

***Durham, Freeport, & Pownal
Reorganization Planning Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2008
Durham Elementary School~Durham***

Members Present: Fred Palmer, Sherry Dietrich, Tim Giddinge, Paul Schumann, John Gleason, Wesley Bennett, Allan Purinton, Rick White, Jennifer Kaplan, Rhonda O'Shea, Nelson Larkins, Amber Snell

Advisors Present: Shannon Welsh, Superintendent of Schools, Durham; Elaine Tomaszewski, Superintendent of Schools, Freeport; Joe Feeney, Superintendent/Principal, Pownal

Also Present: Bob Kautz, Facilitator; Cathy Messmer, Business Manager, Durham, Laurie Poissionier, Durham School Committee and 1 member of the public

Not Present: Cliff Ruprecht. Diane Boucher, Business Manager, Freeport/Pownal

Governance and Transition Subcommittee: Members: Nelson Larkins, Sherry Dietrich, John Gleason, Tim Giddinge, Wesley Bennett

Sherry Dietrich submitted the following notes as scribe:

Members present: Nelson Larkins, Chair; Sherry Dietrich, Scribe; John Gleason; Tim Giddinge; Joe Feeney, Advisor; Bob Kautz, briefly
Member absent: Wes Bennett

The group met at 6:35PM to discuss what changes we wanted to recommend to the full committee relative to the Governance section of the reorganization plan. Our decisions were as follows:

(1) Should we change the number of RSU board of directors from eleven to some other number? In a word, no.

It was agreed eleven board members was the best number. However, the following additional language will be recommended: (a) "The RSU board must be apportioned in accordance with the one person one vote principle, meaning that each member should represent the same number of citizens. Every five (5) years the RSU board will review the composition of the Board and if necessary will take steps consistent with 20-A M.R.S.A. 1475 to ensure community representation meets state law."

(b) "It is strongly recommended the RSU Board consider, on a yearly basis, to undergo boardsmanship training."

The meeting adjourned at 7:03PM to join the full RPC meeting.

- The full RPC meeting convened at 7:03 pm.
- There was an update on the LD 1932 bill. The bill passed in the House and the Senate and was vetoed by the Governor. The veto was sustained by a

vote of 12-23. A new bill, LD 2314 was then introduced which clarified the 2 mil requirement, cost sharing, and bringing minimum subsidy into the new RSU and also makes budget clarifications. It was stated the new bill may be heard that evening. . It was stated that there may be some additions made to LD2314 that were added to LD 1932 by the Education Subcommittee. Amendments may be added to the two other bills being introduced; LD 2280 and LD 2281 which are collectively know as Bucket A and B. It was explained that LD 2281 has a minority report to repeal the law in its entirety which would probably be heard in the Legislature first. The move is to have all items regarding consolidation heard and decided on. It was stated that the concept of Super Unions are not present in any of the current bills, nor is the concept of school sizes of 1200 students or less. It was explained that all of the amendments in LD 1932 are no longer being considered. The other bills do allow for fixes and for a decision regarding consolidation being delayed to January 30th. It was super unions might be an amendment to proposed legislation, and there is some talk of private and special acts, but may be too late to get put in to this legislative session. It was also explained that some communities may submit Plans but may be encouraging voters to vote them down.

- The previous meeting minutes were reviewed. There was 1 wording error corrected before the meeting and the corrected minutes were made available. The minutes were accepted by consensus.

- There were no public questions from the previous RPC meeting.

- There were no public comments or questions.

- There was an update on the school choice referendum in Durham.

Durham voted to phase out school choice. The votes were 168-123 and 176-111 for the 2 questions. It was asked if the turnout was a fair one. It was explained that turnout is hard thing to predict. Overall there was pleasant surprise with the RPC members and it was stated this will help continue the process of consolidation. It was explained that some 8th grade students voiced their free speech by handing out flyers against the referendum, but were not given the correct information regarding choice. This became an opportunity to educate students on the referendum and encourage their free speech.

Durham also showed support by approving the budget with funding for the new RSU at their town meeting. It will explained that at the next Durham School Committee meeting it would be recommended that Laurie Poissonier become a member of the RPC as the School Committee Representative and Amber Snell will stay as a RPC member as well. Amber will be leaving the Durham School Committee. Bob stated there has been good leadership overall from all communities. Bob stated that the RPC deserves credit because of the way items regarding consolidation had been discussed.

- There was discussion regarding a Facilities study and the request for a Facilities Study knowing that some clarity is needed regarding the schools within the RSU. Bob sent a copy of the draft letter for the request to be reviewed and it has been suggested that could be used as a model for other RPCs. It was explained the State will fund \$10,000 for this study. It was

asked when the study can be done and how long would it take. Bob explained it could be done quickly and may take only a few weeks. Members of the RPC stated they would like to have this study done quickly as it is a timely and prudent thing to do and could only be helpful. It was asked if we could cap the cost of the study at \$10,000 and it was explained that the State has agreed to do the study for the amount funded. It was asked if this study would suffice toward the accreditation for Freeport High School. It was explained it may not suffice but the study can only help. It was asked if the study will answer whether or not Freeport can handle capacity. It was explained the draft letter has cited the questions that have arisen within the discussions to use space adequately and to look for cost savings. It was asked if we assume the legislature passes the legislation regarding cost savings, could the study be done in time. It was suggested to ask the study to start at the High School level first and get the answers we need. It was asked if the study would look at field space as well. There was discussion of what is included within the study and explained the RPC can ask for the ground/fields to be viewed as well. A vote was proposed for approval to send in the draft letter. It was approved by consensus and the draft letter would be signed by the Tri-Chairs and sent.

- There was discussion regarding the student assignment language proposed for the Plan. Bob asked if there were any additional comments, question or suggestions. There was concern voiced about the fact this language has been crafted for the elementary/middle school students only. There was concern this language would also allow for secondary students to attend other schools outside of the district. It was suggested to use the wording “within the district”. It was recommended that wording be put in the 2nd sentence “within the RSU” which then makes it an affirmative statement. There was some discussion that some members of the RPC wanted to make it clear this is not just an option, but that it is encouraged. There was a suggestion of changing the wording. It was stated that leaving the wording leaves it open to the RSU board to make the decisions. The RPC did not want to guarantee that personalization would happen for students as this decision was up to the RSU board. It was stated that each school should have a comparable education within the RSU. The word “may” leaves the door open, but by using the words “will be” it would burden the RSU with no choices. It was stated the language does leave it open as an opportunity, but does guarantee students can personalize their education. It was stated the language included needs to make sure the RSU understand that because the RSU shares cost, students should have the option of attending other schools within the RSU if educationally founded. There was a proposal to have the language placed in the Plan after eliminating the last paragraph and changing the wording discussed earlier. The language will be placed under # 13 within the Plan. This was accepted by the consensus of the committee.

- There was an update from Finance Subcommittee. It was explained the Subcommittee is not ready to make recommendations. It was stated they have discussed and reviewed different scenarios and there are more items to

discuss. The RPC reviewed the spreadsheet the Subcommittee distributed. It was explained that some of the amounts used were from Jim Rier's model and the Subcommittee made adjustments for each scenario. The Subcommittee created baselines using Jim's model. It was explained the initial view in the spreadsheet was what the Subcommittee recommended before the public meetings and then adjustments were made for each different scenarios. It was explained there were significant costs shifts with different scenarios. It was also explained the amounts were the additional local monies spent by using different scenarios on spreadsheet. It was asked if the percentage numbers within the spreadsheet were what each community would be paying. It was explained each scenario was broken down into dollar amounts and percentages. The enrollment projection handouts were reviewed and discussed. The cost per student graphs were reviewed and discussed as well. It was explained the intent for this review was to share information with the full RPC. The Subcommittee stated they would try and meet within the next week and be ready to make a recommendation to the group. The goal of the Subcommittee was to try to find a recommendation that would be reactive and support of the comments that had been heard. It was stated the Subcommittee would meet next Tuesday in Pownal. It was asked how the Subcommittee would qualify the concerns that have been heard. It was explained that the biggest concern was each community felt they were paying too much. It was stated the concern seems to be universal. It was stated the Subcommittee would focus on what is most fair for each community and what is best for the students. The Subcommittee may combine some of the scenarios and/or spread costs out over time. It was asked how big of an issue is sharing the facilities compared to sharing debt. It was stated that if students within the communities would not be able to use all facilities within the RSU it would be a hard sell. It was explained the language put within the Plan regarding student assignment is pertinent. The Subcommittee stated there hope was the intent was the consolidation would result in a unified RSU and those principles were what guided the Finance Subcommittee. It was asked if the Finance Subcommittee was comfortable with the work that has been accomplished with student assignments. It was stated that sharing facilities was the intent of the Subcommittee. The Finance Subcommittee still has to recommend cost sharing, but the Subcommittee is comfortable with sharing of facilities. The subcommittee is trying to answer the concerns of the public to the best of their ability. It was explained that scenario 6, allocation of costs by valuation, is what is provided for in the current law. The other scenarios are based on cost sharing methods proposed by the Finance Committee or as a result of concerns expressed at the public meetings. It was explained the argument it is based on a matter of principle. It was stated that each community has principles that they have compromised with and Freeport residents need to look at what the other communities have had to adjust to. It was explained there are many arguments for all three communities. It was stated the RPC would like the Finance Subcommittee to make their recommendations, but also have a rationale for which recommendation that

has been chosen. The Subcommittee also would like to verify their numbers a final time. The group feels comfortable with their numbers even though there are some public members that disagree. The Finance Subcommittee came with a philosophy to do the best for the entire RSU. It was suggested that once the Plan was finalized the RPC should have a Freeport citizen address and articulate the cost sharing information. One of the RPC members wanted to introduce for discussion that there may be some logic in having per pupil costs considered at the High School level. It was explained this and many other scenarios had been reviewed and discussed. It was explained that to consider cost sharing voters needed to go beyond the funding of additional local monies that are needed to be raised and review operational costs as well. There was also a statement made that the Freeport community would also have the building and lands turned back to the town if the RSU decides not to use them in the future. It was asked if there is a 3rd party that can review the proposed cost sharing model. Bob explained that Jake Clockedile from the State would review and give some suggestions. It was asked to have him review the information and give a formal report. The RPC would like to justify the validity of the cost savings approach. It was also stated it would prudent to show voters what costs would be for each community if there was no consolidation. There was discussion regarding who Jake Clockedile is and his credentials.

- The Governance Subcommittee reported on their progress. The Subcommittee reviewed the numbers of members on the board. The Subcommittee will stay with their recommendation with the 11 member board. It was explained the rationale is the board could become too big and not function efficiently. It would be artificial to just add another member. There was no gain by adding one or two extra members of the board as it drops the weighted vote for each member from each community. It was explained the ideal board size researched is 7 and that number did not seem fair to the communities. It was stated that nothing is ideal it is what communities would be comfortable with. It was stated increasing the board by one or two members does not render the board inoperable. This would however give members diminished voting power. With the structure recommended now 9 out of 11 members would have the exact weighed vote. The Subcommittee felt they would not be able to feel comfortable just adding members to the board. It was stated the recommendation is in the confines of the law. There was concern that in small communities it is difficult to get people to run for offices. It was asked if the RPC had any recommendation for changes. There were none. It was proposed that the Subcommittee's recommendations be put into the Plan as first recommended and was accepted by consensus. The Subcommittee also reviewed how the voting would be reviewed due to population changes. It was explained there is state law in place for Commissioner to review the structure if populations change. The Governance Subcommittee drafted up language to place in the Plan for review of the voting structure. This language puts the burden on RSU to review the voting structure every five year, and then the Commissioner would then

review this structure. It was asked if the RPC was comfortable with the language being drafted and added to the Plan. This passed by the consensus of the committee. There was also language drafted to recommend the RSU board to have boardmanship training every year. The Subcommittee did not want to burden the RSU by making this mandatory, but did recommend it yearly because of turnover. It was asked if the committee was comfortable with the draft language regarding recommendations of training be placed in the Plan and it was accepted by consensus.

- There was an open discussion on members' thoughts on the Plan and whether it was close to completion. It was recommended that members voice questions or items they are uncomfortable with and also voice what benefits there are to the Plan. It was stated that in the sections of the Plan regarding claims there was money placed in the Pownal budget for a potential claim. This claim can not be discussed due to the legalities, but is now disclosed to the RPC. It was asked if members see this consolidation as a positive thing and can the RPC articulate this to the public. It was asked what the benefits are. It was explained the question that must be asked is, "if not this, then what?" It was explained that all communities are facing issues that will happen without consolidation. It was asked why did a number of Durham parents choose to send their students to Freeport High next year. It was explained Freeport is a smaller school than Brunswick and the community was looking ahead to consolidation. There was also question of what will happen to Brunswick schools with the closing of the base. It was stated that educationally there is no doubt consolidation brings benefits to all three communities. The concern is how do the whole communities benefit? It was stated there is difficulty selling to communities if costs savings is the ultimate goal and the RPC is not able to state there are no costs savings. It was explained the goal would be to start with the Education Subcommittee recommendations. It was stated there is no point of consolidation just to save money. It was explained that this is what was told to the public by the State of Maine. It was asked how the RPC will let communities know this will be of great benefit to our students and help move the district ahead. It was stated the RPC went into this with principle that the RSU will be better for the educational quality of students instead of having 3 separate communities. It was stated the RPC do come to an agreement but the approval also needs to come from the public. It was explained that Freeport was not consolidating just because it was needed. The community was looking at combining beforehand because advantages were seen. It was agreed the RPC did not see immediate costs savings. It was stated the RPC needs to show that the consolidation will offer new programs and many other advantages to education that the Education Subcommittee recommends. The consolidation has the potential to be exciting for not only students, but for the communities. It was stated students will have more advantages with collaboration and once consolidation happens this will open more doors. The opportunities are right in the backyard. It was stated consolidation offers so much potential and it is believed there will be a cost savings in the future. It was stated the RPC

agrees with educational opportunities and the combination of communities will also help with adequate teams for extra-curricular activities. There is desire to take part of the High School from both students and parents. It was stated there is a lot to be gained from exposing students to other communities and consolidation is a win/win situation. It was explained that some members are frustrated because consolidation has just been focused on the numbers and costs.

- Bob stated there was an RPC meeting the following week. It was stated there could be more discussion time. It was asked what the intent is of the meeting for the next week. It was asked if the intent of the RPC was to have the Plan approved to be submitted at the next meeting. It was stated the RPC would not be able to complete the Plan as there are still issues dealing with cost sharing. There are also still legal questions that need to be addressed. It was asked what the expectation is of the RPC. It was stated that given the fact the RPC needs to still educate the communities it was believed a June referendum is unreasonable and there should be no rushing to meet deadline. It was reminded that a referendum any time between June and November will be paid by the State. It was explained it would not give enough time to get an RSU board in place if the referendum was held in November. It was asked if the June 10th referendum vote would happen. There was much discussion about June 10th being reasonable. It was stated the facilities study information would be helpful to have for information as well before the Plan was approved. It was stated the facilities study could be rushed and there was no guarantee the report would be back in time for a referendum in June. It was stated that many items need to be accomplished first. It was explained the RPC would rather have a Plan they are comfortable with and be able to have the time to discuss with communities. Bob stated the overall consensus being heard was that June 10th is not comfortable to the RPC. It was stated the next meeting would have a little time at beginning for subcommittees to review where they are and any questions that needed to be addressed. The subcommittees would meet for 30 minutes and the subcommittees would report out to the whole RPC. It was asked if there should be other items on the agenda. There were none given.
- The meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted by S.Brewer 4.13.08