

School Administrative Unit #36

School Board Meeting

White Mountains Regional School Board

July 19, 2017

White Mountains Regional High School

6:00 to 7:00 PM

Whitefield, NH

**CALL TO ORDER**

Board Members Present – G. Brodeur, P. Riviere, J. Ryan, J. Brady, D. Holmander, S. Kleinschrodt

Board Members Absent – R. Boggess

Administrators Present – M. Anastasia

**Flag Salute**

**Open Community Forum – Discussion of NHSAA Educational Facilities needs Study (May 2017)**

J. Ryan – Thank you everyone for coming. Questions submitted – asked about a month ago to have questions – took time and answered – instead of reading each question – answers are there to questions submitted.

“Thank you all for coming tonight and for the questions we have received over the past few weeks regarding the NHSAA Demographic Study & Assessment of Educational Program and Facilities for the District.

Together with Superintendent Dr. Anastasia and The School Board we have provided in written form answers to those questions that are available here tonight. We don’t want to take the entire hour reading aloud each but would like to first summarize the report and welcome any new questions or comments from folks here tonight.

The report is an independent objective look at the Educational Facilities in our district. The NHSAA is a private, non profit organization and offer expert and high quality services to NH public school districts. There are several directions the district could go with the information received.

We can summarize, not only through the report, there is a trend in declining enrollment. The study offers different methods the district can use in making enrollment projections. Over the years we have seen many cuts in not only adequacy aid but also the loss of building aid from the State. It’s a priority of the board to provide the best education and an equitable one to all our students first and foremost.

Our geographic area in this district poses difficult transportation issues for all of our students. We have worked diligently in the past years to diminish the amount of time students from any given town spend on the bus and at the same time have increased instructional time at set forth by the DOE. We cannot change the town’s borders or where our student population resides. We are five towns currently with four school buildings in three of them.

It’s important to note this study is not the end all be all in what may or may not happen in our district. Please know that there are recommendations throughout the report not just in the “recommendations” section. Every suggestion or recommendation in the report is not interdependent on each other. Which recommendation(s) will be used have not been decided.

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One of the quotes in the study should be noted: “People within the White Mountains Regional School District are sincerely interested in improving educational opportunities for children as well as the greater community of White Mountains Regional”

Regardless of New Hampshire’s significant population growth over the past forty years and increase overall in the last 15 years with trends continuing this way it does not directly correlate with student population increases, as we know, especially in our area.

We should consider adopting the best method for enrollment trends which according to the report is the Five Year Method based on previous grades currently enrolled in our district. In addition receiving an annual update of births from six years earlier will help us to see the projections more clearly. It’s a tool we haven’t used. It will be important to monitor the number of births to the number of residents. As well, it has been advised to annually monitor housing permits although this is a less reliable statistic in enrollment projection.

In summarizing the study the board has and continues to find actionable items which will be taken into consideration in the coming months and years. There is a lot of planning and discussion to be had on several of the recommendations. The NHSAA Consultants mentioned when they presented the report in June to the board and public that our district has over the years accrued a vast amount of studies and data reports. It’s important to keep in mind this study is a supplement to other documents we have and is not a final report and there will be more as we look specifically at the different recommendation. The findings in the report show that JES has a functional capacity of 90 students (which the facility would need significant maintenance to safely house 90 students), Whitefield Elementary has a functional capacity of 461, Lancaster Elementary has the functional capacity of 556, and WMRHS has the capacity of 574.

Use the study as a planning tool to :

- Annual reporting of enrollment projections and trend using five year average format and add 3 year method (weighted averages) with birth rates, housing permits, etc. (account for out of district, special ed, private and home schoolers as they are not included in the other methods used)
- Develop a Five Year Capital Improvement Plan (tied to strategic plan)
- Look at emergency generators for all buildings (currently only at WES)
- CTE Renovations Project
- Consolidate Grades 1-5 into LES/WES w/ open enrollment with JES Building and Acreage going to the Town of Jefferson.
- Begin the process of looking at grade specific buildings for the long term. Ie: enrollment, facilities, transportation routes times, school hours, minimum standards for graduation (note we require a 24 credit minimum during high school to graduate when the state requires 20)
- Get more detailed cost estimates with the alternatives 1-5 in NHSAA study with viability options from architectural and engineering viewpoints
- Central Office Plan - Inadequate and Costly at present. Feasibility Study (NHSAA) to formulate practical options
- Adopt policy that limits storage in classrooms to appropriate spaces and monitor it’s strict enforcement”

Min. Standards from DOE is 20 credits and we require 24 credits.

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It's hard to summarize – we are one district and consultants said that – we are data driven – everything we can look at we do; every aspect – those documents didn't go away because of this study.

One of things in report – in report states that JES – comprises mostly of Jefferson residents. Just between then and now – currently 24 residents going to JES and 21 from other towns. Total of 45 students.

#### **Q & A – Feedback Received**

Paper passed out.

#### **Q & A – Public**

Ray Gradual – about 12 or 15 years ago – Dalton School closing – quite contentious – 2 years later – closed without a whimper and they knew it was time. The time has come to close JES – 45 kids – like a private school. Class size; question about going to LES or WES – that education isn't as good – if I was a teacher I would be insulted. Travel is an issue. All I am saying is it is time to close JES.

Christina Laflamme – from Whitefield – transferred to JES in grade 2 – does it have to go to taxpayers to close school or is it done?

J. Ryan – no it does not have to go to the taxpayers.

D. Dubois of Jefferson – several months ago asked board to make a decision and stop talking about it – Carl Ladd made mention that we are a well-studied district – now we have Strategic Plan, Facilities Plan, etc. – what is board's plan - time frames for action, etc.?

J. Ryan – I think what happened 7 or 8 years ago. Petition request from Jefferson – don't discuss for 5 years.

D. Dubois – asked because it happened every year.

J. Ryan – trying to catch up to make a sound decision – last thing we were asked to give was a year's notice and looking.

D. Dubois – this is not just a Jefferson issue – there is a lot of things in here – mentioned several things to talk about – 5 or 6 years from now – more...

J. Ryan – one of the things we need to do is develop a 5-year capital plan. Looking at realignment, etc. – Strategic plan outlines those timeframes...by tying capital improvements to strategic plan – several things outside of 5 things...those are things get on.

J. Brady – Jefferson – we agreed to give a 1-year notice and will have definite decision in September.

P. Riviere – what would keep a board from changing mind? Trend is we will probably lose another 200 students in 10 years. Been right on money – pretty confident that their methodology is right on. Do you take into account good fortunes, etc. – if I read state projections correctly – population will be over 65.

J. Ryan – develop buildings that would involve population.

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D. Dubois – concerned that until board makes definite decisions about realignment – how to make capital improvements...I don't understand how you can put or make a lot of decisions about facilities until you have definite decisions.

P. Riviere – couple of recommendations – CTE – state wants us to come up with projected numbers by February of this year. No planning done yet but process beginning; 5-year plan underway – don't see where closing JES and realignment come into play together. No surprises in 5-year plan except for CO. Beyond that we have spent a lot of money on high school to bring up to date and working on other buildings. None of schools are at capacity. Moving more kids doesn't mean building more classrooms, but rearranging...no derailment of decisions made now and after.

Edith Tucker – 2 programs – specifically – Ag. Mechanics and Natural Resources are being consolidated.

P. Riviere – enrollment driven

G. Brodeur – page 46

P. Riviere – doesn't say anything about consolidation. Continue to have computer program, hospitality and culinary arts

J. Ryan – in report what they were driving at – but certain programs required...

E. Tucker – came as State Rep. to talk a bit and make some hard decisions – monies from state will be extremely hard to get – substantial cuts – wonderful study you have done – doesn't catch avg. attention of people...going to have to capture attention of district...but to get...

J. Brady – last 2 years major changes in CTE and lots of talk with Littleton. Condensed down to make beneficial to students and coordinate with Littleton – on much better footing than 3 years ago.

E. Tucker – need to get message across.

Haley from Dalton and children attend WES – one of things said – a lot of emphasis on JES closing and very little talk about anything else. By talking with other parents they have no clue what is going on. People need to understand what is happening – 90 percent of population are way too busy – feel a lot more parents and community members would be here if they knew.

J. Ryan – communication is an issue

Haley – I am saying when it comes from you.

J. Ryan – in part the study was driven – take a hard look and gives us that beginning steps – I am excited about our schools and what is coming – that is our shortcoming – board, collectively, getting together – we are trying.

D. Dubois – there was no advertisement of this forum

Arlene Allin – comes down to communications. In your consolidation – only plan that seems doable...that you won't win popularity contest – consolidate the high school to a 7 through 12. If you are going to move MS, still some resistance, more doable regarding bussing.

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J. Brady – right now Jefferson is on front burner – resizing is not on front burner...we are dealing with Jefferson issue because we did tell you that we would give a year's notice.

P. Riviere – if there is going to be a middle school – MS is the way to do things – just to inform the discussion – one of my complaints...308 students in 6, 7 and 8, next year it will be 240; 2-years out is 251. Even if you decided to bus – WES 210 spaces; LES 300 plus spaces.

G. Brodeur – it is not our focus right now.

J. Ryan – it is in there but board has had no discussion...things in study re: storage, etc. There are several recommendations not just 1, 2 or 3 things.

Arlene Allin – regarding feasibility study – surprise – strict policy to appropriate...what are they storing?

J. Ryan – educational materials.

D. Holmander – when they did site study – visits to schools – very apparent.

Edith Tucker - ...that there is a big need for adult education – this has been talked about – before get carried away down that path...

J. Brady – Adult Education is on the burner.

D. Dubois – have had episodes of adult education in past. Last episode was not only one.

P. Riviere – we have to be completely asleep – school and district consolidation – we are not the only one – those conversations about consolidation – how can you – there are now 4 hospitals functioning with one CEO – there are 2 with birthing centers – not much different than the schools.

D. Dubois – are those conversations taking place? We all understand population and enrollment is going down.

J. Brady – trend is student population. Berlin is discussing closing a school.

D. Dubois – unfortunately that is where all discussion is. As a Jefferson resident – fully believe that school will close – concerned about an empty building – people are saying will not be empty and – what if outpouring and Jefferson doesn't want it – what happens to building? Is there no other function for use of building if town doesn't take?

S. Kleinschrodt – we will look at that.

J. Brady – wouldn't be feasible for us to keep it.

Arlene Allin – Lunenburg closing – feel cheaper to go to Danville. Bottom line – do your communication with due diligence...keep communication open with public. Don't make appearance that it is all behind closed doors and as welcoming to public as possible.

J. Ryan – All committee meetings that go on are open to public except for Personnel – we absolutely need to work on that communication.

Haley – back to consolidation – what are benefits of having 2 separate schools?

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M. Anastasia – when you have more grades and teachers that are alike – more flexibility and options to place students...having all kids together.

Hayley – don't they collaborate?

M. Anastasia – not as much as you think – they need to be in same building – not day to day things.

Haley – have we looked at different ways to collaborate – with technology...

M. Anastasia – different than sitting...face to face for discussion

Haley – all teaching same

S. Kleinschrodt – hard – when you have teacher personalities and will have different results – as much as we like to say we are teaching same, we are not.

Ray Gradual – it's time for the WMRSD opening before Labor Day.

Arlene Allin – there is same curriculum throughout district – we are taking different routes to get there – we also have a similar testing...

J. Ryan – thank you everyone for coming and August 14<sup>th</sup> is next meeting – very aware of transportation issue – it's a big one.

School Board Chair adjourned meeting at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hartlen

School Board Secretary