

## SANBORN REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

April 29, 2015

A special meeting of the Sanborn Regional School Board was held on Wednesday April 29, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm by Mr. Jon LeBlanc, Chairperson, in Library at Sanborn Regional High School, Kingston, NH. The following were recorded as present:

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:

Jon LeBlanc, Chairperson  
Wendy Miller, Vice-Chairperson  
Jan Bennett  
Nancy Ross  
Dustin Ramey  
Roberto Miller  
Corey Masson @ 6:15pm

ADMINISTRATORS:

Ms. Carol Coppola, Business Administrator  
Jennifer Pomykato, Director of Student Services

EXCUSED:

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

The meeting began with a salute to the flag.

### REVIEW AGENDA

Mr. LeBlanc added public comment before the end of the Board meeting.

### SEACOAST CHARTER SCHOOL– FINAL DECISION

Ms. Bennett outlined the steps taken since the last board meeting on April 15. The School Board Facilities Committee met on April 22 from 6-9:30pm. The primary item of discussion was the future of the Seacoast Charter School on the Old High School campus. Prior to the Facilities Committee meeting, that afternoon (4/22/15), the SAU Administrators, Ms. Bennett and Mr. Durso (Seacoast Charter School Headmaster) met with representatives of the Fire Department, the State Fire Marshal's office, Department of Education, and SFC Engineering to review the next steps the school board would take to extend the lease of the charter school, creating a new compliance plan. Ms. Coppola reviewed the research completed by the Business Office in preparation for the two meetings on April 22, 2015. Copies of these documents were distributed to the Board and to the public. Ms. Coppola stated that while the State Fire Marshal does not care if the District enters into a lease agreement with the Seacoast Charter, the District is obligated to fulfill the items listed on the compliance plan. This compliance plan has not changed since outlined by the Fire Marshal in November 2013. Ms. Miller stated that it appears from the documents that the District is not making money but rather covering some of the costs of keeping this building open. Ms. Coppola stated "yes". Mr. Ramey and Ms. Ross asked if the Seacoast Charter School (SCS) is interested in anything beyond a one year lease. Ms. Bennett reminded the Board that the fire marshal stated that the district is responsible as the "project manager" to oversee the corrective actions taken to meet the fire code, even though the SCS offered to act in this capacity. Ms. Miller reminded the Board that in recent years, the SCS could not meet the rent obligations. She is concerned that there

would not be funds remaining to pay the rent if they are covering the costs associated with the meeting the compliance plan. Mr. Masson asked for clarification on the plan for the SCS at the end of last year. Coppola explained that the District cannot enter into this compliance plan without the SCS. The plan was to complete the phase one requirements as outlined for the June 30, 2015 deadline. There was no discussion on completing the next phase of this compliance plan.

Mr. Ramey agreed with Ms. Ross stating that on paper, this seems to make sense to have the SCS remain on site. Mr. Ramey stated that after reviewing the details of costs related to the campus, there is a discrepancy between those numbers prepared by SCS and those numbers prepared by SCS.

Ms. Ross asked if someone were to foot the bill for the entire cost of the compliance plan, is that smart. Mr. Ramey replied that the District would be obligated to complete this plan should the SCS not be able to meet the financial obligations associated with the compliance plan. Mr. Ramey asked Ms. Coppola to explain the process should the board proceed. Ms. Coppola explained that a firm would be hired to monitor the work and stated that the Business Office has not moved forward without approval of the Board to expend funds to cover the additional costs. Mr. LeBlanc asked about the plan if the SCS agrees to fund the compliance plan, but then the SCS finds that they cannot afford to pay the costs. Ms. Coppola explained that as the owner of the building, the District would be held liable for the work, including fines and related court costs for not meeting the requirements of the compliance plan.

Ms. Ross asked about the future of this site should the Board not approve a new lease for the SCS. Ms. Bennett reminded the Board there does not need to be a vote because the Board already voted to end the SCS lease on June 30, 2015. Mr. Masson asked if this situation is because of poor planning. Ms. Bennett explained that this has been an 18 month process. Ms. Bennett stated that while the Board does not want to push out SCS kids and staff, the Board has an obligation to the taxpayers. Mr. Masson stated that there should be better plans. Ms. Miller stated that more than one year ago, the District completed the requirements for the SCS to occupy the building for the rest of this school year.

Mr. LeBlanc asked for clarification on the costs associated with the Old High School Campus. Ms. Coppola explained that whether the SCS is on campus or not, there are costs to the District but that the Board needed to weigh whether the costs and projected rental revenue are acceptable and not a tax burden to the Newton and Kingston taxpayers. Ms. Ross asked for clarification on the past fiscal year costs vs. revenue as it appears that the district's additional cost was about \$34,000. Ms. Coppola confirmed the District was responsible for this additional cost. Ms. Ross asked if the current year is the same, even though the year is not yet finished. Ms. Coppola stated that the additional cost over revenue is approximately \$15,000 to date.

#### **AD HOC COMMITTEE**

Mr. Ramey reviewed the history of the AdHoc Committee explaining that at the end of last year, the Board anticipated that the campus would not be occupied, hence the formation of the committee. Mr. Ramey reported that the committee is a balance of Newton and Kingston voter who are considering inviting Plan NH to complete a Charrette to review the needs of the district and town to come up with a plan to meet these needs. Mr. Ramey explained that the charrette is a two-day process and includes the

expertise of architects, engineers, and other professionals. Mr. Ramey continued to outline one option considered by the Ad Hoc Committee was building a 55+ community; this was not appealing. Mr. Ramey explained that engineers who attended the AdHoc committee agreed that current single story building cannot be revitalized. Mr. Ramey outlined the other options: selling the property; decide on best options for the Seminary Building; sub-divide the land. Ms. Ross asked about Chase Field's future. Mr. Ramey replied that it could be subdivided to preserve Chase Field. Mr. Ramey continued and said that the AdHoc Committee hopes to have a decision between two choices of either selling the property or removing the single story building. Mr. Ramey explained the AdHoc Committee does not want to push out the SCS, but only a long-term lease is practical which will delay any action by the Board. Ms. Coppola explained the costs are marginal between building a new building on the existing space and renovating the existing building. Mr. Ramey stated that the Committee is concerned that while the SCS might be able to make the required changes, there is a good chance the building would then be torn down.

Mr. Ramey explained that the agreement governing the Seminary building could be modified to for use other than as an educational facility. Mr. Ramey explained that facts are needed not just opinions on what is required and that four months is not enough time to prepare a plan and to secure monitoring of the compliance projects required. Various board members agreed that time is short.

Ms. Bennett thanked Mr. Ramey for his work on the AdHoc committee and agreed that it would be wise to have an outside group objectively review the options available for the Seminary building and the campus. Ms. Bennett is worried about the future of the district if the Board agreed to sell the campus. Ms. Ross stated she hopes the Charrette could be helpful even if the property is sold as the group identifies the opportunities.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Jim Baker of Newton asked about the role and responsibilities of the Seminary Trustees. Mr. Ramey explained that the Trustees sold the property to the District for \$100,000 for educational purposes. According to the agreement, the District will turn this building into a museum if no used as an educational facility. There was no language defining options if the District is not interested in creating a museum.

Mr. John N... of Newton asked if not extending the Seacoast Charter School least would mean taking \$120,000 from the budget due to this loss of revenue.

Annie Collier of Newton stated that while the Seacoast Charter School rent offsets the costs to the district, if the district is responsible for the additional \$200,000-\$300,000 for the compliance plan, then moving forward with selling or removing the structure in which the Seacoast Charter School is located makes sense. Mr. Miller explained that while there is rental revenue, the district still loses money.

Ms. Kelly Twiss of Kingston asked where the numbers came from on these reports. Ms. Coppola explained that the costs were identified by the Business Office and the Facilities Team. Ms. Twiss stated that while the charter school students attend Seacoast Charter School, they do not cost the district anything; but if they return to their districts, there is cost.

Mr. Mensch of Fremont and Chair of the Seacoast Charter School Facility Committee commented that the process could take time to complete any steps should the board vote to take action on the property. He was not aware that the Seacoast Charter School was behind in rent, but has not been on the Board for long. He commented that work could be completed while students are in school. He reminded the Board that the furnace is an issue whether the Seacoast Charter School stays or not. Mr. Mensch stated that Seacoast Charter School is desperate; there are no other options.

Mr. John N... of Newton stated that no matter what you do with the buildings, rent is money coming in, so from a taxpayer's point of view, that makes sense. Ms. Miller explained there is money coming in but that the Seacoast Charter School is a cost to the district.

Mr. LeBlanc stated this is a difficult situation that affects many people. For this reason, the Board had this special meeting to discuss this issue. He stated he is pleased that the AdHoc Committee has some options. Mr. Ramey asked if we should get numbers as to cost for the compliance plan and see if the Seacoast Charter School could cover those costs. Ms. Bennett stated that she is not in favor as it prevents the district from moving forward. Ms. Miller agreed that we need to move forward. Ms. Ross stated that she agrees that determining costs for the compliance plan and asking the Seacoast Charter School to "foot the bill" could be an option. She continued stating that the AdHoc plan will take time. Mr. Masson stated that doing the right thing at risk, but that the District is a landlord, overseeing property for which the district has liability. Mr. Masson stated he wants all of this wrapped up and to the voters next March. Mr. Masson stated that if there is no cost to the district, he is in favor of the Seacoast Charter School remaining on the campus with the expectation that they cover all costs to avoid expense to the district. Mr. Miller stated that it is time to make a decision and stated this is just prolonging the agony of a difficult decision. Mr. Miller stated that he agrees with the accuracy of the accounting figures and respects the accuracy of the Business Office. Mr. Miller stated that he cannot take money out of the district and put it into another school, especially with a default budget and personnel cuts. Mr. Miller stated this district is not in the business of subsidizing another school. Mr. LeBlanc stated if the Board were to make a motion today to allow the Seacoast Charter School to get a cost assessment of this compliance project, it would not be fair if the Board is not prepared to enter into another lease agreement for multiple years. Mr. Masson asked if true this is a multi-year plan. Other Board members stated "yes". Mr. Ramey stated that he would want the SRSD Business Office involved to ensure accurate numbers for costs of the compliance plan.

Ms. Miller made a motion with second by Mr. Masson to not extend the lease to the Seacoast Charter School. Discussion followed. Mr. Ramey asked if Mr. LeBlanc feels that this should be a multi-year lease. Mr. LeBlanc stated that with the costs and the number of related corrective steps required to meet compliance requirements, the plan cannot be completed in one year. Mr. Le Blanc stated that the Board should not lead on the Seacoast Charter School. Mr. Ramey thinks the costs may be too high and there is no guarantee that the Seacoast Charter School can/cannot afford this cost. Ms. Bennett stated that while it seems an option to extend the Seacoast Charter School least, she agrees that the District is just prolonging the decision on the next steps for this property and that the Board is obligated to the taxpayers of the District. Mr. Masson agreed that the Board is looking at years of financial obligation. Ms. Ross asked if the majority of the Board is stating that regardless of what the Seacoast Charter School

is willing to do, the Board is not willing to engage in a multi-year contract. Mr. LeBlanc stated while he would like to give Seacoast Charter School a year to find another place that does not resolve the issues discussed this evening and over the past weeks. Mr. LeBlanc reread to motion to not extend the least to the Seacoast Charter School. The vote was unanimous.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made by Ms. Ross with second by Ms. Bennett to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Sanborn Regional School Board. Vote was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 8:04pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer C. Pomykato, Recorder