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NEWFOUND AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Board Work Session Minutes

For

Monday, September 18, 2023 at 6 p.m.

Location: Auditorium - Newfound Regional High School

This special school board meeting is intended as a work session for the board regarding HB 349.

- I. Call to Order by School Board Chair, Melissa Suckling at 6 p.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Record Roll:

Kimberly Bliss, Alexandria	present
Dominic Halle, Bridgewater	present
Joe Maloney, Bristol	present
Melissa Suckling, Danbury	present
Britta Matthews, Groton	present
Thomas Edwards, Hebron	present
Nathan Saler, New Hampton	present
- IV. Overview of HB349
 - a. History and final legislation signed into law

The purpose of tonight's session is to gather input in the discussion of HB 349 which if approved by Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton at their March 2024 annual meeting which would establish authority to the Towns of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton to withdraw from the 7-town Newfound Area School District and establish a 3-town school district based on a K-8 model. The NASD attorney noted that all three Towns of Hebron, Groton and Bridgewater must vote for the HB 349 for it to pass.

Alison, attorney for Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton Steering Committee noted the Steering Committee will provide more information before the vote. However, an unanswered question by a parent was what if the child lives in Alexandria but attends BHVS.
- V. Report from the August 23 meeting of the Bridgewater Hebron Groton Steering Committee

Kim Bliss, Alexandria School Board Vice Chair, and Joe Maloney, Bristol board member are on the Steering Committee along with Terrence Murphy, Patrick Moriarty, John Rescigno, Erick Piper, Jennifer Larochelle, Virginia Parker, Derry Riddle and William White according to the handout.

Kim Bliss noted that two action items have been requested: Explore the willingness of the school board to deal with the steering committee, and two, provide them with points of contact so they can discuss administration, superintendent, elementary school special education, tuition into middle and or high school, food services, curriculum, transportation and others.

VI. Public Comments

a. Input, questions and comments from those in attendance

Erin Edwards, Hebron noted K-8 will have fewer students if HB 349 passes, which is a concern since the middle school was recently renovated and the new principal Chris Ulrich is doing a great job.

Nicki, Alexandria noted there are about 30 BHVS students from Alexandria and they need stability. She asked what is the driving force?

Kathy Haskell, Bristol disagreed with taking over the SAU and noted it would be confusing to have two Boards.

Zack Gilpatric, Bridgewater inquired for some numbers since he has school children.

Deb Bloom, Hebron needs information as well and noted it seems like all they want is their own building.

Alison, attorney, encouraged people with questions to attend steering committee meetings.

The schedule is on the town websites. According to the attorney, a Planning Committee will by July 1, 2025 put students in schools regardless of home town residence.

Kim Bliss inquired about the teachers' contract. Alison Robert, a teacher with school children hopes her salary rises to meet the cost increase if HB 349 passes. For example, curriculum is a big resource that is carefully vetted. Also there is a teacher shortage now that will not get better. We don't even have a foreign language teacher.

Doug Benton, Alexandria asked if these agreements were developed so we can look at them?

Bryan Richardson, Alexandria asked how many had heard of HB 349 before it happened? Few people. At the Deliberative Session a couple of years ago seven towns voted it down, so an outside representative was recruited to introduce it to the state Senate. He noted Alexandria will be hurt the most with no school and it penalizes all elementary students plus, people do not want to take their school children out of the Newfound District.

Les Dion, Bristol disagreed that two districts will save money and is disappointed that this is introduced with insufficient explanation as to what happens to the children. Les praised the Newfound Area School District.

Britta Matthews, Groton School Board member, did not know about HB 349 until it went to the Senate and then she saw it on Facebook. She noted challenges like tuition and sports.

Diane Berube, Bridgewater inquired what are we trying to fix when nothing is broken.

Rick Alpers, Bristol noted the lack of transparency. He agreed that a primary question among parents and guardians is where is my child going to go to school? He commented that we are stronger together.

Gary Robinson, Bristol has heard only one side and inquired for the other side so an informed choice can be made.

Again, people with uncertainty were encouraged to attend informational meetings posted on the Towns of Hebron, Groton and Bridgewater websites.

Deb Bloom, Hebron asked how did the people know about the vote in Concord?

Erin Edwards, Hebron noted it strange that they want us to help them to secede?

Tom Edwards, Hebron cautioned voters that we don't have data to support that this will lower taxes.

Shaun Lagueux, Bristol thanked the school board for listening to the concerns of the employees in the district who do not want to leave the district.

Travis Torsey, Bridgewater asked if we separate is it true the board can vote to not allow our kids to attend Newfound high school? Attorney responded that that would be negotiated in the tuition agreement.

Email from Kaitlyn Simula noted long bus rides and the question if Plymouth will take us are her concerns among others that need to be in writing.

Nate Saler, New Hampton brought up the salient question that is should we vote in favor of it and should we continue a conversation and enter negotiation?

Deb Phelps, Danbury is not in favor of entering a tuition agreement and is not in favor of a new three town district.

Joe Maloney, Bristol asked for a show of hands for who wants the board to enter negotiation with the steering committee.

Kathleen Connor, commented it wasn't fair to people not in attendance.

George Tuttle, Alexandria asked if board members from the three towns would have to recuse themselves. The answer is not if it is a discussion.

Several audience members spoke in favor of taking a seat at the table to discuss with the steering committee.

Diane Berube asked who can get on it and how they are chosen.

Alison noted that since the vote is in March 2024 the steering committee needs information to give to voters.

Tom Edwards noted they need us to help them.

Virginia Parker, Groton Budget Committee member noted that tuition will be a viable source of revenue if the secession succeeds.

Zack Gilpatric, Bridgewater asked about a backup plan if the vote is not to help them.

Melissa Suckling, School Board Chair encouraged people to attend Monday September 25 meeting at the high school because the board will vote then.

Shaun Lagueux noted we have mainly heard from their attorney tonight and not the driving member.

Bob Brooks, Hebron asked if a special town meeting will be held. Yes. The information is on the town websites.

Nicki commented we just got through the pandemic and this is way too much for kids.

Melissa Suckling reminded us that we will vote on what we heard at next Monday's meeting.

VII. Adjournment

VII. Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Whittier, School Board Clerk

District staff: Pierre Nilhas Superintendent of Schools; Robin Reinhold, Business Administrator; Chris Crosby, Videographer

Public: Cindy Williams, Bob Piehler, George Tuthill, Karen Maloney, Andrew Williamson, Catherine Roman, Lindsie Santamaria, Vanessa Robert, Kathleen Connor, Erica Cook, Stacy Giles, Tina Fullerton, Phyllis, Will Fullerton, Chris Dyer, Bill Drake, Gary Robinson, Ashley Robinson, Kayla Torsey, Travis Torsey, Kathleen Haskell, Douglas Benton, Virginia Parker, Ruby Hill, Kirsten DeCormier, Shaun Lagueux, Bob Brooks, Deb Bloom, J. Koch, Joe Wilkas, Laura Sharp, Nancy Sharp, Stephanie Macamas, Glenn and Jenn Pinckney, Jason Seavey, by email Kaitlyn Simula.