

Committee to Study Dissolution

Regional School District No. 11

Minutes of the Meeting of December 11, 2017

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Nick Brown, Clare D'Appollonio, Stephanie Harrington, Jennifer Nelson, Steven Kurcinik, Rose Bisson, Matthew Venhorst, William Hooper (for John Bolduc)

Absent: Cesar Beltran, Bettina Bronisz, William Fazioli

II. Audience for Citizens

A community member expressed concern that the Committee's meeting minutes had not been posted and about the article authored by Ms. Nelson advocating dissolution that appeared in the newspaper recently. Ms. Nelson responded that she wrote the article as a private citizen, which was made clear in the article, and that the meeting minutes had been posted on several different websites.

Another member of the public reported that he recently had relocated from Fairfield County and is very impressed with Parish Hill School and its sense of community.

A member of the public reported that the Committee's report should include some reference to District Reference Groups (DRGs).

The principal of Parish Hill School asked where 7th and 8th grade students would go in the event of dissolution and questioned whether students would be taught by certified teachers in areas such as art and music.

A student from Parish Hill School spoke in favor of the school and of maintaining the status quo rather than dissolving the district.

III. Working Session – Drafting of Report

Ms. Nelson distributed drafts of the Committee's report and appendix for purposes of discussion. Mr. Hooper commented on the asterisks that exist in the tables included in the appendix regarding student performance. Mr. Venhorst responded that the information appears on the Department of Education's EdSight database in this format, likely for data suppression reasons. Ms. Bisson volunteered to attempt to obtain the information for which asterisks currently exist in the report. Ms. Harrington questioned why the report did not include information regarding the transportation of students from towns currently within Region 11 to receiving districts, which would be incurred by the sending towns in the event of dissolution. Ms. Nelson responded that

this information need not be included in the report because this would be a cost incurred by the sending towns – i.e., the boards of education in Chaplin, Hampton and Scotland. Ms. Harrington noted that she has data regarding the busing of students to neighboring districts and will provide it to Ms. Nelson for inclusion in the Committee’s report.

Mr. Kurcinik asked Dr. Baran about the estimated costs of the Scotland district educating students in Grades 7 and 8 in the event of dissolution. Dr. Baran responded that this analysis was done in 2016 and that he would provide it to Mr. Kurcinik. Ms. Harrington said that townspeople want to know how much it would cost to send students to neighboring districts in the event of dissolution and that the Committee should conduct the analysis. Mr. Hooper volunteered to contact the Region 11 central office to obtain additional information regarding the impact of terminating collective bargaining agreements and severance costs.

Mr. Brown noted that the draft report includes a one-year timetable for dissolution, which he believes would not pass a referendum in Chaplin. He recommended the possibility of a ten-year timetable, which he believes could increase the chances that a referendum for dissolution would be successful. Mr. Venhorst responded that a one-year timetable is problematic and that a longer transition period would be beneficial in that it would provide additional notice to students and families. Other committee members raised concerns about a 10-year time period for transition.

Mr. Venhorst said that he believes the report needs additional work, particularly in order to make a determination as to whether dissolution is advisable, which is addressed in subsection (1) of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-63c. To the extent that dissolution undoes or reverses the status quo, the Committee should have additional information on the benefits of dissolution, including with respect to potential cost savings. Mr. Brown noted that the report should have some analysis of the effect of dissolution on the mil rate. Mr. Venhorst commented that the committee should discuss the possibility of taking additional time to finalize the report while being mindful of the potential legal risks of going beyond the statutory timeline. Several committee members expressed concern of extending the study committee process beyond December 21, 2017.

IV. Next Steps

Ms. Nelson said that she would circulate a revised version of the report on Friday, December 15, and that the Committee would hold a vote as to dissolution at its next meeting, which would be held on Monday, December 18, 2017, in the Parish Hill library at 6 p.m.

V. Adjourn

Mr. Hooper moved, and Ms. Nelson seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.