

Pelham Education Visioning Committee

DRAFT

Meeting Minutes: October 27, 2010

Member Attendance: Kathy Weilerstein (School Committee), Ed Martin (Selectboard), Fred Vanderbeck (Finance Committee), Warren Hall (Planning Board), Tom Fanning, Claire Kurtz, Lisa Desjarlais (Pelham Principal), Darius Modestow, Janet Scott, Kristin DeBoer

Not present: Tara Luce, Michael Hussin, Sarah Hayes

Public in Attendance: Hilla Rogel

Kathy Weilerstein called the meeting to order at 6:30PM and reviewed the agenda

1. Reviewed and approved the Minutes from 10-6-10. Discussed the need to post the minutes and agreed on the following: The minutes will be posted on the Pelham School AND Town of Pelham websites, there will be a hard copy of the minutes and any handouts distributed in a notebook available in the Pelham School, the Pelham Town Hall and in the Pelham Library. Lisa will post on the school website, Ed will arrange for the posting on the town website and Kristen will arrange for the notebook in the library.
2. Ed distributed "Open Mtg Law Guide" dated July 1, 2010. Everyone signed the receipt and Ed collected the signatures to put on file in the town office. He also passed out "Summary of Conflict of Interest/Ethics" document which were signed and will also be on file.
3. Report from the Finance Committee – regarding 5-Year Plan. Fred reported that the Fin Com will be presenting this report to the Pelham School Committee on Dec. 2 at the PSC regular meeting and asked if this group would consider attending that meeting to hear the report. All agreed.
4. Discussion of possible scenarios: Lisa distributed a document she received from Rena; "Options for Pelham School for FY 07" – this is a document that was created by the School Council. The group explored strategies for how to move forward in our work in the most productive way possible. It was noted that this is challenging given that there are so many factors that we either have no control of (what direction Amherst, Shutesbury and Leverett are moving) and/or information that is not available (state budget figures, future enrollment figures). We agreed that we would focus on one scenario in depth for each meeting. We will approach each scenario from four perspectives:
 - a. Financial implications
 - b. Educational implications
 - c. Fabric of the Community and Village Center implications
 - d. Governance issues

Individuals and/or small groups will research a specific area and present at the next meeting.

For our next meeting Kristen and Janet will focus on Fabric of the Community, Warren will focus on

Village Center, Lisa and Kathy will focus on educational, Fred on financial, Darius and Michael will focus on state policies and procedures.

5. Kathy reported on the Shutesbury Visioning Committee meeting on 10-19-10. Ron Berger did a presentation on Expeditionary Learning that was very inspiring – great to focus on all the good work happening in our schools today. Good to connect with the work of the group and noted the intention to continue to keep the groups informed of each other’s work. Shutesbury has created a website for this committee and their mtg minutes will be posted there:
[\(http://www.shutesburyeducation.info/\)](http://www.shutesburyeducation.info/)

Future goal identified: create an opportunity to spotlight all the good work being done in our school – possibility bringing someone (maybe Ron Berger) to talk about educational philosophy/theory issues and have teachers do presentations. The concept is of a celebration – target time could be February.

6. Fred reported on attending a meeting in Leverett. They have decided to form an Educational Study Committee also – they will soon decide who will work on that comm. He also reported that there were some people at the meeting who were very vocal about being strongly opposed to school choice.
7. Kathy reported on meeting with Lisa Desjarlais, Michael Hussin and Rena Moore. The purpose of the meeting was to gather relevant historical information for our group. Points to note:
 - a. One outcome was the document Lisa passed out today (see #4).
 - b. Rena described various multi-grade classroom configurations that Pelham has had over a period of years – often there have been two, sometimes three grades together. She noted that this only occurred prior to MCAS and that the current requirements for certain curriculum to be covered in specific grades makes the idea of mixed grade classrooms extremely challenging.
 - c. Rena explained that the history of the central office division of expenses was based on a report originally presented to the school committee about 10 years ago (when Gus Sayer was Superintendent) and that it was based on student numbers and staffing. The report should be on file in the Central Office archives so we will attempt to locate this document.
 - d. When asked more about the relationship with Amherst, Rena articulated how in many ways we have functioned as one community. She highlighted the numerous ways that Pelham has “contributed” to Amherst over the years.
 - e. Rena explained that the formula for how town pay in a regional relationship is determined by a state formula unless the towns involved create and agree on a different formula (as we have done in our 7-12 region) – she suggested this would be important to consider in any regional relationship we may form.

8. Report of current events in the region: As noted earlier, Leverett will be forming an Educational Visioning Committee. Last nite Amherst School Committee also voted to create a Visioning group.
9. We agree that for our next meeting we will each have RANKED the following list of possible scenarios to explore, so that we can decide which ones we will explore in depth and make a calendar for which meeting we will address each. These are not listed in any order of importance:
 - a. Continue Union 26 w/ Amherst
 - i. K-6 with continued School Choice
 - ii. K-6 without school choice - smaller staff/combined classes.
 - b. K-6 Region with Amherst
 - c. K-6 Union or region with Shutesbury & Leverett
 - d. K-8 Union or region with Shutesbury & Leverett
 - e. Close the school*
 - f. K-12 with all four towns

*Although this is NOT a desirable outcome, it was agreed that the committee would be remiss to not include it in list of options. Given that it continues to be brought up by other towns, we believe it is critical to gather the actual facts about what would be involved in and the outcome of closing the school.

It is possible that the committee will articulate a scenario not mentioned above – based on what we learn as we progress and/or information that we receive from one of the other towns.

10. Upcoming schedule:
 - a. Regular meetings Wednesday s, November 17 and December 8, both at 6:30.
 - b. Attend the Pelham School Committee meeting on Thursday, December 2nd at 6PM to hear the 5-Year Report from the Pelham Finance Committee
11. Meeting adjourned 8:45PM

Next meeting: Wednesday, Nov. 17 @ 6:30PM location TBA

Agenda next meeting:

1. Review meeting minutes.
2. Current events – reports on any of the other regional educational study groups.
3. Review ranked scenarios – create calendar plan for when to address each
4. Presentation and discussion of scenario research results.
5. New business