

Sudbury Public Schools
School Committee Workshop Minutes
November 14, 2017 6:00 PM
Ephraim Curtis Middle School Auditorium

Members Present:

Christine Hogan, Chair
Margaret Helon
Lisa Kouchakdjian
Lucie St. George

Member Absent:

Richard Tinsley, Vice Chair

Also Present:

Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Kim Swain, Assistant Superintendent
Don Sawyer, Director of Business and Finance
Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of MASC

Call to Order

Chair Christine Hogan opened the session at 6:03 PM

1. **Presentation of District Organization Options** – Glenn Koocher
Mr. Koocher presented on the different structures available. He noted in a regionalization structure, there is not necessarily a cost savings unless a school is closed, but this is most likely not an option in a district as large as ours.

The options available are:

1. Status Quo
2. Regionalization
3. Shared/Union Superintendent

Mr. Koocher stated a shared superintendency is the same as a union superintendency. The individual school committees often decide union agreements, and the law allows flexibility with regard to what districts can share.

Mr. Koocher said you could create a superintendency union structure where two districts agree to share a superintendent as well as other collaborative services you might wish to engage in. He cited Williamstown and Lansborough Elementary and Mount Greylock Regional High School as they have separate school districts under a central union.

Mr. Koocher said a complication is districts do not want to relinquish elemental control. If within a region there is a decision to unify as a single school district after going through the planning process, all parties must to agree to unionize and develop a new

regional agreement. At that point you would have a new district, which would be considered an independent municipality and school budget. The towns would each need 2/3-vote approval.

By special agreement other services can be combined without fully combining districts. These include, but are not limited to, special education, personnel, after school programs and transportation. The key here is you retain local municipal control over your own district.

For some districts, gaining maximum efficiency is a primary factor in considering unionizing and/or regionalizing.

Mr. Koocher stated that a prime advantage to regionalize is state reimbursement and went on to say that transportation costs in regionalized districts currently receive 70% reimbursement.

Ms. Hogan asked if that is limited to the high schools, and Mr. Koocher said it includes all grades in the regionalized district.

In order to move forward with regionalization, a Regional Planning Committee would need to propose a regional school district agreement. As a singular committee, we (SPSC) would need other districts on board.

Ms. Kouchakdjian noted she has done research on this topic and referred to the Acton Boxborough configuration.

Mr. Koocher pointed to Concord Carlisle as a more relevant comparison for us to use. There, Carlisle has a separate K-8 district but combines with Concord for high school and Concord is under one superintendent for K-12. This superintendent is shared with Carlisle only for 9-12.

Mr. Koocher referenced other districts as well, including Somerset-Berkley, Hampden-Wilbraham.

Mr. Koocher stated shared superintendent is a first step towards regionalization.

Next discussed was the question of what goals could be achieved combined with benefits and obstacles.

Mr. Koocher pointed to a possible benefit for Sudbury in shared/union/regional, as residents of Sudbury would be the guardians and ensure there is equilibrium between what is spent and what is raised which is how a district runs most efficiently.

Ms. Hogan invited elected officials including BOS Members and BOS liaisons to SPS Dan Carty and Susan Iuliano to ask questions or comment, as well as the other FinCom and BOS members as well as LPS and SPS staff present if they so choose.

Susan Iuliano asked about intermunicipal agreement between town of Sudbury and LS to share staff. She asked whether a completely shared administrative system is more complicated because there are too many details. Additionally, if we were to share special education operations, while we may work out protocols, she raised concerns if we were to open up to multiple town agreement.

Mr. Koocher stated some positions could be shared including special education. He also pointed to the two collective bargaining agreements, which makes it more plausible.

Maggie Helon stated we have to set our goals and determine what do we want for our district. If it is curriculum alignment, that could be addressed by mandating meetings. Dr. Wilson stated we currently meet and collaborate with LS.

Ms. Helon stated her concern as an educator is when sharing positions and sharing contracts, eventually there will be personnel issues.

Dan Carty inquired about timelines and asked if shared superintendent could happen faster than full regionalization. He also asked whether there is any precedent for towns to use a shared superintendent as a stepping-stone to fully regionalizing.

Mr. Koocher stated shared superintendency is often a first step in the process and stated it is encouraged as a “first or second date in the marriage of multiple unions.”

Mr. Koocher pointed to Somerset-Berkley as an example, where they each recognized union as a good first step. They had been separate towns, which combined at the high school.

Mr. Carty asked if Sudbury moved forward with shared superintendent, would that decision be binding.

Mr. Koocher stated that if Sudbury decided at some point down the road they preferred to no longer be unionized, they could undo. He stated further there is the formation of a union school committee that exists for the purpose of electing the superintendent. Each party in that configuration, regardless of size, has three votes.

Mr. Koocher stated they have had a lot of experience with this kind of work.

2. Review Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Application

Mr. Sawyer stated he is working on the grant application and will meet the November 16 deadline for submission.

3 Review Action Taken during October 6 Meeting

Ms. Hogan asked if the Committee wished to move forward with the superintendent search process, and whether we wish to move forward with reconsidering our previous votes regarding interim versus permanent search.

Lisa Kouchakdjian thinks we should just continue the process. Concerned there is no position from LS on this and concerned about waiting around for another committee to determine what we need to do. There is no reason why we cannot continue dialogue of shared, union, regionalized.... Ms. Kouchakdjian thinks this is work a subcommittee should do. She does not want us to rush and make a decision we will regret.

Ms. Helon stated this is a tough decision to make and to decide what we are doing. She has read through quite a bit of the material but not all of it. She would like to bring a permanent superintendent here. She reiterated her earlier question as to what the goal was here.

Ms. Hogan responded Ms. Helon put forth a great question. To simplify it, for Ms. Hogan personally, the goal is academic excellence. She stated even while SPS is wonderful, we can always be improved and the Committee owes it to the students and people of Sudbury to examine current structures and identify areas of improvement. She stated she does not see a downside to looking into current structures and operations to identify strengths and areas of improvement, as the ultimate end goal is academic excellence.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Hogan asked for a motion to rescind the vote of October 6 to explore options with regard to district level organization within the Town of Sudbury pending positive affirmation from Lincoln School Committee and LS School Committee. There has been no movement from either Committee.

Motion: Maggie Helon moved to rescind the vote from October 6.

Lucie St. George seconded

Vote: 3-0-1. Lisa Kouchakdjian abstained because she was unclear. Motion passes.

4. Action Steps as a Result of Committee's Direction

5. Superintendent Search

Motion: Maggie Helon moved to rescind the vote to move forward with a search for an interim superintendent.

Lucie St. George seconded

Vote: 4-0. Motion passes.

Motion: Maggie Helon made motion to move forward with search for permanent superintendent for SPS.

Lucie St. George seconded

Vote: 4-0. Motion passes.

The Committee reviewed proposals for services for search firm from Collins, MASC and NESDEC. Dr. Wilson pointed out MASC is unable to actively recruit as the districts are all member towns. The Committee discussed and came to consensus MASC would not be a good fit for the district. Lisa Kouchakdjian mentioned concerns regarding NESDEC citing the Strategic Planning Process.

Ms. St. George stated NESDEC had worked well in the past and Susan Iuliano came forward to give her feedback.

Collins is new to the Committee and there was discussion about the benefits specifically their vast array of services and particularly what SPS could gain from using them not just for this search, but also looking at our overall structure and efficiencies. The application for the Efficiency and Regionalization grant was cited. Concerns for the Committee were around Collins' limited experience in this area, whereas NESDEC has a lot of experience.

The Committee moved to make a final decision at an upcoming meeting. A meeting was scheduled for Friday, November 17 where a vote would be taken.

Motion to Adjourn at 7:56 PM

Motion: Lisa Kouchakdjian moved to adjourn.

Lucie St. George seconded

Vote: 4-0. Motion passes

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Hogan