

Cabot/Danville/Twinfield Act 46 Study Committee (706)
Wednesday, April 18, 2017
Cabot School Library

Present: Chris Tormey, Ry Hoffman, Robert Edgar, Bruce Melendy, Lauren Cleary, David Towle, Ginni Lavelly, Chandra Miller, Sarah Watkins, **Administrators:** Nancy Thomas, Superintendent WNESU, Mat Forest, Superintendent, CCSU; **Consultant:** Peter Clarke. **Absent:** Scott Harris, Ian Covey

Call to Order: Chris Tormey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Consent Agenda:

Approve April 5, 2017 Minutes, - Lauren moved to approve the minutes of April 5, 2017 as written. Chandra seconded the motion. Minutes of April 5, 2017 approved as written.

Public Comment: There were about 55 members of the public attending, primarily Cabot residents. A speaker shared her support for athletics in Cabot that allows for every student to be on every team. Another resident encouraged the Committee to make all districts a necessary. Another resident asked if there are other options available and if this merger will allow Cabot to meet the goals of Act 46. Peter explained that while these 3 districts are in the 706 planning process they cannot formally go forward with other options unless and until this plan fails. If this merger doesn't go forward, there would be other options. One example is that Cabot could close their high school and seek to join the Barnet, Walden and Waterford as part of a PreK to 8 unified district. If Cabot were to operate PreK to 6, Cabot could start discussions with Peacham which is PreK to 6. A parent asked that everyone think about the kids, not about tax rates. Another resident spoke to the value of this proposal for both tax payers and for increased resources and opportunities for students.

Discussion:

a. Discuss Feedback from Forums

Bruce Melendy (Danville) spoke to where the Danville Board stands right now. They are committed to this merger plan with Cabot and Twinfield being brought forward to the voters in June. They are also preparing for the future should this option be voted down by talking with the Blue Mountain Union District Board members and also listening to their residents regarding discussions about closing their high school.

Nancy shared some notes from the Twinfield and Cabot Forums. Chris asked for members to share what they heard at the forums and around town that would make the proposal more positive for the voters.

Sarah said that she heard great support for the PBL option in the community. She would like to reconsider the vote regarding option 1 and option 2.

Bruce spoke to the topics that dominated the Danville forum. They were similar to points made at the other forums: length of transportation, tax savings, savings after tax incentives are done, loss of local control in the School Board. In addition there were people who spoke to the idea of closing the Danville High School. Lauren said that at the Twinfield meeting, there was support of PBL, but not necessarily to be located at Cabot. She also has heard the request/idea of offering a transitional opportunity for Cabot students to complete their education at Cabot. She would like to revisit the decision about “advisable” or “necessary”. Chris spoke to request that the Committee revisit the decision about creating a Project Based Learning program at Cabot compared with having no high school presence at Cabot School. He feels that the increase in choice would benefit all students. One question is: Is there a configuration in the combined high schools that would keep high school age students within this newly merged district. He spoke to the need to retain the strengths of all 3 schools as well as the opportunity to maintain the strengths of their small towns, including athletics and graduation at Cabot.

Sarah moved, Ry seconded the proposal to reconsider the decision to approve Option 1. 3 in favor of the motion. 6 against. Motion fails.

b. Review and discuss Articles of Agreement.

Peter walked the Committee through the parts of the report to confirm his wording.

Lauren moved that all districts be deemed “necessary” indicating that if one district votes the proposal down then the proposal is defeated. Chris seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion. This would require that voters of all three districts vote in favor of the merger for the merger to proceed.

On the issue of nominations for the new school Board, should the merger be approved, the petitions will need to be in by May 20 for the June 20th vote.

The method of selection of Board members to the new Board must be the same for all towns. Currently Danville and Marshfield select their Board members from the floor at Town Meeting. The Committee discussed the issue and agreed that representatives on the new Board would be voted by Australian rather than on the floor in all communities.

The Committee members agreed that the Australian ballots regarding the budget for the new district would be counted separately at each town and tallied. They would not be comingled.

Article 13, regarding closure of a school, in order to be an issue to be voted on by the residents, should be included in the warning covered in Article 1. In order to close a school, it would have to be voted on by each of the member towns.

The Committee unanimously approved to include the contents of Article 13 in Article 1 as well.

Instructional planning. The new Board will initiate a district-wide curriculum and instructional planning process prior to August 2018 to explore the most effective way

- a. to coordinate instructional programs at the high school level,
- b. to offer Project Based Learning activities and programs for students across the district and
- c. to provide a plan to ease the transition of high school students moving to a new campus during the first year of operation.

The Committee finished review and confirmation of the Articles of Agreement. Peter will complete the Report this coming weekend.

Peter asked that the Committee members email to Nancy by Friday, the top reasons that the merger should go forward to be used by Peter to create the executive summary.

The Committee agreed to a schedule of additional dates that will allow for each of the Boards to review and respond to the Report before the deadline to present the report to the Agency of Education. The next Committee meeting will be on Monday, April 24, 6:00 to 8:00 pm. The Committee will review and approve a final draft to be forwarded to the School Boards for review and comment.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Thomas, note taker