

Minutes

Superintendency Advisory Committee

Joint meeting with the Richmond School Committee Tuesday, March 3, 2020 Richmond Consolidated School Conference Room

PRESENT: SAC members: Rachel Kanz, Lauren Broussal, Melissa Roller, Karen O'Donnell, Bob Gniadek, Ina Wilhelm, Neal Pilson, Beth Smith, Ryan Sabourin, Jill Pompei
RSC members: Dewey Wyatt, Sue Benner, Adeline Ellis.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.

1. Re-election of co-chairs as stipulated by SAC response to an OML complaint. Rachel Kanz and Lauren Broussal were nominated, motion by Neal, seconded by Karen; there were no other nominations and they were elected co-chairs. Vote was unanimous.

2. Reports on progress:

Lauren: 2/10/20 Shaker Mountain meeting report: The SMSU was moving forward with finding their own superintendent and therefore leaving or dissolving the union. No formal votes to dissolve the union had been taken, since the RCS SC had not contacted them formally.

Rachel: 2/11/20 RCS SC mtg: The SC decided to move forward with pursuing a BHRSD agreement.

Lauren: 2/12/20 meeting with BHRSD. Lauren, Dewey Wyatt, Peter Dillon and 5 BHRSD committee members including the chair attended. No further details were available on proposed agreement Berkshire Hills has in mind, but they want to start negotiations ASAP. Confirmed that shared services can only be with RCS, not Hancock and New Ashford after June 2020. After that we would need to figure out a more permanent arrangement. This would eliminate high school tuition contracts with any other school districts. Could not comment on capital costs in the future, but would not expect Richmond to pay for HS renovation that is already planned. BHRSD & RCS would need to come to an agreement by November 2020. All 4 towns would have to approve of and pass agreement in order for it to go through. Dewey expressed that the "spirit is there but there is a lack of details."

Bob & Neal: regarding preliminary financial data, Sharon Harrison was contacted to get an understanding of the potential financial impacts of the options. She was unable to meet with Bob until after March 4. Bob has not reached out to her again. Bob tried to look at their budget numbers on his own and it proved to be complicated and unable to be clearly understood without the support of Sharon to explain. He did come up with questions that need to be answered regarding allocation factors. They need more details.

3. School Committee Input: Dewey Wyatt -- SC has not made any decision at this point because our town cannot sign up for something that may have a large financial impact and not know the details. They want to look at what makes sense financially and programmatically.

An idea was to ask the teachers/staff what they want and what they need and how we can then achieve those things.

Regarding the programmatic piece, it seems to be lopsided, in that our students being sent to BHRSD for HS is a benefit for BH more than a benefit to RCS.

4. Discussion regarding whether or not the SMSU could continue. Discussion around whether or not we can exist without a school union.

Relationships need to be mended with Hancock and New Ashford no matter what the outcome.

5. Future path for the Advisory Committee: the 3 SC members need support to look at the details. The SAC can look at “what is our future.” The scope needs to be a broader assessment. Discussion was had regarding what we should be doing to support the RSC.

Can the state grant be used *only* for BHRSD/RCS or can RCS use the money autonomously? School committee will research this. If the grant is only for combining with BHRSD, the RSC will return the funds to the state and fund a consultant themselves.

BHRSD cannot refuse RCS kids. BHRSD *can* establish a new tuition agreement *or* accept RCS kids as school choice only. Some believe it is unlikely they would raise tuition; others disagree.

There was discussion around the fact that if we do not take another year with BHRSD we will need another superintendent, psychologist, business manager ASAP. This is precarious.

Neal proposed extending shared services with BH for one more year and calling it “exploratory discussions.” No motion was made.

Specific goals of the Advisory Committee:

- Meet in the next couple of weeks.
- Tentatively by the end of March, we hope to start making recommendations for the school committee

Rachel motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ryan seconded it.
6:37 p.m. - Meeting adjourned.