

ER9 LONG-RANGE PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE
JULY 25, 2016
Minutes

Attendance:

Region 9 Board of Education members: V. Hancock, C. Hocker
Easton Board of Education members: J. Chieda (7:15 pm), R. Bobroske, D. Underberger
Redding Board of Education members: A. Florkowski, M. Hoffman
Administration: T. McMorran, P. Sullivan (until 6:50 pm), S. Pierson Ugol, C. Basta
Others: five members of the public (including J. Parker (until 7:00 pm) and R. Hicks)

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 pm by Dr. McMorran in the Central Office.

CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE

The Charge was discussed briefly and will be discussed further after Dr. McMorran's presentation. The Easton and Redding board members provided brief updates on the work of their individual long-range planning committees. Mrs. Florkowski commented that above all, it is the education and learning goals for the students of Easton and Redding that are most important.

PRESENTATION: Data for Long-Range Planning

Dr. McMorran provided a presentation of data and information. There was discussion of the data during the presentation. Dr. McMorran will have the presentation posted on the school website.

Information, data and discussion included:

- Enrollment data and projections, current trends
- Role of the elementary, middle and high schools
- Population of Easton and Redding and potential for growth or no growth
- Population movement
- Cost of financing education, both for Easton and Redding, as well as for other schools in the DRG
- Need for each of the towns to have their own specific long-range planning group, but the importance of meeting jointly and working together in a cooperative arrangement

Dr. McMorran suggested the group needs to consider the question of what is a reasonable percentage of the Grand List that can be allocated to fund public education.

Comments, questions and discussion with the members of the public followed.

- Randy Hicks, Easton, noted the importance of looking at the towns independently in terms of numbers K-8 and K-12.
- Steve Hunter, Redding, asked if information about preschool waiting list was available, how many students are the schools losing to private schools, and how do these numbers compare with the State or DRG average.
- Anne Manusky, Easton, commented that children may have moved from public schools to private schools due to a lack of a gifted program and the existence of Common Core. Mrs. Bobroske suggested requesting exit interviews with parents who are willing to share that information.

Vance Hancock noted that the measure of per pupil costs can be viewed as a measure of efficiency, and cautioned what this number means to the public can be misinterpreted. Enrollment and teachers costs are important figures to stress.

WHAT SCHOOL CONFIGURATIONS MAKE THE MOST SENSE FROM AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Discussion of alternate potential uses of the facilities or part of the facilities followed. Data and information on the costs involved with closing a school, renovating a facility, etc. all needs to be considered. Mrs. Florkowski noted that the Town of Newtown is going through the same process and asked what process they were using and asked what could be learned from what they are doing. Mrs. Chieda noted that much of the focus is on the numbers and the costs, and suggested a dual goal of providing the best education possible under these circumstances, not simply a charge to minimize costs.

It was noted that while a long-range plan is necessary, some answers are needed within the next five months, prior to the next budget season. There may be a need to have a plan with phases, so that some questions and needs can be addressed immediately, some for next year, and some decisions/recommendations for further in the future. The primary questions for consideration are educational goals, regionalization and politics, facilities & structures, what's possible and what is not.

Chris Parkin, Redding, commented that the Redding Board of Finance wants to see the budget number decreased as the enrollment decreases. He noted the importance of getting the data and information to the public, along with a plan for the future. The Conservation Commission is currently working on the 2018 Town Plan for Conservation and Development, adding that the schools should be continually working on long-range plans.

Those present were in agreement in the need to work together in a cooperative manner while maintaining individual long-range planning committees. Joint meetings and communication is most important. There was also discussion on the impact of the work on the staff at Central Office. The amount of time required of Central Office staff for planning is taking away from their time for other duties. Discussion of the potential to reorganize some of the roles at the schools and central office was briefly discussed. Dr. McMorran would like to meet with the Tri-Boards prior to the January budget season to give consideration to the financial commitment to do the planning work being done by Central Office staff. Mrs. Bobroske added that there may be the potential of having board members involved in doing some of the work or allocating funds to have some of the work done by consultants.

NEXT STEPS

The next meeting will be scheduled for mid-September. Potential dates for additional meetings will be sent out.

Each district will need a chairman for their committees.

Dr. McMorran adjourned the meeting at 8:54 pm

Recorded by Mary Maday