

**Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee Session Notes**  
**March 18, 2021**  
**Via Zoom – Session Recorded**

**Session Called to Order 6:05 p.m.**

**Attendees**

Kyle Daley, Phil Pariseau, Lindsey Gray, David Covill, Laurent Giroux, Brian Laperle, Don Tase, Jamie Gray, Frank Sawicki, Katie Sawicki, Miles Etter, Kristin Brooks, Sharon Ellingwood, Shelli Aldridge, Mike Dion, Chris Brady, Sandra Cabrera  
School staff Karen Conroy, Debra Taylor, Kim Wheelock, Tracey McKinnon, Cheryl Covill and Carole Martin, meeting support

**Approval of the Minutes from the February Session**

Motion from Chris, second from Phil – vote passed

**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**

- Debra spoke to the New Hampshire Commissioner of Education, who inquired about our timeline, offering a June meeting with the State Board with an April notification deadline. The potential exists for them to do a visit. The State Board of New Hampshire may require more than one meeting to make a decision. He also offered to give suggestions on the presentation format.
- Karen spoke with the Vermont Commissioner of Education – the State Board decides, but it is unlikely that NEK could go off on their own but could purchase services from the Interstate district, or another entity. He is hopeful the interstate district happens.
- Brian stated that the Colebrook school board discussed the growth of APP – American Plastic Polymers – a business that will have added 300 jobs soon in Colebrook. They are seeking help with drugs, childcare and housing in anticipation of the needs of newly arriving families. The board anticipates increased enrollment as a result of this influx and is working on options, collaborating with the APP owner. CTE programs, for instance. They will be conducting a new employee survey regarding school needs. The Department of Business and Economic Affairs is also supportive of this project; now is the time to pursue funding for new building support at the state and federal levels.

## **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.
- Options analysis – facilities, staffing and financials
- Goals – increased student equity and opportunities, CTE expansion, regionally declining enrollment, increase efficiencies.
- Lots of assumptions: Based upon FY 2022 projections, facility cost projects, undetermined allocations, assumed enrollment.
- Narrowing the options proved challenging. There were so many considerations from the Committee. They chose to take two options forward.
- This is the beginning of the conversation.

## **Facilities**

### **Option A**

- Serves Canaan, Stewartstown, Colebrook and Columbia – high school and CTE in Canaan; middle school in Colebrook 5-8
- This includes updated and new buildings
- Assume no state aid at this time
- Total facilities cost 14,247,000

### **Option B**

- Includes the same school involvement and assumption about state aid as Option A
- Regional 7-12 in Colebrook
- Total facilities cost \$ 8,791,000

## **Staffing**

- Used an average compensation formula
- Identifies student opportunities and systemic needs
- Focuses on educational, operational consideration
- Anticipate additional changes for both options
- Is ever evolving; level funded special ed area
- Office administration possible with efficiencies
- Level funded central office funding based upon FTE, bus drivers and transportation, custodians and maintenance staff
- Consolidation of grades could result in cost reductions
- Expanded the CTE and other student opportunities, including IT enhancements
- Cost estimates for Option A = \$302,000 ; Option B = \$ 347,800C
- Cost estimates would be Option A \$128188 and Option B \$83135

## **Apportionment – Option A or B**

- Assumptions – existing debt service in Canaan funding future work for the district
- The local education rate per thousand is shown as a comparison to current
- When comparing options with facilities, staffing demonstrates little difference in budget estimates
  - Tax change for Option A and Option B is outlined by each joining town

Next steps are for the Committee:

- To determine whether to operate all existing sites
- To assess purchased services for Pittsburg/Clarksville/NEK
- Update renovation costs

- Develop the true budget

### ***Clarifying Questions***

- In the financial data an increase in taxes for Colebrook and Columbia and reductions for Stewartstown and Canaan – it is driven by using resident students as the method.
- 60% increase for Colebrook’s tax rate – if Colebrook is currently the lowest – this is the case because currently, the cost is based on the school costs. The differences could be muted or phased in through different methods. Fairness of spreading cost is a goal.
  - Methods other towns have used: Maine has a process for smoothing costs with a variety of influences that could be considered. In a previous case in Vermont, cost sharing was statewide.
  - RHR Smith will put together a list of increased costs explanations.
- We are talking about new construction – should we instead use existing infrastructure only? Option B has k-6 in both Canaan and Stewartstown, which is inefficient.
  - Yes, most definitely – it is a reasonable option. It isn’t one in what has been introduced thus far.
- Option A – is the 14m fixed?
  - That was the Black River report number so it was used.
  - Having similar building assessments on both sides of the river is important.
- Are tuitions factored in the revenue projections?
  - Yes

### ***Discussion and Next Steps***

- What if Stewartstown could become the CTE regional center, allowing the majority of CTE classes to remain where they are, within a mile of this center. Canaan could absorb the Stewartstown elementary students with specific teachers for each grade level? High school in Colebrook/middle school in Canaan. This still allows more opportunities for the students.
  - Any of the options will be a hard sell in Stewartstown, this one especially.
  - Having a regional CTE next to a middle school works. There would be a gymnasium and single grade classrooms. How to utilize existing space to create more opportunities for kids?
- The tax rate in each model is problematic.
- The greatest opportunities are in the CTE model – more focus on it is the best approach.
- One of the main reasons Option A is preferred of the two is because it spreads the students out more evenly.
- A benchmark decision is the model that high school and CTE be on one campus. The benefit is literal proximity. The Committee needs to revisit whether it is willing to separate these.
  - Historically, Colebrook kids would not go to Canaan. This is no longer the case. If the counselors continue to work well together, an off-site facility doesn’t matter so much because regardless, there will be travel for specific programs.
  - Both states want to help us. They are waiting to see what we are going to do. Workforce development is a priority. They want to know what the Committee is going to do and where will things be located.

- Choosing an option that won't fly isn't the answer. A middle ground is worth exploring because it has to have a chance of passing.
- Using existing buildings is okay – it is the morale of the students and the curriculum that matters.
- Option B has 80% of the students traveling to the southernmost point in the region. This should not be the case. One thing we all have in common is that we make do with what we have. Think of the CTE in Stewartstown for the initial five years of the implementation.
- The current approach requires too much disruptive travel in the middle of the day. An alternative must be developed.
- Option B can be an economic driver for the area. It could be the future model in a few years.
  - With this, Stewartstown or Canaan would have to close – as a cost efficiency exercise.
- Option A balances the students across the buildings. Can we use eight million and improve what need?
- Holding a longer session to hash out an alternative can occur after further information is provided by RHR Smith.

#### **Public Comment**

- Everybody has great ideas; we are sad that Pittsburg won't be part of it.
- The key is "What can we sell to voters?"
- What if a hybrid Option B could include Colebrook sending middle school students to Canaan. Since lots of CTE courses are off-campus would there be sufficient CTE space in Colebrook?

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