

Joint meeting of HEART Committee with PVRSD School Committee 3/6/2019

Members present: Julia Blyth, Alan Genovese, Cheryl George, Michele Giarusso, Bob Keir, Jess Marshall, Jean Page, Shalee Pratt, Ginger Robinson, Tom Wyatt

Note: Sue O'Reilly-McRae was present in her capacity as SC Chair

Members not present: Tony Matteo

Others present: PVRSD School Committee, Supt. Scagel, Finance Director Gaylord, Recorder reporter Max Marcus, many concerned citizens, consultant Mac Reid

Mtg called to order by Chair Giarusso at 7:10 p.m. She gave a brief history of the HEART Committee. Members then introduced themselves so that the SC scribe could record names. Consultant Mac Reid shared a brief history of the projects completed by the MARS group, and his own career path, including teacher, to guidance counselor, to SPED administrator, to principal, to superintendent, and now as a consultant having worked on ten similar district agreement revisions at other locales.

Consultant Reid made a thorough powerpoint presentation on Amending the PVRSD Regional Agreement. This encompassed all facets of the RA, from defining it, to why an update is necessary, the amendments the HEART Committee is proposing, community involvement, and the approval process.

Various questions and comments were elicited. A sampling includes:

Tom Wyatt stated that the Warwick Selectboard and Finance Committee want the compensation for closure of a school to include custodial costs of the closed school. Ginger wanted it to be clear that the compensation figure we had arrived at was a compromise derived from lengthy discussion, and with much consideration. Mac Reid shared that it may not be legal for the closure town to actually be paid. DESE is researching this and feels that the correct option would be to lower the town's assessment. Tanya Gaylord agreed that this sounds more feasible. Mike Townsley of the SC (chr of budget subcomm) feels that compensation should be part of the town/district lease agreement. Bernardston Finance chair Jane Dutcher has concerns about the meaning of "fully repurposed", and with the definition of "debt". One SC member asked that Mac speed up his presentation. It was explained that much information needed to be shared.

A member of the concerned public complained that the two smaller towns are at the whim of the SC regarding school closure, because of their capacity of taking such action under the State's current overseeing situation.

School Committee Chair O'Reilly-McRae suggests a SC/HEART meeting to discuss in more detail.

Alan feels that the SC needs to take it from here, assume ownership of the district agreement, and modify it to their liking. A SC member felt we should have been reviewing the SC policy concurrently with revising the DA, to incorporate appropriate policy changes if necessary. Alan and HEART, in general, did not feel it is up to US to review School Committee policy.

Mike Townsley of SC suggests that a SC subcommittee be formed to review the DA proposal thoroughly. The timeline of our wanting the DA to make it to this spring's town meetings was mentioned. A SC member stated she did not want to be pressured to hurry to



vote. Tanya expressed her support of the HEART Committee's work toward the goal of sustainability, and our process of arriving at a revised Agreement. She made the point that she and the Supt. had attended several HEART meetings. Chair Giarusso wanted the attendees to know that it had been most helpful to have the expertise of the MARS group, in particular Mac Reid, in assisting us in formulating a legally correct document. A Bernardston selectboard member offered his support of the HEART Committee and wanted to remind the SC that we had worked diligently as an ad hoc committee to achieve the revised Regional Agreement.

It was informally agreed that the HEART Committee would be at the next routine school committee meeting (3/14), to possibly plan a joint meeting with them, to address questions or concerns regarding our revised RA, once they have reviewed it.

Motion to adjourn made by Bob, seconded by Julia, all agreed. Mtg adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Page