

WWSU Executive Committee and Act 46 Study Committee
Joint Meeting and Public Forum
May 11, 2016
Thatcher Brook Primary School Gymnasium

WWSU Executive Committee Members Present: Rosemarie White (Harwood), Garrett MacCurtain (Harwood), Kate O'Neill (Moretown), Christine Sullivan (Waitsfield), Alycia Biondo (Warren), Alex Thomsen (W-D)

Act 46 Study Committee Members Present: Jill Ellis (Fayston, arrived at 5:52 p.m.), Rosemarie White (Harwood ex-officio), Garrett MacCurtain (Harwood ex-officio), Gabe Gilman (Moretown), Christine Sullivan (Waitsfield), Alycia Biondo (Warren), Alex Thomsen (W-D for Waterbury), Jason Gibbs (W-D for Waterbury, arrived at 6:15 p.m.), Sam Jackson (W-D for Duxbury, arrived at 5:56 p.m.)

WWSU Administrators: Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker, Sheila Soule

Consultants: Walter Nardelli, Jeff Mahre

Other Board Members: Reed McCracken (W-D), Jim Casey (W-D)

Public: Dale Smeltzer (minutes), Stanley Blow (Waterbury Record), From Waterbury: Jan Gendreau, Deb Cousino, Christine Wulff, Pattie Casari, Jason Reichert, Wendy Haupt, Kelly Wilkins, Erinn Rolland Forkey, Tom Stevens; From Duxbury: Lori Morse, Charles Wallace, Brenda Hartshorn, Nancy Martinez; From Warren: Sue Anne Stager, Peggyann Noel, Valerie Bigelow, Adam Greshin; From Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Katherine Cadwell

Christine Sullivan called the WVEC meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.
There were no edits to the agenda.

WVEC Minutes: Alycia Biondo moved to approve the minutes of April 27, 2016 as written. Garrett MacCurtain seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Board Warrants: Rosemarie White moved to confirm Board Warrant # 1166, dated 5/11/2016, in the amount of \$112,339.89. Kate O'Neill seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

WVEC Adjournment: There being no other business, Rosemarie White moved to adjourn at 5:48 p.m. Alycia Biondo seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
Sample ballot distributed

Gabe called Act 46 Study Committee to order at 5:49 p.m.

Act 46 study Committee Minutes: Alycia Biondo moved to approve the minutes of April 27, 2016 as written. Christine Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Review and Finalize the Ballots: Sample town ballots of the new board members filed for the possible new unified board openings were provided for information only, and were re-collected.

(Jill Ellis arrived at 5:52 p.m.)

Review and Update Communication Plan: The banner to be hung in Waterbury was shown to board members. Brigid reported on the Communication Plan. The signs for roadside will be distributed later, 10 per town. Board members can share their town's story cards at public hearings or meetings, and should make copies at their

school. It was too expensive to print them for the papers. Instead, running a full page ad on the same day in each of the two papers, for two weeks, is their recommendation.

(Sam Jackson arrived at 5:56 p.m.)

Brigid provided the one page text draft for this newspaper ad, which was worked on with Jason Gibbs, titled "Why Merge School Boards" with Key Facts, Financial Benefit, Improved Educational Opportunities, Learn More, Voting reminder. Gabe questioned whether the statement about the amount of dollar savings was clear enough, in terms of the amount being for the budget amount change needed, rather than actual taxes. Other suggestions were made for how best to describe the educational benefits. Some edits were suggested and agreed to.

Public Hearings by Town: Brigid asked board members who are planning to attend to help present the information. There must be a quorum of the local board where it is held; there was discussion about which towns needed other board members to come, and a sign up will be set up by email.

(Jason Gibbs arrived at 6:15)

Brigid reported that she is getting many emails now from people about the information that has been getting distributed or published in the local papers.

It was suggested that there be a moderator for meetings where attendance is expected to be high. A similar structure for the meetings is also suggested.

Gabe Gilman moved to adjourn the committee meeting at the end of the hearing. Christine Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously. There was a brief recess before they start of the hearing.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Gabe welcomed members of the public to the hearing at 6:38 p.m. He introduced Jared Cadwell (from Fayston) as the moderator of the meeting. He asked committee members to introduce themselves. He then reviewed the format for the meeting. Jared asked committee members to proceed with their presentations.

Gabe provided an overview of Act 46 and the purpose of the statute.

Jill Ellis provided a Study Committee overview of the work of the last 9 months.

Brigid provided information about education equity and quality, which although not part of the specific Act 46 charge, were issues that came up during the committee's work.

Christine Sullivan presented the Articles of Agreement, and noted that a Study Committee Report, Worksheet and Appendix were also provided as part of the AOE application and are available on the WWSU website.

Alycia Biondo provided information on local involvement opportunities provided for within the articles.

Jared then opened the meeting up for questions from the public. The following questions/comments were made:

- Jan Gendreau, Waterbury, asked what the state might do that would be different.
- Jason Rikert asked what it meant to shoulder the expenses of districts that have merged, a phrase that Jill had used.
- Deb Cousino from Waterbury asked about the possibility of an outlier in 2019 being added later.
- Jim Casey from Waterbury noted that one of the provisions being the tax rate can't increase more than 5% and asked whether the incentive comes before or after this calculation.

- Brenda Hartshorn from Duxbury asked about how the tax incentives worked for both options (unified vs. MUUSD).
- Nancy Martinez from Duxbury asked about how local control would work if something came up at an individual school, including what level would decide (whether there would still be any sort of local decision making level). She also wanted to know what would happen if there was a dispute.
- Tom Stevens from Waterbury commented on the committee's work from his legislator's perspective. He asked about how the bonding costs are being dealt with.
- Deb Cousino asked what date the merger would happen.
- Brenda Hartshorn expressed appreciation for the committee's attention to educational quality, in addition to financial impact.
- David asked to hear about disadvantages that committee members have heard about.
- Erinn Forkey from Moretown asked about special educational options currently being taught at the local schools, whether the 4 year limit applied to these aspects, when school choice would take effect; and whether there would be a cookie cutter model and changes made just for cost savings.
- A parent from Waterbury-Duxbury gave an example of wanting to have French instruction offered for her daughter but it not being available, and there was no option to send her to another elementary school.
- Pattie Casari from Waterbury asked about school choice and how transportation would be solved.

There being no other questions, Jared closed the meeting at 8:30 p.m. and noted that committee members would be available for individual conversation if needed. Per the earlier motion, the Act 46 meeting was also then adjourned.

Minutes taken by Dale Smeltzer