

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

September 27, 2023: Meeting called to order at 6pm

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

BHVD Ex-Officio Representatives Present: William White.

Ms. Larochelle called the meeting to order.

Committee members introduced themselves and stated what position they hold and the town they represent.

Ms. Larochelle asked for any updates to the minutes of the September 20, 2023 meeting.

Ms. Larochelle asked for a motion to accept the public meeting minutes as amended by email and the corrections stated by Ms. Parker.

Ms. Parker moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Moriarty seconded. 4 approvals and Mr. Piper abstained.

She announced that the Groton informational meeting will be held at the Groton Town Hall on Tuesday October 17, 2023 at 7pm.

Dates for Hebron and Bridgewater informational meetings will be finalized in the near future.

Ms. Larochelle reminded the public that was present to continue going to the webpage for the BHG Steering Committee for informational updates. Links are provided on Hebron & Groton's websites and the page can be found on the Bridgewater website under the schools drop down menu.

Ms. Larochelle moved to receive committee reports.

Education Planning Committee – Ms. Larochelle stated that we have received questions from the teachers. Answers were drafted, reviewed by our attorney and sent to Kelly McLane. The committee will follow up with the teachers and hope to schedule a meeting with them soon.

Budget & Contract Negotiations Committee – Ms. Parker noted that they are in discussions with the Department of Education. Mr. Piper added that they have reviewed a food service contract and will need to interface with the federal government for this. The Department of Education has sent us training modules and we will review those over the next few weeks.

Teacher/Staff Contracts Committee – Mr. Murphy stated that the contract that teachers and staff are in with SAU #4 at the inception of the new Special Purpose School District on 7/1/2025 will be fulfilled by the new Special Purpose School District. The teachers would be able to choose whether they take on a new position with SAU #4 or whether they supply SAU #4 with a resignation and choose employment with the newly formed Special Purpose School District.

Dave Darlington asked if the teachers could choose to walk out.

Ms. Larochelle confirmed that they can do that at any time, even now. Teachers and staff change schools and school districts all the time.

BRIDGEWATER, HEBRON & GROTON STEERING COMMITTEE

**297 Mayhew Turnpike
Bridgewater, NH 03222**

Facility Planning Committee – Mr. Murphy mentioned that current maintenance is going on at the Bridgewater Hebron Village School to include upgrades to the existing chimney.

Ms. Larochelle moved to open the meeting up for public comment. She stated that they will answer questions that they are currently able and obtain answers for other questions. She also mentioned that the public comment will be limited to 20 minutes so that the committee can move forward with their tasks to be ready to present residence with materials so that they can make an informed vote in March.

Ann Hardy asked where are we on this. Are we going forward?

Ms. Larochelle answered that the three towns will need to vote in March. We are gathering information, contracts, pricing and everything so an informed vote can be made in March.

Mr. Moriarty noted that the only towns voting will be Hebron, Bridgewater and Groton.

Ann Hardy continued – how will the three towns form a district and afford this?

Mr. Murphy answered same way we do now, ADM – number of children times a predetermined cost per student. A tuition agreement would need to be worked out for middle school and high school to start. The articles of agreement for the three towns have already been drafted and are being reviewed by counsel. We did need to set a floor in the formula so that each town will need to maintain a certain level of contribution. But maintenance or expansion of the school would be the responsibility of Hebron and Bridgewater.

David Hardy asked if we could do school vouchers?

Ms. Parker answered that the present model is for BHVS to become K-8, High School would be a tuition agreement. There could be an opportunity for other high school's willing to accept a tuition agreement. There could also be a possibility of choosing a different school and paying the difference between the allotted tuition and the actual cost of that school.

David Hardy stated that he likes the ability to choose as not all students are able to attend the chosen high school and may require a specialized school.

Ms. Larochelle stated that is part of the reason for implementing a K-8 model.

Tracy Steenberg asked if the committee is looking to SAU #4.

Ms. Larochelle stated that we would like to work cooperatively with them, but we have not receive a decision from them and they just decided on Monday to begin talking with us. We have been told by the Department of Education that there are other SAU's that are willing to provide the services we are looking for.

Ms. Parker stated that if SAU #4 decides that they are only able to have a tuition agreement with us, then we will have to go elsewhere for the other services.

Mr. Moriarty stated that there are all kinds of models and all kinds of options for us to review.

Mark Coulson stated bottom line is between now and March is research to present to voters. March we vote. Throughout this nothing will change until July 1, 2025 if this is voted in.

**BRIDGEWATER, HEBRON & GROTON
STEERING COMMITTEE**

297 Mayhew Turnpike
Bridgewater, NH 03222

Ms. Larochelle answered Yes that is correct, but we want the voters to have a much information as possible to make an informed vote.

Mr. Murphy stated you will hear more and have more say in a three town district than you do in a seven town district.

Mr. Moriarty said you all need to understand this is the second largest school district in the state of NH when it comes to the square miles that the district encompasses.

Kathleen Connor asked the towns will cover the same schools even if agreement is with Mascoma, Plymouth or Newfound? Will there only be one school to choose from?

Ms. Larochelle as stated previously, we would like to negotiate with SAU #4 for tuition and the Department of Education has a formula for this. If a family chooses to see if they can go to say Plymouth and it is more than the standard tuition, then we would need the family to be involved. But that is all part of the research and negotiations.

Mr. Moriarty added as I said before, there are all kinds of models. In fact there are students from VT going to school in NH bordering towns. There is also Pinkerton Academy that was private and is now public and accepts students from a lot of towns.

Kathleen Connor added with this choice will the students have a say? Can they be part of these negotiations?

Ms. Larochelle stated there will be a tail out agreement in the tuition agreements.

Ms. Parker added that we appreciate everyone's input, but most of these questions are still items we are researching and haven't begun negotiating yet.

David Hardy asked if there are special needs students for K-8, how will handle and will that be in our school.

Ms. Parker stated that we are required to provide those services and that is one of the items that we are researching at the current time.

David Hardy added if the three towns vote in the affirmative, could we reconsider if SAU #4 makes a deal with the three towns with a new allocation formula.

Mr. Piper said as an independent town you can join any SAU. Once we vote to leave, we are exiting.

Mr. Murphy added once you have exited the district, you would have discussions on how to move forward by forming agreements with other districts.

Ryan Lord stated I homeschool and I would like to know how that will affect my children.

Ms. Larochelle answered you would just need to file your paperwork with the new SAU. Nothing would change. Your child would have access to all features of the school if you wanted, and those would including music, gym etc.

**BRIDGEWATER, HEBRON & GROTON
STEERING COMMITTEE**

297 Mayhew Turnpike
Bridgewater, NH 03222

David Hardy continued, if the other town wants us to stay, can you change your mind before March.

Ms. Larochelle ensured Mr. Hardy that nothing has changed and we would like to provide local control and have a K-8 model for our children. This is what we have wanted to do for years.

Deborah Hart added that the point individuals are missing here is that if we separate from SAU #4, we do not have the threat every five years that they can change the contribution formula.

Mr. Moriarty stated they have made it clear they will do it again.

Mr. Piper said that throughout the Article 5 committee discussions the SAU representative proposed 100% valuation which would have approximately doubled the tax rate for our three towns. That made us explore other options.

Deborah Hart continued lots of individuals do not understand this this funding method could change.

Discussions continued around the funding method and when a new method could be brought forward.

Ms. Larochelle requested a motion to move into executive session. Mr. Moriarty moved to go into executive session and Mr. Murphy seconded. Roll call all in favor.

Executive session was entered at 6:45pm

Motion was made to exit executive session by Mr. Moriarty and seconded by Mr. Murphy. Roll call all in favor. Executive session was ended at 7:35pm.

Ms. Larochelle moved for a motion to seal the minutes of the executive session. Ms. Parker motioned to seal the minutes of the executive session and Mr. Murphy seconded. Roll call all in favor.

Ms. Larochelle moved for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Piper made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Parker. Roll call all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm