

## **Questions/Statements Pertaining to Addition/Withdrawal of Grades with Responses**

**The Addition/Withdrawal of Grades Referendum to be held on Thursday, November 16, 2017 separate from a dissolution referendum which may or may not take place early next year. On Thursday's referendum, the vote is whether combining all of the Chaplin, Hampton, and Scotland students into a single district is better than leaving them as four separate districts as they now are.**

**All schools remain open but cost savings and efficiencies due to economies of scale are realized and educational opportunities are increased. For this reason, the Additional/Withdrawal of Grades Study Committee recommends a "yes" vote to add the grades to the region. A full report can be obtained on each town's website.**

### **Possible Outcomes**

- 1. If Addition/Withdrawal of grades vote is a "yes," Pre-K through grade 12 from all three towns becomes a single regional district. From that point, If a dissolution vote does not happen (if the dissolution committee recommends not dissolving RD11), or if it does go to a vote but dissolution is voted down, the Pre-K through 12 district remains. But if there is a dissolution and it passes, the district dissolves.**
- 2. If the Addition/Withdrawal of grades vote is a "no" no changes will be made to the current districts (status quo). From that point if dissolution does not go to a vote, or if it goes to a vote and does not pass, we remain with status quo.**

**The following are statements or questions asked (with responses) pertaining to the Addition/Withdrawal of grades process.**

- 1. The number of FTE's does not accurately explain the \$700,000 in savings that are in the report.**

**Another person can't/doesn't see how this plan is going to save money – not enough changes to save money. Another person is concerned about numbers. It seems like census decline is the biggest reason for budget savings.**

The savings is largely realized in combining administration and functional efficiencies, not reduction of FTE's. The budgets were built using the current budget figures for 2017-2018 and cost to each town was calculated using prospective enrollment information provided by the administration of each current school, CES, HES, PHMHS, and SES.

- 2. a) Scotland's numbers are wrong in the report – off by \$192,000.**  
**b) All numbers used were gross numbers – did it include grants?**

a) This statement was made by a citizen who was not using gross educational cost numbers for their calculation.

The budget committee used gross cost numbers (which do not include grants or offsets) for the calculation of cost to each town for the sake of comparison. Each town has various grants and offsets that apply to reduce their gross education costs. These grants and offsets vary from town to town and year to year making them unreliable for inclusion in future budgeting. These grants and offsets will provide additional savings for the towns over the numbers presented in the report.

b) No, please see previous question response.

**3. Concerned about the current debt of SES but then on the hook for the debt/capital expenses for three other schools.**

Scotland carries current town debt for their building construction approximately 10 years ago and will continue their town obligation.

The new Regional District 11 would assume the obligation of the capital expenses of all four buildings. CES, HES, and PHMHS all have a current capital improvements plan that is projected 5 years into the future. Maintenance and improvements on these buildings have been completed according to that schedule. Future capital improvements have been included in the presented budget. SES does not have a capital improvements schedule, however, the committee recognizes that an older building with 10 year old improvements may also have capital needs that have not been recognized and scheduled. Future capital improvements to any of the four buildings will benefit all three towns and, as such, the cost of that benefit will be authorized and shared by all three towns according to the presented plan.

The presented plan states that RD11 will form a capital improvement committee consisting of six members as follows: three members from the RD11 BOE (one from each town) and one member from each participating town Board of Finance or Board of Selectmen (town members to be designated by town boards of selectmen). The capital improvement committee will review and approve all capital improvement projects in excess of \$100,000 and repairs in excess of \$25,000. This committee will ensure that repairs and improvements are responsibly managed to mitigate financial risk for all three towns.

**4. Appendix 6 – would like more information and detail – general person can't understand what this means.**

In calculating the budget for future years (2019 through 2023), the budget committee utilized a formula that is as follows: (Last year's budget \* 101%) - (\$3,000 \* projected student enrollment reduction)

2018-19 = 0% increase

2019-20 = (13,716,260.07 \* 101%) - (20 \* 3,000) = \$13,793,422.67

2020-21 = (13,793,422.67 \* 101%) - (20 \* 3,000) = \$13,871,356.90

2021-22 = (13,871,356.90 \* 101%) - (20 \* 3,000) = \$13,950,070.47

2022-23 = (13,950,070.47 \* 101%) - (20 \* 3,000) = \$14,029,571.17

**5. Did we look at the elementary pay scales when building the budget?**

No, all staff will be brought in to the RD11 current contracts. The budget committee utilized an average cost per FTE based on the current staff at RD11, including benefits.

**6. Had it been discussed to regionalize beyond just the three towns?**

The statutory charge of the committee is to recommend whether grades should be added to or withdrawn from the existing region. However, there was discussion about such possibilities which would exist and still be investigated in the future. The administration is looking into and has received some interest from other towns to add Parish Hill as a school of choice.

**7. Why were more options of school structure not looked at - outsourcing 9 – 12, bring up grades 5 – 6?**

Other options were considered as explained in the final report. Of these options, the final recommendation was considered the best (and only) option that falls within the charge of this committee. "Bringing up" Grades 5-6 was considered and dismissed. The elementary schools are having similar "low enrollment" issues and this option would aggravate that problem

**8. Why didn't we look at closing one of the elementary schools as part of our report?**

The committee agrees that closing an elementary school would be an additional cost savings. However, the tri-town survey showed there was a strong opposition in every town to closing its elementary school. Adding that to our recommendation would have surely ended in a "no" vote on the referendum, undermining the committee's intent to save money and improve education.

Closing a school in the future is still a possibility, but according to the plan, will only happen if all towns vote to do so in a referenda. The committee chose to recommend actions that will be beneficial immediately while still leaving room for these decisions in the future.

**9. Did we even look at regionalizing then outsourcing our grades 9 – 12?**

Yes. As with many other options, if the referendum passes, tuitioning out grades 9-12 is still an option, as it was before the study. Tuitioning out these students would result in a closure of one or more schools, therefore, would have to pass referenda in all three towns. The committee focused on the least amount of controversial disturbance with the most benefit, leaving and creating as many future opportunities as possible.

**10. Is there a statute that states there needs to be a referendum to close one of the elementary schools? Another person – wouldn't authority of building/grounds or closing a school fall to the regional district board?**

The committee is unaware of a statute that states there needs to be a referendum question to close a school. According to CT statute 10-47b, if the referendum passes, the committee's recommended plan shall be implemented. The committee specifically added the referendum requirement to that plan in order to protect the schools and force a referendum that must pass in all three towns before a school is closed.

**11. Provide the statutory reference that states that the report needs to be followed.**

CT statute 10-47b.

**12. Has the Board considered a town's losing a Board of Education – was it considered to keep the current BOE structure?**

Statute 10-47b states that if the towns affirm the expansion, the town boards of education shall be dissolved.

**13. Why couldn't we write the report that elementary teachers would keep their jobs? Another person asked, If we truly plan to hire the current teachers why couldn't we have included it in the report? Another person stated, Unusual that our new superintendent**

**would have the job of hiring all the staff. Current staff would like reassurance of their jobs. Another person, Could RD 11 BOE state that all current teachers keep their jobs? Another person – You are willing to dictate facility responsibilities but not staffing.**

After receiving this feedback at the hearings, the Regional District 11 Board of Education has met and passed a motion to hire all teachers and paraprofessionals who are currently working in the three elementary schools. Staffing will be fluid based on the needs of the schools, as it is now. If positions need to be reduced, the same procedure that is in place now will be followed.

**14. If our focus wasn't to save money, what was our job?**

The committee's responsibility was to study and make recommendations pertaining to addition or withdrawal of grades to or from the regional district. The committee agreed that maintaining or improving education in a fiscally responsible manner would be its focus of study. If no options were advisable, the committee would recommend no change.

**15. If we looked at regionalization as a way to better educate our students, how does cutting cost do that? ( special ed, maintenance)**

Cost cutting was achieved in several ways. One was by using the economy of numbers. Another, by eliminating redundancy where possible. We were also able to combine positions with an eye toward reducing the number of insurance packages provided to employees.

**16. What happens if Addition/Withdrawal passes and Dissolution passes?**

If the addition of grades passes and dissolution passes, the vote for the dissolution of the region will prevail and the region will dissolve. However, the dissolution vote will only happen if the Dissolution Study Committee recommends dissolving the region.

**17. Page 7 has no FTE listed by Pupil Services Director? The last sentence on that page should be RD 11 BOE instead of committee?**

Although there is no FTE listed, one FTE for Pupil Services Director was included in the budget. Also, Regional District 11 Board of Education should be inserted into the last sentence on page 7 instead of the word "committee".

**18. We said that a majority of savings would come from cutting down administration, but the line in the proposed budget shows an increase in that line.**

There is an increase in the administrative office positions because special services faculty who will work in more than one school are listed there with the pupil services director.

**19. Is Chaplin losing an IT person?**

It was not the committee's intention to take an IT person from Chaplin. The position may be reconfigured as an IT department is developed for the district.

**20. RD 11 holds on to surplus funds as opposed to the elementary schools who return them to the towns. What would happen if addition passes?**

RD 11 gives surplus funds back to the towns by applying them to the town's assessments and by transferring no more than 1% of the budget to the capital nonrecurring account.

**21. The state will only fund one school readiness grant because there will only be one program.**

This is not accurate. Mr. Henrici, Superintendent of Region 11, spoke with Harriet Feldhauser of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. She assured him that the Towns will not lose their grants as long as they continue to have a School Readiness Council with the required membership.

**22. Why is there no certification of the report from the State Board of Ed?**

The following link will open a letter from the SBE which states that the certification is not required and only applies to a temporary regional district.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1O27II0IOFOagLXqCE4QfS8ThOB91-PYE>