

RSU #63 Special Board Meeting  
Date: January 7, 2019  
Location: Holden Elementary School  
Minutes

**Members Present:**

*Town of Eddington:* Rusty Gagnon and Heather Charity

*Town of Holden:* Gavin Robinson, John Hutchins, and Jennifer Newcomb

*Town of Clifton:* Linda Graban

*Superintendent of Schools:* Susan M. Smith

**Members Absent Excused:**

*Town of Eddington:* Christina McLeod

**Members Arriving Late:**

*Town of Holden:* Steven Carr, arrived at 6:38pm

**Administrator Absent Excused:**

Jake Morgan, Transportation and Facilities Director

Board Chair, Rusty Gagnon called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. A flag salute was conducted and a moment of silence was observed.

**Questions and Comments from the Public**

Ben Breadmore, Holden Town Manager, strongly urged the Board of Directors to consider the financial impact on the towns and its citizens when making their decision on the direction of RSU #63. He reminded the Board any decision to close a school requires public referendum and not many citizens were aware of the topics on the table of the Board. Deborah Hodgins, Administrative Assistant Town of Clifton, echoed Mr. Breadmore. A major increase to the towns tax mill rate would have a negative impact on the citizens of Clifton. Russell Smith, Eddington Town Manager, also echoed Mr. Breadmore. He felt firm financial numbers should be in hand before a major decision is made. He also felt the towns' mill rates would take a significant increase and the citizens of these small towns could not afford such an increase.

Rusty Gagnon, Board Chair, responded to the comments made. She advised the Board was not entering into these decisions ill-advised. They have been working toward this decision for the past 5 years. She advised the Board has been very transparent in its efforts to communicate the topics with the citizens of each town represented by RSU 63. Board meeting dates, agendas, and topics of discussion have been posted online and shared with all Town Offices. Ms. Gagnon advised the Board of Directors' first obligation is the safety and education of the students of RSU #63. The problems the District is facing will not go away by ignoring them and action is needed. The schools have major infrastructure problems that need to be addressed immediately. She hopes to have the decisions made tonight ready for public referendum in November of 2019.

Bob Harvey, Council Member for the Town of Holden, referenced a copy of the multi-page priority project list presented at the annual budget meeting. This list had multiple priority one items that he believed money had been allocated for at budget time and approved. He questioned if these items have been done or if these items were in the works to be done. Superintendent

Smith advised the money had been allocated for these projects at budget time. Some items have been completed and others are slated to be completed in the near future. Mr. Harvey felt the quotes presented by Oak Point were over-priced. He agrees the buildings need to have infrastructure work done and brought up to code for the safety of the students. However, he felt the Board should seek other quotes before agreeing to move forward.

### **New Business**

#### **Discussion regarding school infrastructure and necessary improvements:**

Ms. Gagnon opened the discussion with a review of Oak Point and Energy Systems Group (ESG) work to date. Superintendent Smith thanked ESG for staying true to their word and their financial help with fixing the roof and heating issues that recently occurred. All Board members agree the schools need infrastructure work. Ms. Newcomb referenced the priority project list presented at budget time by Jake Morgan, RSU 63 Transportation and Facilities Director. She compared the list to the report ESG provided. The ESG report is very similar to the items identified by Mr. Morgan. Ms. Newcomb felt the Board should not vote to spend money to work with ESG when the Facilities Director has identified the same issues and the money could be used to fix the issues identified. She stated Mr. Morgan has not had the money in the budget to fix the issues all at once. John Hutchins agreed with Ms. Newcomb in regard to the issues identified are similar. However, he felt the process we have been doing over the years in regard to fixing issues has not worked. We now have the same or bigger issues. Mr. Hutchins felt ESG would be of great help to the District. There was also discussion regarding the impact to town mill rates, potential energy savings, and the cost of the lease agreement. Ms. Newcomb felt very strongly the potential energy savings did not add up to a large enough amount of money to cover the cost of the lease agreement and the towns could see a significant increase to their mill rates.

Superintendent Smith advised a vote to move forward with ESG would allow ESG to provide firm numbers on specific projects. The Board could then decide which projects to move forward with in March. She agreed with the Board, the District is at a cross-road where changes need to be made. Buildings are in severe need and the piece-meal approach is not working. The advantages of moving forward with ESG are firm project costs and cost savings. Continuing with ESG would allow major work to be done on the buildings this spring and summer, energy savings would start in the fall, and the costs would be spread out over 15 years. If, in March, the Board decides not to enter into a lease agreement with ESG, the District will reimburse ESG \$100,000 for their efforts between January 7, 2019 and March 27, 2019.

Gavin Robinson made a motion with a second by Steve Carr for the Board to authorize the Superintendent to continue with Energy Systems Group ("ESG") to proceed with the development of detailed engineering drawings and cost estimates for multiple options to upgrade the Holbrook Middle School, Holden Elementary School, and Eddington Elementary School.

**Vote: 4 Approved; 3 Opposed (Jenn Newcomb, Gavin Robinson, and Linda Graban)**

#### **Discussion regarding the options presented by Oak Point (1, 2, or 3 facilities):**

Ms. Gagnon opened the discussion with a review of the Oak Point facility proposals. Ms. Newcomb stated she left the Board Workshop on December 10, 2018 thinking option one (all students on one campus at Holbrook) was not viable. She did not understand why the increase in

building space was so drastic compared to what we are currently using. Superintendent Smith advised Oak Point was using the State of Maine recommended space per grade level. Some rooms are recommended to be larger than what we currently have. Ms. Newcomb stated she also felt the cost estimates were high compared to other community new school construction or additions to their school buildings. She felt closing one school would not fix the current issues and we should be working toward the original goal of getting all students onto one campus. Ms. Gagnon stated she was very concerned with adding onto the Holbrook School due to the traffic safety concerns. All Board members agreed these traffic issues are a concern and will be a challenge. The preliminary costs were discussed. Deborah Hodgins expressed the need for firm financial numbers. The towns need to prepare for how the changes could affect the mill rates. Gavin Robinson felt the Board should bring the options to the towns before they move toward one option or another. He felt the citizens should vote on the option they feel benefits the students and towns. This will give the Board an idea on what they would financially support and the direction the Board should be moving toward. Ms. Newcomb expressed the need for a clear vision and plan. She felt the Board needs to explore option one and communicate a clear vision and financial plan. Ms. Newcomb asked Superintendent Smith if there was a timeline for the referendum process. Superintendent Smith said she would bring a timeline for the referendum voting process to the Board Meeting on January 28, 2019.

At 8:30pm a motion was made by Jenn Newcomb with a second by Linda Graban to continue the meeting past 8:30pm.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Ms. Gagnon discussed the need for the formation of a Board Ad-Hoc Committee instead of continuing the New School Community Committee. The formation of a Board Ad-Hoc Committee will be discussed further at the January 28, 2019 Board Meeting.

Gavin Robinson made a motion with a second by Heather Charity to proceed with the Board working towards one campus.

**Vote: 4 Approved; 3 Opposed (Rusty Gagnon, Steve Carr, and John Hutchins)**

#### **Adjournment**

At 8:44pm a motion was made by John Hutchins with a second by Gavin Robinson to adjourn the meeting.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Respectfully submitted by,



Susan M. Smith

RSU #63 Superintendent/Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Approved: January 28, 2019