

**Community Advisory Committee-Article 8  
Meeting #3  
Tuesday, August 11, 2020 4pm  
Via Zoom**

**Committee Members in attendance:**

Kirk Bishop  
Michael Haxton  
Steve McGrath  
Kevin Cooney  
Anna Miner-arrived at 4:45  
Melissa Trow  
Jim Lyons  
Chris Whitehouse

Absent: Tanner Royce

Several members of the public joined the zoom.

**MINUTES:**

Due to Zoom hosting issues, the meeting recording began almost an hour late. Minutes are more comprehensive up to the meeting recording commencing:

Chair Michael Haxton called the meeting to order just after 4 PM.

Chair (Mike) reiterated Article 8 in full, reminding the Committee that the charge from the voters was to explore “alternatives other than new school construction.” Michael also noted that the School Board members and Administration in their document guiding the Committee, they would be available to attend meetings, answer questions, and provide information. There was general discussion.

Mike noted that while the school board established the Committee, and reiterated the Committee has no authority to enact anything. That is the prerogative of the School Board. The Committee’s charge is to make recommendations to the Administration and School Board.

SAU has, and will continue, to post public notification/minutes on the SAU website. Members of the public are welcome to sign in. Public comments will be taken up at the end and are to be submitted on the “chat” function of Zoom. There was discussion of who to notify of this Committees progress, and from whom to seek information. It was decided that the people to be included in communcations/updates would be, Superintendent Russ Holden, School Board Chair Jessie Tyler, and Board Member Kerri Claus, as they had volunteered to be resources to the Committee.

There was general discussion about the SAU-provided public documentation and information. The SAU will not initiate new documents, surveys, or designs for the Article 8 Committee. There were a number of Committee members who took issue with the overall integrity of SAU generated documents. Terms like incomplete or lack of associated costs attached in the case of repairs to the SCES, or inconsistent cost quotes on the conversion of SMHS to K-8 configuration, or varied opinions on the size required of portable classrooms.

#### Sub-Committee 1: Repairs to SCES

Based upon the new shared at the recent School Board meeting, Chair suggested we wait for the EEI report on cost of projected costs and needs for repairs to the Elementary School. The sense of the Committee seemed to be that due to the complexity of reopening the schools during a pandemic, this Committee would seek not to barrage the Administration with multiple requests for information. All Committee questions would be directed in e-mail form to the Chair, who would then pass them on to the superintendent. Sub-Committees would be allowed to continue to pursue their own lines of inquiry as requested by their various sub chairs so long as identifying themselves as pure research through Committee.

Kevin Cooney suggested that the relevant sub-Committee meet with representatives of the elementary school about the current modular classrooms and their status. Chair explained that the new modular classrooms available were very different from the old-style classrooms currently in use at Sunapee Elementary

#### **Sub-Committee 2: School Choice/Vouchers for 9-12**

Chris Whitehouse had communicated with KRHS and also spoke to Lebanon and Hanover with view to taking Sunapee students with vouchers. Steve pointed out that a major difference between vouchers and regional approach (Committee 3 work) is that in a regional setting, all Sunapee students must be taken – regardless of ability or disability. In a voucher system, the accepting schools can pick or chose which students they want. Some students may be unacceptable anywhere, and that becomes the Town of Sunapee's problem/cost.

Steve pointed out the Lempster/Goshen tuition out their 9-12. They do not have a regional arrangement with anyone. Kirk pointed out that we need more information. Kirk's estimates for the cost of a voucher system for 9-12 was \$ 1.62 Million. The total is derived by taking the 4 grades (9-12) multiplying that by \$ 16,000 (average cost per student in NH), and multiplying again by 25 kids per each of four grades – excludes non district students. Kirk noted caveats of no allowance for travel, Special Ed, or Food Service. Kirk pointed out Sunapee is not legally obligated to transport students. Anna Miner pointed out that students with educational needs were double in costs. Melissa noted that Russ remarked on one of the tours that bringing special ed in house cost the district less than or equal to \$ 400,000. Previously Sunapee had sent out Special Ed to the tune of some \$ 2 Million/annum. Chris noted that to him, perhaps using his own figures, the cost savings of Special Ed in house was minimal. (This doesn't sound right. Looks like I've screwed up what was actually said.)

(Recording of Meeting began at approximately this point.)

#### **Sub-Committee 3: Join Regional District**

Confirmed that Kearsarge would have enough space for all Sunapee students. Cost per student quoted to Chris by KRHS was approximately \$ 21,000 per student (Would need to be confirmed as Special Education remains a budgetary question.) Chris pointed out that in a Regional District all students from a participating town must be accepted. That is different from a voucher or tuitioning (School Choice) model, where each child must be accepted by their intended school. The intended school can say no, and then the cost of the child's education reverts to the Town. Chris noted that both the SAU and Teacher's Union were universally opposed to a School Choice.

Discussion ensued regarding the SAU's history of Special Education program coming in-house at a significant cost savings. Chris commented that if we sent them out to another school or had them in house the town is still responsible for paying that students tuition so he did not see a big savings either way . Melissa commented that Russ said that bringing special ed in house cost the district less than or equal to \$ 400,000 and that we used to send the students out to the cost of \$2 million. The committee needs more exact budgetary information regarding those line items.

Anna Miner shared concern that without a High School, property values in town could drop. She remarked that sending students out will be a loss to the whole community. Rhetorically, what does it do to the community without 9-12 High School sports? What does it do to property values?

There was general discussion of property values, centering on the impact of school choice.

Jim mentioned an article citing the Croydon housing market went up with the advent of school choice. The reporter was told by a local Real Estate agent that people were moving to Croydon to take advantage of school choice. That homes were moving on and off the market much more quickly once Croydon was known as a town with school choice.

Kirk Bishop reiterated concerns about the availability of diverse course offering and experiences being limited (eg: variety of Advanced Placement courses and numbers enrolled) and a larger district would pose more opportunities. Anna noted that grades 9-12 had many signature experiential programs in Sunapee: Model UN, trip to Gettysburg, and Whale Watching. The Sunapee students also had the opportunity to learn through winter activities. such as Horseback riding, skiing, Karate, cooking – options available in a small school like Sunapee that make Sunapee unique. Kevin brought us back to “alternatives to new construction.” Alternatives might or might not save money.

#### **Sub-Committee 4 :Converting Middle High School to K-8**

Mike pointed out that the cost estimates are confusing. There was a quote to do the conversion for \$ 3M. It was not clear what that included or excluded. Mike wants to put out to the taxpayers a firm number for converting the Middle High School. As for the cost of putting 9-12 in temporary classrooms, it becomes a “matter of how many pods” are needed.

Kevin inquired of Mike to quote a documented source of the conversion – noting we “have no idea of the cost of retrofitting the building.” Mike stated the estimated cost came originally from Banwell for conversion PreK-8. Again, cost is an unknown.

Toward the end of the meeting, several things were decided:

It was decided that the Sub-Committee #2, School Choice/Tuition/Voucher- Chaired by Chris Whitehouse and Sub-Committee #3, Regionalization-Chaired by Anna Miner would combine as ONE researching Sub-Committee under Chair Anna Miner since that research may involve the same target schools/districts and there was overlap of committee members between those two sub-committees in an effort to be efficient and not have redundant efforts of outreach/research.

The Committee also decided that the October deadline set forth was not acceptable nor reasonable for the Article 8 Committee to provide a comprehensive plan to the School Board-due to both time and the complications of COVID and school reopening. The Committee Members strongly feel the need for research from EEI to help determine a proper proposal of options. Ideally, the Committee will review that information once available and submit proposal within 45-60 days.

One comment was posed from a member of the audience regarding the Committee needing to self-establish a deadline for the report due to lack of potential support by the SAU. It was read aloud in the recording.

**The next meeting will be on Tuesday, August 25th at 5pm via ZOOM:**

Topic: Article 8 Committee Meeting #4

Time: Aug 25, 2020 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2576900590?pwd=aWdvVVg3Wm9lK1lPU1RZQVFyWDE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 257 690 0590

Passcode: 03257

**Link to recording of Meeting #3:**

NOTE: Recording started at 4:45 pm due to technical difficulties:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gj55\\_H2B5U50MjMES4xO0oA4dIDZX2zd/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gj55_H2B5U50MjMES4xO0oA4dIDZX2zd/view?usp=sharing)

The meeting adjourned at 6:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Anna Miner

Secretary

