

**Connecticut River Collaborative Exploratory Committee Session Notes
January 13, 2021**

Meeting called to order at 6:03

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

Articles of Agreement – Questions and Vote Preparation (see document titled “DRAFT Articles of Agreement”)

- A vote will be taken on January 28th or the first meeting in February; much depends upon the depth of the content shared by RHR Smith during the meeting on the 28th.
- Will there be an equal number of board seats for each town?
- How important is it to have an odd number of board seats?

Building Cost Estimates (see report)

- Sally, Brian, Frankie, Mike, Debra and Karen formed the committee. They identified four options.
- Option one is a new building in a new location – k-6 remain where they are
- Option two is remodeling Canaan – k-6 relocated – middle school in Colebrook/high school in Canaan.
- Option three is adding onto Colebrook – combining middle and high schools with some work on the elementary – k-6 in Canaan.
- Option four is adding onto Colebrook and remodeling Canaan – Canaan is middle school/Colebrook is high school.
- Middle school would be 7-8 except option four.
- Option one has the largest square footage for the high school – how much does that matter?
How significant is the benefit?
 - The schools are challenged size wise by the pandemic and it is raising awareness for how much it matters, generally. Capacity and enrollment are the key considerations.
 - Colebrook was set up with expansion in mind – excess capacity to absorb certain functions currently exists.
 - In all cases, the CTE centers are comparable in size.
- Criteria used for comparison include administration space needed/value of separated campuses/long term maintenance cost/ land requirements and potential purchase price/permits/proficiency-based learning needs; co-locating the CTE; teacher issues when teaching both middle and high schools; foreign language capability if co-located; potential for building and CTE aid in each state; benefit of gym spaces designated by age.

- Model one benefits – largest square footage/fresh design/flexible classroom sizing/dedicated athletic spaces/low maintenance. Higher potential for state aid in New Hampshire.
 - Less opportunities for sharing staff and proficiency-based advancement if on separate campuses. The most expensive option.
- Model two benefits – utilizes existing space and buildings; athletic space exists. Classroom size is small. Long-term maintenance costs could be an issue. Canaan k-6 required to relocate and likely split up between Canaan and Colebrook. For three million dollars more, there could be a brand-new building – model two use of money is high.
- Model three – concern is moving into one location and the perception of that. Co-located 7-12 has efficiencies administratively; has increased ability to align and coordinate curriculum across middle and high school. Utilizes existing infrastructure. It allows for increased design flexibility. Combining new with twenty-year-old building lowers overall maintenance cost. Option one and option three differences in cost are relatively low. Three has the most potential for financial assistance because it is in New Hampshire. The consolidation of shared staff and administration and aligned curriculum are advantages, acknowledging that staff training is essential.
 - Option three could increase community acceptance if k-6 remains in Canaan. What makes the most sense is combining now for the least long-term disruption.
- Enrollment trends are a major consideration. The possibility exists for future consolidation if enrollment trends downward. If this is the case, model three has the most promise, though there are permitting and environmental costs. The likelihood is that enrollment will continue to drop.
- Option four utilizes existing space and requires major expenses in two locations. It has similar constraints to other models. It requires the most facility work and high price tag. As a regional middle school it is similar to option two.
- Option one estimated at 19 million.
- Option two estimated at 15 million.
- Option three estimated at 10 million.
- Option four estimated at 20 million.
- Discussion:
 - Why does the cost of CTE vary among the models? The models with new construction are less expensive. Extra site work is needed due to wetlands.
 - What about the potential for an implementation phase for these shifts? What to do with the kids during the construction phase? It would be a phased approach that shifts locations for a year at a time – projects like these are often multi-year building endeavors.
 - Why new CTE center for all locations? It will be hard to sell to community members.
 - If the perception is there regarding subsidizing other towns, is that a shared reality? Do Colebrook and Canaan have similar feelings about this?
 - Initially, the aspiration was to make everyone happy rather than doing what’s best for the kids and worrying less about adult happiness. We strive to get to a point where the sole focus is the best educational system.
 - Each option has resistance – how to deal with perceptions of each model?
 - Can model two be a CTE remodel rather than new?
 - CTEs cannot be remote; a lot of time was spent gathering information, recommendations and data from the guidance counselors. Recommendations are based upon this. Space is the premium that is essential.
 - Additional details can be fleshed out.

- Paring down the CTE offerings is wise. The extensive offerings factored in here are top-heavy. Cost will be a hurdle.
- Is CTE and high school on one campus in every option? Yes. Does the figure include purchasing new property? No – options one and three require property purchase.
- State aid: Are any figures, possibilities or projections known at this point? There is no funding in Vermont. In New Hampshire, legislation and funds available for new construction is at 50% reimbursement. The other possibility is the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Vermont has been awarded 133 million to provide aid to schools – they recognize the need for improvements have been under-funded and they regret it.
- What has been learned about covid at the national education level? The necessity of in-person education. Virtually connecting students and teachers across schools for certain courses opens up opportunities. Also, the pacing of instruction and competency-based proficiency are essential.

Naming of the Consolidated District

- A survey went out for ideas for a name – sixty ideas were submitted. Most were respectful. The five committee members identified their top tier – top six ideas:
 - Northern Borders Interstate School District
 - Upper CT River Interstate School District
 - Northern Forest Interstate School District
 - Tillotson Interstate School District
 - Metallic Interstate School District

The Committee will choose from this list for use in the Articles of Agreement.

Communicating about Our Work

- How to take next steps to inform the public?
 - We will get an update on website visit numbers.
 - Creating a FAQ can be helpful.
 - Creating talking points for use with each community will help us achieve consistency.
 - Create one draft for use in each community annual report. Karen will share a draft of a booklet that Ben the designer created.

Guest Comments

- On all of the models, who pays for the upgrades?
- Better understanding the specifics of the options would be helpful.
- Cost of new equipment – is it in the numbers offered tonight? If not, what is the cost range?

Motion to adjourn by Laurent seconded by Don. Adjourned at 7:40 p.m.