

1. **Members present:** Denis Messier, Mark Richardson, Todd Patten, Dana Rivers, Robert Gadomski, Dave Witham, Todd Marsh and Matt Hanlon
2. Messier called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM. Gadomski stated that the Rollinsford Withdrawal Committee had their first meeting the prior night. He stated that they went through a variety of different information and had an organizational meeting. He stated that they got into an interesting discussion about options and he laid out all the options that the Somersworth Withdrawal Committee has talked about. He also let them know that all the information is public information. He stated that they discussed a lot of different things but towards the end they batted around the idea of having a combined meeting. He stated that at first they thought they would have a couple meetings to get their feet wet, but after a while they thought that a combined meeting sooner rather than later would be better. He stated that then, if there were options off the table, they would know. He stated that what they want me to bring to you is a request that we meet together, perhaps 2-3 of this committee and 2-3 of their committee. He stated that each of those people could go back to other committee members. He stated that early June was a suggestion. He stated that they know that their committee is about a month-two months behind theirs. He stated that they would like to mirror the Somersworth time frame so that everyone would have the November- December timeframe for having a plan. He stated that they do not want to be reacting to the Somersworth Committee. Hanlon stated that they would rather have an agreement than us going to the State with one. Gadomski stated that it would be great if the two committees could have parallel agreements to the State at the same time. He stated that if they could come to an agreement, which he does not think is impossible, that is the best case scenario of getting it done. Patten asked why not meet with the full committees? Gadomski stated that they would meet with the full committees. He stated that they thought it might be a bit more informal and casual with only 2-3 members from each side. He stated that they said if this committee would rather meet with full committees it would be fine. Witham stated that if we were to meet with a smaller contingent of this committee we would need to be sure that collectively we are on board with what that messaging might be and what options we may be seeking. Gadomski stated that he does not see that at this meeting we will come to any conclusions. He stated that he thinks it will be more of a brainstorming session to see if there is anything in particular that each side is thinking about. Hanlon stated that he thinks they may be suggesting this because when we went through the withdrawal there was a large group and it got unwieldy. He stated that as to being on the same page, if we are going to sit down with them in a small group we should let them know that we are open for choices A-f and then see what they come back with. Patten stated that we may not be on the same page. He stated that the one overriding concern that he has is the impact on the City and the taxpayers because it will be significant. He stated that he is still confused as to how we got to this point. He stated that some of it seems to have come about because of a pissing match. He stated that is his perception and it is possible that we may be moving towards cutting off our own nose to spite our face after looking at everything and not really being able to get hard

numbers. Messier asked that the question on the table is do we want to meet with the Rollinsford Committee? He asked that we previously have said we do want to but do we want a small group or the entire committees meet? He stated that summer is coming and he does not really want to spend it meeting on this. He asked what if we come together and they say that they want to stay together but will give up their say in the SAU? He stated that he thinks they do not want to pay any more money than they have been. He asked do we want an advisory group or the whole committee? Gadomski stated that he was not Superintendent when the group got unwieldy but if you want to get the whole group there, so everyone can hear what is going on, he did not mind being the mediator in the middle and keeping the meeting flowing. He stated that this group knows what the options are and they know what the options are. He stated that everyone knows what the cost is going to be. He stated that there are no hidden secrets. Patten stated that the fact that summer is coming is very valid. He stated that if small groups from each side meet, it may be difficult to schedule a follow up meeting to discuss it. Richardson stated that he is glad that Gadomski offered to mediate the meeting. He stated that Messier is our chair but I do not know who is their chair. He stated that it would not be right for the two chairs to knock heads and call the shots. He stated that if Gadomski would be the mediator it does not make any difference if it is the whole group or a small subset. He stated he thinks everyone should be there. Marsh stated that he agrees. He stated that we all need to be there. He stated that it is OK if we are not all on the same page at this point. He stated that this committee can go in with their own thoughts. Messier stated that he cannot make a decision right now about leaving. He stated that it is going to cost us \$183,000. He stated that the City Council just went through an override of the tax cap. He stated that taxpayers will have a sense of what that loss is. He stated maybe Rollinsford will decide to be quiet and pay. Gadomski stated that their group is representative the way yours is. He stated that it is not just school board members. He stated that we have a nice cross section of the community here and they do too. He stated that no one is coming in with a preconceived notion of how it will end up. Witham stated that he feels that the meeting should be both committees in full. It was decided to offer June 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 to meet. Gadomski stated that he would check with the Rollinsford Committee and see which date would work. Messier stated that in the prior meeting they had agreed they wanted to meet with the Rollinsford Committee so this is good working towards an amicable solution. He stated that he wants to know at the joint meeting if we will all shout out a questions or how will we control that and how will we maintain decorum? Gadomski stated that it is up to the moderator. He stated that he will let everyone have their say and put the options on the table. Messier asked where the meeting would be? Gadomski stated that we could use Mulligans Grill at the CTC. Hanlon stated that they are used to having SAU Meetings there. Messier stated that as far as the data, the biggest is the elephant in the room which is \$183,000 in lost revenue. He stated that you will no longer have an SAU Board. Gadomski stated that they would but they would be one in the same. Hanlon stated that he saw in the minutes that this committee was reaching out to different districts. He stated that he did not see a conversation as to what the overarching issues are. He stated that there have been misconceptions about the nastiness. He stated that some of the conversations that they have had with the School Board and Joint Commission is how we got here. He stated that there were meetings that Rollinsford was rather nasty and one sided. He

stated that this was not the primary reason we got here. He stated that it is hard when you are on the Somersworth Board and the SAU Board and things sometimes do not look fair. He stated that they pay between 15-18% of the budget. He stated it was the same when they had three members on the Board and they had 25% of the vote. He stated that now they have five members and that is 36% of the vote. He stated that this is twice the vote vs. what they pay. He stated that this can make a big difference if we have a member out and then the representation goes up to 40%. He stated that if we are looking for a new superintendent and you have 6 people on the Somersworth side who want Candidate A and everyone on Rollinsford side wants Candidate B and three people on Somersworth that want Candidate B that's 70% of Somersworth that want someone and we will not get them. He stated that they added the additional two board members prior to withdrawal. He stated that the equitability is not there. He stated that we have been in situations in the past where Somersworth felt that there was a large issue going on in the SAU which was affecting us. He stated that the way the Executive Council is set up at the SAU is it is the Chair, which every other year is someone from Rollinsford and then a member from each Board. He stated if there is a Rollinsford Board Chair and a Rollinsford Board Member, even though the person on the Somersworth Board, on the Executive Board sees an issue, it may not get fixed. He stated that in this situation we were able to take care of the issue because the Chair was from Somersworth. He stated that this was a giant issue for Somersworth but because there is such a disparity and they are sending the students out of state, this problem was not directly affecting them because they were not having the same issues as we were. Messier stated that we all know why we are here. Hanlon stated that we are not trying to cut things just to cut things. He stated that we are the bigger dog but it is just not the same equitability. He stated that you can get into sticky situations and may not have the people. Patten asked if you could sell this to the taxpayer? Hanlon stated that he is not sure. He stated we could sell it after something goes bad. Witham asked about the jump from 3 members to 5 members. He asked if it was governed by State Law or a decision that Rollinsford made? Hanlon stated he was there and he fought against it at the time. He stated that they can add as many people to their School Board as they want. He stated that it should not matter anymore because there is no more area agreement. He stated that the withdrawal that they went through was a withdrawal from the area agreement. Gadomski stated that the SAU is the only thing that you have in common. Witham asked if there is no MOU or area agreement that governs the makeup of the SAU? He asked if that is driven by State Statute? Gadomski stated that it was. Patten stated that it sounds that this 5 vs. 9 could change at any time. Messier stated that if anything comes out of the joint meeting we will have a Memorandum of Understanding. Witham stated that State Law will restrict them from tweaking it. Gadomski stated that it is local law that allows them to choose how many selectman or School Board Members they have. Richardson stated that the City Charter specifies how many people we have on the school board. He stated that they cannot enter into any agreement as to having any more or less. He stated that where they have no kids in our school he does not understand why we need to have a Rollinsford person as Chairman. Witham stated that he would like Gadomski to do some research as to how many members a school board can have on their Board. He stated we need to know if we can have a MOU that would memorialize how

many members. Gadomski stated that he would research this. He stated that he had asked Barrette Christina and he had said you could work an agreement to have Rollinsford pull out and contract their services with no say in the SAU at all. Hanlon stated that we need to discuss the issues to figure out the end result. He stated that we are open to looking at the number of people on the SAU Board. He stated that we really cannot change the funding because it is regulated by statute. Gadomski stated this is theoretical example. He stated if they pull out and you are SAU 56, they can contract service and tell them they have no votes and no say, you are just contracting services. He stated he would have to see what we could charge them but believes it is still governed by the formula the way it is now. He stated that you could set it up so that you have the autonomy that you are looking for. Witham stated that he agrees and it removes some of the politics from this. Messier stated that he is not looking to generate greater revenue from a neighboring community. Hanlon stated that autonomy is great. He stated that equitability would be the next thing. He stated that paying closer to the representation would be great. He stated that if they were to say we would like to enter into another area agreement he stated that everyone would be happy. He stated that no one is looking to get rid of them, but we are looking for equitability and our own accountability. Patten stated that they pay between 14-18% but take up 36% of the votes on the board. Gadomski stated that this year they are paying 16%. He stated that with the formula it fluctuates a bit. Hanlon stated that their representation is twice that. Messier stated that the voting representation is going to change. He stated he is hoping they will say we will pay with no say. He stated they will just want to utilize the services of the SAU. He stated that this is an outcome that he could embrace. Patten stated that he is confused what you mean about having no say. He asked no say in what? Gadomski stated that right now they have a say in setting the SAU Budget, in the staffing at the SAU, in the Superintendent, and anyone in this office. He stated that they presently have no say in anything to do with the Somersworth School District. He stated that they do have a say in anything and everything to do with this office. He stated that to have "no say", they would have no say in hiring, in setting the SAU budget, it would be out of their control. Marsh stated that he thinks they may balk at something like that. He stated that to pay the same and have no representation at all, he thinks they will not agree to this. He stated that offering them something less in payment they may think that is good. He stated that if it is less it may be more palatable. Messier stated that they are not going in to negotiate. He stated that we are going in to see what they will offer. Hanlon stated that they also have control over what happens with this building. Witham stated that he needs some answers to this. Hanlon stated that they make decisions on a building that belongs to the City of Somersworth. Richardson stated that as far as ownership of this building, we are responsible for it. He stated that we would not be charging them for any repairs. He stated they would just be contracting services. Gadomski stated that SAUs cannot own property. He stated that they can rent or lease property. He stated that this SAU does not own this property, the City of Somersworth does. He stated that if something has to be done to this building, if it is just Somersworth and the SAU, with Rollinsford contracting services, it is the responsibility of the SAU. He stated that the City of Somersworth will charge the SAU for fixing whatever and the SAU would be responsible for that. Messier stated he was here when they tore down the old SAU by Walmart. He stated that the money was used to build

this building. He stated that since then there has not been any rental to the SAU. He stated that it has been maintained in lieu of rent. He stated that this was equitable and fair. Richardson stated that any agreement that they may enter into he would like to leave the door open for Rollinsford to return their kids to our school. He stated that in Marshwood they have no say. He stated that if they then enter into an agreement now and have no say here, they have no say at all. He stated that the only say they would have is for their own elementary school. Hanlon stated that they may have a hard time of giving up any representation because part of the history of how we got here was because they wanted a voting member on our school board. He stated that is what caused the withdrawal from the area agreement. He stated that they have slowly lost more and more representation. He stated that he would be leery if they are going to give up more representation. He stated that he would also be willing to let the students come back to the Somersworth district. Gadomski stated that he thinks that this committee may find the meeting together very interesting. He stated that some of the preconceived notions that you might have are not going to happen. He stated that you will be very surprised on what they are thinking. Patten stated that everything in these meetings is public. He asked if they said that they were leaning this way. Gadomski stated that there were individuals that talked about it. He stated that as a committee they did not say that they were willing to give up their say but it was a discussion. Rivers stated that he remembers that Rollinsford always had an immense turnover on their school board. He stated that from his perspective there was not a lot of stability. He stated that he remembers reading minutes for an SAU meeting last year when there was just Austin and another member from Somersworth but all of Rollinsford Board was there. Messier stated that Rollinsford is a very conservative town and they will not want to spend any additional money. He stated if they are spending \$183,000 and after the split have to spend more, it will not get passed at the Town Meeting. He stated that the people in the community want to get rid of Rollinsford Grade School and not put another penny into it because the neighboring Maine town needs students. He stated that they cannot even get a new police station or town hall approved. He stated that we need to understand the politics of all of it. He stated that a lot will come out of the June meeting. Richardson stated that they want to use the Grade School as the Police Station and Town Hall but it will cost them a lot to bring it up to code. Marsh asked where he would access the minutes from the Rollinsford Withdrawal Committee Meeting from last night? Sullivan stated that when completed they will be posted on the SAU Website. Gadomski stated that this is a committee decision on both sides. Messier asked if we have a list of who their members are? Gadomski stated that this information can be sent out to the committee. Patten asked if they were elected or appointed by the Board. Gadomski stated that they had a volunteer from the Budget Committee and then it was opened up to the public. He stated that they had 8-9 people apply and they took the first four. He stated that he wanted to bring them up to speed as to the letters he had sent out as feelers. He stated that he had met with Dover and they are interested in dollars and cents and if it will make them money they are interested in talking. Witham stated that the door is not closed. Gadomski stated that Oyster River said not at this time and Northwood said no thank you but maybe we may listen if we get to that point. He stated that there has been none eager to take us on. He stated that if it involved kids, they might because the kids bring \$13,000 tuition with them. Hanlon stated that

the trend for SAUs has been for separation and not conglomeration. He stated that people want more control.

3. **Adjournment:** Witham made a motion seconded by Hanlon to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 PM

Melinda Sullivan  
Board Secretary