

Franklin Withdrawal Planning Committee Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2016
Franklin Middle School Library

6:00 PM
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Committee Members: Leigh Webb, Member of the Public, Susan Cook, School Board, Scott Burns, School Board, George Dzujna, Councilor, Janet Desrocher, Member of the Public, Anthony Giunta, Councilor, David Testerman, Member of the Public (arrived late)

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

Others: School Board Clerk – Robyn Keane

George Dzujna asked to make a motion to begin the meeting. Leigh Webb stated the committee has not elected a vice chair. **George Dzujna nominated Leigh Webb as vice chair and Janet Desrocher seconded. No other nominations were presented.**

Call to Order by Leigh Webb at 6:10 PM, in the absence of Chair David Testerman

Public Input – NONE

Leigh Webb asked if everyone was aware of the vote at the Franklin School Board meeting to not accept consolidation. Based on this information, the only reason to withdraw is for an advantage for the City of Franklin and the students of the Franklin School District, control of curriculum and effectiveness of the Superintendent, and a financial savings to the City of Franklin. Anthony Giunta stated the benefit to the City is key and everything else is secondary. It was mentioned any shortfall should not affect our students. Susan Cook asked what is the benefit for the children if we withdraw, and what are the pros and cons? She mentioned Newport has been going through the process of withdrawal. Is Franklin thinking of looking at other school districts to merge with? Dan LeGallo stated most of the time when a school district withdraws from a town or a cooperative it's because the school has no control over their education. It is not a burden to have Hill and they are happy with what we do. Franklin has a revenue issue and we have to make up for that shortfall or it will impact the students. Leigh reiterated that the Franklin School Board voted to not consolidate, eliminating a possible solution to compensating for a loss of revenue from Hill.

Amanda Bergquist updated the committee regarding the audits. Franklin will be caught up with the audits within 2 weeks, Hill is at 2014 and 2015 and SAU is 2013. A reminder that the audits were 5 years behind when she started working for the District. This was due to a changeover of personnel and personnel only working part time. Janet Desrocher stated this is an issue. Amanda mentioned once the audits are all caught up, there will not be a problem with audits being done on time in the future. (If there is a withdrawal, there will only be one audit.)

Tony Giunta asked Elizabeth Dragon what is the cost to the city for the audits not being up to date. Elizabeth stated the city has lost their credit cards and the banks stopped loaning them

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money causing the City issues. She mentioned that the school board needs to know that the budgets are accurate and that the audits are done on time.

Amanda stated she is waiting on a response from the Department of Education with certain grants for the 11 – 12 SY. DOE needs to make sure that these grant(s) are compliant and they will approve.

It was mentioned again that the school board decided not to consolidate. Hill has a town budget and does not affect the SAU or Franklin budgets. Janet Desrocher asked if we are not charging Hill enough and maybe doing contracted services with Hill if there is a withdrawal. Dan LeGallo stated the charges to Hill are a RSA and its part of a formula.

Regarding the SAU employees all contracts end June 30th.

Leigh asked what the recommendation of this committee would be to make up this shortfall - lay off a number of employees to make up the shortfall. Elizabeth mentioned cutting salaries to the SAU employees since there will no longer be a Hill piece to their salary, SAU has two secretaries could eliminate one position and since it's one entity, only need one attorney.

March 7th is the date for recommendation to the City Council according to the adopted timeline, but Supt. LaGallo stated that there is some latitude. Committee should meet before March 7th but does not have to. It was reiterated that a complete plan to go to the City Council and then will go to the DOE if withdrawal were to be recommended. If not withdrawing letters will be sent to the Mayor and the 3 entities. Leigh Webb stated regardless of the decision it does not mean we have to close the door on withdrawal. It could happen in the future. Tony Giunta suggested that a full plan be submitted to the committee before a recommendation vote be taken. The committee will vote for or against withdrawal after the plan has been reviewed at the next meeting.

Next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 8th at 6:00 PM.

Public Input

Bob Desrocher spoke about his concerns. That the Committee should be concerned about Franklin and only Franklin. Hill School District took their students from the middle and high school the City lost \$300,000. He also mentioned part of being a business is losing jobs.

Cathy Viau asked what the educational benefits would be for withdrawing. She explained grants can't be used for just anything and cannot be used to supplant and there are specific guidelines that need to be used for these grants. Audit wise, grants have a lot of steps in order to put together an audit. She stated the SAU has done a great job with what they had to deal with to get the audits up to date.

Deb Brown explained as far as fund balances in any given year there will always be unanticipated funds, such as, staff leaving, staff coming, Special Education needs, etc. The District is not holding money and there will be a fund balance because of these variables. DOE

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has cut many staffing and that is the reason why they haven't gotten back as quickly as they should to SAU. Once that is taken care of things will be done quickly. The staff currently in place are employees at will. They are not part of a union contract.

Tony Guinta stated how frustrated it was that the school board held up City Finance for hours, without listening to them, yet he is listening to the school board member at this meeting. Janet Desrocher stated the money is most important.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.