

Board Reorganization Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
7/16/07

Members in attendance: Susan Nolan, Barbara Basford, Ron Bessey, Rosalie Williams  
Superintendent Mike Gallagher

A review of the information on the agenda distributed to the reorganization committee members was provided.

Item 1. Review update of information pertaining to the new law – School board authority is going to continue to be intact, as it is the school board who is responsible for submitting information to the DOE. The reorganization committee is a committee that will make recommendations to the full board. Mike also indicated SAD #53 will act as a unit so that all of the towns will remain as one unit in the consolidation process. A simple majority vote of the member towns will be necessary to approve any consolidation effort.

School choice may continue if it is available to students now. Therefore, the continuance of attendance at MCI will be available for the communities of Detroit, Pittsfield and Burnham in the future, although there may be financial implications for the towns. Currently, and through the remainder of the contract with MCI (June 30, 2013), no matter who SAD #53 consolidates with the students of SAD #53 will continue to attend MCI. Even if we didn't have the exclusive contract there is no space at any other area high school with whom we would consolidate. Each new RSU will determine their own tuition rate based on the costs to send students to high school divided by the number of students within the high school program. (I gained confirmation about how MCI tuition is impacted by this process. i.e. If SAD #53 joined with SAD #48 the tuition rate for high school would be established by taking the per student cost at Nokomis. If the tuition rate at MCI is higher, the towns of SAD #53 would pay the difference between the Nokomis (new RSU) rate and the higher MCI rate. Obviously that is what happens now. The towns of SAD #53 pay more per pupil now but they don't have a choice currently because the district has an exclusive contract for MCI to educate all SAD #53 pupils. The per pupil cost this past year at Nokomis was \$6,673, which would have been the new RSU's tuition rate if enacted this past year. The tuition rate for MCI this past year was \$7,618 plus IVF \$762 for a total of \$8,380 per student. This is a difference of \$1,707 per student.) In the future if space became available to house some or all students from Detroit, Burnham and Pittsfield in a public school within the new RSU, the students of three towns would still have the choice of attending MCI whether there is an exclusive contract or no contract at all. It is important to note that in the law it is written as "student choice". Therefore, unless something is changed within the law it will be student choice and not town choice. The town would pay the additional amount if the student chooses to go to MCI.

Mike also ran through the timeline of events that will need to occur in the process of reorganization into a new RSU.

**August 31, 2007** a letter of intent must be submitted to the Department of Education. The letter of intent is to stipulate partners with whom we intend to have conversation about consolidation. There may be multiple letters of intent.

By **December 1, 2007** the district, with one or more partners, must submit a consolidation plan. That plan may be complete or it may not be complete, but must be submitted by December 1 to the Department of Education. If the plan is complete and approved by the Commissioner, the Commissioner must notify school districts with complete plans by **December 15, 2007** so that they can then hold a referendum on **January 15, 2008** to get voter approval for the new RSU. If the plan is incomplete, the Commissioner must notify the SAD that their plan is incomplete by **December 15**, and there will not be a January 15, 2008 referendum. If the plan is complete and the referendum is successful on **January 15, 2008**, the districts would consolidate as of **July 1, 2008**. They would need to elect a new school board, (it would take until approximately late March to do so). That new board would need to hire a new superintendent and establish a budget for a July 1, 2008 start. This is a rather tight schedule and it is unlikely that many districts will opt to consolidate by July 1, 2008. If the plan is incomplete then a plan needs to be completed and approved by the Commissioner so that there can be a referendum held on **June 10, 2008** to approve the new RSU. If the referendum fails, subsequent work and additional referendums would need to be conducted until it was passed. The last possible date for a successful referendum to avoid financial penalties would be **November 4, 2008**. The start up date for any RSU's not previously in operation would be **July 1, 2009**. The same process of electing a new board, hiring a superintendent, establishing a budget and setting up a new system administration would still exist in this scenario. Penalties that are incurred if a district fails to reorganize into a new RSU include: an additional cut of 50% to system administration, a reduction by half to the district's state minimum allocation; no transition funding and less favorable consideration for construction. Additionally, general purpose aid would remain at 53.86% of the EPS formula for the duration of time that the district remains unconnected to a new RSU.

Item 2. Financial information from the DOE – Mike shared that the DOE will provide the financial information for potential partners of consolidation. Mike suggested that we must consider educational benefits and pitfalls when considering consolidation partners.

Item 3. Next steps – The next step is to create a district reorganization committee. The reorganization committee must have members of the school unit (school board members), elected officials from each municipality, and community members from each municipality including the business community. Mike has a letter set to send out to selectmen and councilors, and to others who were recommended to him. He discussed using the future search list of names to send invitations to others as well. Additionally, he will put an advertisement in the local paper inviting district citizens to the first reorganization committee meeting.

Item 4. Schedule a meeting to form the reorganization planning committee – The reorganization committee of the board decided on the following meeting schedule and agendas to initiate our local reorganization committee. The first meeting will be on

August 1 at 6:00 P.M. in the Warsaw cafeteria. The purpose of the meeting will be to provide an overview of the law and share the necessary steps that must be taken to consolidate. Within the presentation will be a description of the responsibilities of the reorganization planning committee (RPC). We will then break into small groups to answer two questions. The two questions are: What do you most value in education? and, What are your greatest concerns with consolidation? The small group work will be facilitated by the board members who are on the RPC. The small groups will select their top three to five priorities from their list and report those out to the large group. Those top priorities and all other responses to the two questions will be tabulated after the meeting for future reference when negotiating with other districts. The first meeting will conclude with a thank you and an invitation to convene again on August 15, 2007. The RPC school board members will meet to organize the August 15 meeting on August 8, 2007. All meetings will begin at 6:00 P.M. The board committee will meet in the Warsaw library and the larger group meeting on August 15 will be in the Warsaw cafeteria. We also thought that we needed to have the first meeting of the new year on August 27, 2007 so that the board can authorize sending the letter(s) of intent.

We then brainstormed possible educational documents that could be obtained from other districts that we are considering for consolidation. This information along with the financial information would be the focus of the August 15, 2007 meeting. Mike will attempt to get this educational information prior to August 1 for the board's RPC members. We hope to secure district mission/vision statements, strategic plans (if available), high school course offerings including Advanced Placement courses and graduation requirements, and student handbooks. Other educational information i.e. district curriculum, MEA scores, SAT scores, etc. will be important as discussions with other districts occur.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Gallagher