

Pre-K - 8 School Withdrawal Study Committee Notes
6/5/24

Present: Diana Petrie (Chair), Jo Cargill, Jean Kobeski, Chas Street, Steve Varone,
Tom Ronning, Carolyn Vose (Selectboard Liaison)

Absent: Stan Hutchings

The meeting commenced at 6:33 p.m. in Town Hall.

Tom made a correction to the notes of the last meeting regarding the Superintendent's 100-Day Plan. The plan does not include reinstatement of the NEHT and AHT programs, as reported.

Committee members reported on topics they chose to research last week.

Culture: Chas has spoken to various community members who expressed concern that there are no parents on the curriculum selection committee.

He gave a brief history of the Walpole Schools and said that Walpole voters historically support the school budget. Community members have generously donated money to the school for programs, buildings, scholarships (Hubbards, Hooper) and would most likely continue to do so in the event of the school withdrawal from the district.

Chas said there is greater potential for civic involvement and he will research this. He said the town has the resources to provide a mentoring/or gifted and talented program.

There was a question about the requirement that the North Walpole School stay open. That stipulation was repealed with the passage of Warrant Article 10.

Transportation: Steve reported that Chesterfield pays \$60,000 less per year for transportation than Walpole is paying the district. Jo pointed out that the FM District has a fleet of five new buses and a master mechanic.

Personnel and Programs: Diana, Steve, and Jean met with the Chesterfield principal and school board chair. They discussed the advantages of maintaining local control but remaining part of SAU 29. They described the hiring practices of their staff. Teachers are interviewed and selected locally then hired with the permission of the superintendent. There is little turnover in Chesterfield, but teachers can move within the SAU if they so choose. They will not be forced to do so. Specialists like speech, OT are

also hired locally. If they are only needed in Chesterfield part time, Chesterfield can hire them out to other school districts who also need part time services.

They talked about how Chesterfield relies on SAU 29 for IT services, a Special Services Coordinator, Curriculum Coordinator, Public Relations, Food Services, and the Pre-K - 12 Strategic Plan. Teachers have grade-level meetings with colleagues across the SAU. They have representation on the SAU school board (but not Keene).

Their advice for getting state approval for withdrawal focuses on four areas:

1. Finances
2. Where you feel you are lacking support from the SAU
3. Reasons for choosing to withdraw
4. How withdrawal will benefit your students

Thoughts from Some Walpole Staff:

1. In order to create “sameness” in programming across the district, some teachers feel they have been held back in order to “bring others up.”
2. (Veteran) Teachers are being moved to other schools in the district against their will. Some say they will leave the district as a result.
3. Teachers don’t feel valued by Central Office.

Teacher Survey: A climate survey was distributed to teachers around the district. Results have not yet been released. Diana would like to get a copy of the survey and will contact Misty to request one.

Action Items:

Chas: Research the greater potential for civic involvement

Jo: Try to find the reason for the tax discrepancies among documents

Tom: Start a Google sheet listing the benefits to our students of withdrawal from the district

Jean and Diana: Interview teachers

Diana: Ask Misty Bushee for a copy of the teacher survey.

The next meeting, which is open to the public, will be on Wednesday, June 12, at 6:30 p.m. in Town Hall.