

Ad Hoc Committee for Inter-district Education Cost Sharing
Programming Sub-Committee
Special Meeting
Minutes
April 7, 2022

7PM

Call to Order: Chairman Sears called the Meeting to order at 7:18PM.

Roll Call: Wendy Sears, Rose Bisson, Kathy Donahue, Juan Arriola, Cassidy Martin

Audience for Citizens:

Joan Fox requested that the Selectmen's response to the flyer, produced and distributed by the Political Action Committee "Keep HES Open", include the reason the Ad Hoc Committee was initiated. She also asked where residents can find the documents distributed at the meeting and was informed that everything is available on the committee's and both towns' websites, and expressed concern that not all residents have access to these. Chairman Sears stated that informational sessions are tentatively scheduled for the first week(s) in May.

Maryellen Donnelly questioned why the committee's work wouldn't ultimately result in the closing of one school. Chairman Sears explained that the committee is tasked only with developing an educational model and its estimated costs.

Work Session for Budgetary Issues

a. Matching Figures

Chairman Sears reviewed the changes incorporated per the last meeting. These included adjustments in the costs of health insurance, Pre-Kindergarten, and Speech services, with totals adjusted accordingly. A question remaining on the total cost of the Hampton Elementary School's audit will be submitted to the Business Coordinator, and the budgets will be reviewed again to ensure that costs are not represented in multiple places.

Ms. Bisson reiterated her concern that information on salaries not be identifiable as to specific staff, a situation that she believes might cause certain teachers who lack seniority to resign and seek employment elsewhere. It was noted that the hiring of staff for the combined school will be included in the cooperative agreement and has been the subject of executive sessions. It was also noted that Scotland Elementary School is offering an early retirement incentive which might eliminate, or lessen, a reduction in force.

b. Taking Grants into Account

Discussion on grants continued in terms of ensuring that grant funds are not included in any of the schools' costs for the purpose of presenting fair comparisons from the current to the projected year. Consequently, costs formerly reduced by grants were corrected to reflect actual costs. Kathy Donahue reported that grants traditionally received have been listed and questions regarding their distribution -- to the towns, the schools, and the combined school -- have been submitted to the State Department for clarification.

c. Simplifying Presentation

Rose Bisson explained that the format for presenting the budget information is confusing to Hampton residents and requested that Hampton's budget information be presented in the format residents are used to. Chairman Sears suggested that Ms. Bisson transfer the information from the current format into the preferred format.

There was continued discussion on presenting the estimated cost savings per town and in total. It was noted that, with costs such as transportation and tuition transferred from the combined school budget to the towns, the amount in the chart labeled “estimated savings” decreases from \$1,741,612 to approximately \$1,340,000. There was discussion on changing the format, and/or the language, of the charts so that what the different figures represent is clear. Ms. Donahue stressed the importance of presenting the estimated savings for each town, as well as the overall amount. It was decided, for the sake of clarity, to highlight the chart containing the expenses transferred from the education budget to the town budgets in yellow to match the highlighted areas throughout the budget that denote the transfer of these expenses.

d. Additional Figures

Chairman Sears will compile a list of additional costs, such as FICA for certain positions, still needed.

Set Date and Time for Next Meeting

By general consent, it was decided to tentatively schedule the next meeting for April 21 at 7PM at the Scotland Fire Department’s Community Room.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Chairman Sears requested that members email suggestions for the next Agenda.

Audience for Citizens: Maryellen Donnelly provided information on the Early Childhood Grants. Chairman Sears will send the information she obtained regarding the Readiness Grant to members.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the special meeting adjourned at 8:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola