

**Town of Middletown
Middletown Regionalization Planning Committee
Minutes
Wednesday, August 4, 2010**

The Middletown Regionalization Planning Committee met on Wednesday, August 4, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers of Middletown Town Hall. Committee members Barbara VonVillas, Mike Pinto, Bill Flynn, Kelly DiPalma, Liana Fenton, and Chris Semonelli were present. Rosemarie K. Kraeger, Shawn J. Brown and Ed Collins were also present. The minutes of the July 7, 2010 meeting were distributed and accepted.

School District Enrollment

R. Kraeger reviewed enrollment numbers for residents of Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth and Tiverton whose children attend private high schools. She then presented the enrollment projections for Middletown Public Schools through 2013-2014, which show that future numbers at MPS are on the rise over the next 5 years. B. Flynn pointed out that one reason to regionalize would be a drop in student population, which might lead to closing or re-grouping schools, but the future projections presented by R. Kraeger demonstrate a relatively small increase in student numbers. There was general discussion regarding demographics of the town. B. Vonvillas asked whether a survey has ever been conducted to find out why residents are sending their children to private schools. There was more discussion on after school programs.

R. Kraeger reported that the low numbers at the high school are not because of curriculum issues. The high school is able to offer virtual classroom learning to advanced students by offering them one of 50 seats in a virtual learning academy, which she would like to increase to 100 seats, but support from East Bay Collaborative is necessary for this to happen. There were questions about the overhead expenses of the virtual classroom, and also discussion about how it fits in with regionalization.

There was further discussion of sports programs, after school programs, and special education programs, and how these reflect different values and beliefs of the various communities. W. Flynn pointed out that while regionalization will present students with greater course selection, the communities don't want to give up anything, and that money is going to drive the whole process of regionalization. R. Kraeger suggested that regionalization should begin at the preK/K level, although Portsmouth does not have a full time kindergarten program. There was discussion about regionalization of preK, and how having Head Start in the schools would help with this. There was discussion about the opportunity for students to take advanced courses through the virtual classroom followed by questions about teacher certification – not course specific – and the current inability to conduct a high school class because of inadequate enrollment.

Transportation

The discussion about transportation considered that Middletown is an ideal central location for the island; that the Newport student population is closer to the border with Middletown; that the town has to bus private students on the island; and that special education is already regionalized.

Facilities

R. Kraeger reviewed the findings of the Fielding Nair study, which recommend closing and surplus the elementary school building, consolidating the elementary school students and moving them to the current high school after it is renovated, leaving the middle school students in their current location, and building a new high school that could house 2500-3000 students on the land north and west of Gaudet.

E. Collins stated that the maximum capacity for a high school on the drive-in property was 3,000 students, and it would include both an auditorium and a gym.

It was stated that electives have disappeared from the curriculum because of the regent's requirements, but it was also stated that more electives could be offered if there is a critical mass of students in one location.

The meeting ended with questions and comments from audience members.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 8 at 7 p.m.