

HEART Committee minutes 7/25/2018

Members present: Julia Blyth, Alan Genovese, Cheryl George, Michele Giarusso, Bob Keir, Jess Marshall, Tony Matteo, Sue O'ReillyMcRae, Jean Page, Shalee Pratt, Ginger Robinson

Members absent: Bill Wahlstrom

Others present: PVRSD superintendent Jonathan Scagel, also four community members

Meeting called to order by Chair Giarusso at 6:34 p.m.

Motion made by Bob Keir and seconded by Cheryl George, to accept minutes of 6/27/18. Motion passed.

Information updates from other meetings and other relevant news:

Michele reports that one important takeaway from a recent Gill-Montague meeting led by the civic leaders, was the significant fiscal losses which are being incurred due to school choice. Also, a study done by FRCOG calculates that less than 5% of the regional population is less than five years old, a statistic which can greatly impact economic development. As a point of information, Michele informed us that Gill resident Greg Snedeker told her of a quarterly meeting of state education officials will be held in Gill in January. Details will be forthcoming.

Cheryl reports that, increasingly, people are utilizing the HEART facebook page.

PVRSD school committee update: superintendent and financial manager have been hired. We can expect legislation regarding the state oversight and fiscal arrangements to be passed in August.

In anticipation of our scheduled 7 p.m. phone consult with Mr.'s Hemman and Abrahams, Bob Keir outlined wording which he would like to be included in the update of the district agreement:

- 1) delete section IIIB which requires that each district town have its own elementary school
- 2) add language re: accountability and recall of school committee members

Cheryl George recommended that term limits be considered also.

Jess Marshall questioned Agreement language referring to advisory committees in each town, but members aware of this section recognized it as being part of the original establishment of the district agreement in order to then involve a variety of community members.

Tony Matteo would like the composition of the school committee to be a topic of review, also. He feels that the current even number (twelve) of representatives often leads to voting deadlocks, or has the capacity to do so.

Following are notes from the phone conference the committee had with our hired consultants, Steve Hemman and Mark Abrahams. They are not intended to be verbatim, and other members may have additional comments which they notated themselves.

Per Mr. Hemman: The consultants will be gathering substantial info re closing school(s). Will have several meetings to invite public input. In updating the regional agreement, the two biggest things are the make up of the school committee and methods of assessing the situation (statutory process vs another method). Huge factor is student enrollment. The state expects regional agreements to be reviewed every five years. Steve agrees on the need to examine school committee member term limits. The advisory committees referred to in the Agreement is outdated language. He sees merit in the concept of staff sharing as being explored by the Gill-Montague education committee.

Per Mr. Abrahams: The G-M project will definitely impact the PVRSD. In response to Alan's inquiry about whether collective bargaining agreements are being considered in the design of potentially sharing staff amongst schools, Mark reassured us that , yes, this is being taken into account.

Informationally, Tony recited info which he had researched from the district guidance data, pertaining to student enrollment. Three years ago, three of our district's sixth graders did not go on to attend Pioneer. Two years ago, five did not go on to attend PVRSD. Last year, seventeen of our sixth graders

did not go on to attend Pioneer.

Our consultants Steve and Mark will present an update to the school committee on 9/13. They will present data which they will have collected , in order to assist the school committee in deciding on changes.

One question Michele had for the consultants was whether staff sharing might also include the school nurse position(s). Steve agreed that it should be looked at along with other services.

Steve expects there will be a combination meeting of the three school committees of PVRSD, Tech, and Gill Montague in the near future.

Following the conclusion of our phone conference , Sue O'ReillyMcRae asked that she be considered the school committee representative, which would necessitate her resigning as a Warwick rep and being appointed by the school committee. Warwick then could appoint a new (third) town HEART member. Superintendent Scagel reported that PVRSD is working on creating new, innovative technology courses to draw in school choice students. He also likes the concept of head teachers, who act as curriculum developers as part of their roles.

Cheryl asked if the HEART committee should sponsor a school committee candidate forum this fall. Members view this idea differently, concluding that this goes beyond our appointed role. It's a great idea but should be sponsored by a neutral party.

It was suggested we hold meetings in other towns to be more accessible to our public, and we will possibly do this in October if arrangements can be made for a site.

Next meeting will be in Northfield @ town hall 9/19/18 @ 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Sue, seconded by Tony. 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Page