

Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee Session Notes
February 4, 2021
Via Zoom – Session Recorded

Session Called to Order 6:04 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

Public Comments from January 28, 2021

- To correct the record – much discussion has ensued about having the middle school grades located in Canaan and one of the four proposed models demonstrate this. Suggesting such input was ignored or minimized is inaccurate.

Updates Pertinent to Our Work

- Phil Pariseau reported that Stewartstown school board members are interested in maintaining local control of earlier grades. The business modeling process will continue as designed; each community will have the opportunity to weigh in on this model as this process continues.
- Lyndsay Gray stated that Pittsburg wants to maintain local control on all levels.
- Brian Laperle expressed interest in having the website content state clearly that all displayed documents are working documents and not finalized. There is a need to eliminate confusion. Kyle will reach out to Ben Merrill to update the website accordingly.

Business Model Analysis Process and Content Update

- RHR representatives Mike Nadeau, Ron Smith, Bob Mason and Cindy Kenneman Warren presented new information. See powerpoint presentation and listen to the zoom recording.
- Apportionment models and staffing models were presented. All models presented were created solely for the purpose of having a framework that can be applied to actual options requested by the Committee. It is very important to note that because of the Committee's request for multiple models with each requiring in-depth analysis of scheduling, curriculum, building locations, number of students, etc., the process is super-complex and cannot anticipate every eventuality.
- Apportionment model – this hypothetical example is to familiarize the group with how to consider apportionment. The savings on the four model options are not ready. Where the group ends up likely won't be what we see tonight; it is a starting point and it was informed by input from the Business Managers and Superintendents. More work is needed with them in order to create each model. With this in mind, in this example:

- Net education spending number of seven million does not represent grants, special education, and other sources. It is tax base only.
- Vermont has done work on ways of weighting pupils by category. Secondary grades students are more expensive to educate than primary grades students – funding analysis should reflect this reality. Driving resources to where they are needed is the point and the modeling needs to reflect this.
- In future modeling, town tax rates will be calculated.
- Data sources are fall 2019 in New Hampshire and Vermont. Mike reviewed the sources – see powerpoint slides. Relying on routine data sources is important for year-over-year modeling.
- Mike will be able to use the apportionment model to demonstrate different scenarios.
- Staffing Illustrations
 - Based upon FY 22 proposed staff and is a very rough first draft
 - None of the models reflect every FTE
 - Obvious redundancies were identified; so were capacity needs of a larger district in which roles evolve and change. Capacity was built in for leadership in a variety of realms
 - Scheduling is not reflected in the staffing model, nor was CTE growth factored in
 - The transportation model has yet to be determined
 - Janitorial staff cannot be determined until the square footage is known
 - Differences exist in curriculum offered in Colebrook and Canaan; determinations need to be made about what will be offered, along with scheduling
 - Building-based office support staffing will not change much; in this model, it is level-funded and so is maintenance and paraeducators
 - Centralized staffing is reduced by one FTE equivalent, assuming some services will be contracted for – an operations director could oversee these
 - Tracking out of district student services must be factored in
 - Early indications suggest cost savings are possible
- Transportation updated slide
 - Canaan and Colebrook have their own transportation – routes are difficult to anticipate at this point

Discussion

- One complicating factor is that staffing models vary year over year based upon enrollment.
- The blueprint in place that was shared just now will be modified as the conversations advance.
- Hypothetical numbers can be confusing to the Committee and community. Therefore, caution is strongly urged in how tonight's hypothetical examples are portrayed.
- Current administrators are trying to figure out how to collaborate in current conditions. It is worth looking at one totally consolidated model for all grades in all communities.
 - The community in Pittsburg is interested in a totally consolidated model, given every town the opportunity to vote on this.
- What RHR Smith needs from the Committee are decisions about the shape of the models. A challenge is having too much data and needing a good deal of time processing with the Superintendents and the Business Managers. The hope is to have a final draft in two weeks. The clearest way to think of RHR Smith's role is that of a budget committee.

Preparing for Public Interaction about the Committee’s Recommendation and the work between now and Final Form

- Lay out the steps of the process between now and the community vote. Include it on the website and send it to all Committee members.
- At town meetings, provide an update.
- There is desire by some for the Committee to meet in person or for microphone enhancements in the meeting room. Committee representatives investigated the option of having breakout rooms during the zoom session; public meeting law in New Hampshire and Vermont will not permit it.
- A straw vote was conducted; the majority of committee members would like to meet in person.

Public Comment

- Check with legal about in-person meeting covid-related requirements.
- Clarify what it means when saying “more is possible” with a consolidated model.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m. Mike made a motion; Brian seconded.