. The motion passed.

Heidi Jaarsma moved acceptance of the Agenda as written, 2nd by Troy Simino. The motion passed

Report: 12/18/14 meeting with Plainfield Superintendent re: SAU Services

Heidi Jaarsma outlined the meeting attended by a subcommittee consisting of Heidi Jaarsma, Nicole Saginor, Sandra Carlson and William Palmer. The subcommittee met with Dr. Gregory Vogt, Plainfield Superintendent and Beth Bierworth, Finance Director.

Mrs. Jaarsma reviewed where we have gone as a committee, in search of finding a town interested in joining together in a partnership. She stated that she was the initial contact to Lyme, Grantham, Sunapee, and Plainfield by phone asking if there was interest in joining together. Only Plainfield seemed to be interested.

She stated that the subsequent meeting with Plainfield was a general conversation, discussing Economies of Scale, the increases in time the merger that would potentially impact the Superintendent, Business Manager, Special Education Coordinator, as well as other necessary staff. The time discussed would be time added to the Plainfield SAU staff, given to Cornish.

Heidi also handed out a packet outlining the potential time and costs for such a merger, available on CornishNH.net. She offered that the figures reflected the cost to employ the staff currently in these positions and that the numbers could change with staff changes.

Subcommittee comments:

Sandra Carlson pointed out that Plainfield did not have PowerSchool technologies, and that were we to merge this would be necessary and we would have to share the costs.

Heidi Jaarsma stated that the PowerSchool would be an improvement for Plainfield.

Nicole Saginor addressed the question of what PowerSchool is, and explained that it is an all-purpose program allowing the school to collect student data, grades, test results as well as generate report cards and interface Parent contact.

Heidi Jaarsma added that she had contacted SAU6, and their cost for the program was 10,000.00, with Cornish's share being 1,000.00.

Sandra Carlson further added that she felt the Plainfield representatives were very excited about the prospect of joining with Cornish.

William Palmer offered that he thinks there is a lot of leg work to be done, and that it will take at least another year to pull everything together. He stressed that we need to look at all of the details closely; look at IT, and added he thinks Cornish would get more attention with a similar sized school. He further stated that, down the road we cannot survive without sharing costs and Plainfield shares the same concerns.

Nicole Saginor felt that Plainfield was definitely interested and frequently used the term Economies of Scale. She added that we currently do not have a Technical Integrator which Plainfield does. We need to look at this cost and break out if this is a SAU cost or a building cost.

Heidi Jaarsma offered that she agreed with William Palmer stating this is a time for careful analysis and that this is a unique point in time where two schools may be ready to come together. She further suggested we carefully look at the budget for both schools, be alert to recognize hidden costs which may have a domino effect, but closed that the opportunity merits study so that we might offer both towns a comprehensive look at the financial and educational opportunities.

Troy Simino asked Nicole Saginor to explain how the technology costs were going to be taken out of the SAU budget. Nicole responded stating she did not think it should be taken out, instead she suggested that having a person dedicated to the technology needs of the school would be different than our current arrangement with SAU6. She suggested we look at what we currently spend on technology and compare that to what would be a new, more valuable position.

Troy stated that we get much more from SAU6 than was being suggested, and that with recent revisions to tech services, Cornish will have a person on site two days per week.

Discussion 2014 School District Report:

Heidi Jaarsma presented a draft addressing the committee's progress in the past year and recommendations for the future. The draft may be viewed on CornishNH.net.

Following the presentation William Palmer asked if the preliminary cost analysis offered by Plainfield would be part of the report. Heidi indicated they would not. A general discussion regarding those figures ensued.

It was made clear that the figures we have are very preliminary and at best a ball park estimate. It was further explained that whatever numbers we find to be firm would have gone through the State mandated SAU formula, accounting for Tax assessments and student population.

Nicole Saginor also suggested we have the report indicate we first met in August. She further suggested we explain that we did look into creating our own SAU, and while the committee found this would be potentially possible, we tabled that avenue of investigation to investigate joining another SAU.

Part of the town report indicated that due to the time necessary to continue the work, the committee requested the School Board place an Article in the 2015 District Warrant to create a new SAU Planning Committee to continue studying the advisability of withdrawal from SAU6.

Troy Simino consented to put the item on the agenda for the January 19th School Board Meeting.

Heidi Jaarsma asked if the report and the intent on bringing a Warrant Article be moved.

The motion was moved by Peter Lynch, 2nd by Sandra Carlson.

Discussion:

Troy Simino stated that there was a lot of stuff going on at the school, and introducing this Warrant article might or might not complicate issues at the school. He went on to share that one of the residents at the last school board meeting proposed closing the school and tuitioning out all of the students. He fears that the introduction of the article might lead to a movement of individuals suggesting to, not wait a year, tuition the students now to Plainfield.

William Palmer suggested that the motivation behind tuitioning students was likely driven by costs, making it even more important to continue our study so we might more accurately address how much either option would cost the town. He went on to say that the tuition issue had been looked at in the past when the school had 130 students, and it was found that it would not save money. However, with 100 students the costs may be different. He suggested that we get hard figures on what the merger might cost so we could compare the difference in costs to tuitioning students out.

He finished stating that there would be a large number of people upset if they were not given the opportunity to vote on this article given that this study was asked for by the people at the town meeting.

Troy Simino stated that the study was brought forward in a warrant article by a relatively small group of people.

William Palmer responded pointing out that that article was voted on by the entire community.

Troy Simino stated that he was just supplying the committee with information. He went on to say that, given the number of students, people will look at the tuition option and see large savings.

Heidi Jaarsma suggested that given the school population decreasing, it's time to think outside the box, and that we need to explore all of our options. A merger with Plainfield is one option, perhaps the next committee will come up with other options. However the town needs to have the chance to vote on the article.

Nicole Saginor added that we can't keep the conversation about tuitioning from coming up.

William Palmer stated that with the tuition option we lose all control over the education of our students and cannot properly budget for the year. If more students move to town in the school year you have the unbudgeted costs of paying those tuitions.

Heidi Jaarsma called the question. The motion passed.

Heidi Jaarsma went over the draft of the warrant article and proposed Committee budget.

There was a general discussion regarding the budget and amounts necessary for printing and postage.

A motion was made by Troy Simino. 2nd by William Palmer to accept the Warrant Article.

Motion passed.

The committee discussed having another meeting before the District meeting and decided there was nothing to be gained by it.

Heidi Jaarsma will send a letter to Plainfield informing them of our progress. She will also go to the School Board meeting to support the Warrant Article.

Motion to adjourn was made by William Palmer, 2nd by Nicole Saginor.

Motion Passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:30

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Lynch, Secretary