

**Dresden Education Exploratory Committee**  
**Minutes of March 27, 2023**

Present - Leah Bickford (Chair), Lisa Hewitt (Vice Chair), Gary Blau, Cindy Moeller, Peter Elvin, Reid Anderson, Erica & Josh Atkinson.

Others - Scott Silverman (committee applicant) and Shari Lilly (secretary).

1.) *Leah* called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. noting that we do have a quorum present.

2.) *Public Comments* - None.

3.) *Approval of Minutes* - We will need to vote on both February 20 and March 13 minutes. Lisa motioned to approve the minutes from both dates; Leah seconded and the motion passed by a show of hands.

4.) *Old Business* - Members have been able to review the questions submitted by Lisa & Leah. We have also added the ones presented by Erica Atkinson. We discussed the tuition-based questions. Erica & Josh will work on those.

Reid Anderson will work on the organizational structure. Now that we have the questions, Reid said he can begin working on that right away.

5.) *New Business* - Leah told the group that, due to various commitments, Gary Blau has decided to resign as a committee member, but will still be attending meetings whenever he is available. Gary was partnered on the tuition-based schools.

Leah has added Erica's questions to the Google Doc; has taken out 'quality of education' as Scott suggested. It now just says 'education'.

Leah added Erica's initials (E.A.) to the questions she submitted. The hope is to finalize the questions so we will have all the same ones for each avenue. Lisa asked if we are going to ask all of those or compress them when we talk to the Superintendents? Reid said he will compress them. Lisa said they will need them next week when they have their meeting with the Superintendent. Reid thought we were reaching out to Wiscasset and Richmond to find out what their procedure was for leaving the RSU. Leah explained that it was discussed at the last meeting to clarify what the purpose of this group is, which is to find the best avenue for us. Reid said these are questions we can put to them and get their responses to compare to the other schools.

Scott corrected the wording of question #4 under Food Services. ('Does' should be 'do'.)

Everyone agrees Erica has submitted great questions. Erica added that we should have the same questions for each school, so we should make sure we have them compiled as a document for everyone to use. Gary said many of them are either yes or no. We don't want to pick and choose, but have them all the same. He said a 'survey monkey' would be a good way to get the information and have it more statistically solid. Reid said they may not have all the answers. Erica mentioned that perhaps Richmond isn't really ready to answer our questions as they are just getting out of the RSU this year. Lisa said she wants to keep the meeting with the Superintendent since the Superintendent has made the time for us. Gary said the survey monkey would give us information and save a lot of time. Lisa said the Superintendent may be able to give us a feel for what is felt about the school. Lisa offered to contact the Superintendent to postpone if the members feel she

should. At this time, we'll hold off until after Cindy gives her report.

*Tuition-based* - We don't have any information at this time. Scott asked what is considered tuition-based schools? Reid explained it is mainly schools who need to send their students to a different school because they don't have a school in their town for the grades, but will need to pay tuition to the other school and have a Superintendent's agreement.

*Lisa & Leah* - Morse & Gardiner - As previously mentioned, Lisa has a meeting set for April 04th unless the group wants to hold off.

*Cindy* - Has presented everyone with a report from her meeting with Rick Amero, Superintendent for RSU2. (This doesn't factor in homeschooling.) Mr. Amero gave a breakdown of the number of students, including the projection for next year. Cindy also had information as to the possibility of bringing students back to Dresden or going to Richmond. Also, have to take into consideration what we pay for teachers, staff, bussing, etc.

*NOTE: Cindy's report is on file for public information.*

Erica said they do combine some of the classes, depending on how many students there are. We have six (6) teachers for seven (7) grades. Scott asked how many Tech teachers. Erica explained how some are doing more than one purpose. Cindy then gave her thoughts as to what, as a parent, she feels is a problem as far as having only a few students. Erica said they?

Cindy noted that we don't have a Principal. Erica wanted everyone to know that we usually do have one. Cindy added that, at the meeting, she was told that there is an 'Administrative Official' that comes to the school to fill in. Josh said that even in the 80's we had combined classes, so it really isn't something new. Gary added that these days are challenging for everyone with the changes that even our students face. Cindy said we do have a lot of kids that go to Richmond.

*Reid asked about truancy/chronic absenteeism* - Cindy said she looked at that too. Reid noted that ten (10) days is the limit. He said it could be excused for 10% of the school year regardless if it's excused or unexcused. Erica said we should add that as one of our questions. Cindy also added that sometimes they will suspend kids for getting into trouble, but she feels it would be better to find an alternative instead of suspension, as sometimes that will bring in DHHS to see if there is an issue that's causing the child's actions. Reid said perhaps find out if there is a reason why the student is absent as it could be something that can be remedied. Perhaps we should research about *chronic absenteeism*. Erica said that looking at their grades could also be reflected by the amount of absenteeism. She mentioned that snow days and no power can be causes of why students don't come to school. Reid noted that 28% of Maine students are absent in any given year.

Leah thanked Cindy for the really detailed report. It was said that the future of DES is not looking favorable. The RSU could say if we want to keep our school, we would have to fund it. Once they get past 5th grade, we probably wouldn't have a choice as to where we would send our students. The RSU would make that decision. Reid asked, if you close the school what affect would it have on the town.

Gary asked if the RSU has closed any schools? Erica replied that Hall-Dale built a new one and so did Monmouth, but no schools were closed. Reid explained how his school district has numerous elementary schools that go to grade 8, but all the high school students go to Lincoln Academy. The schools have their own staffs and boards. Lisa asked Cindy if she had heard any indication that RSU may plan to close DES. Cindy said there had been some discussion in the past. It's just a matter of how many students and then preparing for the correct amount of teachers, etc.

Cindy was curious, if she came into town with five (5) children who all wanted to go to different schools, how would that be handled?

Erica mentioned the cost for the budget of \$1.5M and a lot goes for Spec. Ed. She said it would

increase by \$500K.

Lisa asked Reid if he has information on any schools that closed due to the lack of students. Reid said he can check into that. Also, he can check on the voucher schools.

**5.3** - Reid said all the questions can be combined into a Google Doc. Lisa asked if we can get notifications when something is put on Google Docs. Leah will see if she can do that.

*Structure* will be to find out our options and gather models; plus getting the information down. Reid will try to have as much as possible for the next meeting.

**Add to the meeting** - Lisa said we should discuss Scott's approval. Our charter does say nine (9) members and as Gary is leaving, we will put Scott's name before the Select Board for their appointment.

Cindy would like to have a representative from DOE to a meeting. Also to see what happens when a school is closed; what are the effects on the property values if the school has closed.

**Our next meetings will be on Monday, April 10 & April 24 at 6 p.m. in Bridge Academy Library.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Shari Lilly