

Approved

CABOT SCHOOL BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 9, 2016

Present: Board Members: Chris Tormey, Sharon O'Connor, Ry Hoffman, Jackie Folsom, Lisa Olsen; Student Reps: Alisha Celley, Isabella McCallum; Administration: Nancy Thomas, Superintendent, Pat Knoerl, Curriculum Director, Dave Schilling, Principal; Consultant: Peter Clarke

Public Comment:

Here to listen. One member of the public gave thanks to the board for all their work.

Board Discussion : Act 46

Peter asked what the Board is thinking relative to joining a 706 Committee.

Chris asked about the representation on the Committee. The representation would be based on the Equalized Pupil count so Cabot would have fewer representatives than Danville or Twinfield, such as 2 of 10 members. Does the 706 Plan have to be agreed to by consensus or majority. The articles of agreement are voted on, not consensus. However, Cabot could go onto to Committee as an Advisable district, then the Board has the right not to present Articles of Agreement. If they declined to move a proposal to a vote, then a petition of 10% of voters could ask that the Articles be presented for a vote.

Representation on the new district Board would be based on the 2010 population. There could also be "at-large" representatives based on the Articles of Agreement which would be voted on by all towns. There could also be a combination of direct representation and at-large.

If the Board doesn't vote to form a 706 Committee then 5% voter petition could request that Cabot join the 706 Committee.

Peter suggested that Cabot may not want to be "necessary" because if Cabot voted it down then the whole proposal would fail, if Danville and Twinfield voted in favor. If Cabot were "advisable", then the merger of the other two districts would proceed. Also joining in a 706 Committee as advisable, allows the Board to decline to send the proposal for a Cabot vote.

Chris expressed concern that the biggest impact of possible changes would fall on Cabot and not on Twinfield and Danville, but those districts would still get the tax credits. He indicated he would like to see what direction the Committee and guiding framework for the new Board after merger would be prior to going into the Committee. Peter suggested that Boards are in the strongest position to negotiate if they go in with a clear direction. Jackie stated that after the months of discussion she feels that maintaining the same structure Pre K - 12, within its own district is best. Cabot is good at thinking outside of the box.

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Peter explored what the fiscal impact on status quo using the information created by the Facility Committee last year. The handout combined the cost of loosing the small schools grant and phantom students as well as a possible \$8M bond for building construction.

Peter reviewed the process that would happen for districts that do not voluntarily merge. This includes fiscal issues so the plan that would be submitted by 11/30/2017 would need to address the facility issues and how that would impact fiscal long-term stability. The Sec. of Ed would review and present a plan for the whole state to the State Board of Education by 6/30/2018. The SBE takes testimony and then approves a final plan by 11/30/2018. Waiting to the final State Board plan gives the least control to the Cabot Board. Going through a 706 Committee gives the most input and control for the direction.

706 Committee members are chosen by the School Board. At least one must be a member of the School Board and the other representative(s) could be School Board members. Other persons from the community MAY be appointed. A Chair, Co-chairs or Tri-chair is chosen and a Coach is hired to assist. 706 Committee requires that neighboring districts are not left geographically isolated. With this mandate, if anyone of the 3 districts decides not to do the 706 Committee, there could be push back from the State Board prior to the local vote.

Lisa talked about the benefits of increasing class sizes, but doesn't want to see the loss of local control. There was comment that there is limited participation in the current voting process and residents not showing up at meetings. The Board's hope is that limited participation represents confidence in the direction set by the Board and administration. Sharon said that she likes where the school is going now. She worries that the merger discussions do not focus on student success. Peter responded that there were many ideas discussed in the prior meetings that could potentially benefit students.

Ry talked about pride in what the school has been able to do with small numbers and restricted resources, but is concerned about whether or not the school size is viable, particularly high school. He could see benefits for students in an entity with larger numbers. He would like to see more choice for students, such as choosing between high schools. Participating in a planning process could give potential for improvements for our kids.

Chris suggested that by joining the 706 as advisable, there would be a better rationale to go to the State Board should the merger plan not meet the needs of Cabot School. He proposed that they go through the 706 process to have all ideas vetted, then an alternative plan for the State Board would be much stronger. He believes if there was disagreement within the Committee, the suggestion could be to send it back to get agreement.

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The time limit to get the vote completed is July 1, 2017. The target date for a first vote could be either November Election Day or Town Meeting Day. Each school would vote to be a formal member, advisable, who the members would be and the budget. The maximum amount without a vote of the public is \$25,000 and the grant amount is \$20,000, so the maximum to be shared among the three schools would be \$5000. There was consensus that the Board should agree to join the 706 Committee. The Board will formally vote to join the 706 Committee and suggest representatives at next week's meeting.

A public resident commented, expressing his appreciation for the apparent direction of the Board.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Thomas, Notetaker