

TEMPORARY REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2022

*Asst. Received
Lynn Stone
Town Clerk
JUN 20 2022
1:45 P.M.*

- 1) Call to Order The Temporary Regional School Study Committee meeting held via teleconference only was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Stephen Tracy.

Members present: Stephen Tracy, Co-Chairman, Margaret Hunt, Secretary, Billie Jean Sideris, Denise Weik, Lynn Stone, and John Morosani. Also present: Chris Leone, Superintendent, and Kristen Della Volpe, Assistant Superintendent.

- 2) Approval of the Public Hearing Minutes

Mr. Tracy commented he would like to review, discuss, and approve each set of Public Hearing Minutes separately. Hearing no objections from the committee members Mr. Tracy began the approval process. At that time, Mr. Leone clarified that committee members who were not in attendance at any one particular Public Hearing should abstain from voting.

2.1 Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Goshen – May 26, 2022

Billie Jean Sideris motioned to approve the Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Goshen. Margaret Hunt seconded the motion. Lynn Stone and Denise Weik abstained. The motion passes 4-0-2.

2.2 Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Warren – May 31, 2022

Billie Jean Sideris motioned to approve the Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Warren. Lynn Stone seconded the motion. John Morosani, Margaret Hunt, and Denise Weik abstained. The motion passes 3-0-3.

2.3 Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Morris – June 1, 2022

Billie Jean Sideris motioned to approve the Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Morris. Lynn Stone seconded the motion. The motion passes 6-0-0.

2.4 Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Litchfield – June 2, 2022

Billie Jean Sideris motioned to approve the Public Hearing Minutes – Town of Litchfield. John Morosani seconded the motion. Lynn Stone and Denise Weik abstained. The motion passes 4-0-2.

- 3) Approval of the Q & A from the Public Hearings

Billie Jean Sideris motioned to approve the Q & A from the Public Hearings. Denise Weik seconded the motion.

During discussion, Ms. Hunt asked about the correcting of wording on a question on page 2 of the Q & A. Mr. Leone commented that the question was submitted to the committee in writing and as such should stand as written. Ms. Escobar confirmed Mr. Leone's statement as correct. Ms. Hunt identified a typographical error in an answer on page 2. Mr. Leone commented that would be corrected prior to the Q & A's being circulated next week.

Mr. Tracy called for a vote on the motion to approve the Q & A from the Public Hearings.

The motion passes 6-0-0.

- 4) Adjournment There being no further business to come before this committee, Billie Jean Sideris made a motion to adjourn. Denise Weik seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Escobar
Secretary, pro-tem

Questions & Answers from the Public Hearings

- Q. I had heard that teachers would have to reapply for their jobs. Will administrators have to do the same?
- A. If the merger referendum is approved in all four towns on June 28, the new Region 20 will be required to collective bargain with all existing staff and unions before the new region opens, including agreeing on how to establish the new staff; therefore, nothing has been agreed on yet with respect to having to apply, not apply, or some other process.
- Q. With any regional school district, the town with the largest population and student enrollment "run the show" even with weighted voting. How will the towns with the smaller populations/student enrollment be protected?
- A. This is not the case with the proposed Region 20. The Temporary Regional School Study Committee members considered board of education structures in Connecticut's existing regional school districts to address the concerns of smaller population/enrollment towns. Per the plan chosen by the Temporary Regional School Study Committee (TRSSC): The voting power of each Initial, or Regular, Member from each Member Town will be weighted in the proportion, within permissible deviant limits consistent with federal constitutional standards, that the population of each Member Town bears to the population of the entire regional school district and must approve items with a weighted super-majority of at least 66% of the Board present and voting, including at least one member from each Member Town voting favorably.
- Q. When combining two districts, even with the larger student population, there is a concern that all courses, even though still in the course catalog will not be run, be available for students.
- A. Based on all feedback from school administration given to the TRSSC, there will be an ability to run more courses due to a stable and consistent enrollment.
- Q. In regard to athletics, when combining two districts and combining a sport that is fully manned in both districts, will limit the opportunities for students athletes to participate. How will you address that?
- A. Rather than limiting the opportunities, the plan would provide for greater depth to athletics. Offering junior varsity and freshman programs as well as being able to create more sport teams will offer more opportunities for student athletes to participate.
- Q. Core classes at high school are maxed at WAMOGO. There will be a gain of 8 classrooms when middle school goes to Litchfield. Where are we coming up with enough classrooms for everyone?

- A. There are classrooms and space that is not always being used at WAMOGO during the day. Based on a review of the building by the facilities department, there is enough space.
- Q. Currently there are teachers at WAMOGO who do not have a classroom and they cart their wares to each class. (elective's). If there is that much extra room up there to fit all the additional students then why do we have teachers without rooms?
- A. Part of teacher traveling was from the two COVID-years. Part is from scheduling (which can be done better). Part is also a past mentality of assigning one teacher per room. In fact, numerous successful schools do not utilize this method. A classroom is not designated to a teacher but to a subject.
- Q. Parking. As a parent to go up during the day there is very little parking now. How will we be able to accommodate additional teachers and more driving juniors and seniors? (there are approximately 211 parking spaces at WAMOGO 105 for students, 96 for Region 6 staff and admin, the remaining are for handicap, building subs and cafeteria)
- A. Parking, which has been an issue for a decade, is currently being addressed by the administration. With better school practices there can be more spaces.
- Q. How soon do we need to do a bonding referenda for an addition at the High School? Auditorium? Cafeteria? Where will we go? Up? Parking?
- A. Region 6 has not bonded for the auditorium in the summer of 2019 or the gymnasium in the summer 2018. There is a method to pay as you go. With respect to larger projects for windows and air handlers, that would need to be addressed in the coming five years. There is also \$1M annually built into capital for the proposed plan budget.
- Q. Everyone needs to pay off their debt before this happens correct? Region 6 will not be absorbing Litchfield debt.
- A. Region 6 and Litchfield are not absorbing each other's debt. Please see the report page 10 to see how capital, land, facilities, and debt, are handled.
- Q. Did anyone ask the students if they are for or against regionalization? This plan will cause more friction and bullying if the students were not involved in the decision. All students not just a select few.
- A. There was a community survey issued in 2019. Students have not been surveyed on regionalization. There is evidence of students, from all four towns, working together in the arts, sports, social life. There is also anecdotal evidence that there are students in both districts who support regionalization. (See the public hearing minutes for the

Litchfield Public Hearing.) The statement in the question that “this plan will cause more friction and bullying” is speculation and not a question.

Q. Ag STEM program for middle school students – Will this continue? Will the students be transported to the Ag Department for the experience?

A. The ASTE department has two vehicles (large bus and small bus) that can be used for transportation to continue the ASTE experience as an elective for Middle School students.

Q. If the referendum passes; does all professional staff need to reapply for their jobs?

A. The committee used the following language on future employment: Region 20 is required to collectively bargain with existing unions (AFSCME, LAA, LEA, WAA, and WEA) before opening. At least 75% of any reductions from current total staff levels resulting from the creation of Region 20 will come from retirements and natural attrition.

Q. How will the high school principal be chosen?

A. See previous question on collective bargaining.

Q. What will be the cost of rebranding for a new district?

A. It is estimated that rebranding would cost \$200,000 (signage, uniforms, painting, etc.). This is included in the proposed budget for capital costs.