

February 23, 2009

Exeter-West Greenwich

Regional School District

Minutes

Joint Meeting of the EWG School Committee

and the West Greenwich and Exeter Town Councils

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee, the West Greenwich Town Council, and the Exeter Town Council met at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, February 23, 2009 in the High School Library. School Committee Members present: Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Teri Maia-Cicero, Vice Chairperson; Greg Coutcher, Clerk; Mark Rafanelli; Valerie Zuercher; Mary Walsh. West Greenwich Town Council Members present: Thaylen Waltonen; Susan Woloohojian; Kelly Stewart. Exeter Town Council Members present: Cal Ellis; Arlene Hicks; Robert Johnson; William Monahan; Kenneth Fernstrom. Others present: Tom Geismar, Superintendent; Kevin Breene, West Greenwich Town Manager.

A. JOINT SESSION 6:05 PM

1. Chair DeSack said that she wants to show the impact of the proposed Charter change to the district. She gave an example that showed that if the district asked for a \$1million increase, under the

Charter it would put West Greenwich over the cap. The same example with the Charter change would allow the district to get \$1 million and keep both towns under the cap.

2. Chair DeSack showed how variations in the percentage of students can cause big swings in each town's contribution. Kevin Breene said that it wasn't necessary to take either town to the maximum increase. Chair DeSack agreed and said the numbers in the example are for discussion. She said that for the district to ask for a zero increase, it has to cut about \$2 million. She said that the district needs the towns' help. Mr. Breene said that this has caused a fire storm. Towns are getting cut too. Employees are not taking raises in Warwick.

3. Chair DeSack said the District is trying to come in flat and not ask for any increase. A Charter change is still needed to help in the future. The district understands that it needs to do its part to not ask for an increase.

4. Chair DeSack said that the new calculation is based upon student enrollment. It is based upon the asked for increase and not the aggregate. The West Greenwich contribution is more now but it could even out over time, depending upon the population.

5. Exeter Town Council President Cal Ellis asked for clarification. He said that what he sees tonight is not what was in the newspaper. Chair DeSack said that 50/50 was never the case. There were other

proposals.

6. Councilman Ellis distributed the cover sheet for the Town of Exeter. He asked if the proposal tonight is the proposal that was voted on at the meeting last Tuesday.

7. Councilman Ellis said that 30-50 has had a difficult impact on the South County towns. He understand that the School Committee is doing its job.

8. Chair DeSack explained how 30-50 affected the calculation. The proposed calculation is fair to each community.

9. Member Rafanelli said that you can see that shifts in the population severely affect the contributions. The new calculation makes it clearer.

10. Exeter Town Councilman Monahan said that the Fire District's \$900,000 isn't reflected.

11. Audience member Wayne Cross, Exeter, asked why do this change now if the district is trying to flat line the budget? Chair DeSack said that the district cannot flat line the budget by taking the same.

12. Audience member Paul McFadden, Exeter, said that for 40 of the 44 years that the district has existed, Exeter has paid the highest amount. The maximum levy West Greenwich can raise is \$764,000. He said he doesn't see the emergency and doesn't see why it cannot wait a year.

13. Audience member Ted Nataly, Exeter, asked if the method of amending the Charter would be amended.

14. Audience member Ms. Fisher asked if the School Committee could just send Attorney Gorham to the General Assembly to amend the Charter. Attorney Gorham said that 15 amendments have been made in the General Assembly. Ms. Fisher asked Chair DeSack why the Charter change is needed now.

15. Councilman Ellis spoke about the proposal from Attorney Gorham.

16. The question was asked if both towns could agree to level fund the district.

17. Mr. Breene said that small Charter changes went directly to the General Assembly. He said he thought Attorney Gorham's recommendations were good. Mr. Breene said he said that he didn't think there would be a problem to present level funded budgets.

18. Town Councilman Monahan said that according to the Charter, an amendment must be voted on by all members of the School Committee and approved by a majority. He suggested that the School Committee might want to vote again.

19. Mr. McFadden asked if the leaders of the two Towns would share their opinion regarding what they think about this proposed amendment.

20. West Greenwich Town Council President Waltonen said that the approach to the district budget is a good one. He supports going to the towns for a vote and having it ratified by the School Committee. He said that he thinks that it is the best we can do.

21. Exeter Town Council Vice President Johnson said the amendment should go to the voters at the Financial Town Meeting.

22. West Greenwich Town Councilwoman Woloohojian said that she wanted it to go to the voters.

23. Exeter Town Councilman Fernstrom said that he wants it to go to the voters.

24. Mr. Cross asked to show a flat line budget and what the shares would be under the old way and what the shares would be under the

amendment.

25. Chair DeSack asked if the Town Council members would support the amendment.

26. President Waltonen said he would support it. He said the West Greenwich Town Council would discuss it and he would get back to the School Committee as soon as they have decided what to do.

No votes were taken.

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Thomas Geismar, Superintendent