

HEART COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: for the meeting of September 27, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Sue O'Reilly McRae
Joseph Arsenault
Richard Fontaine
Bill Wahlstrom

Bob Keir
Tony Matteo
Michele Giarusso
Cheryl George

Joseph Arsenault
Ginger Robinson
Jack Killeen

Committee Members Absent:

Lisa Armstrong, Claire Brennan, Jennifer Comiskey, Alan Genovese, Jennifer Glazier, Lynn Hansell, Renee Keir, Shannon Miner, Tracy Rogers

Others Present:

Debbie Lynangale, facilitator;

Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Minutes

Bob moved to approve minutes from the September, 2017 meeting. The motion was seconded by Bill and carried by a unanimous vote.

Updates on possible new members for HEART

No new news on new people from the school committee. Bill says it would be good to have more parent participation. New Warwick Member, Sue has asked Doc but has not heard anything.

Mahar Planning Meeting

Does anyone have info on the Mahar meeting? No one went to the Mahar meeting on regional.

Budget sub committee meeting of the school committee

How much of the 295 thousand shortfall was transportation? Severances are due at the same time as another large bill and both could not be paid at the same time. It is important for us to know what is going on with the budgets but not get into the same issues the school committee is in. Jack talks about why it is important to understand what is in the budget and what is going on with the budget. Michele says we are not here to micro manage the district.

RFP (Request for Proposals)

Ginger checks in about the work she and Tracy did on the RFP. Tracy had the idea, and Ginger agreed, not to go into detail of what the group wants on the RFP but move into that later after a researcher is hired. Debbie suggests we take a minute to look at the current scope of work for the RFP. The first section is about gathering current existing data. Bill explains that much of this information is readily available and stored with the district. FRCOG has demographic information. Ginger wanted feedback on the bullet point stating "financial impacts of potential regionalization scenarios". Jack sees the value of the procedures, much of this data is available through the state. Debbie asks if we are expecting to collect information or do we expect someone else to do it. Jack says he thinks the consultant should collect the data. Tony thinks there should be interviews with faculty. The committee suggests interviews with teachers, staff, former staff, students.

Task 2. Gather Data on Best Practices, refer to RFP

Richard says this section is good for an outside group to look into these issues. Michele suggests we may want to narrow the scope in this section. Seek districts with similar demographics when looking into other school systems.

Task 3. Make Recommendations, refer to RFP

Sue really likes task 3. After the focus meetings will we have the option of changing the recommendations.

Task 4. Outreach and Public Participation

We will be able to work out details on where we are going as we move through this process. Richard suggests we may want to add a meeting with the research firm. The group questions, do we have enough time to do all these things, or do we have a good timeline? The goal is to have information for the town meeting season but we are not sure how much can be prepared by that time.

Process for public meetings and public input.

Debbie walks us through a possible process for engaging the public.

Interviews with the key stakeholders

content

process

Relationships

Draft design of a process

Informational meetings. These meetings are about the process, not necessarily collecting information, point is to get everyone up to speed so they can participate when it comes time to gather information. Some of it may be press, meetings, emails of information.

Data collection/information gathering could involve designers sending out questions to stakeholders. Many different ways to do this process. Interviews, surveys, public meetings. It's good to employ a variety of methods.

Data analysis

Often between these processes there are information meetings to keep people up to date. After data analysis we may have dump of information.

Draft of recommendations

Final

Debbie suggest the hired researches may not be doing all of this process and it may be appropriate for HEART do some of this.

Do we have the skills and drive to do this process, do we need support to do it? Debbie has done this kind of work and wants us to know the process but will not have input on what we should do.

Ginger thinks we can do most of the process of community involvement. Tony thinks our weak point can be will be data collection, and is concerned some people will think there is bias, he thinks an outside group would remove any bias. Bill remembers when the pioneer building process was happening with subcommittees and there were a lot of people out there willing to step up and get things done. Michele says when there is a building project people in town get passionate about it and get involved, if we approach it with the experts by our sides, Michele thinks we need the outside firm but they do not need to do all of the process.

Our mission statement says that we want to eventually make recommendations with the school committee. Michelle says also the select boards and other stakeholders such as parents.

Recommendations to the stakeholders, including in collaboration with the school committee.

Publicizing report

Talking with government reps

Recommendations regarding district agreement, the state will have to approve.

Check in around timeline

Cheryl says it's hard because we do not know how long this will take. The District agreement will likely not be changed until the recommendations are considered. Richard thinks having a separate town meeting may be better because the issues can have more time. Sue also suggests this may be done at special town meetings. This needs to be done before the beginning of next school year. Bob believes the best we can do is to make an informational report for regular town meetings. Tony says once we get the RFP, there will be 30 to 60 days to pick a researcher. The committee is generally coming to terms with the reality that this work will likely not be done by town meeting time. Maybe we can have some special town meetings in the fall. Richard says what we are doing is for the long term not for the short term, we have to keep this in mind. Jack thinks the information and work we are doing could be used in hiring a new superintendent. Sue thinks this is a time for opportunity. General agreement we will not have recommendations by regular town meeting time but maybe we want to ask for more support and give information..

What are our next steps?

Get the RFP done. Public meetings, January?

What are we going to do in the next 3 months?

Generate RFP

Meetings in our towns. Sue suggests we tell about the grant, how people may be involved, talk about the broader issues facing the district.

Get more stakeholders involved

Newsletters

Websites

Press releases

Advocacy

Full funding of transportation. Bill, we could push our representatives.

What is going to happen with the structure of this group?

Consider if there are subgroups that should take on some of the above process for the next few months. Sue says if we had a general overview to we could use it for several different formats. Michelle says it may work better if we get together in groups. Who would be working on basic talking points? Ginger, Tony and Bob are going to meet to work on talking points.

Meetings

School committee meeting tomorrow at 7:00 at Pioneer Library. Check in with them about the RFP, what we will be doing for the next 3 months. Bill will do the check in with the school committee.

Next meeting October 11, 2017 at the Northfield Town Hall.

Other issues

Cheryl says we should we have a general email account? Some talk about this and who will check the email.

Cheryl says the best way to keep parents informed is to have a Facebook page. Joe is going to make a Facebook page.

the committee feels this meeting was good. Michele feels like there is momentum. Thanks to Debbie who is awesome.

Adjournment

Motion adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m., the motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

NEXT MEETING: Next meeting October 11, 2017 at the Northfield town hall

Respectfully submitted,
Ginger Robinson