

***Durham, Freeport, & Pownal
Reorganization Planning Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 4, 2008
Durham Elementary School~Durham***

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

Advisors Present: Elaine Tomaszewski, Superintendent of Schools, Freeport; Shannon Welsh, Superintendent of Schools, Durham

Also Present: Bob Kautz, Facilitator; Cathy Messmer, Business Manager, Durham; and no members of the public

Not Present: Cliff Ruprecht, Diane Boucher, Business Manager, Freeport/Pownal, Joe Feeney, Superintendent/Principal, Pownal, Nelson Larkins

- The meeting convened at 7:03 pm.
- The agenda was reviewed. Bob discussed a meeting he attended the previous evening. He handed out some of the information that was given at that meeting. Bob reviewed the budget approval process of an AOS from one of the handouts.
- The previous meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted by consensus.
- There were no questions asked from the previous meeting.
- There were no public comments or questions.
- Bob explained the Finance Subcommittee met the previous week. Allen reviewed the minutes of the meeting. He explained the subcommittee narrowed down the Scenarios to # 2, 3, & 6. The group leaned toward to Scenario 2 which allows the RSU to share the cost of High School and allows each community to pay for their own elementary/middle school. It was explained that Cliff Ruprecht drafted some language for cost sharing in the Plan. There was some question regarding how debt would be allocated. There was some discussion on how the debt was allocated and it was explained there was some double counting within the finance model for all of communities which would be adjusted. It was stated that the penalty configurations were made available from the State website earlier in the day. The penalty is a more current amount and there would be some difference with the finance model. It was stated the recommendation from the Finance Subcommittee would be Scenario 2 for cost sharing. It was asked if the stand alone model for Durham included the 30% for a central office structure. It was explained the models went by the community's current budget. There was some discussion about how the projections can fluctuate. Scenario 2 was reviewed again. There was a motion for the RPC to consider scenario 2 as a recommendation for cost sharing. It was seconded and there was a third. A concern was raised about the public thoughts and questions regarding

scenarios that could have been a deduction for their respective communities. There was concern regarding valuation and how it would benefit each town. It was also questioned how members would be able to persuade their towns when they are not able to convince themselves. There was discussion on what the benefits were for each town of combining. It was explained that the public would be only receiving pieces of information in just one evening. Some members of the RPC don't truly understand all of the information themselves. It was explained that this scenario was recommended to preserve the ratios for each community for the future. It was stated that the Finance Subcommittee looked for a compromise and what would benefit the entire RSU. It was explained that some in Durham feel that giving up choice was a compromise and why would they compromise again by carrying the burden financially. It was asked what the compromises from the other communities are. It was explained that Pownal also gave up choice. It was asked what the town of Freeport is compromising. It was stated that the town of Freeport believes that valuation is unfair and would not support the straight valuation scenario. It was stated this should be an issue for Freeport to direct at Augusta rather than the other communities. It was stated that after the Finance Subcommittee there were questions on clarification in scenario 2 and after receiving clarification it was stated that Durham contingents felt they can not defend the position of using scenario 2. Freeport contingents explained their compromise was that they are funding more than their share. It was explained that going per pupil would burden the town of Durham so Freeport contingents has compromised by shouldering 66% of the funding with only 60% of the students. It was stated that Freeport would still take the majority of the burden by paying 72% of the funding under Scenario 2. There was some discussion regarding the numbers affecting each town. It was asked whether or not the budget validation would direct towns to vote on the 15% for additional local funding. There was some discussion on the fact that towns do not have to vote in additional funds. Bob explained there was a motion on the table for scenario 2 to be recommended. There was a recap of what had been discussed regarding the benefits of each community at this point. There was question for clarification on scenario 2. It was explained that it was the debt that would be shared between the communities would be for the central office and high school only. It was explained the operation costs for all RSU schools would be shared but not the debt incurred before the start of the RSU. It was stated that although Durham and Pownal gave up choice as a compromise does not mean that Freeport has to compromise their beliefs on straight valuation. It was stated that Freeport is giving up control at the high school level which is significant. There was some discussion about give and take for all communities and what would be significant selling points for each community. It was stated that the majority of voters do not argue about wanting better programs and enhancements, but they do vote with their pocket books. There was a motion for the vote. There were two thumbs down for the motion of the vote. It was asked that there be more discussion before the vote of the cost sharing recommendation. There was another suggestion to vote on

the recommendation. It was explained that Freeport voters would vote down the scenario with straight valuation. There were enough members that wanted to continue the discussion of scenario 2. It was stated that members would like to get away from comparing the three communities. It was stated the presentation to the communities needs to be very simplistic and easy to understand. It was explained there are some real concerns about cost sharing and how to defend the RPC's decisions. It was stated that Pownal and Durham giving up school choice was of benefit of the RSU. It was stated that even with using straight valuation Freeport will benefit by a savings. It is believed that the majority of Freeport community members would not like to unduly burden the smaller communities. It was asked if Freeport's funding would be going down because the other two communities would be picking up central office and high school debt where Freeport has fully funded this before consolidation. It was explained that Durham would be spending the same amount they are now with Scenario 2. It was asked if there was a scenario that would explain what it would cost Freeport to stand completely alone without any students from Pownal and Durham attending their high school. It was explained that Freeport's cost would go up, but there have not been figures. It was stated it would cost them more because there is no revenue from the students coming in from Pownal and Durham. It was asked whether or not scenario 2 could be saleable by explaining why this would be of benefit the entire RSU. It was stated that all discussions came back to debt and there were concerns that Pownal and Durham contingents could not explain why Scenario 6 with a benefit to all towns was not chosen. It was stated that Scenario 2 sounds right for some Pownal members because it keeps the elementary/middle school debt within its local structure. Valuation was discussed again. Scenario 3 was discussed and how it would affect Pownal considering Freeport will not consider Scenario 6. It was reminded that Freeport was coming into the consolidation with a high school that is almost paid for. There was a discussion of what the benefits of Durham bringing in their students and its significance. There was some discussion about the commercial properties within Freeport and how this will be of benefit to the RSU. There was a motion for the RPC to vote to approve Scenario 2. There were no thumbs down, so Scenario 2 will be included in the Plan as the cost sharing mechanism.

- There was a proposal for the RPC to consider the recommendation of the Finance Subcommittee to amend the cost sharing formula as stated in the meeting minutes of the April 29th meeting. There was language drafted by Cliff Ruprecht for the cost sharing amendment. There was some discussion of what a simple majority vote would allow. The vote for the amendment was passed by consensus. The language would be included within the plan.
- There was a discussion of how the RPC will proceed. Bob explained the differences between the Plan and an AOS. Jen's proposal was discussed again. It was asked what the benefit was for the alternative structure. There was some discussion about how some feel disappointed on how the AOS has been presented by the DOE and it is felt as if it was propaganda to dissuade

communities to consider the alternatives. Jen gave her views of her proposal and what the benefits were for all three communities. It was explained most of the feeling was that local control needed to stay at the elementary/middle school level. Some of the others felt the level of discouragement regarding the presentations of AOS. The impracticality of having so many boards was discussed. It was asked if it is possible to do some of the same structures within the RSU. Some discussion was had about having an advisory committee for just K-8. Jen explained her reasoning for having local boards at the K-8 level and then some members from those boards being on the AOS/High School Board. It was stated that there would be a great need for a Curriculum Coordinator within this structure. It was stated this structure could work if it was a benefit for all communities. It was asked if some pieces of the Plan that the RPC has already completed could be transferred to an AOS Plan. It was stated that depending on the structure and what is needed some of the pieces of the current Plan may be used. It was explained the biggest hurdle with an AOS would be inter-local agreements. There was some discussion of why the AOS was passed into law and where the model originated. There was more discussion about how the AOS has been presented by the State. It was asked if the current plan could be used in the idea of an alternative plan. There was some explanation that maybe some of the language could be combined, but it would be difficult to use some pieces of the template to incorporate the spirit of an alternative structure. Bob explained there had been a change in the law and that local school committees can propose a school budget to the RSU Board and they can adopt it in its entirety or certain pieces. If the RSU accepts only certain pieces the local school board can then ask the town voters to raise the funds not accepted by the RSU Board. It was stated that management of properties that are retained by the Town must be agreed upon within an AOS by inter-local agreements.

- It was suggested the discussion of the possibility of an AOS be continued at the next meeting and it was recommended that the RPC members review the law prior to the next meeting. The RPC decided to meet on June 11th. Bob explained he would be meeting with the Superintendents at the end of the week to review the current Plan and rewrite and edit recommended language from the attorneys and then for review by the Tri-chairs as to what the RPC has currently approved. If there is a decision not to continue with the Plan it could be set aside. Bob stated he would also be reviewing other reorganization plans and bring some comparisons to the RPC. The committee was comfortable with the suggested continuation. There was discussion of a report regarding the amendments and Bob requested a copy of the report.
- The meeting adjourned at 9:14pm

Respectfully submitted by S.Brewer 6.7.08