

**REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES
November 15, 2007**

Elaine Miller, Superintendent of Schools for School Union 52, called the meeting of the Regional Planning Committee to order at 5:00 p.m. in the library at the George J. Mitchell School in Waterville. Superintendent Miller thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and noted that she, Mr. Haley, and Dr. Morse appreciate people coming to the meetings.

Those in Attendance: Maryanne Bernier, Lawrence Brown, Lee Cabana, Charley Clark, Robin Colby, Judy Coombs, Steve Dyer, Elwood Ellis, Doug Eugley, Lori Fowle, Jeffrey Frost, Monique Gilbert, Eric Haley, Michael Heavener, Melanie Jewell, James Jurdak, Dennis Keschl, Linda Laughlin, James C. Morse, Sr., Nora Murray, Wendy Nivison, Constance Packard, Gerald Saint Amand, Debrajean Scheibel, Gary Smith, Jamie Soule, Phil St. Onge, Jack Sutton, Peter Thiboutot, Michael Thurston, Lauchlin Titus, Michael Tracy, and David Trask

Gerald Saint Amand made a motion, and Peter Thiboutot seconded the motion, to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2007 meeting as printed.

Phil St. Onge asked about the exchange that occurred at the November 1 meeting between Mike Thurston and Dennis Keschl related to identities and one school.

Mr. Keschl clarified his comment. He was hearing a lot over the past several weeks about people thinking that things won't change. When a new institution is built and things come together, there will be changes. Changes are inevitable. People could not just think there will not be any changes. People may think that things will be the way they are now and that nothing will change. The fact is that people and loyalties will change. Their focus will be on the RSU. Change will occur.

Mike Thurston noted that the reason there was an exchange is that part of the law protects that. For example, a student will not be thinking that he/she goes to school at a Regional School Union. The student will, for example, refer to his/her school as Winslow High School.

Mr. Keschl noted that this is true. This happened when Belgrade joined MSAD 47; however, people adopted the SAD #47 identity as time went on, as people will ultimately be focused on the RSU and adopt its identity.

Phil St. Onge said he would say that. Winslow High School will not be closed. There needs to be some language in the charter that will leave it in the hands of the town as to whether the law penalizes an RSU if a school stays open. He noted he has been told by Jim Morse many times that they are not looking to close Winslow High School. It is not known who the superintendent will be or who will be on the RSU Board. There needs to be some language that states there needs to be "hoops we can jump through" before reassigning or closing a school.

The original motion, made by Gerald Saint Amand and seconded by Peter Thiboutot, to approve the minutes of November 1, 2007 carried.

The meeting turned to Subcommittee reports.

Eric Haley noted that members of the Personnel and Transition Subcommittee all took major assignments in reviewing contracts and insurances.

Mike Thurston prefaced his presentation by stating that this is not negotiations. He doesn't want salary scales to be thrown around, and noted that he did not provide copies of his PowerPoint presentation for that reason. This is an interim report regarding merging teacher contracts. The good news is that this RPC seems to be way ahead of other school districts. The four presidents of the local associations were at a meeting last night and making sure to get together with groups of teachers and having those discussions. They have actually been meeting for years. That transition might be easier for this RPC. This is not a negotiation. If the RSU is formed, real bargaining will be in the fall of 2009 and, hopefully, a contract in 2010-11. At this time there will not be any recommendations, as the Subcommittee is working on ways to merge the contracts.

School Union 52's is the most difficult to bring together because of so many contracts and differences in them. The problem is that there are five vastly different scales. Some have steps of \$3,000 - \$5,000, and some it's \$8,000. There are five sets of language in these contracts related to school day, just cause, and teacher rights. There are five benefit packages. Messalonskee probably has the best health package right now. The Subcommittee will have to look at potentially the best benefit packing in that situation. There are five stipend schedules. The same is true of ESP units. Potentially the Subcommittee might be looking at taking between 10 to 15 contracts and whittling them down to see if everything falls into place the way it could.

Once the RSU is formed, existing contracts will remain in force until a new single RSU agreement is reached, even if it takes until 2011-12. The law says contracts must be merged as soon as practicable. China is negotiating this year; Vassalboro will negotiate next year. Right now Messalonskee and Winslow go to 2010. Ideally, the RSU will have a new contract for when those contracts expire.

In comparison to other school districts, Elaine Miller noted the contracts for our new RSU would be simpler than others, for example, Millinocket's contract which includes lifetime health benefits.

Mr. Thurston noted that merging salary scales bring the greatest challenge. He reviewed some of the ways the scales could be merged. (1) Build an index scale for the new RSU. (2) Agree on real increase for each teacher as a method of bringing them on that new scale. It could be 4% for example. (3) In year one of the agreement each teacher is awarded a 4% raise and is placed accordingly from one of the five old scales to the new scale. (4) In year two, each teacher would begin climbing from that point.

Eric Haley noted that that is a major shift. Teachers need to know that they are not going to be any worse off. Build on teacher scales on years of experience. It is possible for a teacher in China and a teacher in Waterville with each 15 years of experience to be on a different scale.

Mike Thurston noted that it would be the RPC's job to sell that idea.

Lori Fowle asked about hiring teachers from within the Union. If, for example a person who teaches in Vassalboro were hired to teach in Winslow, where would that person be placed on the salary scale?

Mike Thurston noted that the teacher would be placed on the scale according to the number of years of teaching experience. There aren't any jumps in this scale; there are just 20 steps. For example, in using 2006-07 salary scales from five different schools, teachers would be placed on the respective scales according to experience, as listed below.

China	16	\$46,804
Vassalboro	14	\$43,330
Waterville	12	\$40,578
Winslow	17	\$48,278
Messalonskee	17	\$47,991

In eight years all would be making the same no matter what. Some may see it as though it is not fair. Is it fair, however, that one person is getting a \$2,000 raise and another person is getting a \$10,000 raise? Trying to find an equitable way of placing teachers on a scale has been a challenge. Teachers will benefit over time.

Mr. Keschl noted that a similar issue occurred throughout the State when the Legislature moved the beginning teacher salary to \$30,000. In a sense we are talking about the same thing but involving 4 different schools. There has to be some way to adjust the salaries of people who may have been at five years making \$30,000, and now new teachers making \$30,000. That needs to be adjusted some way.

Nora Murray noted that a neighboring small town had a lower pay scale at the beginning. There were teachers with 6-7 years of experience making the same as a beginning teacher.

Mike Thurston noted that for China and Vassalboro the beginning contract is the same for the first five years.

Eric Haley noted that this happens a lot. For example, he said he coached and taught. When the head coach retired, the coach was making \$700 a year coaching baseball. When Mr. Haley took the job, he made \$750. The contracts and amount of money change as time goes on. The important piece is that teachers will not be any worse off than they were if they stayed in the original school system.

Mike Thurston noted the new scale would earn teachers a lot more money over time. If teachers are hired from the outside, where are they placed on the scale? There has to be some type of mechanism on how to place teachers on the scale. All that must be included in the contract language.

Jack Sutton said he understood the problem and at some level he understands the concept of the solution being discussed, however, he doesn't understand how all this contributes to the role of the RSU for saving money.

Mike Thurston noted that the big savings do not come from this.

Jim Morse noted that if the RPC went from the principle that we traditionally bargain from, the teachers' association would take the highest paid contract and place everybody on that contract accordingly.

Judy Coombs noted that it would take \$900,000 alone to bring Waterville up to this scale.

Eric Haley noted the savings would come from here but over a three to five-year period, as people leave who don't need to be replaced because of student count. It is a less drastic increase or decrease.

Dennis Keschl noted he finds it hard to understand mathematically how one could see a savings in the approach to teacher salaries. The fact is that all the teachers will be at the highest step at some time over 20 years. Everyone will get to that high level. That means that costs will increase in salaries within the RSU vs. as it is now. The point is there is a dollar cost out there that is higher for some schools than others, but over that 20-year period ultimately all these personnel costs will increase.

Judy Coombs noted that there are so many people who are at the latter part of their careers, and they will be retiring within the next five years.

Lori Fowle noted that an increase would still be negotiated each year for these teachers. They will still receive step increases even if consolidation does not occur.

Dennis Keschl noted that the only point he is making is that personnel costs aren't where the savings are. By bringing everyone up, there will be higher costs per teacher in the end.

Lori Fowle noted that the Governor's plan was not looking at teachers being reduced; it was looking more at administrative costs.

Phil St. Onge asked if this is where people are being asked to take a giant leap of faith. It would be nothing to have your members asking for a higher contract. It is difficult when the case is where we are asked to trust in the future that it will work out. There are no guarantees.

Lori Fowle noted that there is a factor that needs to be considered. There is the possibility of the contract being much higher. Teachers have to consider being a little reasonable when moving forth.

Phil St. Onge noted that everything that is discussed in these groups is brought into the best possible light.

Eric Haley noted that in the first meeting it was suggested that everyone be placed under the best contract.

Phil St. Onge asked if the RPC shouldn't be sharing with the voters the worst-case scenario.

Lori Fowle said she thinks it is her job to explain to teachers that they should not be expecting to have that if this plan is approved. The expectations of the plan are put on the table. When

people go back to the community they have to speak to the citizens as to what they think the expectations are – the teachers' expectations.

Phil St. Onge said the RPC must follow a labor contract that doesn't go backward. It needs to go forward.

Lori Fowle said that makes sense, but the RPC can't expect that will happen.

Mike Thurston said that what is being discussed is the merging of five contracts. The RPC, for example, can come to the table and say it wants Messalonskee's scale. Finding some kind of solution to that is the job of all RPC members.

Judy Coombs said that at this time it is unknown who will even be negotiating a contract.

Lauchlin Titus noted that right now the RPC is being presented with reasonable information. When the new RSU Board bargains, if it all falls apart, hopefully the RPC has laid out enough now so that people working on fact finding and arbitration will hold as to what the RPC was talking about now. That is the checks and balances and minimizes the risk.

Mike Thurston noted that China, Vassalboro and Waterville would negotiate before the RSU is formed.

Doug Eugley noted that the presentation is very good and ideas presented are very reasonable. It seems to make sense whatever that 4% number ends up being, hopefully that scale will change over time. If all towns vote to join this RSU, are they locked into joining the RSU? If a town joins the RSU and there are teachers' contracts that are staggered, can these towns get out?

Jim Morse noted that once the RSU is formed, faith needs to be put into the bargaining team.

Doug Eugley noted that people who have worked on that know that there is not an endless supply of cash in the towns. That will be a huge impact to some of the towns if, in fact, that goes the other way.

Robin Colby said she understands you have to agree it may go the other way.

Doug Eugley noted that it is not known who will be on the negotiating team.

Judy Coombs said that what is here are the who, what and when as to who will represent and when the different contracts will expire. China teachers and ed techs are negotiating now. MSAD 47 custodians, food service personnel and ed techs are negotiating now. Waterville custodians and food service personnel are also currently negotiating. The law says that within 90 days prior to the expiration date of the agreement, once the RSU is formed that a petition needs to be sent to the Maine Labor Relations Board in order to set up the election. The only bargaining agreements that can be considered are the ones that are already in place. For example for bus drivers it would be the agreement with the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union. There could be a vote between them and no union at all.

Jim Morse noted that this would become effective at the date of the forming of the RSU.

Judy Coombs noted that for custodians there would have to be a vote because there are three groups – Teamsters, MEA, and AFSCME. For food service personnel there would be a vote because current contracts are with the MEA and AFSCME. For secretaries and education technicians, it would be the MEA or no union at all. The task for the Personnel and Transition Subcommittee is to determine for the interim what things need to be addressed.

Lauchlin Titus noted that in Vassalboro the only gray area was the contract of a school nurse.

Judy Coombs noted that the nurse is now under the teachers' contract.

Jim Morse noted that the recognition clause is all part of the bargaining process.

Elwood Ellis said that the concern is the transfer of real and personal property. For example, Vassalboro has charges that will be incurred by the RSU. An SAD is all one unit, so it is an easier transfer. Waterville Parks and Recreation wants to keep all property. All of these issues will be settled.

Eric Haley reviewed with the RPC a scenario regarding calculations for converting health insurance benefits to the highest benefit now allowed in the five school systems. He noted that in China, Vassalboro, Waterville, Winslow and SAD 47 the plans are Blue Cross/Blue Shield HMO or standard plans. Reviewed were the highest rates now paid and the number of staff at each benefit level. It would cost \$654,625.94 to move everybody to the best benefit level.

James Jurdak asked if those are today's insurance rates.

Eric Haley noted that they are today's insurance rates.

Wendy Nivison asked if these costs would be shared, and Eric Haley noted that they would be.

Eric Haley said he was contacted by Walt Harris, Director of the Center for Research and Evaluation at the University of Maine. The Center is conducting a survey for RPC members. The purpose of the survey is to document the views of RPC members about school district reorganization and determine the extent to which these views change over time. Mr. Haley distributed copies of the survey to RPC members and asked that they be returned to the Center in the postage-paid envelope provided. He thanked the RPC members for giving the Personnel and Transition Subcommittee additional time this evening to review the progress of their work.

Jim Morse reviewed the work of the Governance Subcommittee. He noted that he received a report from the Maine Department of Education via email yesterday. He indicated that there still is a December 1 deadline for reporting the work that has been completed to date. The towns are required to submit a progress report but not a full plan. The RPC will review the plan, and if members are in agreement, he asked that they sign the document.

Dr. Morse reviewed the required elements of the plan and the status for each element, e.g., not applicable, complete, in progress, not yet started, identified barrier, and need assistance.

- 3.A(1) - SAUS included in the RSU - complete
- 3.A(2) - size of governing body – complete
 - composition of governing body – complete
 - apportionment of the governing body - complete
- 3.A(3) - method of voting of governing body – complete
- 3.A(4) - composition of local school committees – not applicable
 - powers of local school committees – not applicable
 - duties of local school committees – not applicable
- 3.A(5) - disposition of real and personal school property – in progress
- 3.A(6) - disposition of existing school indebtedness – complete
 - disposition of lease purchase obligations - complete
- 3.A(7) - assignment of personnel school contracts – in progress
 - assignment of school collective bargaining agreements – in progress
 - assignment of other school contractual obligations – in progress
- 3.A(8) - disposition of existing school funds and existing financial obligations – complete
- 3.A(9) - transition plan that addresses the development of a budget for the first school year – not yet started
 - transition plan that addresses interim personnel policies – not yet started
- 3.A(10) - documentation of the public meeting(s) held to prepare or review reorganization plan (to the date of this report) – complete
- 3.A(11) - explanation of how units that approve reorganization plan will proceed if one or more units do not approve the plan – in progress
- 3.A(12) - estimate of cost savings to be achieved – not yet started
- 3.A(13) - such other matters as the governing bodies of the school administrative units in existence on the effective date of this chapter may determine to be necessary – in progress

Eric Haley noted that this is a Maine Department of Education survey to determine where the RPC is.

Dennis Keschl stated that item 3.A(8) does not to include insurance group in teacher contracts.

Jim Morse noted that that was a correct assumption.

Regarding item 3.A(9) related to a transition plan, Jim Morse noted that in conversations with the Governance Subcommittee, it was recommended that no action be taken because the RPC is in need of better financials before a recommendation may be made.

Doug Eugley noted that for 3.A(12), estimated cost savings to be achieved, the RPC hasn't really started looking at cost savings.

Jim Morse noted that that item is the next section.

Dr. Morse reviewed the parameters for plan development and the status for each element, e.g., not applicable, complete, in progress, not yet started, identified barrier, and need assistance.

3.B(1) - Enrollment meets requirements. – complete

Sec. XXXX-36, Parameter B

- When viewed in conjunction with surrounding proposed units, may not result in one or more municipalities being denied the option to join an RSU. – complete

3.B(2) - comprehensive programming for all students grades K-12 – complete

- Includes at least one publicly supported high school. – complete

3.B(3) - consistent with policies set forth in section 1451 – complete

3.B(4) - no displacement of teachers – complete

- no displacement of students – complete
- no closures of schools existing or operating during school year immediately preceding reorganization, except as permitted under section 1512 - complete

Sec. XXXX-26, Parameter F

- The plan must address how the school administrative unit will reorganize administrative functions, duties and noninstructional personnel so that the projected expenditures of the reorganized school unit in fiscal year 2008-2009 for system administration, transportation, special education and facilities and maintenance will not have an adverse impact on the instructional program. – in progress

Jim Morse noted that the RPC needs to start thinking about what obstacles it faces.

The items listed below are considered by the RPC to be barriers in completing the reorganization plan.

- manpower restrictions
- timeline
- combining policy manuals
- contract insurance merging
- number of contracts to merge
- in-kind services
- federal funds potential loss
- Governor's \$36 million
- cost redistribution/shifting
- disposition of school indebtedness
- equitable disposition of funds
- repeal effort
- redistribution of costs among potential members
- ownership of municipal property (real and personal) to be transferred to the RSU
- bringing all school units to same financial profile

Dennis Keschl asked whether the RPC agreed to refer policy work to the RSU Board.

Jim Morse noted that was correct, but the RPC is referring to the work involved.

Jim Morse noted that in terms of what the RPC just did, if they are comfortable with the progress report, he asked that each member sign his/her name by their respective school units so that each town may present the report to their respective school boards for approval in order to be submitted by the December 1 deadline.

Eric Haley noted that the law says that each of these plans needs to be submitted by the Board, stating that they concur that this is the status of where we are at in the RPC now.

Jim Morse noted that a copy of the plan would be given to each Board to sign. The school boards will give approval to submit this report.

Elaine Miller said that there is a union meeting scheduled for November 29th regarding the new Superintendent. There will be time set aside at the beginning of that meeting for China and Vassalboro to deal with the issue of the RPC progress report.

Jim Morse reviewed with the RPC the final recommendation of the Governance Subcommittee related to the composition, powers and duties of any local school committees to be created.

The Governance Subcommittee recommends that no local school committees be created.

Dennis Keschl asked when speaking of local school boards if it referred to advisory committees.

Jim Morse noted that that was not the case. The law says that they can actually be governing bodies. The RSU school board has the authority to transfer its governmental rights to local school committees if it chooses.

David Trask asked for clarification as to how much power the local school committee would have.

Jim Morse noted that it could have as much authority as the RSU board is willing to give it. For example, it could actually govern MSAD 47 schools differently than China schools, if the RSU Board is willing to give it that authority.

Jack Sutton asked why the Governance Subcommittee voted against this.

Jim Morse stated that he thinks it would be difficult to govern the regional unit if there were a school board for each school unit.

Phil St. Onge noted that it has to be kept in mind that the RPC has to do what is best for the kids, not the superintendent. If the RPC thinks local control is important, it is important to look at how local boards exist in different educational policy. This law is supposed to be about money. He stated he thinks it is a big mistake to not allow the operation of our schools at local control.

Dr. Morse noted that the RPC needs to take a vote at this time regarding the Governance Subcommittee recommendation that no local school committees be created.

Jack Sutton speaking on behalf of representatives of MSAD 47 stated that they support the recommendation of the Governance Subcommittee.

Lee Cabana speaking on behalf of representatives of the Waterville Public Schools stated that they are in agreement with the recommendation of the Governance Subcommittee.

Gerald Saint Amand speaking on behalf of representatives of China, Vassalboro and Winslow stated that they are in agreement with the recommendation of the Governance Subcommittee.

Gary Smith provided an update of the work of the Finance Subcommittee. The Subcommittee has met and is continuing to line up the financial chart of accounts. The Finance Subcommittee is recommending that all the grants, upon formation of the RSU, become part of the RSU.

Judy Coombs said that she needed clarification regarding this recommendation. There are, for example, grants that are specific to certain schools, such as the George J. Mitchell School. There needs to be assurance that that money will stay with the school.

Gary Smith noted that the grants that are being discussed are federal funds such as Title IV, V, and VI.

Connie Packard noted that there could also be grants that are private in nature for a particular purpose, or federal funds for special education. In some cases that money has to be used for specific purposes. All grants are special revenue funds to transfer wherever they are and whatever conditions they have at that point in time. Some might not be there and there may be some new ones. Whatever there would be at the formation of the RSU would get transferred with the same conditions and the same amounts that are currently in place.

Nora Murray noted that she had discussions with staff at the Department of Education concerning federal funds. As she understands it, when we become an RSU they then will look at us as one school system and will come to us as one school system, not individually as we are now. Together we need to decide how we will use funds as an RSU.

Connie Packard noted that at that point in time there would be carryover funds.

Nora Murray noted that there are times when funds have not been spent by the end of the year.

Jack Sutton asked if this would result in reduced administrative time through less grant writing.

Elaine Miller noted that it would be less time. For example, in a school union right now a grant is written for each individual town, whereas an SAD it is one grant for the entire unit.

Gary Smith noted that today there would be five grants and one significantly great one for the new RSU.

Elaine Miller noted that time would be saved in writing the grants in a larger system like the SAD or new RSU; however, the RSU would still have to take into consideration each individual town. So there is still time, but there is not much duplication of the same grant.

Peter Thiboutot noted that when looking at the needs of particular towns, consideration has to be given to the equitable allocation of all federal money.

Elaine Miller noted that this would present a barrier in the new RSU because it will be distributed according to the new socioeconomic status. That is something that has to be considered.

Eric Haley noted that for example, if Waterville were a budding Cape Elizabeth, it would get those funds for those needy children. To some extent this issue is going on in this proposed RSU.

Nora Murray noted that those schools with the highest free and reduced lunch status students would receive more money. The state dictates that the school with the highest free and reduced percentage needs to receive the greatest percentage of money for students.

Gary Smith noted that to bring components of the RPC plan together it needs to be made clear that these grants and special targeted grants and existing covenants would transfer.

The RPC members gave their consensus to the Finance Subcommittee recommendation that all the grants, upon formation of the RSU, become part of the RSU.

Linda Laughlin provided a summary of the work of the Educational Programming Subcommittee. There have been two meetings of the Subcommittee since the RPC last met. Two new recommendations are included for this evening. Lennie Goff, Director of Transportation for Messalonskee, has been working with the state on routing software. He brought in a comprehensive report of what new transportation would look like in the new RSU. With combining five transportation systems, the savings would be in the bus routes, as some bus routes could be eliminated. One of the biggest needs would be a wash bay facility. The different contract groups would be the big challenge for bus drivers.

Nora Murray noted that the Subcommittee also met and talked about high school programming for a bell schedule. They ended up talking about a common school calendar and did take a vote for one school calendar. If students were taking advantage of different courses in the region, would it be at an advantage to have a common bell schedule? If there were to be some scheduled time between some of the periods then that would allow for transportation time.

Ms. Murray also noted that Waterville, Winslow, and Messalonskee did have many conversations about combining special education administration and how they could best maximize some of the services provided, as well as staff. They reviewed statistics from 2003-04. They met with special education directors to discuss what issues would need to be reviewed. There is no recommendation at this point. The Subcommittee, with special education directors, is now in the process of collecting more data.

Peter Thiboutot noted that the special education director has the personal contact with family and knows personal issues and often avoids litigation as situations arise. The same can be said for transportation, as the bus drivers know the children.

Linda Laughlin reviewed the recommendations of the Educational Programming Subcommittee.

1. We recommend that a common bell schedule be adopted to open opportunities for high school programming.
2. The transportation system will be designed to allow students to access programs across the RSU.

Eric Haley asked if it is the recommendation that the RSU take up the issue of common bells and common schedules.

Linda Laughlin noted that that is not a recommendation at this point.

Nora Murray noted that a common bell schedule would be appropriate for the sharing of courses.

Robin Colby stated that at times the schedules are similar but there is a difficulty in trying to share students. When there is a semester schedule versus an every other day schedule, the sharing of students will be an issue.

Eric Haley recommended that the new RSU Board deal with the scheduling issue.

Nora Murray noted that what was discussed was the opportunity to share courses at the three high schools.

Eric Haley noted that it doesn't make sense to him that an RSU is being created that would have different schedules.

Linda Laughlin noted that the issue is that there is a vision statement that could send the RSU in a different direction. What are the needs? If you have a vision statement that requires everybody on the same schedule, then so be it. The vision of trying to put everybody on the exact schedule probably would not be realistic.

Eric Haley noted that it would make sense that the RPC recommend the RSU optimize opportunities for students by looking at schedules and buildings, etc.

Doug Eugley asked why the schedules don't all line up.

Jim Morse noted that it does make sense in terms of lining up the beginning and end of the days. The internal schedules of these three high schools require conversations that belong with the RSU Board and not here. What needs to happen to align these high schools? There is a tremendous amount of data that supports the actual scheduling of students and the way it is currently being done. He noted that Eric Haley is right in stating that this issue belongs with the RSU.

Jim Morse noted that there are 118 students who were able to take college courses. There is only one week that overlaps in semesters. If the RSU is on an AB schedule, then that course has to parallel with AB schedule. It is more difficult as opposed to a semester schedule.

Doug Eugley asked if a student wants to take college courses then the student would want to attend Messalonskee, as that schedule aligns with the college schedule.

Jim Morse noted that Messalonskee would have the most students taking college courses because Messalonskee's semester schedule lines up with the college schedule.

Elaine Miller noted that it is more difficult in Winslow because of the AB block. You are seeing more and more push and more and more money from the state to pay for those courses. Kids have credit for college courses without paying. It is not an easy answer. For most of us who tackled the schedules in high schools, it has taken years to do that.

Nora Murray noted that they felt the greatest balance for sharing those opportunities would be the school calendar and the building schedule.

Elaine Miller noted that with the current bell schedule some of the students are arriving late for classes.

Eric Haley noted that right now Messalonskee and Waterville can share Robin Colby, a Latin teacher, because she is at Messalonskee in the morning and in Waterville in the afternoon. With the morning and afternoon schedules, it is possible to share a teacher but not to share students.

At this time Elaine Miller asked if there were questions from the audience.

James Jurdak, resident of Oakland, stated that at the last meeting he asked for financial data. Specifically, he requested copies of each SAU's detailed worksheet of the over/under EPS for both FY 2007 and FY 2008. Also requested were copies of each SAU's student enrollments for the past five years, by school and by grade. He also asked for any information that is available on how consolidating the five SAUs will impact the over/under EPS, reduce other costs, improve educational opportunities and performance for students, and improve operational efficiencies. He indicated that he has received the requested information from MSAD 47, but not yet from China, Vassalboro, Waterville, and Winslow. He said he knows it is a lot of work, but he would like to see some data.

Regarding contracts, he stated that there is no way he would ratify that contract as presented. He stated he thinks the RPC has a lot more homework to do.

In response to Mr. Jurdak, relevant to pay and contract issues, Dennis Keschl stated that what is legal and not legal will get decided by the courts. The Legislature by mandate dictates the entry-level teachers' salary at \$30,000, while at the same time there may have been teachers with more experience at \$30,000.

Phil St. Onge noted that the union didn't negotiate that.

Mike Thurston noted that nothing like this has ever been to arbitration. So we have no idea how this would play out.

Lauchlin Titus asked how many RPC members have laid awake thinking about this consolidation. He did last Saturday night. At 1:00 a.m. he got up and started typing a letter and sent it to Libby Mitchell and Lori Fowle. Most of the things that were articulated in frustration were discussed tonight. Libby Mitchell will address this in the Legislature. He wants the RPC to discuss child indebtedness. We have been doing this in a real feel good situation. We have to know what one office looks like with one superintendent. As a private citizen it is my responsibility to see this.

Jim Morse thanked Mr. Titus for sharing his letter and noted that there are a number of other issues that need to be addressed tonight. This was the last official meeting of the RPC because there had to be a plan out by December 1. The work of the RPC is far from done. We need to be thinking about future meeting dates. We are coming into December. We have accomplished all of the components of the plan that the Governance Subcommittee was designed to work out and approve, other than what happens if a member votes the RSU down. There are two items to discuss.

1. Do we want to form an information committee to discuss how we can distribute information to citizens other than the web site?
2. Future meeting dates –to continue to address issues.

Dennis Keschl said he thinks an information committee makes sense. He and his Selectboard in Belgrade have been considering ways for public awareness. They are considering a town get together at Belgrade Central School, with the Selectboard, School Board members, and the Superintendent, to answer questions and give a status report regarding the consolidation issue. They are discussing these and other approaches to educating the public about consolidation. He noted that they distributed 300-500 copies of the informational sheet at the election on November 6. He believes the information committee make sense.

Nora Murray suggested an information piece in principals' newsletters.

Jack Sutton noted that he thinks the information meetings are fine, but until the information is available to present at those meetings gets to the heart of Lauchlin's letter, it is a waste of time.

Lori Fowle noted she feels the same. She feels she doesn't have enough information for a public forum in her town. We can get out there as much as we want, but right now we don't have information.

Something else we have done in Vassalboro is Lauchlin Titus has gone home from every meeting and has typed an informational newsletter. It's been very informative. People are informed and all get the same information.

Phil St. Onge asked if people are engaged yet. When it gets to Election Day people will have a lot of questions.

In response to this, Dennis Keschl said, “Are people engaged? I think people are interested. The problem is that they don’t have access to information.” A lot of the questions that he receives are about savings. These are very valid questions. “The answer I have come up with is when you start looking at those numbers as they relate to savings in consolidation and the formation of the RSU, it does not look good. You will not see a lot of savings. If you want people to support something like this concept of consolidating schools, you should not focus just on savings. All of the information I have read and am reading about regionalization is that you first look at what quality of services you can provide at the same cost, and then in the long-term look at potential savings as you move forward. I think that savings was the focus of this effort and not service quality improvements. People believe what the Governor has said; \$36 million will be saved . . . and from what I can tell, no one believes that the savings will be there in the short term (three to five years) or perhaps even in the longer term. I have heard it time and time again we will not see any savings. Consequently, because the savings have been “booked” in the budget, the educational quality may actually be impacted negatively.”

Lauchlin Titus noted that the checklist shows that we have done a lot. We need to do a piece for the Sentinel. We have done a lot of work and identified barriers. He will draft a letter for submission to the Sentinel.

The next meeting of the RPC is scheduled for Thursday, December 6, 2007 at Vassalboro Community School in Vassalboro.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.