

NEWRY WITHDRAWAL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

Wednesday, August 6, 2015

Present: Committee members: Jim Sysko (Chair), Bonnie Largess, William Andrews, Gary Wight

Educational consultant: Dr. Mark Eastman

Community members: Alison Aloisio, Brooks Morton, Tama Drown

Absent: Legal consultant: Dan Stockford

Open Session Proceedings:

Meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm by Chair, Jim Sysko.

The minutes of the June 23rd meeting were reviewed. **Jim moved for approval of the minutes; Gary Wight seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Citizens' Comments: Jim noted that comments may be made at any time during the meeting.

Old Business: none

New Business:

a) Review of the letter dated July 15, 2015 from D.O.E. Commissioner to SAD 44 responding to SAD 44's request that the withdrawal process be stopped: Mark Eastman read the Commissioner's response letter to those in attendance which, among other things, explains that he does not have the authorization to suspend the withdrawal process.

Bonnie Largess stated that the School Board has not met since receipt of this response letter; the Board's next meeting is scheduled for August 24th.

Mark noted that the Commissioner, in his letter, spoke of timeliness and good faith negotiations, and with that in mind, Mark presented a timeline that he put together reflecting on the process to date. Mark pointed out that looking at this timeline, it seems like Newry's proposals are being ignored, and that the actions of SAD 44 is not supportive of good faith negotiations process which the Commissioner talks about in his letter. Jim added that he sent an email to David Murphy to see if he would ensure that the counterproposal would be received the next day; but instead of the counterproposal, this committee received a copy of the letter SAD 44 sent to the commissioner. The committee expressed their frustration with how SAD 44 has dragged this process out.

b) Comparison of Proposals: Using a summary sheet he created, Mark compared SAD 44's July 23, 2015 proposal with their February 23, 2015 proposal, section by section. One change Mark noted was that Newry's language regarding the "Stabilization Fund" and "funds for promoting fairness in school funding and quality in education" was crossed out and instead July 23rd document references a "Non-Member Participation Payment Targeted Fund" and refers to Newry as a non-member participant in the school district. Mark noted that the funding formula in the new proposal is the same as the February proposal, and that the total dollar amount that Newry would pay in this scenario is actually more than what Newry currently pays.

Mark and William Andrews pointed out that it seems that SAD 44's strategy is to slow the process down enough that an agreed upon proposal cannot be ready for the state-wide Election Day this November and would have to be postponed until November 2016.

c) The Commissioner's Offer to Have a Mediator: Jim noted that the Commissioner's office was mentioned in a letter addressed to SAD 44 and not directly to this Withdrawal Committee. Two potential issues that may result from the Commissioner's letter:

1) Does SAD 44 want to request a cost sharing?

Page 2 of 2

2) If unable to negotiate in good faith this this Withdrawal Committee, is SAD 44 willing to choose a mediator?

Tama Drown stated on record that she thinks that it is very obvious that they have not in the past, and do not seem willing to in the future, negotiate in any way in good faith; they will not and are not doing it.

William reminded the group that as they stated in the beginning, their goal is to keep this withdrawal from happening; and they have been faithful to that goal. At some point a formal motion may need to be made asking SAD 44 to sit with this group to find a mediator.

Mark explained the process of cost-sharing negotiations: If consensus is received in regards to a cost-sharing

committee, it then goes to a public hearing, then to the district referendum vote – that would change the cost sharing for each town in the district if a change is made. The process begins with a letter from the superintendent to each town in the district instructing them to appoint people to serve on the committee, issues are identified, and then strategies are discussed as a group to solve the issues; once consensus or majority is reached, it moves forward.

William moved that this Withdrawal Committee, via Mark or Jim, communicate with SAD 44 Negotiating Committee that we would like to jointly select a mediator to carry forward to get this process started because we recognize that there has been no progress in the many months we've been at it. Jim seconded the motion. In discussion, Bonnie offered to ask that cost sharing be added to the agenda for the August 24th School Board meeting. Following discussion, the motion passed unanimously. William suggested that it be made clear at the outset that the cost of the mediator is shared equally between the Newry and SAD 44.

d) Date for next meeting:

The next meeting of the Newry Withdrawal Committee is scheduled for 5pm August 20th at the Newry Town Office. If Dan Stockford is not back from vacation on the 20th, then this meeting will take place on Tuesday, August 25th.

e) Financial Report: Jim reported that there is a remaining balance of \$18,900 left from the \$50k approved for the withdrawal process.

Adjournment – Gary moved to adjourn; Bonnie seconded. The motioned passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:01 pm.