

Peacham School Community Meeting  
Sunday April 22, 2007  
3:00 – 5:00 PM

UNAPPROVED

**Present:** School Board members-Jo Anne Post, chair, Jean Dedam; Community Members - Neal Gombas, Jane Woodhouse, David Magnus, Dave Stauffer, Julie Hansen, Marceya Roy, Judy Chypre, Wendy Morgan, Debra Vogini, Bruce Courtot, Cathy Browne, Karen Joyce, Tom Joyce, Kate Campbell, Diana Senturia, Jean Clark, Nick Comerci

Jo Anne opened the meeting at 3:10. Introductions around. Kate Campbell from Barnet had seen the article in the paper and asked to attend as an interested person.

**Procedural Update:** Jo Anne asked that committees check with the library and school during regular hours of operation to schedule meetings. With the number of minutes for each committee plus regular board meetings and the monthly full group meetings, the bulletin boards are becoming too congested. It was decided that three binders would be placed at the public locations (table inside the town hall by the school bulletin board, inside at the library and at the school). Meeting notices can be posted on the bulletin boards in a smaller format. Each committee is responsible for posting its minutes and meeting notices. Jo Anne will send electronic versions out to the email list. Jo Anne will check with Wendy Nelson and Suzanne Rhodes about posting to the school website rather than Diana's Peacham.net site unless the school site is not going to be activated soon. Two committee corrections are that Jock Gill is chair of the data committee and Mark Clough is the chair of the choice committee.

### **Committee Reports**

**Merger Committee** - Jane Woodhouse reporter - They decided they would start with Danville and Barnet, they would look only at public schools and that they would look at any added costs such as additional transportation as a separate item. Rob Ide had been in touch with Fred Kitchell who said the board would be interested in a conversation. Jane said the chair of the Barnet board wants more information about the different levels of merger described by Winton Goodrich from the VSBA and would present those to the Barnet board first. If there is interest, then follow-up discussions with the committee could be scheduled. Barnet is having space problems now. The committee feels it needs to have a description of the components or philosophy of education the Peacham community will want to see.

Discussion - Dave Stauffer asked how many students Peacham can hold? Cathy Browne said it had 96 at its peak. Karen noted that the committee would need to separate K-6 and 7/8 costs for a good comparison to current program. Jo Anne said that the type of merger would affect the costs in each system. A discussion of what factors influence the local and state portion of the tax rate ensued. Wendy noted that each committee needs a document with the same basic information on tax rates, enrollment, census data etc.

**Legislative Committee** – Jo Anne Post – Jean and she had attended one hearing in Montpelier and Jo Anne and Bruce had attended a VIT hearing on the recent education legislation that will affect state funding. There is a hearing of the conference committee

this Thursday from 3:30-6:00 at the State House on the bill. The Senate bill had included caps that would be a disadvantage to small schools that must tuition students out and could have a special needs student with a need for high cost services. Anyone interested should attend the hearing. Dave Stauffer asked if there is not a discussion beginning on changing the tax from property to income?

**School As Is with Variations** – Cathy Browne- They first identified what they would research and decided they would not look at inclusion of upper grades as the Expansion Committee was doing that. Ideas brainstormed by the committee included pursuing grant funds through either faculty, volunteers or the town economic committee; encourage more volunteer help in the school from parents or other community members but felt the required background checks were a deterrent; look for ways to collaborate with the town to bring some functions from the town hall to the school if all the classrooms are not needed; promote use of the building for community functions to better use the facility; reduce announced tuition rates to interested families from neighboring towns, promoting affordable housing development in town to increase school population; improve technology infrastructure to increase the potential for people to make a living in the community. Discussion is in progress with selectmen on grants and offices. Need 3 pieces of data for a 25 year period to identify trends, general population, school population and affordable housing.

Discussion – Karen suggested collaboration with the library to reduce by one. Tom said that a recent study has determined that there is a lot more knowledge based home industry work occurring now than was anticipated. Dave Stauffer suggested the school give each graduating child a laptop computer or other significant benefit to draw students. Suggested the proposed observatory could be one. Different tuition options were suggested.

**School Choice** – Nick Comerci – The committee is looking first at total choice and they are researching tuition rates. 2<sup>nd</sup> is privatizing the Peacham School. Wendy is researching the legal issues on privatization. A third option would be an independent school in the building but still have choice. They are researching five areas for each option, costs, governance issues, community impact, social and educational impacts, meeting the needs of all students, transition issues.

Discussion – If the school is privatized the town would be tuition only town – Jean suggested they check with Kirby to learn what their experience has been. Question: can the town designate a private school? Jo Anne said they cannot at elementary but can at secondary level. There was a discussion of historic trends with population ups and downs. Committee needs trend data. Question: When does the number of tuitioned students meet the breaking point so that tuitions are more expensive than operating the school? Jean said that one of her concerns would be to meet the needs of children that are not on an IEP but need some extra help in specific areas? Kate Campbell said that Peacham has a good differentiated education program and the children leaving the school are well prepared. The point was made that there is a need for a discussion of values/criteria when investigating options.

**Data Committee** – Diana Senturia - reported that the committee plans to provide a consistent data base for each committee that would include trend data. Each committee should provide Jock Gill with their priority data needs.

**Expansion Committee** – Jean Dedam – Marceya Roy is the chairperson. The committee decided to investigate the possible expansion to include 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grades but not high school. The committee is collecting data on enrollment, certifications of current staff, capacity, and services that might be available from other schools. The committee plans to meet with the current teaching staff for their input and with the superintendent of schools, John Bacon. Jane suggested talking to Walden School as they are working with Danville on tech programs. Marceya discussed transition issues and partnership potential.

Discussion – Nick Comerci asked if the committee intends to survey past students about their wishes and Wendy suggested asking parents also. Jane Woodhouse said she thinks the students wishes might be different if they knew they would be staying at the school for 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade and not planning to leave after 6<sup>th</sup> the way they do now.

**Community letters** – Jo Anne asked if anyone would be willing to distribute the community letters to renters they might be aware of in town. Jean Clark agreed to take letters up to the senior apartments.

**Speakers** – It was decided not to arrange for speakers at this point but to continue with committee reports at the monthly meetings and arrange for speakers as topics become more clearly identified. Nick asked about collating and producing a final document. It was decided that each group would write up their own report. In the future, all committee reports will be given before discussion begins.

Meeting adjourned about 5:20

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Dedam