

HEART COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: for the meeting of December 6, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Tracy Rogers
Richard Fontaine
Cheryl George

Bob Keir
Tony Matteo
Sue O'Reilly McRae

Ginger Robinson
Bill Wahlstrom

Committee Members Absent:

Joe Arsenault, Alan Genovese, Michele Giarusso

Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m.

Minutes

Bill made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 20, 2017 meeting as written. Tony seconded the motion and it was carried by a majority vote.

Bob reported that he met with the Bernardston Selectboard last night regarding Jack Killeen's resignation from the HEART Committee. The Board is moving as quickly as they can on a replacement. Bob also discussed with them the possibility of expanding HEART membership to include teachers, parents, etc. The Board thought others should be welcome to attend, but not allowed to vote.

Debbie reported that a written response to Jack's resignation from the Bernardston Selectboard stated they are disappointed with the Committee's slow pace regarding the District Agreement.

11/21 Meeting with Gill-Montague Civic Leaders

Ginger, Tony, Sue, and Michele attended a meeting of the Gill-Montague Civic Leaders group. Ginger reported that it feels like the Gill-Montague group is going in a very similar direction to the HEART Committee. The energy of the meeting felt positive. Sue asked Superintendent Michael Sullivan what he thought about sharing a superintendent across districts. He thought the workload would be too much. Would need to pay such a superintendent more money and provide more support staff, since s/he will be spread so thin. SPED and transportation might be areas to collaborate. Pioneer and Gill-Montague are both in the GIC, so that's not an area to explore for savings.

12/5 Gill-Montague Civic Leaders Meeting

Ginger attended the 12/5 meeting of the Gill-Montague Civic Leaders group. The Chapter 70 formula was discussed and how it's not good for small schools. There was discussion about advocating to change the formula. Brockton is filing a class action suit against the State of Massachusetts calling the funding formula unconstitutional. The Gill-Montague group is considering joining the suit.

Other Reports

Sue met with Representative Paul Mark on 12/4. She asked Paul to convene everyone in one room, including Bob Pura from Greenfield Community College. Paul agreed and tentatively set a date for the last Saturday in February. He recommended we use our Community Compact grant to focus on our own district's needs.

Sue also shared a number of studies she found. The superintendent from South Hadley, Nick Young, has written a report and book about the challenges rural schools face. Sue will forward the studies to the Committee.

On 12/5, Sue met with Pat Shearer, Ruth Miller; Shelby Ashline from the Recorder was present. Shelby is writing a series on the challenges of rural schools. Ruth attended the Franklin County Business Managers meeting recently at which members asked her to talk about the ideas about sharing administrative services. Ruth also explained that the closing of Vermont Yankee is contributing to our declining enrollment problem. Ruth applied for a state Efficiency & Regionalization grant to create an organization similar to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments for schools for services that aren't direct education, such as payroll, transportation, and collective purchasing.

Ruth reported that schools already participate in collective purchasing for busing. However, there is a monopoly on the SPED van pool and prices are high. Charter schools don't impact us much. There are a lot of homeschooled children in Leyden. We still receive a good number of school choice students.

Tony reported there exists a list of students who've choiced in and out over the last five years and that includes the reasons why. Sue will ask the District for a copy of the list.

HEART Committee Member Expectations

Debbie asked the Committee what its expectations are for moving forward. Committee members each expressed their thoughts. How big can a district get geographically before it doesn't make sense? Should we look at following the Tech School model? How long will it take to implement changes at Pioneer versus something larger? We'd get a bigger bang for our buck if we collaborate, both financially and with the number of committee members. We shouldn't work in a silo, so if we keep our committees separate, we at least have to send representatives to each other's committees to keep apprised. We'll have more leverage with the State if we combine forces.

Cheryl joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Given the Bernardston Selectboard's concern about the lack of progress on the District Agreement, the Committee thought it should share the work it's done thus far on the District Agreement with selectboards and the School Committee. The Committee will discuss Bob's edits during the next meeting and then share the results out to show progress.

For the next three months, the Committee will focus its work on the District Agreement, the request for proposals for a study consultant, and outreach.

Future Meetings

Wednesdays 1/3, 1/17, and 1/31 at 6:30 p.m. in Northfield.

There is another Gill-Montague Civic Leaders meeting 1/11 6:30 p.m. at the Montague Senior Center on 5th St. Ginger is generally available to attend those meetings, but cannot on 1/11.

Committee Membership

There has still not been a response from Joe Arsenault. Cheryl recommended reaching out to PTOs for more members. Sue will reach out again to Doc Pryne on the Warwick Selectboard. Ginger will ask the Leyden Selectboard how they feel about others being allowed to serve on the Committee. Tracy will ask Northfield at its 12/19 meeting.

Tracy asked if the Committee should consider merging with the Gill-Montague Civic Leaders group, or stay focused on our own district and keep in touch. The Committee agreed on the latter.

Cheryl offered to create and maintain a HEART Committee Facebook page and knows someone who could create a logo for us.

Homework

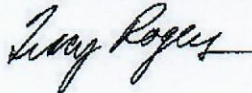
- Sue will send out the packet of information she shared with Rep. Mark.
- Tracy will send out a copy of the District Agreement showing Bob's edits versus the original document.
- Ginger will send out talking points she developed.

Adjournment

Bob moved to adjourn at 8:26 p.m. Tony seconded the motion and it was carried by a unanimous vote.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, December 18, 2017 6:30 p.m. at the Northfield Town Hall, 2nd floor.

Respectfully submitted,



Tracy Rogers