

# BRIDGEWATER, HEBRON & GROTON STEERING COMMITTEE

297 Mayhew Turnpike  
Bridgewater, NH 03222

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Terence Murphy  
Bridgewater Selectman

Patrick Moriarty  
Hebron Selectman

John Rescigno  
Groton Selectman

Erick Piper  
Bridgewater Representative

Jennifer Larochelle  
Hebron Representative

Virginia Parker  
Groton Representative

Derry Riddle  
BHVD – Ex Officio

William White  
BHVD – Ex Officio

August 23, 2023: Meeting called to order at 6pm

Committee Members Present: Erick Piper, Jennifer Larochelle, Terence Murphy, Patrick Moriarty, John Rescigno and Virginia Parker

SAU #4 Board Members Present: Kimberly Bliss, Alexandria; Joseph Maloney, Bristol; Robin Reinhold, SAU #4 Business Administrator; and Steven Nilhas, Interim Superintendent.

After calling the meeting to order, Terry Murphy noted that the Agenda distributed by SAU #4 incorrectly stated this was a meeting of Bridgewater-Hebron Village District (BHVD). He stated that clarification needs to be made that BHVD, although that is the commission that built the Bridgewater-Hebron Village School and currently maintains the facility that is not the entity conducting these School District organization meetings.

Mr. Murphy stated the reasons for this initial meeting are: to come to an agreement with SAU #4 to move forward cooperatively. HB349 states that the three towns appoint two members to perform research and setup our SAU/Cooperative School District.

Items to Create:

1. Budget – Necessary to propose to towns prior to March for town meetings, due to the amendment of a two year limit.
2. BHVS – Agreements to continue to have students from other communities. Transition to 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade then Newfound Regional High School for 9-12 grade.
3. Superintendent Services

A discussion ensued regarding the teacher contracts and the fact that the contracts are with SAU #4 currently and teachers would have to choose to leave SAU #4 and sign a new contract with the new SAU.

Mr. Murphy and other committee members chimed in to make it clear, we want the teachers to have the choice, and we will mirror their current contracts, so that there isn't a disruption for any of the teachers.

Committee members also wanted to clarify if students want to stay at a certain school, they should be allowed to do so, and we need to work out agreements that will allow this.

Ms. Larochelle stated that she would like everyone to be clear on what is currently happening and go over some history, so that it is understood. When Bridgewater and Hebron came together to build a new school, the superintendent at the time was all for it.

Having more options would draw more individuals to the district. It is not a new idea that Bridgewater-Hebron Village School transition to K-8.

Middle School is not for everyone, after teaching for 14 years, I've realized some children flourish in a K-8 design.

Mr. Murphy stated that it is his belief that with smaller cooperative districts, it will allow each town to have more say, although it may make a Business Administrator's position more burdensome.

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It can work to have smaller boards so that each unit can be heard. Currently having seven towns is not working. It seems as though each town is pulling in its own direction.

The bill has been signed by the governor and we are now tasked with moving this forward. The items we would like to currently accomplish with this first meeting are.

1. We're asking that you confirm the School Boards willingness to work with us to find common, mutually beneficial opportunities we've outlined in our discussion paper prepared for this meeting.

2. The next step would then be to provide us with points-of-contact so we can assign individual folks from our committee to enter into discussions with you on items outlined in items 3 to 7. The goal would be to develop DRAFT agreements prior to the adoption vote.

We would like this transition to be seamless, and therefore it would be foolish if we didn't work together and we tried to recreate the wheel.

Mr. Piper stated there seems to be a certain level of confusion regarding HB349. Now is the opportunity to ask questions.

Ms. Bliss stated the bill is outlined well and Mr. Maloney stated yes it is pretty specific.

Ms. Bliss mentioned that there was an original agreement signed. Mr. Murphy noted that HB349 now provides us the ability to do what is best for ALL and we need to form a group that will work together.

Mr. Rescigno brought to the attention of all those present that the bill has passed. Let's move forward. Let's work together and move forward.

Ms. Reinhold mentioned that this will put an added burden on the BA.

Mr. Nilhas said that the full School Board will need to review the documents and possibly expand beyond based on other committees, etc. The full board meets Monday August 28, 2023 and we will present this in our report.

Ms. Bliss mentioned that the SAU currently does not provide any SAU services to any other district. Hill gets their own money from the state and is only included in adequacy aid. They are on a tuition agreement and we are trying to find out what Hill wants now. They may want to join SAU #4, but that will be up to their voters.

The group came to a consensus that the SAU #4 School Board will need to review the committee requests at their meeting on Monday August 28, 2023. Mr. Murphy asked for a timeline for a decision of whether or not the SAU #4 is willing to work cooperatively with the committee.

Mr. Nilhas stated that the committee report is on the agenda for the August 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, so they will address it at that time and hopefully have a decision shortly.

Mr. Murphy mentioned that we would like for attorneys to be able to communicate with each other.

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At that time the current lease agreement was brought up and Mr. Murphy stated that at the end of the lease which is June 30, 2024, the School District will become tenant at will.

Ms. Bliss stated that an amendment to the lease agreement would be necessary. But Mr. Murphy said that wouldn't be necessary as the lease term ends June 30, 2024.

Ms. Larochelle suggested the meeting be opened to public comment.

Kathleen/Paul Connor – What is this? What does the end product look like? What would be unique? Will they have the same if not more? Personally concerned about classes per grade and students staying together. They need more social interaction – it's hard for us to know.

Ms. Larochelle – Totally appreciate all of your questions and concerns. At the present time some of these cannot be answered as this is the reason this committee was formed. By the time the March vote comes around all concerned individuals will be well informed and have all their concerns answered.

Ms. Connor – This is putting the responsibility on the SAU for building your new school district.

Discussion ensued around the above statement and the meeting was brought back to a decision needs to be made by SAU#4 whether or not they agree to work cooperatively with the committee over the next few months so that each of the towns can make an informed decision at the Town meetings.

Alizia Boswell 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher BHVS – What will leadership look like? Teacher contracts?

Ms. Larochelle – That's what the contracted services would be for.

Mr. Rescigno – Pay scales would stay the same. We are looking to maintain current contracts.

Ms. Bliss – You could only mirror contracts as the current contracts are between the unions and the SAU.

Mr. Murphy – ultimately we are looking to parallel all contracts. We did not do this to save money or spend more money

Ms. Boswell – Is there room for curriculum change?

Ms. Larochelle – We cannot answer that question at this time.

If there are no further questions we can adjourn this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7pm.