

***Durham, Freeport, & Pownal  
Reorganization Planning Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
June 25, 2008  
Durham Elementary School~Durham***

***Members Present:*** Paul Schumann, Allan Purinton, Jennifer Kaplan, Laurie Poissonnier, Sherry Dietrich, Rick White, Cliff Ruprecht, Amber Snell, Wesley Bennett, Fred Palmer, Rhonda O'Shea, Tim Giddinge, John Gleason, Nelson Larkins

***Advisors Present:*** Shannon Welsh, Superintendent of Schools, Durham; Diane Boucher, Business Manager, Freeport/Pownal; Elaine Tomaszewski, Superintendent of Schools, Freeport

***Also Present:*** Bob Kautz, Facilitator; Cathy Messmer, Business Manager, Durham and 4 members of the public

***Not Present:*** Joe Feeney, Superintendent/Principal, Pownal

- The meeting convened at 7:02 pm.
- The previous meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted.
- There were no questions asked from the previous meeting.
- There was one public question if the RPC would be voting on the submission of the Plan. It was explained the vote was slated on the agenda. It was asked if the Facilities Study was available and it was made available to the public members. The public comment stated that it was hoped the committee had a good feeling of what the Plan's information is and that the committee members were educated and able to get the information out to public.
- The Facilities study was discussed. It was explained the report given to the committee was only the portion of the full facilities study that pertains to Freeport High School. Mike McCormick was present to give an overview of the study. He stated the report was a draft and may not change but there are possibilities of changes. They are comfortable that Freeport can accommodate 650-700 students. Mike explained some of their considerations such as student/teacher ratios, occupancy loads within classrooms, program offerings. It was explained that potential programming considerations were not factored in at this time as well as Special Education programming. Mike explained some of the calculations used to factor into the facilities study. There were questions regarding the study. It was asked if the number of students take into account the increase of additional programs. It was explained possible program offerings were not supplied and the company had to limit the work to the here and now. It was explained that there are possibilities of space reconfiguring and it was stated the area that houses Industrial Arts is not being used efficiently and could be looked at differently. It was asked if the study calculated the entire amount of students (around 200) in fluxing into classrooms with the student ratio per class. It was explained

the study included the total number of students in fluxing and the question relating to the space was the figures used by the study were there are 36 typical classrooms and using a 1/20 student ratio would give an estimate of 720 students. If the ratio was changed to 15/1 this would allow for 540 students. It was explained a preliminary study was done for the Education Subcommittee by the Administrators and at timeframes throughout a normal day Freeport High School has 6 to 7 classrooms empty this year. It was asked why Freeport High has a class attending in a modular building if this was the case. It was explained the class is a non-traditional graduating class. It was stated the findings are based on adequate instruction standards and it was asked on what factors those are based. It was explained the study used the DOE square foot adequacy standards. It was stated the State of Maine adjusted the standards to their specifications and they do periodically change. It was asked if the adequate standard was based at the minimum amount. It was stated that adequacy is aligned with Maine Learning Results and doesn't take student ratio into consideration. It was stated these standards were used for the new Durham Elementary School. It was explained that core educational spaces are considered important by DOE. Gross and net spaces were discussed and what the State would fund. It was asked if there was an assumption that Freeport would have a 20/1 student ratio in their classrooms. It was stated this was a methodology and a general ratio of 20 students per class is usually configured. It was explained the study could accommodate whatever ratio that was needed. There was a discussion about the portable classroom being used currently and why it was not considered within the study. It was explained using the portable classroom was local decision and there were a combination of factors of why it was used. There was a discussion on appropriate space for those students and why the portable was there. It was explained the students in the portable are counted in the total enrollment. There was much discussion on students and reconfiguration of classrooms. It was stated the study did not show how well the building is being utilized at this point and more work needs to be accomplished before the study is complete. The lunch room capacity was discussed and the fact that it can not adequately house all students now. There was discussion on how many classrooms and some members wanted clarification on numbers. A concern of having 15/1 ratio was voiced and that there would not be enough traditional classrooms at the peak year. It was explained there were two sets of data used to compile the projections; one was from the district and one was from McCormick. There was some discussion with phasing in students. McCormick's data was assuming all students would be attending the first year of consolidation. Their numbers were also not assuming students were in Music, Art, etc. Vocational students were also not included. It was explained Freeport School philosophy was a 15/1 student ratio. It was stated that there is not room now for both Band and Chorus within the Music program. One class is teaching on the stage at this point. It was explained that McCormick has not completed adequacy of space yet. It was asked if the 36 core classes included the Cafeteria, locker rooms, Music, etc. It was explained those areas

are not included. It was stated Mike was not sure if the Industrial Arts area was included but that it probably counted as only one space and could be reconfigured as the space was not being used adequately. It was asked what number of students attended Voc and the answer given was 40-50 students per year; half a day. It was asked where those students eat lunch and the answer was at Freeport High. It was stated this study will help the group make some decisions with this plan but it did not drill down details currently. It was asked with the study as it states now if there is adequate space to move forward. The answer was yes. It was stated that changes always take place and adequacy will change with them. It was asked if adequacy would be done for the current year's programs and if provided with projected programs the study could also be completed. It was stated there is no reliable data that class sizes under 22 are more productive. It was asked if this data contributed in the report and the answer was no. It was stated that local communities should make the decision of student ratios but there is no reliable research to suggest there is a difference between having 15 or 20 students. There was some discussion regarding student ratio research and teaching practices and that Freeport High School was trying to address both. It was asked if it is safe to say adequate square footage is based on the same factors as what the essential programs and services are. It was explained that adequate square footage is based on Maine Learning Results. The discussion was wrapped up.

- The next item on the agenda was the discussion of the Plan and a vote of submittal to the School Committees. Bob discussed the responsibility of the RPC and what will happen after the Plan is voted on. It was suggested the committee hear the feelings on the Plan from each member and the need to think about if not this, then what. The committee went with a round table discussion of their thoughts. It was stated the Plan had been put together responsibly. There were many difficult decisions made and consolidation has to be a benefit to all three districts and a step forward educationally. It was agreed the cost savings are not there immediately but consolidation does offer the opportunity to do more. The Education Subcommittees' views were discussed. It was stated the work force will need to be adjusted to include a Curriculum Coordinator and Literacy and Math Specialists and all three communities need to make that commitment financially. There was disagreement as to whether all of the changes could be made without some changes to the physical structure in the High School. There was some discussion on the high school part of the facilities study. It was stated that new students can stabilize the programs currently and help offer more programs. It was stated that all three towns needed to be willing to commit to the upgrades to allow the RSU to grow. It was stated the night the RPC voted on cost sharing the votes were not unanimous. It was stated that as a group the RPC is really going to need put this to the communities positively. It was stated some members wanted to have the parking lot discussion or what do we really think and what are we going to do about it. Some people have not made up their minds yet but would like to see it work. It was stated that a form of consolidation is needed. There were concerns regarding cost sharing and the

concept of consolidation. It is public information that only 5 plans have been approved by the Commissioner. There was discussion on the plans that have been approved. Alternative plans by others were discussed. It was asked why the group was rushing. It was asked for the committee to really look at the Plan and understand it and then have voters view the information ahead of time and vote in November. It was stated that in the summer months voters are not paying as much attention. It was stated the group needed to send the best plan to the voters. It was explained the committee worked within the law for the best plan. Some would have liked to have developed an alternative plan. It was stated that all municipalities will find issues within the Plan they do not agree with. It was up to the group to send the Plan to the voters or not but they should not make predictions. It was stated that some members have been looking at the consolidation from different perspectives and they would not do anything differently than what has been accomplished by this group. It was stated this group has done the best they could. It was stated that all three communities have made compromises. Some members were happy with the Plan. It was stated this was the best plan developed in the process by consensus. It was not a perfect plan as there is an imperfect process. We will not achieve what is needed. It was stated this committee had done very little within the Plan that isn't subject to change. It was stated there were very few items that were controversial on this consolidation; only different views. It was stated there was a fair amount of substantial agreement. It was felt there is not a better opportunity for the three communities and it is time to put this in hands of the voters. It was stated the group could wait to send to the voters until November but then the board would come in very late and be behind. It is believed that the board needs sufficient time to succeed. It was stated at some point that all sides have come to the table under duress. It was stated that Freeport and Pownal were heading in this direction of consolidation. It was explained that there are no objections to provide for funding for employees and programming and all communities have committed to enhancing their programming. It was stated all members may have questioned at some point if the group did the best thing but something needed to be done. It was stated that not acting is a decision and the communities can't stand still for the benefit of the children. There were some concerns about the adequacy of the high school facility and those issue need to be resolved quickly. It was stated that members of the other communities could sense the Freeport contingents' reluctance on many issues. It was stated that it comes down to the commitment to make the Plan work; not hope that it works. Passionate leadership in place is needed to make it work. It was stated this is the best opportunity for consolidation. It was stated the committee has addressed obstacles such as choice as well as cost sharing and this reflects give and take. It was explained that if the group continued to discuss the issues they would still be in the same place. It was stated the group has accomplished their objective. There is no ideal plan and if the group was looking for an ideal they would never end the process. It was stated this was a huge opportunity for the Freeport community and some Freeport contingents like the idea of

combining with Pownal and Durham. Some members were very comfortable that the group has the information needed from the facilities study and they see no reason to delay the process as there is enough information to make the decision. It was stated if there was question of supporting education then based on past history all three schools support education. It was stated that all three communities are fiscally responsible. It was explained the opportunity is here and the group needs to collectively make this a success but need to have the support, leadership and drive to make it a success. It was stated there are some real issues up in rural areas of the State. Members feel they are lucky to have this opportunity. It was stated this is a good consolidation if the communities are willing to make it work. The timeline was discussed. It was stated the group could continue to talk for hours but needed to trust the consultants and administration on facilities. It was stated there are limitations to the law and what the group could do. The school choice issue is a compromise to what is best for the RSU. It was stated there were no alternative plans discussed and most people said the Plan was the best with what the group was allowed. Local committees were discussed and it was stated there is language within the Plan to address them. It was stated the group has stated items carefully so that changes can be made. It was stated the group needs to move forward. Educationally all communities will support the offer of new programs and leadership. It was stated this is an exciting opportunity even though the entire group can not be excited about everything it does not mean that the committee won't support the decision. It was stated the committee has taken their time the last two months and essentially still have the same plan as two months ago. It was explained that everything has been done to make this happen. The plan is flexible and allows great opportunity in the three towns. It was stated that 4 months ago some members could not have supported the Plan. School choice and Durham's decision was discussed. It was stated that it is a good Plan and members believe it is the best that can be done. Some members can't see anything else that could be done to make it a better plan. It was explained that all three communities have the same goals and vision for their students and are using a lot of the same programs currently. Durham has shown faith that this is good for the town and the Plan can be supported by Durham contingents. It was stated that some felt during the discussion members were trying to convince each other this is a good plan. There was a concern that the committee would vote on whether or not they agreed to the Plan and not as a committee member they will support the Plan. It was stated that all members need to focus on the positives. It was explained that sometimes there is question of the process afterwards. It was stated if something is a priority then it will be voted on. It was stated some members hope that the information can be presented in advance so voters realize this is a priority. Durham's financial decision regarding the new elementary school was discussed. It was stated the passion regarding the support of the Plan was heard at the meeting and it is the most important thing to support each other. It was explained that expressions are shown differently and many are excited with the plan. The questions that have been raised are

not necessarily questioning the Plan. It was explained the facilities questions have been raised since October and it is important the High School continue with student/teacher ratios they have. It was explained the group wants to be reassured that they can adequately support the consolidation for educational needs of all students. It was stated the group needs to approach this cautiously and listen to Administrators and teachers as well as it does affect the learning environment. Communities need to know this will be responded to appropriately. It was stated that some ideas may need to be reconfigured and the group needs to respond flexibly. It was explained some were reassured to hear the support from other members. It was stated this was a good discussion. Chris Leighton addressed the committee and stated working together was the overall important concept. We are hearing the support this evening and this is a basis of a good foundation.

- It was asked if the committee was ready to vote on the Plan to be submitted to the School Committees. It was stated the finalized Plan needed a final review by the Attorneys. It was asked if the group should vote by written ballot. The voting process was explained and clarified that each town has 4 votes. It was asked that the members have complete clarification on what is being voted on. There was some discussion on what the question is for the vote. It was decided the committee would caucus by communities. Amber motioned to approve the Plan and submit it to the School Committees and a second was made by Fred. The communities adjourned to caucus.
- The meeting reconvened and the communities reported their votes. Durham voted yes with all 4 votes; Freeport followed with yes on all 4 votes; and Pownal concluded with all 4 votes yes. There was applause.
- The proposed timeline was discussed. It was explained that once the School Committees voted if the Plan was passed it would be sent to the Commissioner for approval. If approved by the voters there needed to be 85 days before nomination papers could be filed. It was explained in Freeport per their charter nomination papers must be filed 100 days before. There was then discussion of obtaining ballots. It was stated it looked doubtful that there would be a vote in November for the RSU board. It was stated that it needed to be decided once the plan is approved when the referendum vote would be if the school boards approve to submit the Plan. There was discussion about getting voters informed and the added responsibilities of the committee. It was explained that Durham would be voting on the Plan's submission the next evening. Freeport tentatively scheduled their vote for June 30th. Pownal would have to schedule a special meeting for the vote of submission. It was suggested the Plan be submitted to the attorneys. There was some discussion on when the committee would meet again. It was stated there would be a proposal regarding timelines sent via email for approval. It was explained that January 30<sup>th</sup> is the latest date to have a plan passed by referendum before penalties would be assessed. The timeline information continued to be discussed. It was stated the later the referendum vote is the more pressure there will be time wise. It was stated the committee would tentatively have a date for referendum in September. Bob stated he and the Superintendents will

review the legal review from the attorneys and the proposed timeline and then have some discussion with the Steering Committee and email determinations to the committee. There was some discussion about legal funds and there is still some available with Freeport as they are the fiscal agent. It was stated the committee needed to add a communication strategy to next agenda.

- The meeting adjourned at 9:26pm

Respectfully submitted by S.Brewer 7.7.08