

**UNION 28 JOINT SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, March 23, 2016**  
**FINAL Minutes**

**Present:** Scott Bastarache, Bethany Seeger, Sarah Dolven, Johanna Bartlett, Son Hui May, Audra Goscenski, Carla Halpern, Jessalyn Zaykoski; Dan Hayes, Chair; Prudence Marsh, Director of Student Support Services; Aaron Osborne, Director of Finance and Operations; Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent.

**1. Meeting Called to Order by Dan at 7:07 P.M.**

**2. Public Hearings**

**3. Approval of the Minutes from February 29, 2016**

**SCOTT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 29, 2016. AUDRA SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**4. Budget & Personnel Committee Update**

Bethany reported there's no update. They will plan the next meeting with BettyLou.

**5. U28 Central Office Renovations – Update**

Scott reported that he met with the Selectboard on Monday; they aren't willing to put the renovations in the regular budget, and there's even some question as to whether Erving wants to continue renting the building out (the first floor is used by the Recreation Committee). They have put off having the discussion about maintenance of the building. Jennifer added that an electrician has looked at the building to put together an estimate on wiring the buzzer system. There won't really be an update from the town side until this fall.

**6. Regionalization Update**

Sarah reported that she's spoken with representatives from Pelham and Amherst about having a conversation about a 3-town K-6. To restart a joint committee that can explore this, each town has to put this on the warrant. For Leverett, the Union structure doesn't work, and the town doesn't want to keep funding the school as a stand-alone institution. If it were part of a region, that picture would change since there's a lot more cost-sharing in a region as opposed to a union. The committee discussed the reasons for Leverett's position.

Dan spoke about Shutesbury's reluctance to regionalize: having a school with an individual identity boosts property values, and that benefit would disappear in a region. The town is looking into regionalizing other services such as fire and police. He concluded by affirming that JSC should be an environment where all representatives should be able to speak frankly about their schools and towns.

Johanna agreed with Dan and went on to say that Wendell's struggle with the regionalization

issue suggested to her that regionalizing doesn't really involve much cost savings in the end. Audra said that Leverett's tax and economic situations put the town in a difficult position, and this financial pressure comes down on the school. Dan said that he's been advocating for using SES as more of a resource for the town, offering night classes there or allowing public access to the library. Johanna added that the perceived value of living in a town is connected to the quality of its library.

Scott said he was approached by a parent suggesting a secondary regionalization among Turners Falls, Erving, and Pioneer; the situation is different there and it seems it would make more sense than regionalizing at the primary level. A town committee would have to be formed to explore this possibility, which is just a solitary "what-if" at present.

Sarah said that she's met with Rep. Kulik several times and expressed this feeling in the small towns about not wanting to give up their elementary schools even in the face of potentially unsustainable financial situations. Jennifer reported that superintendents of rural districts are forming a network to advocate for our interests; the group is meeting again April 11. She mentioned that Wisconsin gives \$300 more per pupil to rural schools – we could adopt such measures in MA. Dan added that CES has done some significant research on the impact of charter schools on rural schools.

Johanna concluded with an expression of solidarity: we're all here at JSC for the kids, and we all understand the challenges both our committees and our towns face.

## **7. Swift River School Announces Opt Out for Students**

Johanna reported that after the Opt-Out Forum, SRS teachers felt very strongly that they wanted to help parents understand their opt-out options. SRSC put together and approved a statement of support for both parents and teachers who advocate for opting out of PARCC; MASC confirmed that this is the first of its kind in the state. It's getting published in *The Montague Reporter*. Scott said that the article has already been pushed around on social media. Danika, the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher, went with Principal Kelly Sullivan to an MTA meeting, where they found inspiration to put together this statement. SRS will hold a meeting explaining Opt-Out to parents on March 28; childcare is provided. Johanna invited JSC members to take similar action at their schools.

Sarah said that the Amherst School Committee also passed a very abridged version of this statement, and the SRSC version was read in full at that meeting. ASC is adopting a two-pronged approach: first, they will raise awareness among parents that opting out is an option, and second, they will explain their reasons for advocating for Opt-Out from more of an activist perspective. Sarah added that the state of New York has been very successful with their Opt-Out movement.

Son Hui said she was for opting out, but asked what tool would replace PARCC. Jennifer said that there are other assessment tools teachers already use, but that the state has already invited proposals for a replacement test for PARCC. Johanna also questioned where the representation of our communities is within the state on this issue. She went on to speak about some concerns parents at SRS have expressed about stigmatization of students who either opt out or choose to

take the test.

At Dan's prompting, JSC applauded SRS, its committee and teachers for taking this bold and well-thought-out action. Jennifer said that it's important this action is coming from a Level 1 school, where things are going very well.

### **11. Superintendent Report (moved up in agenda at Jennifer's request)**

a. Entry Findings Report for Union #28: Jennifer shared her report with JSC. She and her Leadership Team identified core values, and she created entry plan goals. Processes to move toward these goals included interviews, public meetings, surveys, data analysis, and school visits. Strengths of the U#28 schools include high quality education, positive cultures, a feeling of community, and independence/individualism at each school. There is strong communication and collaboration throughout the union and the Leadership Team as well. Opportunities for growth include curriculum alignment, Central Office procedures, food services, and crafting a U#28 vision statement. Challenges include declining enrollment, finances, high-stakes testing and accountability, and technology.

### **8. Revisioning Union #28**

Aaron and Jennifer offered a presentation on “revisioning” U#28. Broad options include expanding schools through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, creating a U#28 Middle and High School, and other creative collaborations among our schools. Aaron has reviewed financial implications for these options.

Expanding through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade is more and less difficult depending on the school (for example, Erving could consider this almost immediately), but Jennifer said that this kind of school offers unique leadership opportunities for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders. Carla wanted more information about how the different needs and attributes of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders would work; Johanna noted that studies show combining Middle and High Schools does not seem to be a good idea educationally, yet it's done all the time for cost savings. JSC went on to discuss sports programs at combined Middle/High Schools; Carla noted that when done right, sports offer a wealth of benefits to kids, and she would be disappointed if there were no sports programs added to a PK-8 school. Johanna said that it seems better for the kids to stay in the community another two years, but we would really need to research the educational pros and cons of this model, and especially talk to the principals and teachers about their response to it. Aaron presented a conservative financial model of expanding K-8 for each school: the upshot is that compared with what the towns pay out in assessments now, savings could range up to several hundred thousand dollars depending on the school.

Aaron and Jennifer went on to outline what a U#28 Middle-High School and Vocational Academy might look like: it could have a hands-on, outdoor focus, and offer vocational training in agriculture and forestry. A ballpark estimate of how many students the school might enroll puts it squarely in line with other regional schools. Projected assessments for a 7-12 school are all lower than what the towns pay currently in regional assessments. JSC enthusiastically discussed various aspects of what creating a 7-12 school might entail, including state funding for actually building the school, parking, the merits versus the image of vocational schools, etc.

Carla credited Jennifer, Aaron, and Prudy for being so incredibly innovative about revisioning U#28, and about this proposal in particular. JSC agreed to compile questions about the expansion/new school options ahead of time in order to streamline discussion at the next meeting.

Aaron concluded by presenting the intended outcomes for these and resource-sharing proposals. Dan and Scott reiterated Carla's appreciation for the bold and creative work of the U#28 leaders. Jennifer reciprocated the compliment; U#28 school committees are consistently supportive of their schools, students, and staffs. Rounds of applause.

**JOHANNA MOVED TO AUTHORIZE JENNIFER, AARON AND PRUDY TO EXPLORE THESE EXPANSION OPTIONS IN MORE DETAIL. SON HUI SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

Dan concluded that he thinks what makes our schools work so well is the structure in which we operate, which is democratic and supportive; this excellence in collaboration and educational quality does not happen by accident.

**9. News/Updates From Each School and Union #28**

Wendell / New Salem: Johanna ceded her time because the Opt-Out statement was the biggest news of late.

Leverett: Sarah reported there are two new students at LES; there might also be another family with three students moving in next year. There's a problem with the boiler, but nothing that bad; it's getting resolved. A lockdown drill went very well recently. There was also a grant-funded puppet performance recently. On the 29<sup>th</sup> there's a Music and Art Night. We're in the process of revamping our summer program. Bethany added that the 1<sup>st</sup> Grade LES teacher is the recipient of a district teaching award.

Erving: Scott reported that EES is starting to use Google Apps for Education. National Pi Day was celebrated by the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade reading a story about Sir Cumference and his son Radius followed by a pie-in-the face event. Coming up in April is the PTO-sponsored Dance-Off, using dance games on borrowed consoles. Son Hui added there's an all-school play coming up in April as well.

Shutesbury: Dan reported that SES is looking at School Choice, and is pursuing monies from the town to put in a school track that will be available to the community at large. There was a school clean-up day recently that went well. Dan praised the processes each school and U#28 follow that make our schools so great.

Union #28: Jennifer reported

**10. Director of Finance and Operations Report**

a. Office Technology and Operations Report: Aaron reported that there are some ancient pieces of technology that need to be replaced; they need to be declared salvage in order to dispose of them and replace them.

**JOHANNA MOVED TO DESIGNATE THE ATTACHED LISTING OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT AS SALVAGE FOR PURPOSES OF DISPOSAL THROUGH OFFER TO THE SCHOOLS/TOWNS AND THEREAFTER DONATION OR RECYCLING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ABOVE. SCOTT SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**11. Future Items**

- a. Next Meeting Date – TBD

**12. Adjournment**

**SCOTT MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:00. JOHANNA SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**