

Ad Hoc Committee for Inter-district Education Cost Sharing

January 27, 2022

7:00PM

Call to Order: Gary Greenberg called the Meeting to order at 7:03PM.

Roll Call: Gary Greenberg, Allan Cahill, Kathy Donahue, Rose Bisson, Juan Arriola, Wendy Sears, Cassidy Martin.

Not present: Clare D'Appollonio, Tom McAvoy.

Others present: Hampton Selectman John Tillinghast, Recording Secretary Dayna McDermott-Arriola

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Allan Cahill, seconded by Kathy Donahue, to approve the July 29, 2021 Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session to Discuss Material Covered by Attorney-Client Privilege

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Allan Cahill, to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a contract under negotiation. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session convened at 7:07PM. Those present: Gary Greenberg, Allan Cahill, Kathy Donahue, Rose Bisson, Juan Arriola, Wendy Sears, Cassidy Martin.

Public session reconvened at 7:20PM.

Discussion of Next Steps

Gary Greenberg outlined the two stages of the next steps as follows: the committee will present the cooperative agreement to both Boards of Education during executive sessions as a first step in the process; the committee will subsequently present the information to the public at large during informational sessions. He expressed the hope that the members of the committee and the school boards will present the information to the public jointly. Rose Bisson noted that the programming sub-committee has not completed its task and suggested that, since the sole purpose of establishing a committee to research combining schools was to save money, presenting at a meeting without that financial information would be premature. Wendy Sears suggested that two sessions be scheduled with the Boards of Education, one to present the cooperative agreement and another to present its impact on the schools' budgets, noting that it was a lot of information to discuss all at once. While agreeing with Ms. Bisson that the financial information is an important component of the proposal, Cassidy Martin supported the notion of two sessions, adding that she hoped that the meetings would happen in proximity so that all the relevant information would be available in order to reduce speculation. Wendy Sears stated that she is in the process of incorporating the last of the schools' numbers discussed into the budget document; acknowledging Ms. Bisson's comment that there were remaining figures that would require the continued involvement of committee members from both schools, she stating that a draft, at least with the major departments and costs, should be ready within the next two weeks. To Ms. Bisson's reiteration of her concern that the contract and the budget be presented simultaneously to the school boards, Kathy Donahue, while acknowledging that financial information formed part of the reason for a discussion on combining schools, she advocated for splitting the presentations into two sessions as the information would be too cumbersome to process during one session.

There was discussion on the timeline for presenting, and voting on, the plan. Kathy Donahue noted that if the proposal were to pass, there are statutory timelines for notification to school staff. Gary Greenberg agreed that the likelihood that the plan could be implemented for the next academic year was slim. Allan Cahill suggested that the boards be apprised of the budgetary impact of combining the schools now as they are currently in the process of building their budgets, noting that redundancies in the schools, especially regarding costs in administration, should be apparent.

Rose Bisson challenged the notion of the legislative body, the Town Meeting, voting on the proposal. While the committee was relying on the information offered by Attorney Dorsey, who had provided legal advice to the committee throughout their review of the cooperative agreement, Ms. Bisson stated that she would be discussing the issue of a Town Meeting vote with the Hampton Board of Education's attorney. Wendy Sears expressed her understanding that the Towns are involved in the decision because they own the school properties. Kathy Donahue agreed, adding that the Boards of Education and the Town Meetings are voting on two separate questions, with the school boards voting on the cooperative agreement, and the Towns voting on designating a school to use for the cooperative agreement. Cassidy Martin asked what would happen if the Boards' and the Towns' votes produced opposing results. Gary Greenberg confirmed that all entities, both boards and both schools, would have to support the plan in order to enact it. Ms. Martin also asked how the issue of which school to use would be resolved. Mr. Greenberg stated that the choice of the school would be a recommendation of the committee. To Ms. Martin's concern that once a vote was taken, current staff would start to seek other employment opportunities, Kathy Donahue acknowledged that this is usually part of the process of closing a school, and Gary Greenberg stated that the schools' teachers, in the main, should not be impacted by the closing of one school as staffing levels should continue.

After discussion, it was agreed by mutual consent to schedule meetings with Scotland's Board of Education during the weeks of March 21 and April 5, with meetings with Hampton's Board of Education during the weeks of March 28th and April 11th. Both school board chairmen agreed to contact their respective school board members regarding their availability to attend meetings during these timeframes. It was also agreed to reschedule the February 1st meeting of the governance sub-committee for February 8th at 10AM.

Audience for Citizens: none.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Committee, the Meeting adjourned at 8:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Secretary