

Walpole K-8 Research Committee Notes
May 8, 2024

Members Present: Stan Hutchings, Jean Kobeski, Tom Ronning, Steve Varone,
Diana Watson Petrie, Carolyn Vose (Selectboard Liaison)

Members Absent: Greg Lent, Chas Street

Leadership: Diana chosen as Chair, Tom as Vice Chair, Jean as Note-taker

The committee can recommend one of three choices:

1. Remain part of SAU 60
2. Attach to another SAU (29)
3. Form our own SAU

If we form a new SAU, we could have a part-time superintendent and Walpole would have its own school board (3-5 members). If the town votes to separate and form our own SAU, the Walpole School Board would be the decision-makers, not this committee.

If you have schools to run, you need to have an SAU. If you don't have schools to run, you pay tuition.

A lengthy discussion ensued about the difference between an SAU and a district. Steve explained how the budget is apportioned, and he explained the history of the Fall Mountain School District and Marlow School District.

The group reviewed our charge from the selectboard:

1. Pros and Cons of local control (Walpole K-8) but staying in SAU 60.
2. Pros and Cons of forming a new SAU
3. Pros and cons for joining an existing SAU

A recommendation was made to listen to the schoolboard presentation at the past deliberative session. Go to sau60.org. Click on Business and Finance, then Budget Presentations.

Questions arose about the number of students in Walpole being homeschooled or attending charter schools. Why and what would bring them back to the public school?

It was stressed that the recommendation this committee makes will address not only financial ramifications, but will also consider curriculum: what's being taught, resources, teacher autonomy, student preparedness for high school. What happens beyond eighth grade? Will students tuition into FMRHS or, if we pull out of the SAU, what choices are available?

The committee decided to continue meeting on Wednesdays at 6:30 in Town Hall. It was agreed that the meeting can extend to 90 minutes.

It was recommended that, before we have actual research assignments, we hear from school board members from Westmoreland and Chesterfield. Tom said he would invite Nick Belsky and the middle school guidance counselor, who serve on the Chesterfield School Board, to our next meeting.

In the meantime, Diana asked that we list on Google Docs all the elements we want to research (finances, curriculum, transportation, etc.)

Next meeting is Wednesday, May 15, 6:30, upstairs in Town Hall.