

BARRE SUPERVISORY UNION #61 SCHOOL DISTRICT
ACT 46 - 706 STUDY COMMITTEE
Spaulding High School – Library
April 26, 2018 – 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Gina Akley – (BT Community Representative) - Co-Chair
Tyler Smith - (BC Board / BC Community Representative) – Co-Chair
Jeff Blow - (BT – Community Representative)
Giuliano Cecchinelli - (BC Board / Community Representative)
Paul Cook (BC – Community Representative)
Sarah Costa - (BC – Community Representative)
Guy Isabelle – (SHS Board – BT Community Representative)
Rebecca Kerin-Hutchins - (BT – Board Representative)
Ed Rousse - (BC – SHS Board / BC Community Representative)
Jessica Vest - (BC – Community Representative)
Kim Whitcomb - (BT Community Representative)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Marcia Biondolillo - (BT - Community Representative)
Michael Deering - (BC Board / Community Representative)
Michaela Martin - (BT Community Representative)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

John Pandolfo, Superintendent

GUESTS PRESENT:

Video Vision Tech Dave Delcore – Times Argus Paul Malone Sonya Spaulding
Christine Sullivan

1. Call to Order

The Co-Chair, Mr. Smith, called the Thursday, April 26, 2018, meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to Agenda

Add 4.4 List of Financial Benefits of a Consolidated District (prepared by Business Manager, Lisa Perreault)
This item will be discussed after Agenda Item 4.1.

3. Approval of Minutes – April 10, 2018 Act 46 Consolidation Study Committee Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Rousse, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the April 10, 2018 Act 46 – 706 Study Committee Meeting.

4. Act 46

4.1 Discussion with Board Member from Harwood UUSD

Christine Sullivan, Chair of the newly formed Harwood Union Unified School District, was introduced to the Committee. Ms. Sullivan advised regarding the consolidation of 7 schools into one district. The total student count is approximately 1,700. Each of the 7 Boards had its own budget, and unique cultures, roles, and responsibilities. Previous boards consisted of a total of 32 board members, plus members of Executive Committees. The merged Board has 14 members. The merger involved creation of one board with 2 representatives from each district. Not all members of the new Board were on previous local boards. The Board is currently working on its second budget season. The focus during budget development is equity, including foreign language, and added consistency in Pre-k Programs. Though the Board make-up consists of equal representation from each district, voting is weighted. The Board has found that it needs to run more formally than the previous small local boards, and there are more committees. Committees include; Policy, Facilities, Negotiations, Community Engagement/Communication, and Personnel (for the Superintendent's evaluation). There is no Finance Committee. In response to a query, Ms. Sullivan advised that there have not been any "close votes" or transportation issues. Administrators are still working as they did before the merger, but do not attend Board meetings. No schools were closed as part of the merger. Of the 7 schools, there is only 1 high school. Part of the philosophy behind the merger was to realize savings with increased efficiencies at the elementary schools, and invest those savings into the high school. It was thought that over the years, more focus was being given to the local schools, and the high school

was collectively being ignored. The Board is discussing the possibility of closing two of the small schools, and is currently discussing various structures and seeking public comment.

Merger discussions were occurring before Act 46, and community members thought merging made good sense. Three or four public forums were held prior to the merger vote. Voter support was 80%. Voters felt that a merger would happen eventually, and felt it would be best to approve the merger and take advantage of the tax incentives.

Recent issues relate to non-merger related items, including proficiency based learning and grading. In response to a query, it was noted that there were discrepancies in Cost per Equalized Pupil throughout the 7 schools. Though some savings have been realized, the majority of savings will be the result of closing some schools. Some savings have been the result of purchasing fuel, copiers, and paper through the merged district. The Board has not been tracking finances at each school. It is believed that school administrators are managing finances at the school level. The Board is looking into the addition of art programs and music lessons. Ms. Sullivan volunteered to answer any follow-up questions that may arise. The Committee thanked Ms. Sullivan to attending the meeting and sharing her experience.

Committee Members shared thoughts of the overview; Mr. Isabelle was impressed that what could have been a very complicated merger, involving 7 schools, was completed very smoothly and received positive support from all communities, Mr. Smith noted that both speakers (Mr. Evans from Paine Mountain and Ms. Sullivan from Harwood) both reported that their boards believe equity is very important and are working towards achieving equity throughout the schools in their unified districts. It was noted that the populations in Barre City and Barre Town are fairly equal, thus negating the need for weighted voting on a unified board.

4.2 Review Articles of Agreement

A copy of the Articles of Agreement from the October 2016 Final Report (Appendix E), was distributed. Mr. Smith advised that the first thirteen Articles of Agreement are required by Act 46. The Committee began discussion of the Articles of Agreement that were previously approved by the State and put before voters. Discussion was held regarding removing the words 'at this time' from Articles 2 and 4. Mr. Pandolfo will check with counsel regarding whether or not an additional sentence can be added to Article 2 stating that no other mergers would occur without a vote. After lengthy discussion, Mr. Smith cautioned that discussion seemed to be leaning towards Articles that are too complex and he believes the Articles should be kept short. Mr. Pandolfo advised that given the formation of the new Study Committee, the previous Secretary of Education was going to leave Barre out of the draft Statewide Plan. The new interim Secretary of Education, or whoever is charged with creating the draft Statewide Plan, may include Barre. It was confirmed that the State Board of Education has to approve the Articles of Agreement before they are put before the voters. Discussion of changes to dates in the Articles of Agreement was tabled, as it was deemed premature to assign dates at this time. Mrs. Kerin-Hutchins voiced concern that BTMES field trip fund raising monies be reserved for use by BTMES. Committee Members want to know if the law allows for each school's funds to be earmarked (reserved) for their school. Regarding Article 6 (Indebtedness of Member Districts), Mr. Pandolfo will check with counsel to confirm whether or not any monies can be reserved for use by a specific school. Mr. Blow voiced displeasure that the BTMES 'Roof Fund' was renamed the 'Capital Improvement Fund'. It was noted that BTMES depleted their Capital Improvement Fund in the summer of 2017 (roof work and parking lot paving).

4.3 Committee Work Plan & Timeline

Discussion at the next meeting will include:

- Discussion on the Articles of Agreement, including Article #7 (Real and Personal Property)
- Committee Member Concerns

Committee Members currently have no requests for additional guest speakers.

A copy of an updated 'Appendix 3C', Comparison of 2017 Smarter Balanced Assessment Data (Aggregated and Dis-Aggregated), was distributed. This information was provided at the request of the Committee, and will be discussed at a future meeting.

Two meetings were scheduled:

Thursday, May 10, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the SHS Library

Thursday, May 24, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the SHS Library

4.4 List of Financial Benefits of a Consolidated District (prepared by Business Manager, Lisa Perreault)

A document titled 'Benefits of a Unified Barre School District' (04/03/18), prepared by Lisa Perreault, BSU Business Manager, was distributed. The Committee reviewed the document prepared by Mrs. Perreault. In response to a query regarding a possible reduction in SPED out placement and building leases, it was noted that the BSU cannot currently purchase real estate. Under the current structure, if a decision is made to purchase real estate to 'house' a special education program, real estate will need to be purchased by one of the districts, and then possibly be shared by multiple districts, which brings about a number of complications. Under a consolidated district, the BSU could purchase real estate. Ms. Whitcomb queried regarding possible benefits for gifted students (in a consolidated district). Enrichment programs are currently in place for 'high achievers'.

5. Communication Plan

Tabled pending a decision regarding the course of action the Committee will be taking.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin