

HEART COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: for the meeting of April 26, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Michele Giarusso, Chair	Alan Genovese	Sue O'Reilly McRae
Tracy Rogers, Secretary	Cheryl George	Ginger Robinson
Lisa Armstrong	Bob Keir	Bill Wahlstrom
Jen Comiskey	Jack Killeen	
Richard Fontaine	Tony Matteo	

Committee Members Absent:

Joseph Arsenault, Claire Brennan, Sharon Fontaine, Lynn Hansell, Renee Keir

Others Present:

Debbie Lynangale, facilitator

Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m.

The Committee discussed the Recorder's recent article about Mohawk Superintendent Buoniconti's discussion with the legislature about centralizing administrative functions across districts. This is an interesting idea to explore, but Ruth cautioned to proceed carefully.

The Committee discussed whether it is overreaching its charge. The reason we were called together was to look at the regional agreement. Ruth mentioned that 82% of the things the Committee says it wants to work on are things that have already been tried or are the responsibility of the School Committee. It feels like the HEART Committee is considering micromanaging the staff, faculty, and the School Committee. Alan pointed out that the list was the result of brainstorming; it doesn't mean that's what the Committee will ultimately do.

After much discussion about the Committee's charge, and review of a statement of purpose drafted by Alan, Debbie took a straw poll of how members wanted to proceed. A majority of members liked the wording in Alan's version of the purpose statement, and agreed that the Committee can't recommend changes to the regional agreement until it explores the issues it has been discussing. The end result of the Committee's work may be to recommend changes to the agreement; it may not.

Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose agreed to by the majority was as follows:

The HEART Committee (Honest Education and Retaining Trust) serves as a bridge between the towns (Bernardston, Leyden, Northfield and Warwick) and the Pioneer Valley Regional School District with its primary purpose of recommending and advocating for changes that promote high quality educational services for all students in a manner that is sustainable and affordable. These recommendations and changes may include, but are not limited to, the provisions of the District Agreement.

The HEART Committee is committed to reaching out and communicating with various stakeholders within the respective towns and working collaboratively to support, not supplant, the work of existing entities (i.e. School Committee, Boards of Selectmen, etc.) and to openly explore creative options, including those that address efficiencies and economies of scale for member towns and the regional school district.

Finally, the HEART Committee anticipates serving in an advocacy role that supports regional and state-wide efforts to increase revenues and manage the escalating expenses associated with operating a high performing school district.

HEART Committee Operations

Debbie handed out a draft document outlining Committee Operations (similar to bylaws). Members agreed such a document is necessary and it is worth spending time creating/refining it. Further work on this was tabled.

Tasks

The Committee discussed what subcommittees it may need to create. A draft list is as follows:

- Energy efficiency
- Increasing revenue, perhaps combined with advocacy
- Why are we losing students?
- Managing costs and efficiencies
- Low hanging fruit
- Coordination/big picture/long-term sustainability
- Legislative advocacy network combined with public relations
- Collaborate with other districts to regionalize SPED student services
- Partnerships
- Study District Agreement to determine what we can change and what we can't

That list was summarized into four larger categories:

- Costs
- Efficiency
- Advocacy
- Revenues

Cheryl asked what the School Committee wants us to do. Do they endorse what we're doing? The Committee agreed to present its statement of purpose to the School Committee during the School Committee's May meeting in hopes that it will endorse the HEART Committee's work.

Grant Opportunity

Tracy announced an opportunity to apply for a state Community Compact grant to support the Committee's work. Sue offered to help Tracy apply.

Minutes

Sue moved to approve minutes from the April 12, 2017 meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Bob and carried by a unanimous vote.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: May 10, 6:30 p.m. at the Bernardston Senior Center, 20 Church St.

Respectfully submitted,



Tracy Rogers, Secretary