

**Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee Session Notes
December 21, 2020**

Session Called to Order 6:03 p.m.

Code of Ethics Review

- Respect
- Open-minded
- Trust
- No side conversations or interruptions
- Listen and ask questions
- No ideas are bad
- No questions are dumb
- Keep it to the committee
- Regular attendance at meetings
- Right to voice opinions

Updates Pertinent to Our Work

None stated

Feedback from the Boards on the “Reimagining Education” Document

- Canaan – Felt the number of CTE programs was unrealistic
- Pittsburg – Response was positive; believe the number of CTE programs too high
- Stewartstown – Same as Pittsburg
- Clarksville – The board had no comment
- Colebrook – The response was positive
- Columbia – The response was positive
- NEK – The response was that they are feeling positive about this opportunity

Additionally, the superintendents shared the document with faculty. They are working together on curriculum.

Articles of Agreement

The following information was provided to Committee members in the form of a separate document:

*Outline of Action Issues for Vote by
Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee*

Topics:

A. Number of school board members on the Interstate School Board

1) 2 from each Town

B. Annual Meeting (Governed by the laws of Vermont)

1) Warrant Review Meeting – rotating location – at least 30 days before the vote [This meeting is analogous to the deliberative session called for under NH law].

i. Board reviews comments

- ii. *Board has the ability to amend warrant prior to finalizing ballot*
- 2) *Ballot Review Meeting– First Monday in March [This meeting is analogous to the informational hearing called for under Vermont law].*
- 3) *One Australian/Official ballot vote in each town – Second Tuesday in March*
- 4) *Commingled ballots. Availability of early/absentee ballots.*

- C. *Grades covered*
- 1) *PreK -12*
- 2) *7-12*
- 3) *9-12*

- D. *Apportionment of Expenses (Capital vs. Operating)*
- 1) *% ADM*
- 2) *% Fair Market Value (FMV)/Equalized Valuation (EV)*

- E. *Amendments of Agreement*
- 1) *Requires 2/3 vote by law*
- 2) *Voting by Australian ballot*

- F. *Plan for Educating Students – Initially (9-12)*
- 1) *Colebrook - Addition*
- 2) *Canaan – Remodel*
- 3) *New Building*

Committee findings:

After a general discussion of the issues above, a member of the Committee should make the following motion, separately, for each issue as follows:

I move that the Interstate Planning Committee make a finding that it is advisable:

- 1) *The Interstate School Board be comprised of 2 members from each forming town, and, if such membership results in an odd number of members, include one-member at large.*

- 2) *The Interstate School District Annual Meeting be governed by Vermont law, that the Annual meeting consist of 2 pre-voting sessions followed by a vote on all issues by Australian/Official ballot vote in each town on the Second Tuesday in March.*

- 3) *The Interstate School District be responsible for all students in grades ____ to ____.*

- 4) *The cost of funding both operating and capital expenses be apportioned according to [100 ADM or 75% ADM/25% FMV/EV?].*

- 5) *That the initial plan for fully educating students shall include the following schools: (Identify towns and schools who are members of the interstate district)*
 - a. *Canaan*
 - b. *Clarksville*
 - c. *Colebrook*
 - d. *Columbia*
 - e. *Pittsburg*
 - f. *Stewartstown*

I move that the Interstate Planning Committee direct the Superintendents to begin to develop a recommended plan and draft proposed articles of agreement according to these findings.

-end-

Discussion about the Articles of Agreement:

- Kyle, Sandra, Karen and Debra met with the attorneys – Paul Guliani (Vermont) and Jim OShanessy (New Hampshire) to develop the recommended Articles of Agreement. The attorneys were present to explain each Article and answer questions.
 - Rivendell and Dresden were used as model Articles of Agreement.
 - The impact to each community was factored into the recommendations.
 - The Interstate Agreement requires an uneven number of board members and must be larger than five members. If an even number of board members results when ensuring equal number of representatives from each community (two), an at-large member is elected utilizing the same process as any other elected position. The at-large member position is alternated between New Hampshire and Vermont.
 - NEK Choice is characterized as in an advisory role – and approach than can work for any sending districts. It is non-voting. The non-voting roles can also include stipulations about right to attend certain meetings, etc.
 - Presently, the reduction of representation to two members is a concern for Colebrook.
 - Once the interstate district is created, it is one joint corporate body.
- Annual meeting is the most complicated topic. The goal is to find a balance. One choice point is to meet in the same location every year or alternate locations. The form of meeting is a blended warrant review meeting, participate, modify anything if agreed followed by ballot review meeting, at which time all warrant articles are places on ballot and a vote is taken. Regardless of method, all ballots are comingled prior to being counted. Board members are elected and articles are voted on.

The annual meeting is the second Tuesday in March. The three steps culminate in the Australian ballot (two informational meetings followed by the vote).
The annual meeting must be publicized 30-45 days in advance.
- Grades covered – The Agreement must cover a range of grades – it is required. This is a policy decision. If prek-12, there is one board, one teacher contract, one budget. If 7-12, there are separate boards, multiple teacher contracts, multiple budgets.
 - Preferences:
 - Canaan – prek-12
 - Pittsburg – 9-12
 - Stewartstown – prek-12
 - Clarksville – 7-12
 - Columbia – prek-12
 - Colebrook – prek-12

Phil made a motion to include prek-12 as the grades covered by the Articles of Agreement.

Brian seconded it.

New Hampshire votes:

- Lindsay – no
- Phil – yes
- Brian – yes
- Mike – no
- Chris – yes

Vermont votes:

- Katie – yes
- Frankie – yes
- Sharon – yes
- Miles – yes

The motion passes.

- It is important to remember that amendments to the Articles of Agreement can be made over time; the withdrawal process is like the joining process.
- Apportionment of expenses:
 - This is the most complicated concept among the issues. It is strongly recommended that a financial consultant is retained to explore the options. The aspiration is fairness.

Updates on the Business Plan Approach

- RHR Smith will have all information they need from the Business Managers by Wednesday, December 23rd. They will provide three drafts to the Committee – an initial one in January; a final one in March.

Discussion on the building cost estimate options, staffing model cost estimates, update on the naming of the consolidated district contest and the Tillotson Fund grant application process were tabled. These topics will be discussed during the January 7th session.

A second session will be scheduled for the third week in January to review the RHR Smith proposed consolidated district business plan model and related topics, along with voting on the Articles of Agreement recommendations.

Public Comments

- Factor in voting representation by student population density.
- A primer on all of this will be needed for communities prior to voting.
- The Business Managers are working closely with RHR Smith to provide needed information and data.

Session Adjourned at 8:02 p.m.