

Newport County Unified High School Exploratory Committee Minutes

6:00 -7:45 PM - Thursday, January 23, 2014

Attendees

Present: **Richard P. Adams**, Middletown Town Council; **Marco T. Camacho** (Alternate) Newport City Council; **Kellie E. DiPalma**, Middletown School Committee; **Sandra J. Flowers**, Newport School Committee; **Justin S. McLaughlin**, Newport City Council, Vice Chair; **Naomi L. Neville**, Newport City Council; **William R. O'Connell**, Middletown School Committee; **Barbara A. VonVillas**, Middletown Town Council, Chair

Not Present: **Robert B. Power**, Newport School Committee

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the January 2, 2014 meeting of the Exploratory Committee were reviewed and unanimously approved.

Committee Purpose

A general discussion was held to clarify the purpose of the Unified High School Exploratory Committee. Ms. VonVillas began with a brief explanation of the origin of the committee's title. She indicated that, based on the advice of Counsel, the name was adopted to clearly indicate that the process followed and authority of the Committee were not as described in RIGL 16-3 but were unique to the creation of a Unified High School District.

She indicated that equally important was the desire to build upon the work done by previous regionalization committees and discussions and avoid repeating previous work. Mr. McLaughlin commented that he believed the question of "Why a regional high school" had been largely answered, but the question "How" was essentially unanswered. He also noted that the committee need not answer every question or issue, but must answer "How" to a degree which would convince a reasonable person that a regional high school was feasible.

Ms. Neville commented that she agreed that the Committee should concentrate on "How" and leave the question of "Whether" a unified high school is a good idea to the voters.

After further discussion, it was proposed that the purpose of the Exploratory Committee be stated as:

"The purpose of the Committee is to explore and define how a Newport County regional [unified] high school district could be implemented and presented to the voters of the City of Newport and Town of Middletown in a referendum in November 2014. "

The Committee agreed that a vote on the purpose statement would be deferred to the next meeting.

Enabling Legislation

Ms. VonVillas began the discussion with an explanation of the need for enabling legislation. She explained that such legislation could be either drafted as amendment to RIGL 16-3, the RI statute governing school district regionalization, or as a separate statute governing the creation of a Newport County Unified High School. She noted that informal discussion had been held with Newport and Middletown state legislators to guide development of the enabling legislation and to establish a submission date.

Ms. DiPalma said that enabling legislation must generally be submitted before the spring legislative break in February to allow time for review and submission to appropriate Legislative Committees for hearings. She also pointed out that no enabling legislation would be reviewed or scheduled for hearings unless approved by both Newport and Middletown Councils. The Committee then held a general discussion of the enabling legislation submission process.

Mr. Adams provided the Committee with drafts of the two approaches to enabling legislation, the first consisting of a markup of RIGL 16-3 with general "language insertions" indicated, the other a modification of the Bristol-Warren Enabling Legislation. After a general discussion of the alternate approaches, the Committee decided to proceed with markup of the Bristol-Warren Enabling Legislation.

Mr. Adams noted that, after working on both documents, he agreed that markup of the Bristol-Warren test was the best approach and would serve as a good check-list for the issues which to be considered and agreed to in order to arrive at a consensus on "How" a regional high school district could be implemented.

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Mr. Adams pointed out that a thorough review of the draft based on the Bristol-Warren enabling legislation required consideration of issues of governance, finance, property management and acquisition/leasing, regional school district committee authority, composition, and referendum text.

After a general discussion of the organization of the enabling legislation text and which items should be considered of the highest priority, it was agreed that the Committee members would provide Mr. Adams with comments, suggested changes, and corrections and he would develop a "Rev 1" draft for consideration for discussion at the Committee's next meeting on February 10, 2014.

Schedule

Discussion of a draft calendar of events was deferred to the next meeting. The pacing event is submission of a referendum question to the voters in both municipalities in the November 2014 election.

[Post meeting note: Based on Committee discussions, a revised sketch of the Newport County Unified High School implementation process is attached.]

Proposed Meetings Calendar

The Committee agreed to meet as follows.

Date	Time	Place
Monday February 24 th	6 – 8 PM	CCRI Newport Conference Room
Monday, March 10 th	6 – 8 PM	TBD
Monday March 24 th	6 – 8 PM	TBD
Thursday, April 17 th	6 – 8 PM	TBD
Tuesday April 29 th	6 – 8 PM	TBD

Agenda Items

[Post meeting note] Committee members are asked to submit agenda items by February 14, 2014.

Agreed Items

Item	To Do	By Whom?	When?
Draft Calendar & Timeline	Create a calendar of events for distribution to Committee members	VonVillas	Next meeting 2/10/2014
Enabling Legislation Markup [Bristol-Warren Regionalization Enabling Legislation – Draft markup]	Mark up draft enabling legislation. Send all comments, corrections and markup to Dick Adams by February 1, 2014 to allow time to consolidate inputs and provide for February 10, 2014 meeting.	All Members	Next meeting 2/10/2014

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard Adams

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