

**Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee Session Notes  
January 28, 2021**

**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

**Overview of the Process from This Point Forward**

- The attorneys' recommendations on the Articles of Agreement and subcommittees' recommendations in their specific areas of focus will be voted on (in the form of recommendations – not decisions) to present to the communities at large.
- The attorneys advised us that the State-level Education Commissioners are the first to review the sum of the recommendations. After their input and addressing any concerns they may have, we can present to the community, where they weigh in and the Committee then considers whether to make changes to the recommendations. If so, the Committee reaches agreement on modifications and it goes back to the Commissioners; if not, it can go to the communities for vote.
- School board meetings in March – a letter will be inserted in the town reports that outlines the Committee's work – a progress report and overview of themes. Some meetings are virtual so format will inform discussion flow. We will be leaning on the press to get the word out to make sure the public has access to the information in the town reports. The letter will be generated this week. Ben Merrill, Debra, Karen and Kyle will ensure the letter is ready for review by the Committee and finalized in time for use in Vermont, where the deadline is earlier than in New Hampshire.

**Business Model Analysis Process and Content Update**

- RHR Smith's Mike Nadeau, Bob Mason and Cindy Warren are presenting. See the three documents they produced for use during this session.
- This is part one of a presentation of two parts. Tonight is focused on the assumptions, anticipated cost impacts and next steps of the modeling.
- They modeled the consolidated district on not having Pittsburg, NEK Choice and Clarksville as part of it – these communities will contract with other entities for their services. They will maintain their three local school boards. Their cost would be what they are purchasing for their districts from the consolidated district.

- There is a proposed 2022 budget – the modeling is based upon this. Some revenue and expenses will go away as a result of consolidation. For instance, tuition goes away for joining districts. The combined budget for the consolidated district would be 16,000,000 +/-.
- The four options in terms of building location/buildouts are factored into the modeling of options, as outlined during the January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. This is based upon the facilities study a subcommittee generated.
- Transportation costs are difficult to estimate until one model is chosen, and services are contracted for.
- Food costs should approximate current costs.
- Other decisions to be made involve scholarships and endowments, capital and other reserves, facility upkeep and reserves. Also existing local debt, new debt incurred, facilities changes, etc.
- Other impacts include staff full time equivalents – the number of staff needed - this is based upon facility configurations, student offerings, staffing capacity, purchased service agreements, athletics/cocurricular, and contracted services.
- Legal and professional services will likely go up in the short term, but longer term may result in savings. Other districts experienced measurable cost savings in services through consolidation.
- Next steps – initial draft of cost analyses for the four models; apportionment models. These will be reviewed at next Thursday’s session.
- Examples of decisions to be made by the Committee –
  - Finance system in the consolidated district
  - Training
  - Bond issues
  - Existing debt issues
  - Existing reserve and other fund issues
  - Updated facility costs
  - Transportation update

**Update/Discussion – Facilities Recommendations**

Canaan Committee members met as a group to discuss the four facilities options that they played a role in creating. They are most interested in trying to launch the consolidation with existing buildings, only – especially option four, except high school would go to Colebrook, pre-k -5 at existing facilities and 6-8 at Canaan and CTE where they are, currently. There is concern that a new school would be a shock to the community in terms of cost and could prevent a successful consolidation outcome. Canaan Committee representatives emphasized that the building is not the education we provide to our children. What happens inside is the point.

The numbers to add an addition are huge – is it wise to consolidate in a phased approach, keeping CTE separate from the high school for the initial coming together? If the goal is zero cost increase versus what is best for the students, does the commitment exist to continue to meet in this Committee composition for years to come to manage an incremental transition? While the price tag of 19 million will shock people, one of the agreed-upon strengths of consolidation is co-locating the high school and CTE. This was an early priority to the Committee and has remained consistent throughout this exploration process.

Canaan wants to introduce another model – a fifth model - to study using only existing buildings. Use the one-million-dollar bond to address needs in Canaan for grades k-6.

There is shared understanding that New Hampshire is much more likely to financially support needed buildouts – Vermont is clear at the state level that funds do not exist for this purpose.

The Black River report confirmed that 9-12 plus CTE could fit in Canaan. A similar study should be undertaken in Colebrook. A detailed a costly analysis of this magnitude has not occurred to determine what Colebrook could hold, space-wise. The analysis of this was done by Committee members. Colebrook does know that they are overflowing right now – more space is needed. This was shared with Dan Hebert, the builder. When the Committee makes its recommendations, it should include a long-term vision/plan. Final details do not need to be determined. Updating a newer campus versus updating an older facility are the kinds of things we need to be thinking about now and in the long run, keeping in mind the trend of our student population. Also, we must bear in mind which state will provide the best financial support, overall.

The financials are vital to make any determinations, which will happen next week. No determinations will occur until this information has been reviewed by the Committee.

#### **The Naming of the Consolidated District**

- The results of the poll (see graph) – the Northern Borders Interstate School District was the first and second place outcomes. With this, a motion was made by Brian and seconded by Don. Unanimous support for the name.

#### **Public Comment**

- Don't underestimate the Canaan people and their vote. If the middle school is not in Canaan it will be a tough sell.
- There is a hazard in getting too hung up on the building condition versus what happens in the buildings.

**Meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m. Motion by Laurent, seconded by Katie.**