

## **Tunbridge Selectboard Informational Meeting for Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> School District Dissolution Vote**

**Present:** Gary Mullen (Chair), Mike McPhetres (vice Chair), John O'Brien (clerk), Jamie Kinnarney, Kathy Galluzzo, Kathi Termi, Wendy Palthey, Michael Livingston, Tess Mix, Kay Jorgensen, Ben Wolfe, Michael Sacca, Jim Ludwig, Sylvia Desautel, Mariah Cilley, Pete Howe, Rob Howe, Anissa Morrison, Micheal Gray, Stacey Dion, CMP, Cecily Anderson, Robin Amber, Emily Marshia, Eliza Minnuci, Mike and Amy Bogardus, Caitlyn Macgaffin, Marty Shame, Maryann Caron, Scott and Patricia Beavers, Dan Ruddell, Maureen McCullough, Meg Hopkins, Sean Maher, Nancy Chapman, Betsy Race, Brenda Field, Alex Hanson, Heidi Chapman, Chris Bryne, Ingrid Van Steamburg, Liz York, Lenora Kimball, Tara Weatherell, Mark Blount, Dylan Kelly, Charlotte Mullen, Aileen Lem, Jack Spicer, Susan Dollenmaier, Jen Doyle, Mike Schaefer, Henry Rosario, Tracy Crocker, Jen Hayslett, Thorton Hayslett, Jane Huppee, Daniel Guertin, Mariah Lawrence, Laura Tobin, Robert Childs

### **Via Zoom**

7pm Mullen called meeting to order

5:08(zoom time) Jamie Kinnarney, WRVSU Superintendent (JK)

Noted that this was also an official school board meeting, Kathy Galluzzo called that to order. Kinnarney answered questions that the public had submitted. He explained that a stand-alone separate district of each Tunbridge and Chelsea would have a higher budget; approx. \$200,000 more. This is due to expenses of running two school boards, bill backs for special education expenses, staffing increase for two campuses, increases due to vocational tuitions.

Question: what was HS tuition costs for Tunbridge students?

FY18 avg. \$15,103.11. total \$694,743.00  
FY19 avg. \$16,073.16 total \$797,385.00  
FY20 avg. \$15,414.17 total \$631,981.00  
FY21 projected \$15,414.17 total \$521,855.00

Chelsea comparison:

FY19 avg. \$13,371.00 total \$615,090.00  
FY20 avg. \$16,866.29 total \$860,181.00  
FY21 projected \$18,143.04 total \$816,437.00

Phantom students gone away, do not use anymore. Kinnarney does not expect this model to be used again.

Question about major concern of the Tunbridge campus closing if there continues to be budget problems:

Articles of agreement state that neither campus cannot be closed without first the school board approving a petition for that, then the members of that town would need to vote to affirm the closure of the campus in their town. The other town voters could not weigh in on that.

How separating schools affect taxes?

Projections-per pupil spending for Unified District \$17,996.36

Tax rate in Tunbridge 1.5615 includes plenty for not being under threshold,

Projections for Tunbridge stand-alone tax rate:

Per pupil spending \$19,599.08

Tax rate for Tunbridge 1.7821

If approved in Tunbridge and not in Chelsea is it a done deal?

It is done for now, but without legislative changes it could in the future be petitioned again.

State funding penalties: Waiting to hear back from State Agency.

Small schools grant still available and but needs to be applied for each year with lots of criteria, not a given that the school would qualify any given year. They do have this revenue now because it was perk for the merger.

(17:15) Tunbridge Heating system: Kinnarney has been working with a consultant in conjunction with maintenance staff concerning issues with the Tunbridge heating system. FY22/23 budget will include proactive maintenance budgeting. \$310,000 projection to upgrade Tunbridge system and replace upstairs windows. Plan will be instead of bond, budget over 5 years to implement systematically improvements. Looking to run surpluses which he will ask the voters to put towards reserve funds so no money will have to be borrowed. Confident that boiler will make it through this winter.

Breaking down % of money allocated for maintaining Chelsea school building vs TCS building, did not have time before meeting to get the answers. Working on a maintenance plan for both facilities. Spoke to the studies that showed nice professional places of work lead to better outcomes and morale.

Class size with new restructuring plan: Kinnarney spoke about class size in the 16-22 range as optimal and a goal for meeting all student needs.

Restructuring- discussions about admin. restructuring to make sure the system is not too top heavy. Kinnarney acknowledged disappointment in that the restructuring so far has not delivered what was promised in terms of benefits for the student experience.

(28) Michael Livingston (principal TCS) (ML) spoke about restructuring plan as the best for the children and robust education system and best for staff.

Mike Gray (Chelsea resident, FBUD boardmember) spoke toward two separate schools for best students with the restructuring plan of dividing grades among the two campuses.

( 32:15) Rob Howe submitted the petition for reasons of disappointment that the costs have not gone down, and that the system has not improved for the students. Appreciated new principle in Tunbridge. Was concerned about talk to close the Tunbridge school among FBUD budgeting talk. Advocate for not allowing this to happen. If we lost our campus here in Tunbridge, not good for town. It serves as a community center, attracting others to move here. Restructuring plan also a concern in terms of the public's views. Concerned that restructuring plan was based on a survey with not a lot of response. Disappointed that this meeting was a lot about the numbers. We don't want to lose our school in Tunbridge.

(37:58) Mullen spoke to the process of the vote.

(39:09) Rob Howe: was there a plan for people in the towns to vote on restructuring plan?  
Kathy Galluzzo, FBUD, No vote, but plan for outreach in communities. Board was invited to this speak at meeting to answer budget questions. Spoke about the restructuring plan being made in a way to ensure a school in both towns remain, given the act 46 merger.

Stacy Dion: Equity concerns in playgrounds and general between Tunbridge and Chelsea. If taxes are going up she wants more value. Concerned about covid cleaning in TCS.

ML: staffing for COVID cleaning, have not been using gym so more cleaning in other places. Focus on washing hands, mask wearing, distancing, as surfaces are not as big as a concern in terms of spreading virus.

New play structure for TCS will be up in spring.

Increase class size will allow more project-based learning with multiple teachers for upper grades.

Kinnarney: K-4 more intervention learning planned

5-8 experiential learning increase and foreign language strategically taught part of restructuring plan.

How to best use staff efficiently between two campuses in order to get the best value in terms of educational experience, and dollar wise.

Sylvia Desautel- wanted to know future demographics look like.

JK: said we need to do work for projections

Ben Wolfe: years since mergers and it have not gone well. Reiterated concerns from FBUD discussions around possibilities of closing TCS to pass a budget. Feels like there is more trust and easier to pass budgets with single school. Easier for school leadership to implement a plan if they know the town is behind them. Concerned that Chelsea voters would pass a budget that would not support Tunbridge campus. Questions survey.

Mike Gray, FBUD, 180 response to survey, small sample. Results were 50% in favor each in town on restructuring plan.

Cecily Anderson- transportation for students? Concern for school being closed in Tunbridge.

JK: cross town buses are budgeted in.

Kathy Galluzzo- speaks to talk of voting out TCS campus with cutting a budget. Budget was voted down in both towns. Concerns that Chelsea could vote down a budget until it was so low that they had to get rid of Tunbridge campus. A lot of Tunbridge votes were against the budget also.

JK: school would not be closed. We could borrow up to 87% of last year's budget, plus there would be spending freezes. They were not at that point to do this. FBUD not allowed to budget to close a building. Board was never considering closing a campus.

Robin Amber, Chelsea voter, spoke to need to merge communities.

JK FBUD board working together more now. Lots of levels to merger on.

Kathi Terami: Too much time spent on merger logistics rather than doing the work for students. Merge where needed, but not at the whole level, might be more community support. Feels some folks were pressured by the State to merge, though they really did not want to.

JK: Goals to create interdependence across the district. Principles are already having meetings together.

Kathy Galluzzo spoke about the new leadership at SU and Tunbridge school working and things actually getting accomplished.

Anissa Morrison- spoke about benefits to children for not moving and transitioning between schools, thus benefitting from long term relationships you find staying on one campus for their time k-8<sup>th</sup>.

Questions for Selectboard concerning big picture questions about attracting and supporting more business in Tunbridge to create more revenue and opportunities. Mullen was appreciative of reminders of town visions.

Pete Howe: How to measure success of restructuring plan if we stick with merger.

JK: Do we have happy, engaged students. Assessment tests, but more importantly how easy is it for students to access intervention. Are parents/guardians feeling good. Social, emotional, academic all-important part of the dashboard. Need to start tracking how students from our school do in high school.

ML: Qualitative data- are your children happy to get up and go to school? Are families moving to Tunbridge with school age children?

Jim Ludwig: Appreciations for FBUD and Selectboard and administrators.

Moriah Cilley, town clerk, absentee voting possible, schedule a time to pick ballot up due to time pressure. You can drop ballots off up until 7pm Jan.9<sup>th</sup>, at Town Hall in box by the door. Vote is 10am-7pm town hall Sat. Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>.

Emily Marshia, teacher from Tunbridge school, former Chelsea school board member. Appreciates both schools and their families. Sees people in the buildings really care about the students of both communities.

Eliza Minnucci- Appreciates good folks at the school, but really believes in the k-8 experience on one campus.

8:46 O'Brien moved to adjourn  
McPhetres seconded, so moved