

Cabot/Danville/Twinfield Act 46 Study Committee (706)
Wednesday, April 5, 2017
Cabot School Library

Present: Chris Tormey, Ry Hoffman, Robert Edgar, Bruce Melendy, Lauren Cleary, David Towle, Ginni Lavelly, Ian Covey, Scott Harris, Chandra Miller, Sarah Watkins, **Administrators:** Nancy Thomas, Superintendent WNESU, Mat Forest, Superintendent, CCSU; **Consultant:** Peter Clarke.

Call to Order: Chris Tormey, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Consent Agenda:

Approve March 27, 2017 Minutes, - Dave moved to approve the minutes of March 27, 2017 as written. Bruce Melendy seconded the motion. Minutes of March 27, 2017 approved as written.

Public Comment: With many (more than 40) local residents present at this meeting, Chris began by summarizing the current status of the Committee discussions and the timeline.

Dale Newton, a Cabot resident, shared a written statement regarding the proposed merger, suggesting that the Committee should choose to provide high school at Twinfield and Danville. Another Cabot asked whether or not the PBL Academy could help students meet all proficiencies in 4 years at Cabot. Dave Schilling replied that it wasn't designed to do that but there is flexibility. Other Cabot residents suggested that the merger not go forward. Concern was expressed over local control and the fact that the people of Cabot know better about how to operate their schools. A Cabot student asked why the high school needs to close. Lauren explained that the Committee seeks to expand student opportunities, not shut down the school. Dave explained the idea of the Project Based Learning Academy. Another Cabot resident spoke to the better opportunities that could happen with the proposed merger options. Questions and comments were made regarding facilities and debt. Chris and Peter explained how the costs would be shared within the new 4 town district. A Cabot student shared her opinion that with declining enrollment, this is currently "death by a thousand cuts". Even without Act 46 the Committee should consider what would best address the declining numbers. A Danville student sent out a survey and found that 85% of those surveyed would want to have Twinfield and Danville as the option. A Cabot student expressed the desire to be able to finish school at Cabot. A Cabot parent spoke to the fact that most of the incoming 9th grade class has applied to make use of the Choice option, leaving a very small class. Another question was raised regarding sports at Cabot. A Cabot coach spoke to the advantages of having sports at Cabot where it is possible for every student to play varsity.

Discussion:

a. Determine Option Proposal

Bruce Melendy (Danville) spoke to his opinion that he believes the Danville community would not support merger. Dave Towle (Danville) expressed his concern that Cabot should determine which of the options regarding their program. Robert Edgar (Danville) said he leaned toward local control where the locals have more knowledge for their kids. Ian (Twinfield) thinks that creating a bigger peer group isn't helped by creating a PBL Academy. Chandra (Twinfield) agreed that merger would be good, but did not support a PBL Academy at Cabot. It could be done at the other sites. Lauren strongly supports merger and would support the PBL Academy if that helps to get everyone on board. Tim Sanborne, (Danville) as an educator, likes the PBL concept, but doesn't think that it will be good in isolation. He doesn't see it as sustainable, but with merger there can be shared resources. Chris supports merger with the PBL Academy which would keep a high school presence at Cabot and also contribute to the options for the other 2 schools. All our kids would have more options, giving bigger peer group for students and staff. It would address the current challenges and could garner support of the community. Ry Hoffman (Cabot) expressed concern that if the Committee doesn't merge, their school would be forced into something that they don't want to do, still losing local control anyway. The PBL Academy could provide an important option for students. Sarah Watkins (Twinfield) spoke to the fact that Act 46 was designed to address declining enrollment and increased costs. Cares for Cabot, but questions why there should be a merger maintaining 3 separate high schools/programs. She feels that Cabot is at risk of losing much more. Scott spoke to the pros and cons to the smaller and larger merged districts. He believes that they are all our students. He strongly supports the merger, creating more options, but feels that the new board should have flexibility. He supports the PBL Academy.

Bruce and Dave spoke to bringing the decision of the Committee to the Forum on Monday. A petition is being circulated to close Danville High School. Peter shared information regarding "necessary" and "advisable". If the decision is advisable for all, it will be up to the school board to decide if it goes to the voters. Bruce said he would want to put the vote to their voters. Cabot and Twinfield could either be advisable or necessary. If 2 of the 3 communities vote affirmatively, then there would be the side-by-side option giving the Barnet, Walden, Waterford, as the other "side", their incentives as well. If Cabot does not join at the time of the initial merger, the small schools grant would go away. Ry spoke to the 3 cultures that we have now, but with merger there will be a new culture that might support having more students want to spread out and take advantage of other school options. Chris spoke to the benefit of having the Cabot PBL due to geography, encouraging more students to take different options. Got to start somewhere: with a shorter trip.

Bruce called the question. Dave seconded.

Option 1 5, Ginni, Ian, Chandra, Tim Sanborn, Sarah Watkins.
Option 2 4, Lauren, Chris, Ry, Scott
Option 3 2, Bruce, Dave

Peter explained that under Roberts Rules of orders there needs to be a majority and at this time there is a plurality. The Committee discussed the options again and who would be willing to change their vote.

Dave moved and Chandra seconded that the Committee vote again on the 3 options.

Option 1 Ginni, Ian , Chandra, Tim, Sarah , Scott
Option 2, Lauren Ry, Chris,
Option 3, Bruce, Dave

Discussion on the date of the vote.

Bobbi Brimblecomb spoke to the Town Clerks' request to move the vote to June 20. She shared that people can do absentee ballots.

Chandra moved to change the date to June 20. Ian seconded the motion. Motion approved.

The Committee then discussed the hours of voting. Bruce moved, Chandra seconded 8:00 am to 7:00 pm. Motion approved.

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Peter explained the choice of Advisable/Necessary. The schools will all be advisable.

Regarding the name of the new district. Chris moved, Bruce seconded that the provisional name will be the CDT School District. The motion passed.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Thomas, note taker