

Minutes
Secondary Education Financial Planning Advisory Committee
March 1, 2021 7PM via ZOOM

Attendees: Jim Dow, Blue Hill Select Board; Matt Freedman, Brooksville School board; Jim Goodman, Penobscot School board; Charles Brenton, Penobscot Select Board; Kelly Samperi, Sedgwick School Board; Ben Astbury, Sedgwick Select Board; Michelle Berger, Surry School Board; Mark Hurvitt, Superintendent Union 93; Sally Mills, GSA Trustee; Jim Crawford, GSA Trustee; Deborah Ludlow, GSA Trustee; Samantha Politte, GSA Trustee

Guest: Jeffery Roth, Penobscot Bay Press

Ben Astbury chaired the meeting.

At 7:05PM the meeting opened and the minutes from the January meeting were approved.

1. Jim Crawford reviewed the document titled Impact of GSA Request. See attached document. This document can be refined and expanded in a working group. Things to consider adding to the document are total students per town enrolled in secondary education and total students enrolled in k-8. No questions.
2. Review of what has been covered by this committee and what are the outstanding issues which we still need to address or revisit. Since Covid struck, GSA has been unable to hold town forums to answer questions and get feedback from members of the public. We would like to hold a zoom meeting for this purpose so that citizens (who have access to all of the documentation on our website) can bring their concerns or questions to our attention.
 - A. Items we have covered and/or can put on hold:
 - Endowment Draws
 - Joint Board
 - Communications & Transparency - Financial documents are all posted on the GSA website
 - Communications with the Press at these committee meetings
 - PPP Loan - J Crawford will followup directly with J Goodman on one outstanding question regarding this.
 - B. Items to be addressed at future meetings:
 - Real Estate Holdings
 - Review the Charter of the Committee - has the committee evolved since the original charter was drafted?
 - What are other Town Academies doing in regards to budgeting and staffing?
 - What is GSA's plan if towns do not support an increased tuition?
3. Ben Astbury spoke about the makeup of the committee. Although it is a diverse committee we have all come together on common ground. The citizens of this peninsula deserve a quality high school education and we want to figure out the best way to fund that education. It is about building relationships and opening up the doors and windows so people can look in.
4. Sally Mills lead a discussion about GSA's governance and town representation. A few ideas and possibilities fell out of this discussion:
 - Joint Board. It was decided this was not the best solution. Previously the Joint Board did not have purview over the finances and that is a major element the towns want going forward. Going back to this idea does not advance our initiatives or goals.
 - Expanded Board. The more promising way forward may be an expanded board with town-appointed trustees. That is where we will focus our energies for now. Questions/Comments around this concept:
 - We would need to create a Memorandum of Understanding so all exceptions are clearly defined

- These representatives should be appointed rather than elected so there is no conflict of interest. It is the advice of the lawyers that you can not have a public election for a private position.
 - GSA would most likely accept any appointed trustee however there should be a process by which GSA can object to a nominee "for good cause."
 - Although saving money would be a welcome outcome, the appointed trustee would not advocate for a particular constituency, but would bring their experience and knowledge of their community to the table.
 - Appointed Trustees would be 7 people wired into the community - it was acknowledged that GSA does currently have many people on the board who are long standing community members. This structure would enhance that.
 - Question about the legality of Town Representatives making financial contributions to GSA and how important is that? Is that a conflict of interest?
 - Commitment and acknowledgment from the towns that there is an inherent risk to GSA but the intent is not to send someone disruptive. The towns will be endorsing these representatives. The goal is to build healthy relationships and open communications.
 - This would increase the GSA board from 14 to 21. Is that a good size for an effective board?
 - These representatives would serve on GSA standing committees and be deeply involved in GSA.
 - Public Access to Meetings. Two ideas around this were:
 - Town Appointed Trustees were responsible for reporting back to the local school boards regularly with updates on board initiatives and finances.
 - Allowing the public to come to the beginning of a meeting to ask questions or present concerns.
5. Next Steps and Future Meetings:
- April Meeting:
 - plans/discussion if GSA does not receive town support for an increased tuition
 - review the charter of this committee
 - May Meeting:
 - GSA Trustees will present a draft proposal for an Expanded Board Structure

Meeting Adjourned at 8:25PM

Next Meeting: TBD

Respectfully Submitted, S.Politte