TEMPORARY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
December 15, 2021

1) Call to Order The Temporary Regional School District Study Committee meeting held at the Litchfield Center School and via teleconference was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by William Davenport.

Members present: William Davenport, Co-Chairman, Stephen Tracy, Co-Chairman, Margaret Hunt, Secretary, Michael Bergin, Treasurer, Robert DeLayo, Jill Johnson, Denise Weik, John Morosani, and Lynn Stone. Also present: Christopher Leone, Superintendent, and Matthew Venhorst, CSDE.

2) Approval of Minutes (from November 22, 2021)
Mr. Tracy made a motion to approve the minutes from November 22, 2021. Mr. Morosani seconded the motion. Ms. Stone abstained. The motion passes.

3) Public Comment
Julia Hrica from the Town of Litchfield wanted to reiterate a comment she had made at a previous meeting. Ms. Hrica would like to remind everyone the intent of Region 20 is to benefit the children and provide better educational opportunities in the classroom, athletics, clubs, and the arts and not about the loss of power from some adults in the community.

Additionally, Ms. Hrica commented in 2019 Governor Lamont spoke to redistricting schools in the state. If our communities allow this to happen, we may not be happy with the results.

Matthew Terzian from the town of Litchfield wanted to thank everyone on the committee for his or her time commitment and wanted to wish everyone a happy holiday season.

4) Superintendent Update
   a. Timeline to Referendum
      Mr. Leone reviewed the timeline for the desired Referendum date of June 21, 2022. The timeline document highlighted key dates and actions needed to meet the desired Referendum date. Mr. Leone noted that the timeline was reviewed and approved by both Board of Education attorneys Mr. Dorsey (LPS) and Ms. Chinni (RSD6).

      Ms. Hunt asked what happens if the report submitted is not approved by the State Board of Education? Mr. Leone and Mr. Venhorst responded that they cannot predict what the State Board of Education would do with the report. Mr. Venhorst added that the report can be modified to address any concerns identified by the State Board of Education and the committee can resubmit a revised report.

      The Timeline to Referendum will be posted on the district website.

   b. Appraisals for Buildings
      Mr. Leone has just received the market value building appraisals from Galvin Appraisals Services, LLC. Mr. Leone shared the numbers on the screen and read them aloud to the committee. Mr. Leone stated he has only received the numbers and no other backup
documentation at this time. Mr. Leone will have the full appraisal report in January. Mr. Leone will send a copy of the document (without backup details that are expected in January) to the committee members following the meeting.

c. 5-Year Budget – Update
Mr. Leone shared the updated 5-Year Budget. The revisions to the budget include the removal of annual electric/solar from the Town of Litchfield. The revisions increase capital based on recent Boards of Education approved documents. The updated Budget also includes revisions for 2022-2023 town costs (projected). Lastly, there is a comparison of the R20 5-year budget with current budgets held flat, and with potential budgets at 2% annual escalation.

d. Language Review – Update
Mr. Leone read from his memorandum to address a series of questions on he had received on several issues.

First, regarding Town of Litchfield School debt: Specifically, how will the June 2024 $1.8 million debt be reconciled? And, if the Town of Litchfield absorbs the debt without control of the assets, how will this debt be equalized with Region 6? Mr. Leone read his response in the memorandum: “The difference in approximate debt for June 30, 2024: $1.75M (RSD6) vs. $1.81M (Town of Litchfield. There is a misconception that the three towns of Region 6 don’t have a debt obligation.” Continuing to read from his memorandum, Mr. Leone read his proposed recommendation that the report show the expected debt for the Town of Litchfield and Region 6 as of June 30, 2024, with the proposed language of “The work group recommends that Region 20 does not assume any financial responsibility for the previous school debt from the Town of Litchfield or Region 6.”

Second, the Town of Litchfield Solar PPA and lease: Mr. Leone read historical background on Solar PPA and lease saying that “Litchfield absorbed BOE electric cost-in 2020-2021 and completed the solar PPA and lease with MEI in January 2021 with the system going live in March 2021.” Continuing to read from his memorandum, Mr. Leone added the following: “PPA can be transferred to Region 20,” and “town counsel Mike Ryback recommended to have Litchfield retain the lease with an easement from Region 20. Litchfield will transfer the electric to the new Region 20 and will realize a reduction in operating expense.” Mr. Leone stated this would be a decision to be negotiated with Region 20 and the Town of Litchfield and should be separate from this committee’s recommendation(s).

Third, Plumb Hill Playing Fields: From his memorandum. Mr. Leone read a review of the Plumb Hill Playing Fields agreement with the Town of Litchfield and Litchfield Attorney Mike Rybak’s recommendation that the parcel be split off of the LIS parcel with the Town of Litchfield to retain ownership of the land and PHPF to retain ownership of the improvements with a lease to Region 20 for use at the current lease fee of $63K/year.
Fourth, School buildings: Reading from his memorandum Mr. Leone summarized the questions about reconciliation of assets values, what would happen if Region 20 decided they did not need a school building, and what would happen if the town(s) refused to accept the asset back? And lastly, will Region 20 assume the PILOT payment on the Wamogo solar array that is due to Litchfield in the amount of $2,000 per year? Mr. Leone provided the following responses. Regarding reconciliation of assets values, the market value appraisals were just received so there will be more information to come on this topic. In the current recommendation, if a building is not in use, it would revert back to the host town or in the case of WAMOGO, back to Warren, Morris, and Goshen. The committee can revise this recommendation if it so wishes. The PILOT payment on the Wamogo solar array is owed and to be paid by the solar company.

Fifth, Region 20 Governance: Mr. Leone summarized the questions and concerns that he had received. The Litchfield Board of Finance would be giving up oversight of the school budget: how will the town’s financial interests be managed; will it be one person one vote or a supermajority as outlined in the previous study?

Mr. Leone explained there is a difference with a Regional School District budget versus a town budget. What is currently being discussed regarding governance/Board of Education voting is 8 of 12 votes. There would need to be an affirmative vote from each town for the budget vote to pass. This is a popular vote and like Goshen, the town of Litchfield could very well easily have the majority of voters to approve or reject a budget.

5) Action Items
   a. Debt
      Mr. Bergin made a motion to tentatively accept the revised language on Debt. Mr. Morosani seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

   b. Capital
      Mr. Leone commented the capital numbers need to be updated on the Litchfield side following the completion of the 2020-2021 budget audit as the funds in the non-lapsing account is now up to approximately $250k. The recommendation is Region 20 will not assume any capital funds from Litchfield Public Schools and Regional School District No. 6. All capital funds will be exhausted before the creation of Region 20.

      Mr. Bergin made a motion to tentatively accept the recommendation that Region 20 will not assume any capital funds from Litchfield Public Schools and Regional School District No. 6 and those funds will be exhausted before the creation of the new district. Ms. Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

      Mr. Leone, with permission, would like to recommend to the committee to table Action Items c. Facility Appraisals and d. Board Structure and Governance as he does not have enough information on the appraisals to say where we are and is awaiting additional feedback on Board Structure and Governance.
Mr. Morosani made a motion to table Action Items c. Facility Appraisals and d. Board Structure and Governance. Mr. Tracy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Facility Appraisals  
Tabled until next meeting.

d. Board Structure and Governance  
Tabled until next meeting.

6) Public Comment  
None

7) Next Steps  
Mr. Leone will share the information he receives from Attorney’s Fred Dorsey and Chris Chinni, representing Litchfield Public Schools and Regional School District No. 6 respectively. Mr. Leone commented the committee would need to begin redrafting the report. Mr. Leone has received some feedback on language from Mr. Venhorst and Ms. Hunt. With the committee’s permission, Mr. Leone will provide a draft report and request committee members provide their input early in the new year.

Ms. Hunt inquired if it would make sense for the committee to ask Mr. Venhorst for samples of reports submitted from other mergers to use as a model? Mr. Davenport commented he believes the committee has what it needs in regards to reporting and formatting and Mr. Bergin concurred.

8) Next Meeting  
The next meeting of the Regional School District Study Committee will be held Wednesday, January 12, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. at the Warren School.

9) Adjournment  
There being no further business to come before this committee, Mr. Bergin made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morosani seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Escobar  
Secretary, pro-tem