

Essex Caledonia Supervisory Union
NEK Choice School District 706 Study Committee Meeting
(Formerly NEK pK - 12 Act 46, 706 Study Committee Meeting)

Location: Maidstone Town Hall
Thursday, August 18th, 2016 6:00pm

Board: Miles Etter (Chair) of Kirby, Kami Burns of Bloomfield, Stephane Thibault of Norton, Emily Switser and Donna Lond of East Haven, George Blakeslee and Christina McGrath of Guildhall, Lyn Schmucker of Maidstone, Melanie Staats of Victory

Supervisory Union Administrators: Michael Clark (ECSU Superintendent), Chris Masson (ENSU Superintendent), Martha Heath (Consultant), Jen Botzjorns (CNSU Superintendent)

Community: Richard Bund of Bloomfield, Daniel Wade of Canaan

Call to Order

1. Call to Order by Miles Etter at 6:15pm

2. Approve Minutes from May 31st, 2016

- Steve Thibault makes a motion to approve the Minutes from May 31st, 2016 with amended changes, Kami Burns seconds, motion passes 7-0-1 (Lyn Schmucker abstains)

(Melanie Staats joined us shortly after the vote.)

3. Name for new District

- Miles suggests the name Northeast Pre-K - 12.
- Kami suggests the name Essex Caledonia Pre-K - 12.
- George Blakeslee also suggested North Kingdom East Pre-K - 12.
- Some Board members liked the idea of having "Choice" in the name.
- The Board agreed to drop "Pre-K - 12" from the name.
- The name "NEK Choice School District" was passed around the table, and it seemed favorable among the Board.
- Steve makes a motion to name the new district NEK Choice School District, George seconds, motion passes 9-0

4. Central Office Savings Associated with new District

- Chris Masson provided copies of rough estimated projections that would possibly produce savings in budgets for schools.
- These estimates show what current 2016-2017 school budgets look like in addition to adding special education support while taking away transportation costs and possible ECSU savings. After figuring out these estimates and costs, Chris found just over \$100,000 in savings.
- What is not factored in is that 55% of these estimates are reimbursable.
- Chris created these assessments using data about equalized pupils. He hopes to come back to the Board with possible outcomes of these assessments when a new district is formed.
- Michael Clark believes that it will be important to be aware of the transition from having three separate districts (ie. Caledonia North, Essex Caledonia, Essex North) and into one new single district. He clarifies that this new merged district will stand as its own district and Canaan would be their own district, thus creating a side-by-side operation (eg. sharing supervisory positions).
- Important elements to think about when creating a budget for a new merger would be superintendent salaries, and operating a functional office where the Board can maintain receiving satisfactory service from its supervisory union. There will be the need for two Boards to be put into effect: the supervisory board and the school board.

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- Martha Heath thinks it's important to touch on the subject of the new merger becoming either an advisory district or necessary district. To clarify, a necessary district would mean having to vote yes in order to form a new district whereas an advisable district is one that is interested in becoming a merger but has the ability to decline without voting so.

- The Board asked Martha about possible disadvantages over either choice. She establishes the only disadvantage is if the Board decides to become a necessary district, and one town votes against joining a new merger, no other towns may vote yes to join that merger.
- There is a possibility to write an article that would allow a town to reconsider their vote if they originally voted for not joining the new merger.
- The Board had a unanimous consensus that all towns should become advisable with written articles that supports the towns.

5. Cost of providing Transportation with Family Stipends

- Some Board members shared possible interest in providing transportation services to support neighboring towns.
- Christina McGrath mentions having spoken with her community of Guildhall in regards to providing bus transportation or vice versa and believes the overall tone is of common acceptance and understanding of these new changes.
- Martha notes with the new articles that must be written, they must also include information about transportation, so there will be clarity in these decisions along the way. There is also possibility for towns to alter their decisions and decide to provide transportation after initially saying no.
- The Board shared an unanimous consensus in not sharing transportation services for towns that vote into the new merger. A major factor that weighed in on this decision was the requirement of offering transportation to all schools within the district if offering transportation to one school.

6. Deficits and Surpluses

- All directions are pointing to all deficits and surpluses eventually compiling together when the new district is formed. Outstanding bonds and loans must be addressed in articles of agreements that need to be written.
- Jen Botzjorns clarifies to the Board that this is implied by sharing one local tax rate, that will be assessed by the Common Level of Appraisal.
- There are options for towns that have schools with surpluses, and individual Board members were recommended to speak with their corresponding superintendents on what they can do before the new district is formed.

7. Board Representation

- Since the Board has agreed to have each town become advisable, there isn't need to formulate any representation at this point right now.

8. Voting Method

- There are different models in regards to voting for the Board. Board members shared concern over having each town's voice heard but also keeping the new created Board proportional accordingly to representatives of their towns.
- Martha provided a model of what voting would look like in a proportional scenario when a new district is formed in regards to town representation.
- George suggested that each town have one representative, but also have the voting power that is proportional within the new merged district as well. Miles mentions seeing the benefit but also sees challenges with maintaining the accurate approach to creating this new district.
- The Board has agreed they will need to further discuss possible voting methods.
- Miles brought to everyone's attention that this new merger and its voting will mean that town members will also be voting for town officials and school board members of other towns. It'll be a new endeavor for some people, and will prove anyone wishing to be elected for these positions will need to make their presence known to the other towns.
- The Board talked about the possibility of writing in the articles of agreement having town members only voting for their town's candidates.
- Martha would like the Board members to think about what voting method the Board would like to vote on (australian ballot or the hybrid method), as well as who will put the ballots together.
- The Board came to an official unanimous consensus that they would pursue the australian ballot.

9. Communication

- Michael and Jen have been working with another 706 committee that are coming up with a media communication plan that he believes will provide the goals of this Board's agenda. He will come back to the Board with the suggestions and ideas they have come up with so far.
- The Board will be responsible for coming together or choosing a small sub committee to come up with the information the whole Board hopes to share with their communities in regards to promotional flyers and ads.

Closure

10. Agenda items for next meeting

- Communication efforts by Board members on providing information to their communities
- Martha will be looking at what needs to be written into the articles of agreement
- The savings model will also be more refined
- Board representation will be revisited
- Next meeting is September 8th, 2016

9. Adjourn at 8:24pm

Note: Executive Session: If discussion warrants, and the Board so votes, some items may be discussed in Executive Session pursuant to VSA, 16§ 3 13(a)

Act 46 706 Study Committee Board Meeting Minutes, August 18th, 2016, prepared by Sabra Snyder