

Minutes of the Pelham Regional School District Planning Committee

Monday, April 30th, 2018, 9:30 A.M.

Pelham Library Community Room
2 South Valley Road, Pelham, MA 01002

The meeting was called to order by Emily Marriott at 9:30 A.M. Cara Castenson moved to approve the minutes of 4/2/18 and Tom Fanning seconded, after which they were approved unanimously.

The committee then summarized the regionalization process so far, including the work of the joint Regional School District Planning Board (the Board) with Amherst, and discussed the following potential issues with regard to regionalization:

1) Consultant selection process and grant usage options

The Committee discussed the upcoming presentation by the Collins Center to the Board about its consulting work and the regionalization process. All three members were in agreement about the potential benefits of retaining the Collins Center in lieu of pursuing a longer RFP process. Tom Fanning noted, however, that while an RFP would be time-consuming, it would force the Committee to evaluate and articulate its goals.

As to the idea of dividing the grant award between separate areas of study—e.g., community engagement and financial/assessment method planning—Tom Fanning suggested discussing it further as the work proceeded, and the committee agreed.

2) Financial implications/benefits of regionalization

Emily Marriott expressed the opinion that regionalization could offer sustainability and could serve as a buffer against future negative financial pressures. Tom Fanning expressed the concern that future cost increases could overwhelm potential savings. The committee discussed, and agreed to request information about further projections of the long-term impact of regionalization and invite John Trickey to its next meeting.

3) Potential governance issues/concerns

The committee agreed that there is much to be learned about different options for the structuring of a regionalization agreement. For Pelham, the critical issues remain avoiding closure of the school and the impact of the change in school committee composition. The committee discussed, and also suggested having further conversations with the full Board about key issues for the town of Amherst, including school building usage.

As to approval of any potential regionalization agreement, Tom Fanning researched the issue and noted that it would have to be approved by ballot within 30 days of presentation to the town at a town meeting.

4) Educational issues

The committee agreed that this is the most straight-forward area of consideration, but wanted to ensure that the work of Small Schools Group currently discussing curricular innovations for Pelham School would proceed.

Tom Fanning moved to adjourn at 10:25 A.M., Cara Castenson seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Prepared by Cara Castenson.