

## **Meeting of the WMRHS Mayors and Representatives of the Boards of Education – May 10, 2012**

### **Opening of Meeting and Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Organization of Committee**

#### **Members of the Committee**

Mayor Neil Henry- Mendham Borough  
Sam Tolley – Mayor Mendham Township  
Rob Strobel – Mendham Township Committee (alternate with MaryBeth Thomas)  
Ken Short – Mayor, Washington Township  
Bill Cogger – Mayor, Chester Township  
Bob Davis – Mayor, Chester Borough  
Jeff Brauner – Mendham Township BOE\*  
William Corbett and Paul Frechhelm– Mendham Borough BOE  
Walt Cullen– Washington Township BOE\*  
Ray Trevasino and Kerri Wright – Chester BOE  
Jim Johnston and John Meyer – West Morris Regional HS District  
\*An Additional committee person is expected to be assigned

The committee would be comprised of 2 members from each sending district BOE and the Regional BOE and the Mayor from each of the five towns. Mendham Twp. has requested and it has been accepted for them to add one additional member on a rotating basis (MaryBeth Thomas or Rob Strobel). The committee is not an official organization or an elected body, but rather an advisory board comprised of elected officials and private citizens.

**Decision Process:** The committee agreed that they had no authority to act independently from their sending organization. Therefore they would review and secure a consensus vote on all material matters with their respective organizations.

**Voting:** By simple majority it was decided that each Mayor and each BOE including the Regional BOE will receive one vote. The chairman and Vice Chair will not be voting members. It is expected that issues that are scheduled for a vote at the next Mayor/BOE meeting will have been reviewed and voted on by each municipal governing body and BOE prior to the meeting. The committee voted that a unanimous vote by the Mayors would be required in order to move forward with a feasibility study. Less significant decisions can be reached via a simple majority by the Mayors and BOE representatives.

The committee then elected Christine Myers Chairman and Jim Harmon Vice Chairman of the committee.

**Working with sending organizations:** In order not to impede progress at the Mayor/BOE meetings, the committee agreed to communicate issues, obtain feedback and vote on any required issues with their organizations. The committee also agreed to hold “special meetings” if their regularly scheduled meetings did not naturally occur before the next Mayors/BOE meeting.

**Role of Committee:** The committee was formed as an advisory group tasked to work through the process of presenting options for the configuration of the schools in our district, funding formulas on behalf of their municipalities and Boards of Education. The committee is also responsible for communicating the options to the public and working with their organizations and towns with the goal of reaching a satisfactory resolution(s) of the issues of our school district. They agreed to be responsible for developing the Statement of Work RFP and proposals of any feasibility study as well as evaluating and retaining a satisfactory consultant.

**Public Participation:** Alternatives for public participation during meetings was discussed by the committee. The committee agreed that the Public would be allowed to speak about a specific agenda topic prior to the committee discussion of that topic. The meeting would be open to the public for general comments and questions at the end of each meeting, prior to the closing. All persons wishing to speak will have the right to speak before an individual may speak again on the same topic. All comments and questions will be directed to the Chairman and be limited, in general, to 3 minutes or less. Responses will be provided by the Chairman or her designee. Questions that cannot be readily answered in the meeting will be answered by the chairman or her designee following the meeting. Answers to such questions will also be part of the minutes of the meeting. The committee also agreed that there will be no grandstanding or debating with the committee.

**Communications with the Public:** The committee discussed the importance of consistent, timely and accurate communication with the residents of all five towns. In order to achieve these goals the committee agreed to post all agendas, meeting minutes, and other relevant data on the municipal websites and all school websites. Only those documents which have been agreed to and approved will be authorized for posting or distributing to residents. It was decided that individuals on the committee may not release any information that has not been authorized or deemed official.

Because not all residents use email for communicating, the committee agreed to issue a newsletter or provide alternate means of delivering information to their towns, particularly when milestone votes or events occur. Alternate methods of communication will be discussed at later meetings.

Bill Cogger suggested that should a consultant be retained to develop a feasibility study, that they be required to provide an informational website available to all residents.

#### **Next Steps:**

**Feasibility Study:** After much discussion the committee agreed to create a list of options to take back for review and approval with their respective organizations. The discussion included input from the public: Val Schlosser stated that the funding formula calculation was mechanical; Kristen Turner suggested considering magnet schools; Kevin Corbett advocated for limiting the number of options considered; Bob Marino likewise preferred a limit number of options and noted that a 2 K-12 districts raises the issue of what school k-8 students will assigned to, but suggested there could be agreement not to change current assignments and Ron Sauster stated that if k-8 schools prepare students equally, they will be on an equal footing in the high school and schools need to be comfortable to the students.

Those options would then be voted on at the next Mayor/BOE meeting in June and a set number of 3-4 options would be pursued through a feasibility study. The following options were offered for review:

- Creation of 1 K-12 School District for all five towns
- Creation of 2 K-12 Districts – one for Washington Township and one for the Mendhams and Chesters
- Creation of 1 K-12 District for Washington Township and a Limited Use 9-12 District for the Mendhams and the Chesters. The K-8 schools in those towns would not change.
- Status Quo: K-8 schools stay in place, WMMHS and WMCHS would continue as one district.
- Creation of Magnet schools, either at the k-8 level and/or the High School 9-12
- Hybrid Model: One Superintendent over all five towns, local school boards would remain in place and have local control over areas including quality of staff, curriculum and where their children attend school (needs further definition). The focus of this model is shared services, and optimization of resources while maintaining local schools.

Included in each option will be the funding formula alternatives and the financial implications of that option. The Chairman requested that the legislative idea presented by Bill Cogger (see below) also be discussed as a potential scenario as part of one of the above proposals or as a discreet option.

**NOTE:** The options need to have unanimous approval by the Mayors in order to move forward with a feasibility study. Each Mayor (municipality) will then agree to commit \$10,000 for the study.

A subcommittee was established to develop the SOW, RFP and review and retain an outside consultant to conduct the feasibility study. The subcommittee members are: Neil Henry, Ken Short, Kerri Wright, Jeff Brauner and Christine Myers.

### **Update on Legislative Change**

Bill Cogger provided an update on a change in the legislation that would provide a funding option that automatically adjusted when funding disparities become too great. He described this as a “circuit breaker” approach. He stated both Senator Bucco and Assemblyman Bucco have been supportive as has the Department of Education, which has suggested it might be able to provide this option by regulation, with a statutory change to follow.

### **Open to the Public**

Val Schlosser urged (1) publish draft minutes within 1 week after a meeting; (2) make interim reports available on websites and (3) publish correspondence with consultants. Bob Marino advocated for a per student funding formula as the only assured fair method of funding.

**Next Meeting Scheduled for June 7, location to be determined**