

**Dresden Education Exploratory Committee**  
**January 30, 2023      Informational/Discussion Notes**

**As we had two members who have left the committee and one member absent, we did not have a quorum that would constitute an official meeting. This document is for the discussions that were held as well as introduction of two residents interested in joining the committee.**

Members Present - Leah Bickford (Chair), Lisa Hewitt (Vice Chair), Peter Elvin, and Shari Lilly (Recording secretary).

Others - Joshua & Erica Atkinson.

Leah asked if there are any public comments. We do have two residents attending, Joshua & Erica Atkinson, who have an interest in joining the Committee. They do want to get updated information at this meeting. Leah said we will do a Q & A for them at the end. Also, she welcomed them to the group and explained that we would get the paperwork ready so they could be approved by the Select Board and be sworn in. Lisa will help with that.

Old Business - We have developed the research teams, but recently learned that Karen Moody & Jonathan Doray have left the group, so we'll need new people to contact Richmond and Wiscasset. Gary Blau & Peter Elvin are taking on the tuition-based schools and Lisa & Leah will do Bath & Gardiner, plus have members to revisit the RSU2 contract.

3.2 - Committee member to collect research from individual groups to send to T.A. Daniel Swain and the website designer for posting on the town website.

Peter said that, as we are planning to meet at Bridge Academy Library for researching, a lot of this work can be done from there.

*3.4 - Utilizing of Bridge Academy.*

Leah will contact Judy Tunkle to find out the dates that the Broadband Committee meets at B.A. We know the library is open on Tuesday & Thursday from 2 - 7 p.m., plus Wednesday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The broadband committee is meeting there every other Monday so Leah will contact Judy Tunkle to find out times, etc and then we can make our schedule with members giving their decision via email.

Jon Doray was going to contact Richmond Town Office for their withdrawal information, but we'll need someone else now that he isn't involved.

Leah has compiled a list of the questions (using some from a previous questionnaire). These can be ones we would want to ask at each entity; such as food service, adult education, video communications, quality of technology, facilities and opportunities for the students, etc. She will upload this to Google Drive. She asked if we should table this for now, but Lisa said we could review them, then send an email to everyone for their choices to make any revisions we feel would best work for this committee. We can then come up with a more streamlined document.

We will ask to have DEEC meeting dates & times put on the town sign.

New Business - We will review the previous by-laws as there will need to be some changes to a few of them. Shari will make the revisions to the ones on her computer after everyone has given their input and approval. The following are updates & changes as agreed by all members present:

Change name of Committee - It will be the Dresden Education Exploratory Committee.

Membership - Change the number of members required to consist of One (1) Planning Board, one (1) Budget Review and four (4) Residents-at-Large. As we are not planning a withdrawal, we do not need to

have a school board representative.

Committee term will be for one (1) year.

Quorum of four (4) will be needed to conduct an official meeting.

Meeting day(s) and time is TBD (to be determined).

We'll need to elect a new Board Secretary to replace Karen Moody who has left the group.

Homework - Work on the questions for the list. Leah will confirm the dates of meetings. Will make sure we have access to a project. Lisa will provide the research information to Daniel for the town website.

Side Note - Lisa mentioned that in talking to 2nd selectman, Don Gleason, he was concerned that this group was working on a withdrawal, but she explained to him this group is doing research on the education system and what will be the best for our students and the town, not making any recommendations. We realize there was a lot of misunderstanding from the previous committee. That did help to ease his concerns.

Josh Atkinson said he and Erica would like to be members on this committee. Lisa explained the process of taking their information, providing it to the SB for their approval and then being sworn in by the Town Clerk.

Erica Atkinson, a teacher at Dresden Elementary School, asked if they need to be present for that. Not unless they want to. She also asked if Shari is considered a member. Shari explained that she is not as she is hired only as a recording secretary. Leah said that we do need two more people to fill the vacancy by the two that just left. Mrs. Atkinson wondered if it is clear to the town what the purpose of this group is as it was a little confusing with what information was on the website. Leah explained that we are trying to look at other avenues and comparisons to our own school. Mrs. Atkinson said she wants to know what the group is looking for in relationship to the educational and wants the people of Dresden to be well informed about what this committee is trying to accomplish. She said her understanding here is that this group is looking at an abundance of data such as grades, teacher to student ratios, etc. Leah said that is exactly what we want and her, as a teacher, will be a great asset to this group. Mrs. Atkinson added that she wants to be able to take the information back to the other teachers to let them know what the people are looking for the teachers to do. Leah explained there was confusion as the RSU2 was thinking we were looking only at withdrawal, which is why the last Exploratory Committee was unable to go further. We are not only looking at cost, but also other various issues. It just may be that staying with the RSU2 could be a positive if it is what will work best for our students. In order to send our students to other schools, we need to have a 'Superintendent's Agreement'.

Jeff Bickford said, in order to get the 55% of funding from the State, we need to have at least 105 students, but we only have about 68-69, so that's why we need to have the RSU2. Otherwise, we would not qualify for the 55% funding. Also, 69% of real estate taxes goes to education. He added that there are various scenarios that could be discussed. What would be the return for the cost and the benefits. Some disadvantages to our students going to Hall-Dale M/H at 6th grade and trying to get accepted in the environment as late comers in extracurricular, etc. is a concern. If we send out 5th graders to HDMHS, then we have to find a way to justify the money we are spending for having less students at DES. Josh Atkinson said perhaps we should consider bringing our 6th graders back to DES.

Mrs. Atkinson commented that we lose superintendents quite frequently and we end up paying them for a few months after they have left. She questioned if we could put a clause that we pay the for only two (2) weeks after they leave. Jeff said these are questions that need to be addressed. Jeff B. said we already dealt with a similar situation of a superintendent being out on a health issue and then not coming back, but we still had to pay due to the contract, plus look for another superintendent and work on a contract for that person. If we had some type of clause, it would help to reduce our debt.

Josh Atkinson mentioned that we should also have clarifying mission statements. Lisa said that we did. It stated our commitment to our students and to the people of this town to do what would be best for our future. Jeff B. mentioned that many times in these groups, it's the same people who are involved or who attend the meetings to know what's going on. This happens a lot, including with the School Board meetings which is sad because it is the biggest and most important issue we have.

Lisa asked if it would be possible to do meetings through Zoom as well. Leah said we should be able to. Lisa added that it might be a good way to get more people involved.

Peter motioned to adjourn the meeting; Lisa second. So voted at 6:55 p.m. Leah will get information out as to day and time for upcoming meetings via email.

Shari Lilly - Recording Secretary