

***Durham, Freeport, & Pownal  
Reorganization Planning Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
May 21, 2008  
Freeport High School~Freeport***

***Members Present:*** Fred Palmer, Paul Schumann, John Gleason, Allan Purinton, Jennifer Kaplan, Rhonda O'Shea, Cliff Ruprecht, Laurie Poissonnier, Sherry Dietrich, Tim Giddinge

***Advisors Present:*** Elaine Tomaszewski, Superintendent of Schools, Freeport; Shannon Welsh, Superintendent of Schools, Durham; Joe Feeney, Superintendent/Principal, Pownal

***Also Present:*** Bob Kautz, Facilitator; Cathy Messmer, Business Manager, Durham; Diane Boucher, Business Manager, Freeport/Pownal and no members of the public

***Not Present:*** Wesley Bennett, Amber Snell, Nelson Larkins, Rick White

- The meeting convened at 7:05 pm.
- The previous meeting minutes were reviewed. A question was asked about wording on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page. Once explained by RPC Secretary there were no other questions and the minutes were accepted by consensus.
- There were no questions asked from the previous meeting.
- There were no public comments or questions.
- There was a review of how voting on any decision making could be done. The consensus process was discussed and it was asked for the RPC Secretary to research what was agreed on from the first RPC meeting.
- The Finance Subcommittee reviewed their cost sharing presentation to the entire RPC. There was an explanation of the guiding principles and how the baseline was configured. The stand alone model was explained. The key assumptions were reviewed. It was explained that state funded debt was not considered into the cost sharing model. The key assumptions were reviewed. A new piece was reviewed that was not included in the public meetings, the capital improvement expense. The amount of \$400,000 was built into the scenarios. \$80,000 of the amount would be dedicated to the high school capital improvements. There was a question about whether or not the \$400,000 was a fair amount charged to capital improvement. It was explained that is an average amount that Freeport has budgeted for in the last few years. The Scenario common ground page was discussed and which scenarios work best for the communities. Scenario 3 is the closest and Scenario 6 was the one that would be favorable to all three towns which was by valuation. It was stated it was difficult to rank the scenarios. The penalty was included within the scenarios. It was explained which scenarios are most currently still viable to the subcommittee. There was a question of why each sheet handed out was so different. It was explained that the variables for scenario 7 were incorrect when configured. It was also explained that the scenarios were compared to

the first year of stand alone model with the penalty calculation inputted. It was explained that as enrollment changes for each community, the penalty calculation changes as well and has been configured on the most updated sheet. The impact to the taxpayers was discussed. It was suggested that the mil rates for each town be presented with each scenario and compared to what is current in each town. It was explained the mil rates are just the school costs and do not include the municipal portion of the budget. It was asked if there was any sense from the Subcommittee of what should be looked at seriously. There is no consensus of the subcommittee at this point. It was asked if the hybrid scenario is just simply one more scenario. It was explained that the hybrid scenario is a spin off from the first scenario. It was based on per pupil costs with some variations in order to be fair to each community. They also took what was heard within the public meetings and tried to come up with a balance for all communities. It was stated that per pupil costs are difficult to predict for each community, but a per pupil component would adjust for the reality. It was explained that the Durham future student projection seems inflated because they were estimated by an outside source and is not what has realistically taken place in the community. It was stated the numbers were estimates. It was explained that the scenarios would base on the stand alone model and the amount being discussed was 15% of the total budget which was above EPS funds. It was stated the EPS amount for the total RSU budget was not a huge amount of money. There was some discussion about what visually looks fair to each community. It was explained that the plan was for the RPC to vote on the cost sharing recommendations at this meeting and the allotted time had been exceeded for the discussion. There was question about what is really the effect (bottom line) on the taxpayers within the community and suggested this be presented in the future as that is what community members would question.

- It was asked if the full committee could give their feedback on which scenarios seems to work for each community. It was stated there was not enough time for the committee to digest the information and come up with suggestions. There was a roundtable discussion with each contingent giving their suggestion. The suggestions were: Scenario 6 was recommended, but it was understood that this is something the full committee had said they would not approve. There was a comparison of splitting a meal bill. It was stated that Scenario 2 was close. It was stated that coming up with an agreement with just the members on the committee a consensus could be made, but it has to be able to be presented positively to the communities. There was a discussion about why Freeport contingents would not support valuation. It was explained that Freeport pays 75% of the budget with only 60% of the students attending. It was explained that scenario 7 brings some fairness to the Freeport citizens. It was explained that valuation bases property valuation with the ability to pay for educational funding. This is a principle of fairness and is being resisted by many communities. Scenarios 1 or 7 were suggested to be considered as they represent a lot of work. Scenario 1 would be supported by some with a process in place for communities to revisit the cost

sharing model within a few years of the RSU. Pownal contingents could argue that the scenarios that Freeport suggested were not saleable to their communities. Scenario 3 was discussed. It was stated that each community needed to look at what would also be saleable for all three towns. Scenario 3 was suggested which seemed the fairest for all three. Scenarios 2, 3 and 1 could be supported by some members of Pownal contingency, but they would also support the valuation if it would be saleable for Freeport. Scenarios 6 and 2 were favored by Pownal. Some members opted to just listen to the views of others. Scenarios 2, 3 and 6 would be favored by another member of Pownal. It was stated it seemed like 6 would be the fairest to all partners. It was explained that in scenario 3 it would be more difficult for Durham at 102% above the stand alone amount, but they have chosen to build a new school which the other communities were not able to weigh in on. There was some discussion of stabilizing and offering enhancement of programs and how that can be balanced with the scenarios. It was voiced that the public view was that the Freeport community wanted a savings and how could the group sell that to the communities and then also explain extra funds needed for program enhancement. Durham contingents explained that all communities need to be impacted positively. State subsidy was discussed; and the reminder of school choice was discussed. It was stated the RPC could not just look at scenarios when there are so many other variables. It was stated that Scenario 6 makes most sense and in every scenario Freeport benefits in compared to standing alone. The other communities only have a few scenarios where this is the case. It was stated that cost sharing would be a hard sell. It was explained that Durham gave up school choice on good faith to help their community spend less and not increase mils by significant amounts, but the Durham contingents understand Freeport's concerns. It was explained that Scenario 3 is a less abrasive version of Scenario 7. It was stated that as opposed to full valuation some Freeport views are that Scenario 3 could be approved by the community. There was concern that members should be able to present these ideas favorably to each of the communities. Some suggestions were made on how to present the Plan to the citizens. It was asked if it would be attractive or negative to the voters with program enhancements being the driver for consolidation and would the voters support this. It was stated it would depend on constituents. It was explained the RPC could not view just one argument. It was stated that valuation is critical to older constituents. It was stated if there is value in the communities coming together the RPC needs to reestablish those feelings within the group and build enthusiasm within the communities first. After presenting the vision the group should then discuss program enhancements. It is believed the first step should be finding value in the partnership. A Durham contingent explained that the secondary tuition dollars have been discussed with the town and their town constituents want to support program enhancements and were concerned about the other partners wanting to support them as well. Some discussion was had about the valuation base being important and shifting costs within communities. It was stated if the goal is to position the RSU to weather

expenses then valuation would be something to consider. Raising funds in each community is certainly different. Some discussion was had about the single RSU vision. There was more discussion about valuation and that it would not be fair to Freeport.

- Bob suggested that Scenarios 4 and 5 should be taken off the table as there was no support for either scenario at the moment. Scenarios 4 and 5 were eliminated for the time being.
- There was a suggestion the Finance Subcommittee have one other member from Durham and one other member from Freeport join the subcommittee and meet to discuss scenarios and have the challenge to come back with recommendations. There was discussion about the all members of the RPC being able to articulate information on cost sharing to any town. It was explained due to the holiday weekend there would be no time for the Subcommittee to meet and there was a suggestion the Subcommittee meet on Wednesday in place of the full RPC. It was suggested that others members of the RPC come and observe. It was decided the Finance Subcommittee meet on Wednesday 5/28 in Pownal by consensus. It was discussed that some changes could be made to scenarios but there does not look like there could be an agreement. There was some suggestion about what the presentation papers should provide including what the additional local money would be actually be funded and how it impacts the taxpayer.
- There was some discussion about AOS but that was tabled. Bob explained the side by side analysis needed to be reviewed regarding AOS/consolidation. It was asked for the committee to review by the next full meeting and it was requested if there was additional information needed or questions/suggestions to email Bob as well as any items to consider for the Finance Subcommittee.
- Bob stated members should plan on meeting next Wednesday in Pownal to observe the Finance Subcommittee's work and then the following Wednesday would be a full RPC meeting with hopefully some recommendations on cost sharing.
- Bob explained the proposed timeline and stated if the RPC planned a referendum vote in November and it was voted down by the communities the reality is there would only be a month and half to review the plan and resubmit to have a plan approved before penalties. There were suggested deadlines to finish the Plan by Sept. 12 or Sept. 22 for a referendum vote, but cost sharing will need to be decided on by proposed RPC deadline of July 2. It was stated that if the RPC considered proposing an AOS this work could not realistically be completed by July 2. It was explained that meetings will have to be held over the summer and deadlines would need to be extended which would give less time in case of a no vote at referendum. AOS was discussed briefly and would be discussed again at the next full RPC meeting.
- The meeting adjourned at 9:05pm

Respectfully submitted by S.Brewer 5.23.08