

## Ad Hoc Committee for Inter-district Education Cost Sharing

April 22, 2021

5:00PM

ZOOM Meeting

**Call to Order:** Scotland First Selectman Gary Greenberg called the Meeting to order at 5:06PM.

**Roll Call:** Gary Greenberg, Hampton First Selectman Al Cahill (5:08), Scotland Board of Education Chairman Brynn Lipstreu, Hampton Board of Education Chairman Rose Bisson, Hampton Board of Finance Chairman Kathy Donahue, Hampton Elementary School Superintendent Frank Olah. Not present: Scotland Elementary School Superintendent Frank Baron.

### **Approval of Minutes**

February 25, 2021 Meeting: tabled

**Additions to the Agenda:** none.

### **Superintendents' Report**

Dr. Olah detailed the findings of the March 9 meeting of the Superintendents which developed a list of cost and staffing comparisons between the two schools. The list was sent to Ms. Bisson and Mr. Cahill, who forwarded it to Ms. Donahue and announced to the Hampton Boards of Education and Selectmen Scotland's tuition quote of \$7,800 per pupil offered to Hampton students. Dr. Olah explained that, although there were some disparities, which prompted a discussion regarding the schools' needs for counseling services, staffing in the two schools is basically the same, as are the number of students attending each of the schools. Dr. Olah stated that there was little ability to save money for products, such as paper, because of the small volumes used by both schools. He suggested that there might be an opportunity to explore collaboration for the Pre-K class as there are only eight students in Hampton expected to attend next year, and only five students in Kindergarten, yet staffing must remain at the same level. He expressed concern that the State might not fund the Pre-K program if the 16 slots allotted are not filled. It was reported that Scotland has 14 students enrolled in Pre-K next year. Ms. Donahue suggested that the Superintendents provide financial details, including salaries and benefits, for each of the positions listed. She noted that cuts to Education Cost Sharing are expected to continue, and that with the continual decline in student enrollment in the schools, something different must be done as the schools will not be sustainable in the future.

### **Roundtable Discussion**

Mr. Greenberg stated that tuition should be a last resort if the schools can't find meaningful savings, and that a single school serving the students of both towns under joint supervision is a more realistic option. Ms. Donahue advocated for a cooperative agreement instead of regionalization, and Mr. Greenberg suggested that investigating a cooperative agreement between the two schools could be a charge of the committee. Ms. Bisson concurred that this was an option worth pursuing, and Ms. Lipstreu advocated for a larger committee with broader representation. Mr. Greenberg stated that the State Department of Education (SDE) could serve as a resource, and Dr. Olah suggested that the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) might have expertise on the subject as well. Mr. Cahill urged the committee to investigate the way grant funding impacts cooperative agreements. Ms. Bisson stated that the school

districts should determine the way the study should be conducted and that the educational model – curriculum, grade configurations, staffing – should be the committee’s first focus, and costs and governance as a second stage of the study. Ms. Donahue countered that representation is important to residents from the start, and Mr. Greenberg agreed, noting the importance of maintaining equity between the towns. Ms. Donahue suggested that two sub-committees be formed and community members be added to both. There was discussion on membership and ensuring equal representation from the two towns. By general consent it was agreed that two sub-committees, expanded with representatives from the two communities, could be formed: one with a focus on mission and programming; and one focused on governance and finance, with the ultimate goal of a single school for the two towns under a cooperative agreement. Mr. Cahill suggested that more information be gathered before further decisions are made, and that he supports any measure that provides progress. Mr. Greenberg agreed to contact both the SDE and CABE before the next meeting.

#### **Audience for Citizens**

Maryellen Donnelly stated that school board members should serve on the committees as they are elected and charged with the responsibility of educating the students in their towns. She urged the committee to consider teacher contracts and the potential uses of a vacated school building as part of the study.

Lisa Labelle advocated for teacher representation from each school on the expanded committee.

Jen Nelson stated her belief that the State would fully accommodate the forming of a cooperative agreement between the two schools.

Cassidy Martin suggested considering other schools, like Chaplin, as student populations continue to decrease.

Wendy Sears expressed her gratitude to the committee for exploring options and suggested developing a clear mission statement at the start. To her question on a possible time frame, the consensus was that the study would take two to three years to complete the entire process.

**Next Meeting Date & Time:** June 3 at 5:30PM.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the Committee, the Meeting adjourned at 6:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola  
Recording Secretary