

Draft Minutes – April 13, 2017 Meeting

Vocational Education Advisory Committee

Plainfield Town Offices

The April 13, 2017 meeting of VEAC, held at the Plainfield town offices, was called to order at 10:06 a.m. by Chair John Sears of Hawley (presiding). Also present were Paula King, Plainfield – Kayce Warren, Ashfield – Suzanne Crawford, Mohawk Regl. – Beth Bandy, Charlemont – Robin Pease, Central Office - and David Newell, clerk.

The minutes of the March 7 meeting of VEAC, with revisions earlier tendered by John Sears, were approved by unanimous vote.

John reported on the presentation made at the April Mohawk school committee (which David also attended). He felt the committee reacted positively, and the presentation, though brief, was effective. David reported that gas bills were in the mail, and that he had sent the assessments for March-May to Mike K. at the central office and bills should be out shortly (payable in April). Kayce reported a +15% voke ed increase for Ashfield, while Paula and John reported that Plainfield and Hawley appropriations were expected to decrease for FY 18. Suzanne suggested to Beth that it would be helpful for Charlemont to forward a vote certificate to Mohawk respecting Charlemont's decision on 'preferred voke school(s)', and Beth agreed to get this done.

The final spreadsheet detailing FY 18 voke applications was distributed and reviewed. It appears that there will be 5 new students at Smith (1 Plain., 2 Ash., 2 Charl.) plus 1 from Buckland and 1 from Shelburne. The large map was brought out, and current and new students plotted. Two 'realities' affecting FY 18 Smith busing were evident to all: 1) We are virtually certain to need two Smith vans next year; 2) It appears highly likely that we will want to offer busing to the 1 returning and 2 new students from Buckland and Shelburne, given the economics involved.

It appears there will be 9 new students at Tech (Ash. 7 & Charl. 2). This will create challenges for FY 18 busing. It is hoped that Tech can transport several Charlemont students again, next year. In Ashfield, it appears a second van (or an upgrade to a mini-bus) will be needed. Robin agreed to work with David to examine (using routing software) the South Tech and Smith route options (and see if the mini-bus option is viable and what the best Smith routing configurations might be).

David shared his telephone discussion with Jay Sullivan (DESE) noting, in particular, Mr. Sullivan's desire to have our four towns formally declare a choice of 'preferred vocation school(s)'. A letter will be forthcoming.

The revised draft (3-17-17) of the Mohawk agreement amendment was discussed, and it was noted that Mohawk's counsel felt the draft was in good order. David, Kayce and John discussed a joint legal review by Hawley and Ashfield town counsel (Donna MacNichol), and it was agreed to bring this suggestion to both selectboards with the suggestion that the two towns split the legal bill. Beth and Paula reported that their towns utilized the same counsel (viz. 'K. P. Law Firm').

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the timeline for moving the amendment forward. There was a sense of meeting that it not be sent to the Mohawk school committee for the May and June annual meetings. After considering that it could be sent to towns for special town meeting approval, it was generally agreed that it should be sent to Mohawk, perhaps as early as this fall, and brought to the towns at their 2018 annual town meetings.

David distributed an eight-page document which discusses the amendment and related information about the four-town 'system', VEAC policy recommendations, and committee organization. This document will be

put together as a small brochure and made available to town and school officials. There was some excellent discussion, a number of suggested improvements offered and a consensus that David should work with John and they should prepare a revised draft for the next meeting.

It was felt best by all that Michael's presence would be helpful at the next meeting. John offered to interact with Michael and examine possible June meeting dates and get back to the committee with a date. It was agreed that the next meeting will be a morning meeting at Plainfield.

Following this, the committee unanimously voted to adjourn which was done at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

David Newell
Clerk, VEAC

[First draft 5-15-17]