

February 8, 2019
Session Highlights

Updates Pertinent to Our Work

- Bruce, Karen and Carole were interviewed as part of the Tillotson Grant application process. The outcome of the funding request should be known in late March.
- Bruce and Karen met with the Vermont Secretary of Education. He offered to speak to his counterpart in New Hampshire. He is supportive of the exploration underway and stated that funding from AOE is available to support the kind of work we are doing. He also clarified that if k-6 is not offered in a Vermont district, school choice is required unless there is an interstate agreement in place. Since our model 11 is predicated on a balance of student numbers and this requires combining Canaan and Stewartstown, we must carefully consider how to address this.

Interstate Agreement Rules Review

- Will Phillips, an attorney with the New Hampshire School Board Association, addressed the committee. He said:
 - For the interstate process, Vermont and New Hampshire statutes are mirror images of one another –
RSA 200B. Steps include:
 - The existing exploration committee can continue or if we are focusing on an interstate compact, the state commissioners determine committee composition, taking into account the informal committee composition that we currently have in place. A minimum of two members from each district, one of whom must be a board member is a requirement – the committee is given a specific charge. The work accomplished by the informal committee (us) can be ratified, or not.
 - The term for committee participation is concurrent with board term, or three years for non- board members.
 - The formal committee focuses on:
 - Advisability of idea being explored
 - Construction
 - Operations
 - Financing

And creates a written report to the districts with recommendations. Expenses are shared equally across districts.

There is no timeline specified for the work.
 - If a recommendation to proceed is formed, articles of agreement are created. Then, with 15 days notice, it is put forth to the community for review and input. Any modifications are made. The plan is submitted to the respective state boards for review and approval. It is then presented to voters at a special meeting. If one community does not pass it, the state can authorize a second vote for that community. 2/3 of those present for the vote must approve it.
 - There is a lot of flexibility for construction, etc. Buildings can be leased in co-op form or all assets can be transferred to the interstate, for instance. All indebtedness and capital outlay belongs to the interstate agreement.

- Getting out once in – indebtedness is according to the terms of the debt – it is its own problem. See article 8.
- Hiring of staff is not clearly defined. The interstate district is the employer – geography defines retirement plan and employment laws of the state apply. It is not as flexible under a tuition agreement.
- With interstate agreements, only a majority is needed to pass a bond.

Review of Community Questions submitted at Forums

- There is agreement among the group to publish a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document that is updated after each community forum. Bruce will continue to create the responses to the questions and Kyle and Sharon will serve as first readers.
- The work-in-progress FAQ will be handed out at the end of each of the final two public forums. After the final forum, the comprehensive FAQ will be published in the paper as an insert and will be posted on all websites.

Next Steps

- Colebrook forum – Chris will open the session; Brian and Karen will review the slides. Kyle will conduct the questions portion of the session.
- Pittsburg forum – Michael will open the session; Rich and Karen will review the slides. Kyle will conduct the questions portion of the session.
- Our goal is transparency. Brian and Bruce will work together to modify one slide to accurately reflect our emerging learning about Vermont school choice for k-6, etc.

All are encouraged to allow community to speak – and to place special emphasis on allowing new voices to join the conversation. While we want to hear from community members who attended earlier forums, we want newcomers to be heard.

March Meeting Date

The March meeting date has been changed from the 7th to the 14th due to budget meetings.

