

Chester Board of Finance
Special Meeting, March 19, 2015
Page 1 of 3

Call to Order

The Board of Finance held a Special Meeting on March 19, 2015 at the Chester Town Hall, 203 Middlesex Avenue, Chester, Connecticut. Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:22 PM.

Introduction and seating of members

Those in attendance were Virginia Carmany, Bob Gorman, Charlie Park, David Cohen, Lori Ann Clymas (seated for J. Rannestad). Jennifer Rannestad arrived during the meeting and Lori Ann was then seated for Joyce Aley.

Approval of Minutes – February 19, 2015

Motion by Gorman, seconded by Park, to approve February 19, 2015 Minutes as written. Unanimously Approved.

Reports

First Selectman's Report on Regionalization of Schools PK-12
First Selectman Meehan reported on the following-

Main Street Project Bids are out and due back on April 9th. This has been advertised in the Hartford Courant and on the Department of Administrative Services website.

A status update was given on the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. Still waiting for DEEP approvals.

Regionalization of Schools PK-12

Meehan noted the 3 Elementary Schools have each voted to request Region 4 to consider the addition of Pre-K6 to District 4. He noted he has been attending all the workshops. The overall view of the project now is that there is a strong consensus that a regionalization would be beneficial to our communities from an educational point of view as well as the quality of education and improving it from what it already is. Declining enrollment was discussed. It was also noted there are benefits from a management and teachers' points of view as well.

Meehan noted at the last workshop different options were presented to the group. For a 3 year period the elementary schools would remain unchanged relative to grade levels,

reassignment of staff and any issue of closing. After 3 years, predictions of declining enrollment will be re-evaluated and possible grade reorganizations might be considered. That was agreed upon last Saturday and left to the administration and attorneys working with Region 4 to draft that language in a proposed plan. The unanswered part of that is the financial aspects of declining enrollments and average daily membership. He noted there are a lot of financial benefits for Chester because of declining enrollments. Budgets for the next 5 years were reviewed. These budgets were based on percentage increases, costs, etc. Meehan reviewed various aspects of these budgets. Conversely, Deep River whose ADM's will remain stable for awhile don't decline until 2021. The concern for Chester is closing the elementary school. The concern for Deep River is that they will take the hit for shifting ADM's. These concerns were discussed in detail at last Saturday's workshop. Meehan reviewed 2 formulas that were proposed. One proposal was payment in lieu of taxes to Deep River for the 2 school sites. There is also a concern that this will be done through an interlocal agreement which means Chester could not take the credit for any payments made to Deep River against the MBR. The 2nd formula was that the loss to Deep River would be split 50/50 or maybe based on ADM between Essex and Chester for just the period of Deep River's upside down in declining enrollments which is 4 years.

Declining enrollments were briefly reviewed. It was noted this is happening faster in Essex and Chester than it is in Deep River.

Meehan noted there was a 3rd option which was to take the 3 numbers and average them for a period of 4 years to a point where Deep River no longer has a situation of declining enrollments.

First Selectman Meehan noted this is a long way from being decided. His concern was that the only way the elementary school could be taken away from Chester would be by a referendum vote of the people of Chester, not by a District vote or District referendum. This should be included in the draft proposal. They also discussed 3 or 4 years of transition.

Bob Gorman asked who actually makes this decision. Meehan noted Shipman & Goodman will draft a plan and present it to the working group which consists of the 9 members of District 4, members of the local elementary school boards plus the 3

selectmen. The draft plan would then go before the 9 members of Region 4 who either send it to referendum or public hearing which could be late June. He felt June might be a rush. Meehan noted there is a time period in the Statutes that once the 3 elementary school boards vote unanimously to request Region 4 to add the elementary schools to Region 4, there is 45 to 90 day window when the plan has to be done. Meehan reviewed a couple things to keep in mind regarding teachers' contract negotiations and the budget cycle.

Meehan noted this is still evolving. The plan is constantly changing. If after 4 years projections aren't close, the plan can be amended through the appropriate process.

There was discussion regarding what would happen to the elementary school. It was suggested to put the Library in that building if the elementary school is closed. Chairman Carmany noted that was not the discussion for tonight's meeting, although she understands those concerns. She felt that discussion was too preliminary. Charlie Park noted he was just trying to look at this from fiscal responsibility.

Meehan noted the important thing is to get people involved and to have local workshops and public hearings in the local communities.

Audience of Citizens – none.

Adjourn

Motion by Clymas, second by Gorman, to adjourn at 7:58 PM. Unanimously Approved.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith R. Brown". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Respectfully submitted,".

Judith R. Brown, Recording Secretary