

PUBLIC HEARING

April 12, 2016
Franklin Middle School Library

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Committee Members: Leigh Webb, Member of the Public, Susan Hallett-Cook, School Board, Scott Burns, School Board, George Dzujna, Councilor, Janet Desrochers, Member of the Public, Anthony Giunta, Councilor, David Testerman, Member of the Public

Administration: Daniel LeGallo - Superintendent, Amanda Bergquist – Business Administrator, Judi Milner – Finance Director, Elizabeth Dragon – City Manager

Others: School Board Clerk – Robyn Keane

Call to Order by David Testerman at 7:00 PM

Motion: George Dzujna motioned to approve the minutes of March 23, 2016, Leigh Webb seconded with corrections.

Approved: Unanimous

David Testerman: We have had numerous meetings since the fall. In general, I believe we have a good plan. We have the public hearing tonight, send plan to the State Board of Education and if they approve, the plan goes to city council for them to vote on it. The cost to administer Hill is \$93,000. To make up the shortfall we looked at two different methods, consolidation to save \$112,000 or reduce costs of the SAU. Part of the plan is to have options for Hill if there is a withdrawal. Options: hire principal Superintendent, area agreement, contract out services, or negotiate a contract with Franklin for services. We had a vote 4 to 3 to withdraw. 2 members of the school board and a member of the public voted no. Franklin is starting a new era and we need to focus on what is best for the Franklin students. Hill is in agreement with Newfound for 10 years.

Public Comments:

Tamara Feener: Has an attorney looked at the plan before it goes to the state board? Answer: Attorney has not looked at the plan and will not before it goes to the State Board.

Tim Dow: Why is consolidation still in the plan? Consolidation has not been agreed to by the school board and at the March 16th meeting the majority of the withdrawal committee wanted the consolidation out of the plan. Feels the consolidation should be taken out of the plan. Answer: Again we are giving an alternative to the plan. Hill is a diversion and takes up time. Withdrawal will allow the Superintendent to focus on Franklin.

Leigh Webb asked the chairman for permission to ask each committee member how they voted for the withdrawal. Leigh Webb asked this of the Chairman for the members of the public so if they wanted to ask a specific question to a specific member:

Leigh Webb	No
Scott Burns	No
Janet Desrochers	Yes

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George Dzujna	Yes
Dave Testerman	Yes
Tony Giunta	Yes
Susan Hallet-Cook	No

Jennifer Weaver: I am concerned that our Board members on the committee voted no and how does this affect our schools? The people we voted for to take care of our schools said no and the others of you are not an elected body for the school you are for the city. When is City Council going to give the schools added money and why is there another shortfall this year? Operating with less money next year as last year. Are the SAU employees going to be part time and, if not, is Franklin going to be making that up too. Where are we making adjustments for this? Is the Superintendent's salary going to be cut? What are the benefits for the students? - \$93, 000 is the cost that we lose from Hill. - There was one person that was cut and services no longer needed. Monies will be made up with consolidation or a shortfall. Looking at other areas for money. This will not impact the teachers or the students. The cuts will come from the SAU Office itself. Susan Hallett-Cook became a member of the committee at the tail end and has asked on several occasions what do the students benefit from withdrawal and has received no answers.

Cathy Viau: Is the consolidation going to be taken out now, since the board voted against it? What is the educational benefit? Answer: Will have to have a meeting on that.

Janet Desrochers made the motion not to discuss the consolidation. She explained the plan is all generic, it's just a formality. This doesn't mean the state board is going to approve it and it doesn't mean you have to go with the options. David Testerman: School Board voted to establish a committee. When the RSA took over then it was established as a withdrawal.

Greg Husband: First, withdrawal was supposed to be a study, second, the study was supposed to be done by the school board, didn't realize it would be taken away from the School board and third, I don't think the consolidation should be in the plan and there shouldn't be a vote to keep it in or not. He feels the withdrawal plan is boxing the school board in a corner. In regards to the \$14,000 for lawyers, the school has a need for different legal services than the City. The school district law firm deals only with education law. Greg is questioning the savings. He is all for working with the City Council but feels both entities have to go about it in a different way. Consolidation shouldn't be part of the plan. Answer: David Testerman: SAU withdrawal is just a group (committee) that was looking at alternatives. Once the RSA became effective this started the process of withdrawal. The RSA demands certain structured steps.

Elizabeth Dragon: There were two options, consolidation or cut positions and salaries. The City does not have the authority to make these cuts or recommendations. Part of the RSA is for the committee to come up with financial options. Hill pays approximately 8% of the Superintendent's salary. It was mentioned the committee worked together to make our schools better for the Franklin community.

Deb Brown: At a previous meeting it was stated that language was going to be added that the school board voted against the consolidation. The wording was added in the minutes. If it's going to the state board for consideration it should be part of the discussion showing our vote. I think it's important that the State Board knows how the school board voted.

Leigh Webb asked to clarify: 1. Committee to include consolidation as a possible financial alternative to addressing the shortfall. 2. \$14,000 is a legal savings as we would no longer need three attorneys. Greg

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Husband: The school board will make a decision as to whether or not to include a letter with the plan to the State Board to explain why they are in disagreement. Susan Hallett-Cook read part of RSA 169:2, the plan that is submitted has to have a fiscal and educational analysis.

Glen Feener: Franklin would be in control of themselves with the withdrawal. Savings would be once Franklin leaves SAU 18 you will not be bringing over the employees. You will be hiring a new employee, that's a savings. We could pay a superintendent less money. Amanda stated 2012 SAU audit is waiting for a signature and 2013 is ready to go. Glen Feener: As for the committee we are the legislative body, the school board brought it to us to vote and the committee is following the RSA. The Withdrawal Committee has put in a lot of time. He also mentioned the City Charter can take over the finances of the school.

Greg Husband: Regarding a history lesson, the reason why Franklin has a tax cap is a previous city council and mayor charged 1 ½ years of taxes in one year and never ever fixed it. What's happening right now the SAU and the board is trying to work with the city.

Stephanie Bendixsen. Have we looked at other cities? Answer: We have looked at other cities. George Dzujna mentioned a couple of towns were in dire trouble. They had to do something to help their children and get better control over their district. Leigh Webb: There was no direct comparison to other cities in our situations. George Dzujna money is the bottom line of everything. I hope you don't think the committee is backing the school board in a box in regards to the consolidation.

Mayor Merrifield: The figures on the spread sheet do not work well and would love to see the SAU revenues on the spreadsheet. Amanda, Bergquist indicated the reason why the two doesn't up, is there is another column which consists of indirect costs which offset some of the revenue to fund the SAU. Revenues for the SAU are from Hill, Franklin and indirect costs from grants. This is all the revenues the SAU receives.

Tamara Feener. I was on the school board and the \$14,000 attorney fees were set aside for this withdrawal committee if they needed an attorney. That's why I ~~asked~~ if asked if an attorney will review the plan before it goes to the State Board. She also mentioned the school district doesn't usually use the SAU attorney for Special Education, they use the Franklin Attorney.

Jackie Clark: questioned whether there would be a shortfall. Dan LeGallo stated Franklin needs to cut \$400,000 and is waiting for the city to give the school district's allocation for 2016/2017 school year.

Tamara Feener: Does the Superintendent have to go to Newfound? Dan stated we are still responsible for the special education students attending Newfound, yes.

Jim Roberge: SAU 18 still exists. Franklin has to establish a new SAU and will have to hire all new personnel. There is a preconceived notion that the SAU personnel will transfer over to Franklin. The new SAU will need to hire new people. Jim mentioned other districts will use one SAU for a more efficient stand point. He can't see (financially) how Franklin will able to hire the entire personnel employed in the SAU now. Jim asked what will be the benefit for the Franklin School District to withdraw from SAU 18 other than cost savings and control of its own school district. He stated he hasn't heard an answer.

Tamara Feener: Hill has said on several occasions that they will be just fine financially.

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Deb Brown: commented that the reasons for other school districts to withdraw from their SAU's were due to school boards feeling that they were not getting the individual attention they felt was needed from the Superintendent.

Janet Desrochers stated the committee was told it would be \$2,500 to set up an SAU.

Elizabeth Dragon: SAU assets are approximately \$5,000. Equipment, chairs, and software are paid for by Franklin. Greg Husband informed the committee that software is not an asset. It is a license and the software belongs to SAU 18.

Lisa Tremblay: What is the educational benefit to withdrawing? She wants people to become part of the community, buy homes and attend our schools. If there are no cost benefits for the students, it just doesn't make sense to withdraw. Tamara Feener stated the educational benefit she sees is getting our superintendent for 100%. He would have more time working with our principals, students, teachers and school board.

Cathy Viau stated Hill has never had any say over Franklin's curriculum. Hill is providing income to Franklin but has no say over education. Tamara Feener reiterated as far as Hill is concerned they tuition to Newfound and that Hill has approximately three more years in Franklin.

Greg Husband asked why we should cut our funds because we are upset that Hill went to Newfound. I don't see that.

David Testerman asked if there was any more business at this time.

Motion: Leigh Webb motioned to strike all mention of consolidation from the withdrawal plan, seconded by Scott Burns.

Discussion:

Anthony Giunta: The Committee has a Fiduciary responsibility to cover the cost savings. We are bound and working step by step per the RSA. Consolidation should be in the plan as a suggestion, as a cost savings.

Leigh Webb: Fact of the matter is this is not fait accompli. It still is in the discussion stage and he would like to take out the consolidation piece for discussion purposes.

George Dzujna: We were given the task and we have to follow the RSA.

Scott Burns: The numbers are not going to be there and I don't think we will have the savings. I don't think we should put it in plan because it isn't correct.

Anthony Giunta mentioned all the hard work that the City Finance department has done for the committee and all the hours they put in to bring forward to the Committee. George Dzujna stated Amanda Bergquist from the SAU Office has too.

Janet Desrochers feels the committee is being bullied to change the plan that will be submitted to the state board. She stated the committee did the best they could with the figures they had. This will better our City with the plan we are going to submit to the state and as stated before it's just a piece of paper right

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now. Again she feels like the committee is being bullied to change their minds. She has done her research and she agrees with Anthony Giunta and we have to include consolidation in the plan.

David Testerman let the public know that the State Board isn't the final decision. Once the State Board approves the plan it will go to the City Council for a vote.

Voting results to strike the Consolidation piece from the plan:

Leigh Webb	Yes
Scott Burns	Yes
Janet Desrochers	No
George Dzujna	No
David Testerman	No
Susan Hallett-Cook	Yes
Anthony Giunta	No

David Testerman stated the vote is 4 to 3 to keep the consolidation in the plan. Corrections and the input of the spread sheet need to be implemented before the plan can be sent to the State Board.

David Testerman thanked everyone for attending the Public hearing.

Meeting is adjourned at 8:45 PM.