

**Regional Planning Committee for RSU 18
Monson Elementary School
March 27, 2008**

Members Present: Sue Mackey Andrews, Ralph Johnson, Richard Goodwin (interim appointment for TerriLynn), Virginia Sanborn, Jack Bair, David Thorp, Jack Clukey, Mary Downs, Walt Emmons, George Hardy, Jane Hewes, Julie Anderson

Guests: Dr. Ray Webb, Dr. Richard Swett

NOTES

Introductions, Review of Meeting Notes (3-13-08)

- After a review of the minutes, David Thorp noted that he thought the State did reimburse the purchase of school buses at a significant amount (98%) on a two-year delay, but that more inquiry would probably be needed.
- David also noted that in regards to facilities, Shirley's preference would also be similar to Greenville's in that the town would keep its facilities and enter in a lease agreement for use.
- David also offered that owning our own buses was not necessarily less expensive than contracting...a lot of auxiliary costs included mechanics, garages, etc.
- Spoke about the preference of using local contractors. Sometimes it is the better option...sometimes it is the only option if there is only one contractor in the area and it not necessarily is a less expensive proposition. More good will involved sometimes than cost savings in using local contractors and this will need to be discussed by the RSU as to their preference on how they handle this.

Update

- LD1932 with amendments (super union concept) has been passed by the House and Senate by margins that may be veto-proof. The bill now faces final votes in each chamber before going to the Governor for his consideration.
- Union concept still has many more questions that will need to be answered such as board membership and governance. How many would be involved, etc.?
- Sue Mackey Andrews distributed a draft letter that serves as a report to the Commissioner regarding RSU 18's reorganization plans to date. At the March 13th RPC meeting, it was decided by the committee that a letter to the Commissioner to comply with the March 28th deadline was the best option for the RPC at this point in time.

- School choice still remains an issue and concern that we have not received an answer on and this was voiced in the draft letter. Through discussion, committee members decided to remove this from the letter. We have written to Norm to request a read from the MDOE and will proceed with our planning on the basis of the verbal counsel that he provided earlier. Not sure if we will get a response from the MDOE to this question that we raised even before December 1, 2007 and again in our progress report submitted at that time.
- RE: union-like structure. Question asked about what happens to towns such as Monson, Charleston, Sebec that are part of an SAD...Can they go on their own, such as Shirley? Original reorganization law stated that towns that were part of an SAD, had to stay as part of an SAD....If the law is to dissolve SAD's, do the towns in the SAD have to set up separate school boards to deal with the work of the RSU? (next meeting will be used to discuss these structures)
- More comments
 - Ray Webb - maybe the opportunity is there to be more direct in shaping how we want the RSU to be
 - Wait to see what is going to happen with the legislature and continue these discussions about what union concept will look like for us....with the other towns...
 - Sue Mackey Andrews - regarding school choice, if we don't hear anything from the Department, we should consider going to the Attorney General for an answer
 - Ray Webb - his feeling as a taxpayer is that universal school choice would be in the best interest for the State...families being able to choose where their children go to school
 - Questions about transportation costs related to school choice...who pays for this?
 - Richard Swett – would hate to see a parent end up having to say that they won't be able to let their child take advantage of an opportunity at a school choice because of money concerns, i.e. transportation costs, etc. This is a real issue for many families in this area.

Finance Committee Report – Jack Clukey

Jack distributed a report of the recommendations of the Finance Committee regarding certain items that are required to be addressed as part of the consolidation plan.

Items discussed:

- Item 6 - *“The disposition of existing school indebtedness and lease purchasing obligations if the parties elect not to use the provisions of Section 1506 regarding the disposition of debt obligations”*
 - Recommendation by the finance committee that the debt should be disposed of by the units incurring it.
- Item 8 - *“The disposition of existing school funds and existing financial obligations, including undesignated fund balances, trust funds, reserve funds, and other funds appropriated for school purposes”*

- Recommendations made assuming no school union model is adopted.
 - Designated funds – new unit should dispose of designated fund balance consistent with original purpose of establishment of the fund
 - Undesignated funds - balances turned over to the RSU board should be used by the RSU to benefit the communities from which the funds were originally assessed. Recommended that a list of capital facility and/or equipment needs associated with those facilities be turned over to the RSU by the SAU in conjunction with turning over the undesignated fund balances so that the RSU board could consider the capital needs prior to dispensing the funds for any other use.
- Comments:
 - Question raised by Mary Downs about who will take care of the debt service on SAD 68's new school if the SAD is dissolved. Discussion about the State fulfilling it's obligation, which Mary is concerned about.
 - Capital improvement funds approved by the state – Will these be available to unions as well as the RSU's?
 - Designate funds in the last budget before turnover to the RSU for specific things that would be appropriate (capital improvements, etc.) to give guidance to the RSU in dispersal of these funds.
 - Item 12 - *“An estimate of the cost savings to be achieved by the formation of a regional school unit and how these savings will be achieved”*
 - Recommendation that the cost savings of the RSU be equal to or greater than the reduction in State subsidy that is anticipated by the DOE over subsequent budget years.
 - Estimate cost savings in central administration and focus on this estimate to be part of the plan submitted in April
 - David Thorp questioned instruction being off limits for cost savings and not considered for savings like other areas
 - Jack responded that the law was specific about where cost savings can and can't come from, i.e. instruction and closing of schools
 - A model for central administration that best fits our RSU will be presented to be part of the plan submission for April

Next scheduled meetings: 4/10/08 and 4/24/08

4/10 – Super union discussion (governance) dependent on legislation

4/24 – School choice and finance, next steps and timelines, meetings with boards, decisions about having referendum vote in November 2008 or January 2009 (Jack offered that to be on November ballot, warrants needed to be approved by September)

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berce