

LUNENBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

JOINT MEETING BETWEEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND LUNENBURG REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, January 13, 2010
Lunenburg High School Auditorium – 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

School Committee

David Reif, Chair
Michael Mackin
Jason Poitras - absent
Milree Keeling
Donna White

Superintendent

Loxi Jo Calmes

Recording Secretary

Mary Landi

Student Representative

Elizabeth Broden

Guests

Dr. Maureen Marshall

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- * Call to Order – Dr. Reif called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. He introduced Jane Hall, Regional Planning Committee member, and Dr. Maureen Marshall, Superintendent of North Middlesex Regional School District. Dr. Reif stated that this would be an information sharing meeting. He reminded everyone that the Regional Planning Committee is still intact with two members, Milree Keeling and Jane Hall, and that there is a vacant seat on that committee as well, which needs to be filled. Dr. Reif gave the audience a review of how we got to where we are in terms of the regionalization issue. He informed everyone of the need to go through this process of seeing if it makes sense to regionalize with North Middlesex before we can go further in the feasibility study phase of renovating the high school through the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Mike Clark, 275 Cross Road, asked if the final report from the Regional Planning Committee was brought to the Select Board. Ms. Keeling replied that the RPC decided to not make a recommendation around regionalization. He questioned why it wasn't brought to the people. Ms. Keeling responded that the Board of Selectmen received the final report, and it is posted at the Town website. Dr. Reif suggested to Mr. Clark that he read the report and Mass General Laws to better understand the process. Dennis Martell, 25 The Lane, asked how much money is left from the funds that were originally allocated to the RPC at Town Meeting. Dr. Reif replied that the Town of Lunenburg has received approximately \$23,000 back from the allotted \$28,000. It was pointed out that the recommendation around regionalizing with Ayer and Shirley was not made because the 1.8 million dollars needed for the transition period was not available from the State and the RPC did not feel as though they would be successful in attaining those funds from the townspeople. Ms. Keeling added that we needed the transition funds because a region did not exist. If we merged with an existing region, the cost of transition would be far less or none, because the infrastructure would already be in place.

* Old Business
Discussion

- a. Discussion and information sharing around regionalization talks with North Middlesex – Before starting the PowerPoint presentation, Superintendent Calmes informed the public that a Lunenburg High School teacher and two students were in Haiti when the earthquake hit. They

are safe and expected to be home next week. The superintendent began her presentation with a slide showing the geographic area of Lunenburg and the three towns that are included in the North Middlesex Regional School District – Ashby, Townsend and Pepperell. The next slides showed a breakdown of each district with regard to the number of schools, their locations and student enrollment numbers. The distance from Lunenburg High School to North Middlesex Regional High School was noted to be 6.1 miles. Superintendent Calmes reviewed the FY10 Lunenburg organizational chart, followed by Dr. Marshall's review of the North Middlesex organizational chart. Dr. Marshall noted that the NMRSD School Committee is comprised of nine members. She also talked about class size in the elementary schools, which is mostly in the mid-20s, except for Ashby Elementary where it is in the teens. North Middlesex is a fiscal entity on its own, and so it is not managed by the Town. Some buildings are owned by the town and others by the school district. All four towns would need to vote in the affirmative to add Lunenburg to the region. What's in it for North Middlesex? Dr. Marshall replied they want sustainability and continuing opportunities for our children and so they are looking to their neighbors to see if there are ways to share resources or partner in other ways to better serve the children. Brendan Grady of 161 Robbs Hill Road asked if we will have *SMART* decision criteria this time around. Superintendent Calmes talked about sustainability as well. She next reviewed the towns' population for 2008, school enrollment, current region/expanded region percentages by town, average single family tax bill by town for FY10, town expenditures on education as a percent of total expenditures, FY10 Net Revenue by district, and per pupil expenditures. Salary schedules were compared. First language not English numbers are very similar, as are the free and reduced lunch numbers. Also compared were the SAT scores and AP scores from spring 2009; profile of students attending post secondary education; dropout rates; graduation rates; and the special education environment.

Ms. Keeling explained that per the MSBA, we must first explore regionalization with North Middlesex before we can move forward with a feasibility study to renovate the high school. Jane Hall reminded everyone that the Shirley tuition money has provided a lot for the Lunenburg Public Schools. Working with a current regional school district would be much easier because a sitting regional school committee exists. The Lunenburg School Committee is planning to make a recommendation and take a vote of either support or non-support to continue exploring possible regionalization with NMRSD at their February 3 meeting. The MSBA is aware of this timeline. A new region would need to be formed by December 31 to be included in the next year's budget planning.

- * Public Comment - Llars Widstrand expressed his concern about adding 500+ students to North Middlesex and inquired if additional staff would need to be added to accommodate that increase. Maryellen McKenna asked about the Lunenburg High School feasibility study done several years ago and if it is still usable. Dr. Reif replied that a significant portion of the feasibility study will be able to be utilized. Superintendent Calmes explained that we were able to develop strong SOI's for our schools because of the 2007 School Facilities, Educational Program, Master Plan and High School Feasibility study. Jane Hall explained that we are being directed by the MSBA to have conversations with other districts around regionalization; our hands are tied. Dr. Marshall reiterated that we are doing our due diligence and all feel the urgency around this issue. Jim Tuttle, 45 Chestnut Street, asked about the next steps after the February vote. Lisa Krowitz of Stonefence Road would like the committee to look at transportation in terms of the length of time students would have to ride on the on bus and student/teacher relationship in terms of students being able to stay after school for extra help, etc. Would there be after-school buses? She also would like to see information related to athletics. Tom Alonzo, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, asked what the MSBA is looking for and how the School Committee is going to evaluate and provide a decision to the Regional Planning Committee. Superintendent Calmes responded that the MSBA is not saying

go in there and make this work; it is saying show us that you are doing due diligence and we will move on. Ms. Keeling talked about the criteria that need to be looked at when deciding on whether or not a region should be pursued. Dave Maki of 715 Page Street commented that he was opposed to the ALS region but is optimistic looking forward to North Middlesex; the numbers would be more credible coming from an established system. Anthony Caiozzo stated that North Middlesex is already a big region and asked what we need to do to stay independent. Andrea Laford of 53 Pleasant Street asked if we would have any flexibility around the regional agreement if we joined the NMRSD. The Committee responded that we are not at that point yet. Stephanie Page noted it appears that Lunenburg has better educational outcomes than North Middlesex. Dr. Reif said it depends on which area you focus on. Mike Clark talked about the high cost of a new regional high school. Greg Berthiaume of 1084 Massachusetts Avenue asked what the plan would be as a region running two high schools, since a new school would need to be built and it would take a couple of years. Tom Alonzo asked the committee for a comprehensive plan for both alternatives so people would be able to make an informative decision. Mike Clark asked for in-town projections and regional projections for Town Meeting. He wants a comparison of apples to apples – side-by-side projections.

- * Adjournment – Dr. Reif thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone to continue being involved. The next School Committee meetings are scheduled for January 20 at Brooks House and February 3 at Town Hall. Mr. Mackin moved and Ms. Keeling seconded a motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Vote: unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Landi
Recording Secretary

c/5/21/16/mel