

***Durham, Freeport, & Pownal
Reorganization Planning Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2008
Pownal Elementary School~Pownal***

Members Present: Fred Palmer, Tim Giddinge, Paul Schumann, John Gleason, Allan Purinton, Jennifer Kaplan, Rhonda O'Shea, Amber Snell, Cliff Ruprecht, Laurie Poissonier, Rick White

Advisors Present: Elaine Tomaszewski, Superintendent of Schools, Freeport;

Also Present: Bob Kautz, Facilitator; Cathy Messmer, Business Manager, Durham, Diane Boucher, Business Manager, Freeport/Pownal and 1 member of the public

Not Present: Sherry Dietrich, Wesley Bennett, Nelson Larkins, Shannon Welsh, Superintendent of Schools, Durham; Joe Feeney, Superintendent/Principal, Pownal

- The meeting convened at 7:01 pm.
- Bob explained the handouts given to the RPC. Mike McCormick was introduced to the group as the Facilities Consultant. It was asked if there was any sense of timeframe; the proposed timeframe to accomplish the study was 3 to 4 weeks. The idea was to have the study completed by June 30th with the High School information being completed first.
- The previous meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted with consensus.
- There were no public questions from previous meeting.
- There were no public comments or questions.
- The bill LD2323 was discussed. Bob explained the handout given out of the law was the most recent copy. It was reminded this law was an amendment to the existing law. Bob explained that on June 19 Drummond/Woodsum has scheduled another legal workshop and will be discussing the new bill. Bob stated he wished to review the law and asked members to jot down pieces of the law that may affect the RPC. The law was reviewed in entirety. It was explained the first section clarified the definition of a school administrative units. For this year only the DOE will accept an SAD budget with the 6 cost centers because of the lateness of the passage of the law. The core functions of a regional school unit were clarified. The law also does not require the penalty to be printed on the ballot of the referendum vote. The transition of powers to the regional school unit was clarified. It was asked if collective bargaining would be allowed. There was some discussion regarding contracts that expire in August 2009. It was stated there is not written language that the RSU board would be able to make those negotiations. Bob stated he would get clarification from the state. It was explained that Pownal is in negotiations currently and has taken the stature that until the RSU board is in affect they do not have the ability to negotiate contracts. Pownal will negotiate a multi-year contract which will allow the

contracts to be transferred into the RSU. The section regarding voting power was reviewed and it was suggested that Governance review and discuss the change to a 5% variance instead of a 2% variance. There were clarifications in the elections of the regional school unit board. There were clarifications explained regarding local school committees. It was explained that local school committees can raise local monies to supplement their local schools. There was clarifications written regarding title to property. There was discussion on inter-local agreements for property. It was stated the latest date to submit a plan would be December 13th. It was also stated that if a plan is submitted on time but voted down at referendum, there would still be time before the operational date of July 1, 2009 to revise the plan and have another vote for approval. It was explained that the budget validation referendum is only for school budgets and does not include a municipal appropriation. There were clarifications of who pays for tuition of school choice students and how they are charged. The section on cost sharing was reviewed. The process of budget meetings and referendum was clarified within the law. Failure to pass the budget was clarified within the law. It was explained that there can be as many referendum votes as it takes to pass the budget. There had been changes of dates for certain sections within the existing law. There was a number expansion to addition school committee members. There was clarification about school budgets. There was clarification of tuition for units who do not have elementary or secondary schools. Reports to the commissioner were clarified and dates were amended. There were amendments made to clarify mil rates. It was explained that an Alternative Organizational Structure "AOS" or an RSU will be dealt with by the DOE the same manner. The law clarified it will deal with either of them as one unit. The penalties were clarified in regards to transitional monies and consideration of school construction funding. The penalty was clarified and it would be an increased mill rate by 2% if a community chooses not to reorganize. It was explained that the funding the state does not spend on an area that does not reorganize will then be distributed to the areas that did. Alternative Organization Structures were explained and a new notice of intent should be clarified and confirmed by the state if units choose to align in this structure. AOS's have to have in their plan how they are going to consolidate their system administrations and adoption of core curriculum, school policies and collective bargaining agreements. It was explained the timeframe for adoption of collective bargaining agreements to be accomplished was 3 years for RSU, but could be longer in an AOS. It was stated the collective bargaining agreements must be agreed on by the school committees and employee representatives for consistencies. It as explained that inter-local agreements must be completed and included within the plan in order to have an AOS. An AOS also must also have a budget validation referendum and the plan must state how this will take place. The isolated rural community units were clarified and it was explained that rural is the definition given by the DOE. The referendum information was explained and dates were amended. It was explained that the State will pay for the referendum on any dates other

than June 10 or Nov. 4. It was explained there are no procedures given about units withdrawing from an RSU. There was clarification regarding SAD's who become an RSU on how they may save money by not having to change many of their information, such as on buses etc. The rest of the law was reviewed. It was explained the Commissioner will report findings and status of reorganization in November to the current Education Subcommittee. It was explained the important pieces of the law for the RPC are that the financial fixes are addressed and the later date for the referendum vote. It was asked whether or not the group felt comfortable with the explanation given on the AOS. It was explained that AOS would only be approved if they have "stamina" to get all the items needed to meet the requirements of an AOS. There are some added flexibilities but people will have to dedicate themselves to the time needed to create the agreements needed within the law. This is slightly different work than what the RPC has to do. There is a time crunch for the AOS. It was also explained that inter-local agreements must be created by attorneys and that will cost money. It was stated that some members felt frustrated that the state would "obstaclize" the process.

- There was a round-table discussion of the Plan. It was explained members should look at the notion of consolidation and whether or not the communities would choose to consolidate if the law was not in place and what would be the reasons or gain for consolidation. It was asked how people would feel about the idea of still consolidating without the constraints of the law. Bob presented some guiding questions to help with the discussion. Bob recommended a healthy discussion to understand what things would help to make some clear decisions of whether or not this is best for all communities and the future education for their students. It was explained members should discuss what things work and what things don't work and then members should be able to communicate those issues with community members. Bob recommended an open discussion. It was asked that due to the time should the discussion be carried over to the next meeting and be put first on the agenda or would the contingents like to meet and start the process now. It was asked when the RPC should review alternative proposals and how that process would be handled. It was stated that Jen Kaplan had an alternative plan and she had brought copies for review. It was asked if others had alternative plans to present and there were no others. It was explained that some members felt putting alternate plans on the table would help with discussions. The alternative plan presented has much of the work the RPC did previously and it was stated it would require minimal work. It was asked if there are other templates of other alternative plans. It was explained there are not any other examples known of. It was explained that there are two options for the RPC to consider. The first is the communities have a single RSU and the other alternative is the 3 units retain some individuality by being more like a "union". It was stated that Jen's plan gives a contrast. It was stated the alternative plan has some liquidity to students and gives a more organic approach to multiple units. It was explained that some of items need to be changed and the healthy discussion is to get outside of the constraints of the

law. There are pieces that haven't been discussed and should be put out on the table. It was stated the RPC needs to look at what's best for the communities first and then see how it would benefit the collective group. It was asked what the Finance Subcommittee's recommendations would be on this concept. It was also asked if the Finance Subcommittee was ready to make any recommendations yet. It was stated the Finance Subcommittee has almost reached a recommendation to the constraints of the law, but that Jen's plan takes the constraints of the law off the table and helps give perspective of other aspects. It was suggested the RPC spend some time discussing questions focused by the concrete alternative and then revisit the cost sharing structures within the constraints of the law. It was stated the big question is how cost sharing is going to work. It was explained it would be helpful for the Finance Subcommittee to at least discuss a few of the scenarios they are considering. The Finance Subcommittee stated they can provide more information. It was explained the alternative plan will take the Finance Subcommittee down another road. It was stated the larger group does not have a sense of all the scenarios the Finance Subcommittee is considering and the data should be presented for review. It was stated it would be good for the RPC to have a sense of the scenarios. It was stated that the Finance Subcommittee will give an overview of their discussions and then Bob will present the guiding questions for discussion of the alternative plan and cost sharing will be discussed. It was stated the Subcommittee had discussed amending cost sharing formula and it could be changed in 3 ways by either 2/3rd vote, a district referendum and then in within the new law there is a 10 percent petition scenario. It was asked for the RPC to think about all of the pieces discussed before the next meeting. It was stated there was a meeting tentatively scheduled for the following week on May 7. It was suggested the RPC meet twice a month and discuss a target end date to complete the Plan. The dates of June 1, June 15 and July 1st were discussed with no decision made. It was suggested the RPC discuss and decided on an end date next week and the close of school for the summer may be a target for a timeframe. It was stated the Freeport contingents have budget meeting on May 7th and many members would not be in attendance. After much discussion the next meeting date for the RPC was scheduled on May 14th.

- The meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted by S.Brewer 5.10.08