

RSU Exploratory and Review Committee
Meeting minutes of September 16, 2021

Present - Jeffrey Pierce (Chairman), Kathryn Marseglia (School Board representative for Dresden), Gary Blau (Budget Review member), Lisa Hewitt (Resident-at-Large & Board Secretary).

Others - Residents - Lindsey Chasteen, Holly Morgan, Amanda Pendleton, and Dale Hinote. Emily Duggan (KJ News) and Shari Lilly (Recording Secretary).

The meeting was opened at 6 p.m. Whereas we have resident attendance, Jeff asked the Committee members to introduce themselves stating their community involvement for the group.

Jeff began by stating that the purpose of this committee is to research and present information, data and facts to the townspeople as to the continuation with the RSU2 or if it would be in the best interest of our students and townspeople to withdraw seeking other options. He continued by explaining that this is a public meeting - not a public hearing. Therefore, the Committee will be going through the agenda items then providing a Q & A after each article.

Jeff noted, for the record, that two (2) members are absent - both being Resident-at-Large. \ At the last meeting, using a comparison from another committee, members were asked to compile by-laws that would be best suited to this committee. Once the by-laws are adopted by this Committee and Select Board, they will be on file at the Town Office. Lisa suggested that the group go through each suggested by-law, concluded with a vote so that we do not keep going around further.

The Recording Secretary provided copies of the suggested by-laws submitted by both Karen Moody and Lisa Hewitt.

A - Authorization - This by-law references that seven (7) members are appointed by the Select Board and serve as an advisory committee to the Select Board providing information in regard to dissemination to the residents of Dresden.

Vote - 4 - 0. Approved by all those present and voting. (three absent).

B - 1.) Membership - By-law indicates members would be one from the Dresden RSU2 School Committee, one from the Budget Review Committee, one from the Dresden Planning Board, and three Resident-at-Large members. Jeff noted that it was planned to include a Select Board member, but Lisa Hewitt noted that, as the group is appointed by and overseen by the Select Board, they should not be a member. After discussion, it was decided to have a 4th Resident-at-Large to complete the seven (7) member committee. Dale Hinote offered to join the group as he has educational and town experience. Jeff told him he could go to the town office to get an application. With nothing further on this, the vote was all in favor of the update to this bylaw.

2.) Three year term. (Approved by show of hands.)

3.) Vacancies will be immediately filled by appointment through the Select Board. (Approved.)

C - Purpose - This bylaw states the Committee serves to review options to best represent the needs of the Dresden community, the children in the public education system, current and

future, ~~and the taxpaying citizens~~. It was voted to remove the last part.

D - Organization - #3 - Change the word '**Scribe**' to Recording Secretary for the keeping of records and notes.

#4 - Change the wording of **Recording** Secretary to Board Secretary to serve as Chairman in the absence of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. (Approved by all).

#5 & 6 - approved by all.

#7 - Meeting schedule - Meetings to be held on the **third** Thursday of the month at **6** p.m.

#8 & 9 - regarding cancellations and special meetings were approved as written.

#10 - Jeff requested to add the following for absenteeism. **Missing three (3) meetings will be cause for dismissal from this committee.** This was approved by a show of hands from all those present and voting.

We will have copies made up to be signed, dated and submitted to the Select Board for their approval.

The agenda includes a request from some residents who have asked if it would be possible for Zoom meetings. We will need to get more information on how to do that. We'll have to check with the Select Board/Town Administrator to see if this would be something we can do in the future. Lisa said that the town is purchasing some new laptops for the office and perhaps we would be able to use one of those for the Zoom meetings. She will check on this. However, it will be a 'work-in-progress'. She'll have more information for the next meeting.

The minutes will be posted on the Town of Dresden Website once they have been approved by the Committee members. It was decided to email the minutes to each member for their review and approval in order to expedite getting them out to the public and on the town website. There will be copies available at the town office. We will NOT post on Facebook.

Data Research & Assignments - Gary Blau is still working on the number of students and cost-per-student. Kathryn noted that we had sent our students to Hall-Dale in the beginning before it became an RSU. Then with the change we had to provide a percentage of students per the contract developed by the RSU2. The conception for the RSU2 began in 2010. Gary added that he is looking to get information on the number of students per grade and the student per-year cost. Kathryn noted that, right now, we have 73 students in the elementary. She added that there was a lot of information gathered through the first exploratory committee back in 2015. Jeff said yes, but we didn't get all the student numbers and costs. Lisa Hewitt suggested that the group also get the number of homeschoolers. Resident Dale Hinote suggested contacting the Department of Education who would be able to provide the numbers we are needing. Also, mentioned was that with tuition students, you very often have to have a 'Superintendents Agreement'. Resident Holly Morgan said that Superintendent's Agreement & Tuition are different. With a Superintendent's Agreement, they can say no unexpectedly and our students are out, but with tuition you are guaranteed your student will be accepted. Kathryn mentioned that it is easier to go to other schools within the RSU and the transition is smoother. Lisa asked if we want to wait for Gary's information. Jeff said we do have copies of the previous contractual agreement. Lisa said it is from 2015-2016, but Kathryn added that it hasn't changed over the years. Kathryn will try to get updated information.

Also discussed the 'merit status' for each school which is very important. Kathryn said the RSU has changed the system in the last five (5) years, but that information should be on their website.

Jeff suggested we use the former questionnaire to help gather information. Kathryn noted

that Jeff was referring to the State of Maine's 'classification system' for each school. Years ago, schools were "graded" by the State according to test scores and other criteria: A, B, C etc. Maine DOE has changed (within the last 5(?) years, how schools are classified: Tiers instead of grades. The State's system used to determine the Tiers is different from what they used in years past. The criteria used to determine each school's Tier, is available on the DOE website.

Kathryn will get what information she can. Resident Amanda Pendleton asked if there was another town vote besides the raising of bonds for the RSU2. The answer was yes and Lisa will check for any information at the town office in regards to any voting. Dale Hinote added that if we went back to the non-RSU system, our students could go to any school through the state approval tuition system. We can see what is available for secondary school students. Jeff said that once we get the information we can get into other things further. First, we need to get an updated contractual agreement to review.

Lisa will contact West Bath school to see how they pulled out of RSU1 a number of years ago. Jeff has been trying to contact someone from the Richmond School who has been working on their proposed withdrawal plan which was accepted by the DOE, but lost during the regular voting system. He'll have someone at the next meeting. It was also mentioned that a third school is considering withdrawal from RSU2. Jeff said that as three out of five schools are considering a withdrawal, perhaps a collaboration would be a good idea.

Jeff asked Lisa to get an actual copy of the DOE criteria for withdrawal. Also, we can check with Richmond Town Office to ask if we can get their withdrawal information. We will also need to check state statutes.

Emily Duggan (for the KJ Newspaper) asked if we have developed a petition. Jeff said no because it was a vote of the townspeople to do an exploratory review.

Lisa offered to help Kathryn if she needs it.

Jeff said all the information we gather will go into a master folder.

We have recently gotten copies from the State of Maine Department of Education providing the 2021 Elementary Tuition Rates which the recording secretary has supplied to all members via email for review.

Holly Morgan asked if any towns in Maine of the same size as ours has withdrawn from their RSUs. Jeff said yes, Georgetown, West Bath and a few other of the smaller towns.

With no further discussions, Gary made a motion to adjourn; Lisa seconded the motion which passed unanimously by a show of hands from those members present and voting at 7:20 p.m.

Recap - Kathryn & Lisa will gather information for the Contractual Agreement and any numbers.

Jeff will contact Richmond for their information from their withdrawal plan and request a representative to attend our next meeting.

Gary will continue gathering statistics on student numbers and cost-per-student.

Lisa will get information from West Bath School and Georgetown.

Next meeting will be Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Pownalborough Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Shari Lilly (recording secretary)