

Summary notes from Community Forum Meeting October 21, 2015

During the community meeting, participants were asked to write down their thoughts on the paper table tops. The notes are transcribed below in Section 1. Other participants provided follow up comments by email following the meeting. These are provided in Section 2. Scenarios for new governance configurations were presented to help focus the discussions. While there are a wide range of options, the ones presented for discussion are:

- Option 1: Merge with other K-6 districts within BRSU
- Option 2: Merge with other K-8 districts within BRSU
- Option 3: Join another SU and merge with other K-6 districts
- Option 4: Join another SU and merge with other K-6 or K-12 districts
- Option 5: Remain as a single K-6 district

A separate spreadsheet posted on our websites details the work of the Sunderland School Board in evaluating advantages and disadvantages of each option. Additionally, the Board meeting minutes provide further insights to the community discussions during the meeting.

If you missed attending the forum, you can still see the discussions on GNAT. To see the televised meeting, go to the Sunderland town site here:

<http://vp.telvue.com/player?id=T01807&video=252862&mini=true>

The summary from each table begins in the video at 85 minutes 27 seconds into the video.

SECTION 1 - Written notes from tables

Table 1

Concerns for option 2: How is 7/8 assigned?

Yes – join study group.

Important that we:

Maintain school choice

9-12 (definitely)

7-12 (preferably)

Merge with district that can show strong financial records.

Consider potential effect on property values.

Consider who has the most resources to share.

How to make the most of our Impact Aid Reserve for our kids before it is absorbed by a larger district

(playground, library, technology)

We do not like Option 3, 4, 5, etc.

In regard to “sustainable governance structure”, are the schools we would consider joining on

improvement plans?

Table 2

Preserve school choice for:

1st – 9-12

2nd – 7-8

Tax structure, what kind of choice?

Financial plan which benefits Sunderland long term

Spend the dowry

Table 3

K-8 Option

Spend Impact Aid here in our own building/town where monies were raised.

What would the transportation be for option #2?

Table 4

Questions:

If we merge, what opportunities do our students get? Lose?

What will our tax rate do if we merge?

Would there be a grandfather clause?

Thoughts:

We like option 2 and magnet middle schools.

PLP's will play a role in the education of our students.

Property value....

Merger study- yes

Questions for study: How middle school enrollment will be decided?

Table 5

What would the transportation be for option #2?

Table 6

Big 3 – K-8 Dorset, Manchester, Flood Brook (1300 students)

K-6: Middletown Springs, Mt. Tabor, Sunderland, Danby

Non-Operating: Sandgate, Winhall

Could be 4 options

Merge K -8

Merge K-6

Go independent

Close the school

What about pre-k?

Detailed notes submitted from participants:

Priorities/concerns:

A. Preserve 9-12 school choice is the clear priority. Some preference to also preserve it at the 7-8 level, but not as strong

B. Future tax structure: what would that look like in regard to Sunderland vs other towns in the merged district.

C. A long term financial plan that does not adversely impact Sunderland.

I think both B and C refer to ensuring the dowry that Sunderland has is credited to Sunderland taxpayers, and not given to other districts...

As far as the options that were outlined:

- Option 1: while a very attractive option, the Pawlet/Tabor NY issues may be very difficult for those towns to overcome. While that is their issue, it may hinder the larger group.

- Option 2: seems to deliver more favorables to Sunderland. Loss of Jr. High choice a concession, but a moderate one to make.

- Option 3: **no no no no no**. High school choice is what drives real estate sales in Sunderland (meaning, parents choose us for a reason) If we become 'married' to any particular high school that will impact our tax structure in a very dramatic way (note item A), above)

- Option 4: Long term loser, geographic problems: Eventually, the state will have an issue with a random collection of K-6 school spread out over the entire state.

- Option 5: long term loser: as with 4, eventually we will have to make a different choice.