

At 5:30 the meeting was called to order.

In attendance were committee members Jim Sysko, Brooks Morton, Bonnie Largess, William Andrews and Attorney Dan Stockford.

Minutes of the 11/5/14 meeting were approved.

Brooks Morton will develop the minutes, Jim Sysko will prepare the agendas.

Tama Drown will help maintain the website.

Jim Sysko distributed an information packet including;

A list of committee questions for Dan Stockford,

Financial spreadsheets comparing seven similar Maine School Districts,

E-mails and attachments from Paula Gravelle, School Finance Coordinator for the

Maine Department of Education with spreadsheets showing the possible scenario's

regarding cost sharing formula changes for RSU #44,

And historical data relating to the 1991 withdrawal plan.

Dan Stockford responded to prepared questions submitted by the committee.

#1 Q. Assuming Newry withdraws, can citizens vote at the annual town meeting to provide more money to RSU #44 than is required to cover our students tuition?

A. Yes, (a) Citizens can raise additional funds to support the school district. (b) Provisions can be agreed to for funds beyond the State tuition rate as part of the withdrawal negotiations. Any alternative funding would be in the negotiated agreement with the school of guaranteed acceptance. After the affective date of withdrawal, the Law requires an agreement with a school unit for ten years to accept any student Newry chooses to send it, called the school of guaranteed acceptance.

#2 Q. Can Newry vote to pay more than the state tuition rate to a private or other educational institutions?

A. The State has a statute that applies to private school tuition rates that is more restrictive than rules applied to public schools. The state calculates an individual tuition rate for each private school based on a predetermined insured value factor.

The school unit can pay an additional fifteen percent as a maximum that could be contributed to a private school. A school administrative district is not privy to pay tuition to a private school.

If Newry withdraws it would have the potential to allow for school choice. The Newry school committee would have the ability, by policy, to allow and decide how school choice is to be exercised.

The school committee could start at the state tuition rate a pay the maximum allowed.

If a school exceeds the allowed amount the parents would be responsible to provide the balance.

#3 Q. The committee asked for recommendations for an educational consultant.  
A. Dan Stockford recommended two candidates.

#4 Q. Does the law require our committee to negotiate with whoever the school board chooses ?

Is it required that it be a committee of school board members or is the Superintendent and his legal council allowed?

A. There is no rule, but a precedent has been set by the commissioner that negotiations should occur, and a negotiated agreement would result in a committee chosen by the school board.

#5 Q. What substantive matters do we need to work on?

A. This will be addressed in detail by the educational consultant that will help to develop a plan for educating Newry children.

#6 Q. Can we meet in executive session in matters concerning negotiations?

A. Yes, for certain aspects of the negotiation the details would jeopardize our position if made public beforehand.

Additional questions.

#7 Q. Is there a way we could pay more? Is it possible to set up a private foundation funded with Town revenues to administer grant money to a school district, not tied to tuition, but additional enrichment money?

A. It does not have to be that ornate, this process is a negotiation so any additional funds could be part of the negotiations any final agreement would not have to be tied to tuition rates.

#8 Q. If the commissioner received a plan that would hurt the school district would he deny the plan?

A. It is not likely that he would make the decision based on those grounds, he is more interested in Newry's education plan. He will make his decision based on the plans merits.

Various questions were asked and discussion ensued on the general purpose and procedures of the committee and the relationship that the lawyer and the educational consultant will play in the process.

Based on the strong recommendation of our legal counsel Mark Eastman was nominated and affirmed through a unanimous vote to be hired as our educational consultant.

It was determined that part of the next meeting would be in executive session with Dan Stockford and Mark Eastman to discuss the confidential aspects of negotiations.

The next meeting will be held Thursday, November 20, 2014, at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 6:03 pm