

**RSU # 18 - Regional Planning Committee Minutes
November 19, 2007
Monson Elementary School, Monson**

6:30 p.m.

The new co-chair from Greenville, Ralph Johnson, was welcomed. Everyone introduced themselves as requested.

Sue Mackey Andrews, co-chair, asked the subcommittees to take a few minutes to discuss our values and vision as a newly forming school unit.

She asked each group to share one value:

- Creating an opportunity out of this process creating more opportunities for students beyond cost savings; do not sacrifice instruction;
- Maximize the number of graduates that go on to higher education, college or trade school;
- Need to become a community-based education system;
- Do not increase student time getting from home to school;
- Move staff, not students;
- Keep the facilities up-to-date and a safe environment for children; keep schools open if possible;
- Provide options, choice -- especially at secondary level (when does choice start?);
- Provide enrichment programs, ensure options and opportunities for participation by all children (transportation for sports for children);
- Best possible opportunities for all students

Statement: This is a district office issue, eventually decreasing central office personnel in the future; and

Statement: EPS recommended student/teacher ratio might not work in an economically deprived area.

Norm Higgins, consultant to the Maine DOE, believes that the DOE will respond to the progress within the mandated 15 days. He is willing to hand-deliver the plans to ensure a timely response. He, also, stated that the SAUs with school-choice may maintain school-choice. Once an RSU is established, the regional board can not remove school-choice from a community. In MSAD 68, there is a contract with FA. If the contract is not renewed, school-choice would be a possibility. If the contract is not renewed, Monson students would be able to go Greenville HS. If it is renewed, FA would be the contracted choice.

In response to a school-choice for the new RSU, school-choice might be possibility if it is part of the plan and voted in by the voters. There will be a shift for towns with school-choice if the maximum allowable tuition is more than current secondary tuition rates. Attendance zones (towns with public high schools) will remain as is unless the RPC publicly approved plan by the voters or the SAU school committee writes school-choice into the development in the RSU. The local SAU committee's decision cannot be overturned by the RSU board after the plan has been instituted. If the all the former SAUs in the RSU 18 want to develop specialty secondary institutions, it may happen, but it is not an immediate possibility. It would take time to develop. Ray Webb suggested that the potential for the opportunity to develop specialty schools ought to be part of the current conversation and plan. Norm confirmed that it would be a good idea to keep the potential ideas visible and transparent.

Norm believes that some of the schools will close after consolidation due financial pressures. The law currently does not allow a unit to withdraw from an RSU. Dick Swett

asked and Norm confirmed that the community may pay for any schools that they want to maintain.

After a break, Sue clarified that the representatives on the RPC develop a plan, that the plan goes to the boards of the SAUs, and then to a public vote. She asked about the timing of public meetings. Norm clarified that there are two types of public meetings right now. One public meeting would seek input about the plan. The second type would be to present the plan for public discussion.

Questions about the citizens' petition rescinding the consolidation law were asked. Norm believes that by late January we will know what will happen.

Our plan would have to be developed in March, approved by the respective Boards by April 15th to be on the June referendum. Public informing sessions would be conducted once the plan was final, and before the election. Sue suggested that it would be a good idea to conduct listening forums now, to see where citizens not on the RPC are with respect to key issues such as transportation, school consolidation, school choice, etc.

The 3 page progress plan to be submitted to the MDOE was reviewed by the RPC. The local school committees are meeting tomorrow night to approve this progress plan. Pete Johnston suggested that all *completed* boxes be changed to *in-progress* boxes. We had a lot of discussion about the nature of the planning; we are a work-in-progress. Several participants suggested that a short, sweet cover letter should be submitted to further explain the difficulties of the RPC. Revisions were made to the template after discussion of specific concerns.

Sue noted that we would continue our RPC dialogue and that we would know hopefully by the end of December if adjacent District plans were approved, which would inform us if we would have additional partners join the RSU at that point in time. Participants agreed to meet on 12/18 in Monson, at 6:30 p.m., at which time we hope to have information on the status of our progress report. The purpose of this meeting is to get organized for our next steps:

- Review of topical group membership
- Development of decision-making process
- Articulation of values and priorities (started at this meeting)
- January information gathering community forums
- Development of the Plan (large electronic version)
- Presentation to School Boards

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Janes

Next meeting December 18th , 6:30 in Monson