

**Hampton/Scotland Ad Hoc Committee
Programming Subcommittee
For Inter-district Educational Cost Sharing**

Via Zoom meeting on September 15, 2021 at 6:00 pm

<<Link to recording>>

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_gNd8tqBm8sIQP2Z9ZNbTqRHw71ylcQB/view?usp=sharing

1. **Call to order:** Meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm. Present: Gary Greenberg, Wendy Sears, Rose Bisson, Brynn Lipstreu, Angela Maschka, Kathy Donohue and an audience for citizens. Juan Arriola joined the meeting

2. **Additions to agenda:** No additions to the agenda.

3. **General discussion:** Rose Bisson forwarded a copy of the "Final Report, Addition/Withdrawal of Grades Committee, Connecticut Regional District 11, (dated) August 21, 2017". The purpose of forwarding this document is to utilize it to focus the direction for this subcommittee.

Wendy Sears will take Gary Greenberg's place as representative of the Scotland Board of Selectmen to this committee.

Discussion centered around what specifically this subcommittee will do, and how they will do it. The document that was forwarded to each of the members is instructive regarding the kinds of questions that should be asked, if the idea is to make one school out of two schools and questions surrounding teachers, staff etc.

The question was asked of each member as to why they believe the vote on the recommendations from the Final Report failed. The answers ranged from

- No town wanted to lose its elementary school, and the unknown factor that it was uncertain as to whether an elementary school would need to close.
- People didn't want to totally regionalize and close schools. They seemed to prefer the idea of cooperative agreements. They were worried about expanding the Region and being unable to get out of it as is the case right now with the current region.
- Worry about some towns being smaller than others and not having the same voting power when items such as closing schools or budget items come up for vote.
- Increased financial obligations for smaller towns with stable student population vs. decreased obligation for larger towns with declining student population made it unpalatable for some.
- Loss of control, because the region would take over.
- If students were in split schools based on grade level, some parents might have one or more children in one school, with one or more in a different school.

As these concerns were mostly based on the expanded region model, they don't apply to this model that the committee is considering.

Questions were asked such as:

- Would we have the same trouble as last time, regarding lack to desire to close a school?
- What would have happened to the Board of Education (Answer: would have become a regional BOE as now exists). Under a cooperative agreement, that would not happen.

- How did the committee determine what the staffing requirements would be?
 - Took a lot of negotiation, looking at all the school's attributes and took into account the things that each of the schools didn't have.
 - Biggest concern in Hampton was losing the library media specialist, and the final draft left this position out.
 - Talked about the number of paras and utilization, and could these positions be consolidated?
 - Idea of three different elementary schools in a regional structure
- If the premise is to utilize a single building, how would this subcommittee figure out what staffing would be required for approximately 150+ students?
 - Staffing requirements K-6
 - Would have to account for student's grade levels and appropriate number of students per class.
 - Would there be savings in specialists? Would they increase to full time?
 - Would there be room to add to programming, utilizing those teachers that would be available due to staffing changes?

There was discussion surrounding the Pre-K program and state grant funding, administered by EastConn. Readiness grants do not cover all the costs of the program, so some funds come from within the general budget. It alleviates the expense, but operating budget dollars are still needed to keep the program operating. State reimbursement is about \$6,000/student. There is also some tuition, on a sliding scale, that adds to the program. Hampton Elementary School currently has 9 students in Pre-K, while Scotland has 17 students in Pre-K. When the Pre-K student numbers are larger, it is more likely to come close to covering the cost. The State of CT eventually wants the towns to take over, but towns will be able to recover less and less of this expense as costs rise and reimbursement remains low.

Student populations are currently

- Hampton:
 - 80 total students broken down into:
 - 65 Kindergarten through grade 6
 - 9 Pre-Kindergarten
 - 6 Outplaced students, Barrows and other
- Scotland:
 - 101 total students broken down into:
 - 84 Kindergarten through grade 6
 - 17 Pre-Kindergarten
 - TBD number of Outplaced students (unsure if O/P students figured into school total number of students)

Ideally, we would have a student population that could fit in either one of our elementary schools. It was brought up that Scotland Elementary has some amenities that Hampton does not, including a new gymnasium and science lab area.

The most difficult question before the Committee will be which school would host the combined schools, and how would that be determined. Members discussed birth rate vs. new families moving into each town, as a potential starting point for the conversation on enrollment potential and staffing requirements. The members would have to look at capacity for each building, likely population/potential for enrollment, and cost of staffing.

Rose recommended that each of the members review the report for the next meeting. Brynn suggested that information that would be helpful is capacity for each school and data on births in last 5 years, allowing to look at future class sizes by grade level.

The Milone & McBroom study detailed the physical characteristics of all the schools within the Regional District 11. It should have the demographic projections (which were high) for each town. The question was raised as to where the sources for that data originated, and how the current staffing would match the student numbers. The CT State Board of Education may have demographic projections. Rose will investigate that. There are several other sources for this data and members can dig in to find this information.

Subcommittee can be very concrete about the size of schools, capacity, staffing, and think about how current staffing would map out with all students together. Members should familiarize themselves with the Add/Withdraw study and the Milone & McBroom Study. One of the most recent committees concluded that there would be no cost savings in sending students out to other schools, and looked at the cost of closing a school/decommissioning. The members briefly discussed some aspects of decommissioning a school building. There was discussion of errors on the transportation costs being higher than they should have been in the Milone & McBroom study.

Teacher contracts and negotiations were briefly discussed, to see where each town was in that process currently. Scotland is about to negotiate their teacher contract, while Hampton negotiated their teacher contact last year, with it being in force for 2 or 3 years.

Members discussed Boards of Education and how that would operate. Will be a task of the other Ad-Hoc committee. According to the speaker who came a few months ago and addressed the committee, each town would retain their Board of Education, but there would be a Supervisory District (making up a new board).

The members agreed that the documents that will be reviewed by the subcommittee should be made publicly available, on a website/webpage separate from the two towns. Those documents (for each town as applicable), thus far, will include:

- Milone & McBroom study
- Final Report- Addition/Withdrawal Committee 2017
- Dissolution Study 2017
- Current census'
- Teacher and Administrator contracts
- Current budgets

Any additional documents will be added as they are necessary to the subcommittee for review. Gary Greenberg will investigate the creation of a webpage/website where documents can be compiled.

There was discussion of ensuring that the membership for this subcommittee be even, as it appeared that Scotland had one more member than Hampton.

4. **Meeting dates 2021-2022:** There was discussion surrounding meeting dates and times.

Wendy Sears moved to accept a preliminary 2021 schedule of September 29, October 6 and October 20 at 6:00 pm as dates for Special Meetings of the subcommittee to be held over Zoom, with links to be announced with agendas. Rose Bisson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The members agreed that a General Discussion item shall be added to the agenda for subsequent meetings. Will discuss November meeting dates at a future time.

5. Audience for citizens: Kim Martin from Scotland (re: the question of why the vote did not pass for Addition/Withdrawal) stated that the closeness of the votes to Dissolution and Add/Withdraw confused people into thinking that they couldn't vote yes to both questions.

Gary stated that the subcommittee must be fair, judicious and transparent with the numbers and offer the sources of this information so that others may crunch the numbers as well.

Juan stated that a Hampton board member wanted to involve Chaplin in the committee. He believes that the cooperative agreement should only be between Hampton and Scotland and is not a regional agreement.

Kathy stated that Hampton's Board voted to appoint a committee to discuss shared services (look at sending students to Chaplin, potentially on a tuition basis). Each of our Schools are only capable of handling the number of students who are currently attending Hampton and Scotland Elementary and adding Chaplin to the discussion would not make sense.

There was discussion regarding the hiring of an attorney to work with the committee during this process. There is a conflict of interest with each of the proposed education attorneys for both towns. The foremost attorney in this field is Shipman & Goodwin, who works in the same practice as Hampton's Board attorney. Hampton's Board voted to not overlook the conflict of interest, leaving the remaining entities to determine if they will. Scotland has hired an intern who is looking into cooperative agreements existing in other towns, and who their attorneys are to see if there are other options.

6. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn made by Kathy Donohue, seconded by Wendy Sears. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 pm.

Meeting minutes submitted by Wendy Sears