

**KEENE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**

**DATE:** December 15, 2009

**LOCATION:** Keene High School Large Group Instruction Area, 43 Arch Street, Keene, NH

**CALLED TO ORDER:** 6:33 p.m.

**TIME ADJOURNED:** 8:12 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell, Chair
- Mrs. Carol Brown
- Mrs. Kristin Blais
- Mr. Carter Chamberlin
- Mr. Neil Donegan
- Mr. Carl Panza
- Mr. Donald Parker
- Mrs. Amy Speas

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

- Mr. Wayne Woolridge, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. William Gurney, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. John Harper, Business Administrator
- Ms. Catherine Reeves, Director of Special Education
- Mr. Paul Cooper, Director of Human Resources
- Mrs. Meredith Cargill, Director of Curriculum and Assessment
- Mr. Tom Remillard, Director of Buildings, Facilities and Ancillary Services
- Mr. Alan Chmiel, Keene High School Principal
- Mr. James Logan, Director of Cheshire Career Center
- Ms. Patricia Yoerger, Jonathan Daniels School Principal
- Mrs. Dorothy Frazier, Middle School Principal
- Mr. William Harris, Benjamin Franklin School Principal
- Mr. Richard Cate, Symonds School Principal
- Mr. Paul Huggins, Fuller School Principal
- Mrs. Gwen Mitchell, Wheelock School Principal

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

- Mrs. Dru Fox, Stenographer
- Ms. Sarah Palermo, Keene Sentinel Reporter
- Mrs. Chris Weeks, Public Information Coordinator
- Members of Public (approximately 20)

**Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.**

**1. Public Input**

None

**2. Final Report of the Administrative Structure Review Task Force of the Keene Board of Education**

Mr. Wayne Woolridge and Ms. Kristin Blais provided an overview of the task force study and its goals, speaking about budgetary concerns, the complexity of the work ahead, improvement and achievement for

all students, a balance to support operating and capital needs with the challenges being faced. He thanked the members of the committee who participated in this study, who met weekly, and whose opinions were sought and valued and the hundreds of pages of data that were reviewed:

- Bill Harris (Franklin Elementary Principal)
- Dotty Frazier (KMS Principal)
- Alan Chmiel (KHS Principal)
- Carl Panza and Kristen Blais (Keene Board of Education)
- Wayne Woolridge (Co-Superintendent of Schools)

Mr. Woolridge also thanked the following who provided support during the task force's work:

- Yi Gong (provided data analysis work)
- Brenda Finn (facilitation)
- Cathy Dieter (clerical and organizational support)

Mr. Woolridge provided a PowerPoint presentation beginning with Task Force Objectives and an explanation of *District-by-District Comparisons* in which 4 similar districts were selected and 5 additional ones were added. He explained comparative factors at the school-level and city-level and stated criterion used for making comparisons. Mr. Woolridge's PowerPoint presentation included charts and graphs detailing the following results of the study:

#### District and City Level Demographics

- District Enrollments
- 2007-2008 Early Exit and Drop Out Data by District
- The percent of Special Education by District as of 12/1/2008, with Portsmouth having the lowest and Laconia the highest rate of identified students
- Free/Reduced Participation by District
- City-level Demographics, residents below the poverty level and Keene being at the very bottom with the highest level of poverty; one district comparable in median household income and others higher
- City Level A Comparison of Per Capita Income
- City Level Comparison of Total Tax Rates and Per Capita Income and Total Tax Rate Overlay with Keene having the very highest total tax rate at 27.28%
- Cost of Living Index Comparison; Keene living index is less than average
- Keene Local and State Education Taxes as % of Total Tax reduced dramatically
- Keene % Change in Taxes raised and the Claremont decision and climbing ever since

#### District Level Staff Comparison; Limits of the Data and Comparisons; Number of Students Per Employee

- Number of Students Per Employee, with Keene averaging 5.2 per employee
- Average Number of Students Per Teacher with Keene averaging 12 per teacher
- Average Number of Students Per Aide
- Average Number of Students Per Regular Instructional Aide
- Average Number of Students Per SPED Aide
- Average Number of Students Per Aid: Comparing Keene (K-5) to Exeter (K-5)
- Students Per Non Instructional Professional
- Students Per Clerical Position
- Average Number of Students Per Clerical Position
- Number of Students Per Support Positions (Other)

- Average Number of Students Per Support Position
- Other Staffing Categories with Keene's Guidance averaging 188.6 and Library averaging 328.7 students per guidance counselor and librarian respectively
- Average K-12 Students Per Principal

#### Per Pupil Spending: High School, Middle School, Elementary

- 2007-2008 High School Cost Per Pupil with Keene being less than the state average
- Keene High School Per Pupil Cost vs. State Average Costs Since 2000
- Graph of the Difference between Keene High School Costs v state Average Costs Since 2000
- Average Cost of Principals + APs Per High School Student is \$246.79
- 2007-2008 Middle School Cost Per Pupil
- Keene Middle School Per Pupil Cost vs. State Average Costs Since 2000 with Keene being \$896, which is more than the state average
- Graph of the Difference between Keene Middle School Costs vs. State Average Costs Since 2000
- Average Cost of Principals + APs Per Middle School Student and that some schools have additional administrative positions not captured
- Per middle school students and Wayne said a little more difficult to obtain. Look at cost, longevity, experience plays in as well as salary schedule.
- Average Middle School Class Size 2008-2009 of 17.2 being at the low end of the graph
- 2007-2008 Elementary Cost Per Pupil being \$3,813 more than the state average and spending \$4.5 million more than would have using average per pupil cost
- Keene Elementary Per Pupil Costs vs. State Average Costs Since 2000
- Graph of the Difference between Keene Elementary Costs vs. State Average Costs Since 2000
- Elementary vs.. High School Per Pupil Costs An Analysis of 175 New Hampshire Districts with 27 out of 65 spending more at the high school and 38 out of 65 spending more at the elementary level
- Average Cost of Principals/APs Per Elementary Student using the 2008-2009 salary and benefits survey
- Average Elementary Principal Salary by School Size looking at 38 of the 41 elementary principals in the district with length of service playing a big role in some of Keene's salaries

#### Keene's Enrollment, Staffing and Administration Over Time

- Students Per Administrator
- Students Per Administrator
- Elementary Enrollments Since 1989
- Elementary Staff Per Principal whereas enrolments declined yet staff increased
- Middle School Enrollments Since 1989 with Keene having the smallest number of students
- Middle School Staff Per Administrator with 12% declining enrollments and 35% staffing increases
- High School Enrollments Since 1989 with 17% increase in enrollments and decrease in students per administrator
- High School Staff Per Administrator increased by 28%

A Closer Look at Keene Elementary Schools by examining average class size, comparing Keene's per pupil spending and average school size, comparing other cities spending similar amounts and prepare case studies of districts performing well.

- 2008 Average Elementary Class Size Across Districts in grades 1&2 is comparable but is lower in grades 3 and up.
- Average Elementary Class Size – Keene Policy and Current Enrollments (Sept 2009)
- Keene Average Elementary Class Sizes Since 2000 and the decreasing numbers
- Per Pupil K-5 spending Comparison with NH towns of 14,000 to 34,000 Population with Keene having 5 elementary schools
- Chart of the Average School Size Versus the Average Cost Per K-5 Pupil – Towns of Similar Population with Keene being the highest on the chart and Rochester the lowest and this slide is the reason for additional districts to be included in this study
- A Comparison of Keene and Other Districts with Small Schools/Lower Per Pupil Costs and Keene being lower in some areas
- A Look at Cities with Similar K-5 Per Pupil Spending based on eight cities above and below Keene and 22 spend more at elementary level
- 2008-2009 Average Elementary Class Size and the fewer classrooms per grade the more difficult to shift populations and duplication of costs

#### Case Studies and taking a closer look at two school districts. Exeter and Salem

- Exeter being one small district with average per pupil cost of \$13,005 and 2 schools
- Exeter has an active volunteer program and large PTO, emphasizes technology and music
- Exeter: Student/Teacher Ratio and Average Class Size difference of 1 position
- Exeter: Regular and SPED Aide Comparison with 70% of Keene's regular aides at the elementary level and 68.5% of Sped aides with Exeter having the smallest number of students/aide
- Exeter: Principal/Assistant Principal Costs very comparable
- Exeter (K-5) and Keene (K-5) NECAP Whole School Performance Reading, with Exeter at 87% proficient and Keene 78.6%
- Exeter (K-5) and Keene (K-5) NECAP Whole School Performance Math, Exeter at 90.5% proficient and Keene at 69%
- Exeter and Keene: District AYP
- Exeter: Summary, Exeter has a larger number of employees per student, a student/teacher ratio similar to Keene, performs at a high level, 2 elementary schools versus 5, lower per pupil cost
- Salem is K-12 with an enrollment of 5,000, has tuition students from neighboring towns, average per pupil spending is \$9,706 and has 7 schools
- Salem schools promote community and social curriculum, each school notes the value of its PTA, resource sharing
- Salem: Student/Teacher Ratio and Average Class Size
- Salem: Regular and SPED Aide Comparison compares district wide numbers rather than apportioned numbers for Exeter
- Salem: Elementary Principal/Assistant Principal Costs with Salem's average elementary principal salary about \$9,600 less than Keene's and administration cost significantly less than Keene
- Salem and Keene NECAP Whole School Performance Reading, with Salem at 79% proficient and Keene at 78.6%
- Salem and Keene NECAP Whole School Performance Math, with Salem at 79.6% proficient and Keene at 69% proficient
- Salem and Keene: District AYP Status
- Salem: Summary, Salem has small elementary schools, a much larger number of students per employee, performing well with no need of improvement, lower per pupil cost

### NECAP – Whole School Data by District

- NECAP Comparisons Elementary Reading and Math (with Keene being proficient in Reading and lower in Math).
- NECAP Comparisons Elementary Writing and Science (with Keene having lower performance in Writing and higher performance in Science)
- NECAP Comparison Middle School Reading and Math (with Keene in the average performance range and lower performance range in Math)
- NECAP Comparisons Middle School Writing and Science (with Keene performing lower than comparison districts in Writing and in the average range for Science)
- Elementary/Middle District Reports Reading – Economically Disadvantaged
- Elementary /Middle District Reports Math – Economically Disadvantaged
- Elementary/Middle District Reports Reading – Educational Disability
- Elementary/Middle District Reports Math – Educational Disability
- NECAP Comparison High School, Reading and Math (with Keene close to the middle in Reading and Math)
- NECAP Comparison High School Writing and Science (with Keene performing lower than comparison districts in Writing and in the mid-range for Science)

### Summary of Findings

- Education in Keene is more costly
- In per pupil spending, KHS is near state average, KMS is higher than State Average and Elementary Schools are significantly higher than state average
- Keene has small K-5 schools resulting in higher administrative staffing
- Keene has the lowest number of students per employee compared to all districts reviewed
- Staffing at elementary and middle schools drive administrative costs
- Keene class sizes are comparable or smaller than comparison districts
- Keene's percentage of special education students is significantly higher than state average
- The performance of special education students on the NECAP was less than other districts

### Recommendations

Mr. Woolridge then provided the following recommendations based on the findings:

- #1 - Engage district employees in the task of improving efficiency and learning – a task vital to the success of our mission.
- #2 - Form a community-based task force to study and make recommendations for the future configuration of our elementary school programs.
- #3 - Institute a hiring freeze for all personnel at the elementary level for the 2010-2011 school year.
- #4 - Reduce one administrator at Keene High School at year's end.
- #5 - Review the supervisory responsibilities of elementary principals, in the context of reducing elementary administrative staff.
- #6 - Implement class-size policy that would increase student enrollment in grades four and five as reviewed and recommended by the policy committee and Keene Board of Education.
- #7 - Study opportunities for sharing services (administrative, custodial, clerical, etc.) when Keene Middle School opens on the same campus as Jonathan Daniels School.

*Mr. Neil Donegan made a motion to accept the Administrative Structure Review Task Force Report as presented. Mrs. Carol Brown seconded.*

Mr. Carter Chamberlin questioned the recommendation to immediately reduce one administrator at the high school level and Mr. Woolridge responded that it would be handled through attrition as one administrator is retiring at the end of the year.

Mr. Neil Donegan asked if there is any consideration to add students to one or more schools and to close a school and Mr. Woolridge responded that because the task force wanted to reveal as much information as possible they did not make those kinds of recommendations.

Mrs. Carol Brown asked why the data for spending is from 2007-2008 and the data for staffing is from 2008-2009 and Mr. Woolridge replied that the most current data available was used in all cases. Mrs. Brown then asked if comparison districts have full time kindergarten and Ms. Kristin Blais said she would get an answer for her.

Mrs. Carl Brown asked if preschool numbers were wrapped up in all the data and Ms. Blais said that most of the time preschool was not factored in. Mrs. Brown further inquired how those figures were extracted and questioned whether our costs were inflated and Ms. Blais replied that the data compiled was consistent in all instances.

Mrs. Brown also asked about high school career centers, bond payments, which of the districts were part of their city departments, and whether the recommendations would be budget driven. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Donald Parker commended the task force, spoke about how helpful the information was and explained how this would improve our level of service.

Discussion continued pertaining to the hiring freezes at the elementary schools, having a clear plan for the recommendations, how to address the issue with staff, parents and students and how it all affects how we move forward.

At this time questions were opened up to the public.

Mr. John Tonkinson, 18 Newbury Lane asked if the collaborative programs at elementary schools were included in the costs and if so, were they included in the comparing districts. Mr. Woolridge replied that collaborative programs were included in our data (which was taken from a state report) and that he will check the comparing districts. Mr. Tonkinson asked about per building/per pupil cost and spoke about small number of students demanding a higher amount of the costs.

Mrs. Mari Fauth, 9 Starlight Drive thanked the task force for a thorough study that is easy to understand. She spoke about being faced with a challenge, encouraged the public to become involved as much as possible and reminded the board that public hearings are useful, that they were very helpful in the middle school project and the best way to move forward now is with a thorough and well thought out plan.

There being no further public input, *a vote was taken on Mr. Donegan's motion to accept the Administrative Structure Review Task Force Report as presented. Motion unanimously passed by a vote of 8-0.*

*Mr. Neil Donegan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Carol Brown seconded. Vote taken, motion to adjourn unanimously passes.*

**Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.**

*For a copy of the full report, visit*

<http://www.sau29.org/administrativestructurereviewtaskforcereport200.html>

Respectfully submitted,

Dru Fox

Stenographer

Wayne E. Woolridge

Co-Superintendent of Schools

William B. Gurney

Co-Superintendent of Schools

Meredith Cargill

Curriculum Director

**Approved by the**

**Keene Board of Education:**

**Date: February 9, 2010**