

Thomaston Public Schools and Town of Thomaston District-Wide Educational Study

Community Meeting

First Community Meeting

October 23, 2025

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Meeting Recap / Findings

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Walk-About | Welcome | Study Overview

Approximately 30 participants gathered at 6:30pm in the High School Library for the first of three scheduled Community Meetings. Participants were welcomed and invited to share in coffee and cookies while informally reviewing the board mounted presentation materials displayed.

Rich Sileo called the group together and introduced the study effort and welcomed the assembled group.

DRA provided a Workplan / Schedule and overview of the study timeline, and activities completed to date.



Meeting Overview | Breakout Introductions



DRA provided a meeting overview, introducing the key discussion points for the meeting. These discussion points included:

1. Retention of Existing Schools
2. Reduction in Number of Schools
3. Exploration of Shared Services
4. District Regionalization Potential

DRA introduced the three breakout sessions for the evening. The goal for the evening was to discuss the four key discussion points focused through a specific lens for each of the three breakout sessions. The lenses – **finance**, **facilities**, and **education** would shape the

discussion of the key topics for each of the three breakout sessions.

Breakout Recaps | Concluding Comments

The three Breakout Sessions:

“CONTAINER” ----- Facilities: *Buildings, Systems, & Infrastructure*

“CONTENTS” ----- Education: *Programs and Activities*

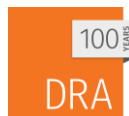
“CASH / CURRENCY”- Finance: *Operational Expense, Efficiencies*

Each of the three breakout sessions focused on the four key discussion topics:

1. Retention of Existing Schools
2. Reduction in Number of Schools
3. Exploration of Shared Services
4. District Regionalization Potential



Recaps of the individual discussions and sample key outcomes are noted on the following page.



Drummey Rosane Anderson

planning architecture interior design

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“CONTAINER” | Facilities: Buildings, Systems, & Infrastructure

1. **NOTES** - Notes from the four key discussion points through the lens of “**Facilities**”:

RETAIN – The predominate comments recorded were that the buildings are nearing the end of their useful life expectancy. Renovating them at this point did not seem to make sense to the participants. Additionally, the buildings are not up to current building, energy code, standards for accessibility, or technology, and general functionality. Athletic facilities – both gymnasiums and outdoor fields – are lacking.

REDUCE – Several participants favored combining school programs into fewer buildings, noting that this could possibly allow for open space for outdoor athletic fields, parking, etc. Some participants commented that having schools adjacent to each other allowed for synergies between the schools and viewed co-location as beneficial. One parent noted that having facilities share a single site might be more convenient when their children are at different age/grade levels.

SHARE – The group explored, and the discussion focused on shared programs, such as STEM/STEAM. The group favored this concept, noting that it could be extended to include surrounding school systems.

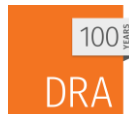
REGIONALIZATION – It was noted that this might be difficult to accomplish in Thomaston because of surrounding regional school systems. However, they believe this is worth further discussion and exploration.

2. **RESPONSE** - Response to question “through the lens of “**Facilities**” which discussion topic may have greatest impact:

“**Reduction**” was clearly the most favored topic that was seen by the group as having the greatest potential to impact the District, followed by “Shared Services” and “Regionalization”. Retaining existing facilities was clearly not seen as being beneficial to the town or the school system, as viewed through the lens of “facilities”.

3. through the lens of “Facilities”
Next Steps / Actionable Items

- Further discussion and exploration of reducing / combining school facilities. If schools are reduced/combined, how could the town make use of the vacated buildings or sites? What are their market values of these properties if they were to be sold?
- Further discussion and exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of a regionalized school system.



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“CONTENTS” | Educational: *Programs, & Activities*

1. **NOTES** - Notes from the four key discussion points through the lens of “**Education**”:

RETAIN - Several participants were OK with the idea of retaining the existing facilities. They discussed that some classrooms (Center School and THS) were larger than needed. They also identified some other limiting issues in terms of educational space, and physical environment, but these didn't seem to be problematic. The conversation focused on the opinion that good teachers made the difference despite the spaces.

REDUCE – The group did not develop a strong conversation, nor had specific suggestions or comments regarding the concept of reducing the size of the District facilities. However, were interested in further exploration.

SHARE - This was important to several breakout participants. Several remarked that through the availability of specialized courses (- off campus) their children had benefitted markedly.

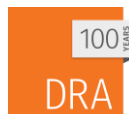
REGIONALIZATION - This seemed to make sense to some participants; however, they worried that a sense of community would be lost which was very important. One participant (- a teacher) moved back to Thomaston from Torrington because of the sense of community in Thomaston school district. A second teacher, from Litchfield warned the group about the dangers of regionalizing without a good plan.

2. **RESPONSE** - Response to question “through the lens of “**Education**” which discussion topic may have greatest impact:

“**Shared Services**” – was deemed very important with a high potential to have greatest impact in terms of being beneficial for students. Regionalization garnered several votes in the “greatest impact” question; however it was clarified by participants, those impacts were seen as both potentially very positive, or very negative. Also, concern was expressed regarding the potential loss of sense of community with Regionalization were voiced.

3. through the lens of “Education”
Next Steps / Actionable Items

- Further exploration of the sustainability of shared services.
- Options concerning regionalization
- Consolidation planning



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“CASH / CURRENCY” | Financial: Operational Expense, Efficiency

1 NOTES - Notes from the four key discussion points through the lens of “Finance”:

RETAIN – A discussion regarding the difficulty in finding efficiency in maintaining the existing facilities was noted. However, the benefit of a resulting low teacher to student ratio, and smaller class size was seen as a positive outcome of this inefficiency.

REDUCE – Several participants explored the various approaches to district facility reduction. These included working within the existing building envelopes, addition and renovation, and new construction. It was noted that all options should be explored.

SHARE – The group explore questions of the costs of bussing, and other factors in current students utilizing out-of-district resources.

REGIONALIZATION – Although the finance-related discussion was limited. Some expressed interest in the financial benefit regionalization might provide. Other participants cautioned that the loss of the educational system – may be akin to ‘loss of the heart’ of community.

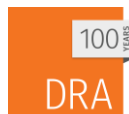
2 RESPONSE - Response to question “through the lens of “Finance” which discussion topic may have greatest impact:

“**Reduction**” – was deemed important with a high potential to have strong impact in terms of financial consideration. Regionalization garnered more votes; however, it was later clarified that these votes were split between those who anticipated the impact would be positive or negative. Again, concern regarding the financial impact to businesses due to the loss of the schools was shared.

3 through the lens of “Finance”

Next Steps / Actionable Items

- Exploration of school system facility reduction options.
- Additional conversation regarding positive and negative effects due to regionalization.
- Further study of shared services financial impact.



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Conclusions / Next Steps

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The attendees of the first community meeting provided a rich and dynamic conversation regarding the future of the Thomaston Public Schools. Breakouts were formed by inviting participants to self-select the overall lens of the discussion for the evening. The three discussion lenses were:

- "CONTAINER" ----- Facilities: *Buildings, Systems, & Infrastructure*
- "CONTENTS" ----- Education: *Programs and Activities*
- "CASH / CURRENCY" --- Finance: *Operational Expense, Efficiencies*

Once participants selected the overarching theme of their breakout group, they then were asked to engage in discussion of these four discussion topic areas:

- 1. *Retention of Existing Schools*
- 2. *Reduction in Number of Schools*
- 3. *Exploration of Shared Services*
- 4. *District Regionalization Potential*

The focus of the meeting was that of "Listening". The study team was present to listen to the questions, concerns and issues raised by the community participants.

In moving forward and preparing for the second community meeting focused on exploration of "Options and Alternatives", the study team will keep in mind and build upon the "Next Steps / Actionable Items" as recorded in pages 2, 3, and 4 of this recap.

Some of these key areas of interest and exploration voiced by the first community meeting attendees include:

- 1. REDUCE – Members of the three breakout sessions identified this as an area for additional discussion. (Noted in all three breakout sessions).
- 2. SHARE – Meeting participants asked for further exploration of shared services as a means to develop a more efficient District. (Noted in 2 of 3 breakout sessions).
- 3. REGIONALIZE – Members of the three breakout sessions identified regionalization as something that may have a great impact on the District. Some clarified that this impact may be both highly positive, as well as highly negative. (Noted in all three breakout sessions).

These areas of interest will be focused on as the team continues the study effort and prepares for Community Meeting 2 | Options and Alternatives.

