

HEART COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: for the meeting of March 29, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Michele Giarusso, Chair	Cheryl George	Sue O'Reilly McRae
Tracy Rogers, Secretary	Bob Keir	Ruth Miller
Claire Brennan	Renee Keir	Ginger Robinson
Sharon Fontaine	Jack Killeen	Bill Wahlstrom
Richard Fontaine	Dawn Magi	
Alan Genovese	Tony Matteo	

Others Present:

Debbie Lynangale, facilitator.

Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Facilitator's Role

Debbie explained how her intent is to keep track of process and progress. She is not going to tell us which direction to go. She'll help us determine where we want to go and how we want to get there. She'll help us get to working agreements before we make formal decisions.

Debbie proposed that she come to every meeting through May, because the formative stages are critical. In May we can reevaluate how she can best serve us.

Michele reported that she spoke to Representatives Mark and Kulik about grants. Two towns just got \$50,000 grants for similar work. Rep. Mark has two UMass interns who can get data for us.

Minutes

Jack moved to approve minutes from the March 15, 2017 meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Ginger and carried by a unanimous vote.

Process

Deb handed out a list of conversation starters. The Committee broke into smaller groups and each group added it's thoughts to the list. Groups reported out on the topics as follows:

Mission

- How do we get the community behind our work?
- We should move from thinking of ourselves as a school district to thinking of ourselves as a community at a district-wide level
- We don't need to build a better district, but how do we deal with our constraints to make us more sustainable?
- How can we build enrollment? Perhaps we could combine band outings, athletics, etc. with recruitment of students.
- What tangible things can we accomplish in the near future (within the next year)?
- Our job is to connect the District and the towns.
- We should look at town budgets to find out what we have to work with before we get to work.

- We need to look at renewable energy and lack of broadband.
- Create a plan for balancing a quality education system with affordability and long-term viability.

Possible Approaches

- Some things are controllable (like energy efficiency), some are not (like special education costs). We should focus on what we can control.
- We should function openly, including using a website as a way for people to check in
- We should consider combining schools if communities are interested
- Could we farm out our students to other towns or bring in other towns' students?
- Look at eliminating redundancy. Could a teacher of a specific topic rotate through schools if there aren't many students in any particular school interested in that topic?
- We should not take a shotgun approach, but have a more focused mission.
- We should take a look at the projections of town budgets, capital plans, and school budgets and capital plans covering the next five years.
- Look at districts that function well—both in their operations and town/school relationship.
- Look at regionalization, both district services and town services.
- Look at reconfiguring the school administrative structure
- Look at declining enrollment
- Play and advocacy role with state legislators.
- We should recruit kids into kindergarten. Have open houses to attract more families from the beginning of their educational lives.
- Look into sharing functions with other school districts, such as payroll.
- Provide education to the public on school and town budgets
- Identify needs and recommend actions
- Be creative; think outside the box

Process

- What are the must haves and what can we do away with? Each community should clarify what their deep attachments are and what they are willing to let go.
- Gather all of the creative ideas and explore them for viability, once we determine what's inside our scope and what's not.
- The diversity of the Committee (selectboards, finance committees, teachers, school committee members, parents) should lend us some credibility.

Outcomes of Committee Work

- Build more community connections among standing bodies, such as the School Committee feeling more accessible and selectboards feeling more accessible.
- Possible modifications to the District Agreement.

The Committee then looked for common themes heard from all of the report outs:

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| • Energy efficiency | • Focus on quality within the schools |
| • Connection between school and community | • Sustainable, affordable, viable |
| • Thinking outside the box | • Changing the District Agreement |
| • Communication/outreach/website | • Looking at redundancy/increasing efficiency |

- More information flowing in more directions

What Should the Work of the Committee Be?

- Act as a bridge between towns and the District
- Make recommendations leading to change
- Advocacy

Debbie will try to work these three ideas into a mission statement for review before the next meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: April 12, 6:30 p.m. at the Bernardston Senior Center, 20 Church St.

HOMEWORK: None.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Tracy Rogers