

Somersworth Withdrawal Committee

June 27, 2019

SAU 56

6:00pm

1. **Members present:** Denis Messier, Todd Patten, Dana Rivers, Robert Gadomski, Dave Witham, and Matt Hanlon. Absent: Mark Richardson and Todd Marsh
2. Messier called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Witham made a motion seconded by Hanlon to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2019 meeting. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. Messier stated that we need to discuss our next steps. Gadomski stated that Rollinsford has had another meeting since the joint meeting and they are discussing their moving forward with pulling out and what the options are. He stated that those are to create their own SAU with a part time staff, which initially they thought would be a bit cumbersome and not realistic to get off the ground in a timely manner. He stated they talked about contracting services with other entities such as Dover, Marshwood, and Somersworth and they are in the process of developing an RFP type document requesting what they might get from other SAUs as far as interest. He stated that they were meeting again on August 6<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the RFP would be sent out in the next week or so and hoping by August 6<sup>th</sup> that they will have some feedback to see if there are any possible options there. He stated that he thinks they realize that there are a lot of positives to contracting services with Somersworth as it is a known entity, they realize that the services that they are getting are very good and they know what the dollar figure is going to be. He stated that they have set a tentative date for a Community Forum in Rollinsford on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Hanlon stated that he had watched the Rollinsford Meeting. He stated that there was a disconnect on what we had said the rate, set by RSA would be or that we would be willing to negotiate. He stated that for some reason, everyone but the two School Board Members thought that this meant that we wanted to charge them more. He stated that Nelson was very adamant that that is not what the Somersworth Committee had meant. Gadomski stated that the recommendation to both committees is going to be very clean and straightforward. He stated that you have an RSA that governs the formula. He stated that it has been working, you know what it is and it's fair. He stated that he recommends to both sides that you continue the same. Hanlon stated that he wondered what happens if the Rollinsford voters vote it down? He stated that this is a potential thing that could happen, the committee states they are going to withdraw and the voters vote it down. Gadomski stated yes it was possible. Hanlon stated that they should look at the same thing and be ready to withdraw if they vote it down. He stated that if this is what happens, we would have to go all through this again. Gadomski stated that Somersworth has a time frame of moving in the November-December timeframe. He stated that the Rollinsford decision will not come until March. He stated that you will know in December which option they are moving forward on, but the vote will not come until March. He stated that he needs to check and see if there is a way that Somersworth can think about suspending the final decision. He stated he needs to find out if there is an avenue that you could suspend your committee until March or April and then you will know the outcome of the Rollinsford vote. He stated that if this committee makes their decision to support Rollinsford pulling out, then you have a couple of things up in the air. He stated they could vote it down or, they can vote to withdraw and go with someone else. Hanlon stated that

his biggest fear is they say no we are not doing anything, and we would be stuck right where we are. Gadomski stated for at least another year. He stated he would ask the attorney at the New Hampshire School Board if there is a way to stretch the timeframe. Patten stated that this has been his concern. He stated, having grown up and raised with a Town government, he knows that there will be voters asking why they are leaving the SAU if we can just stay and keep things status quo. He stated that if just one citizen starts making that case at a Town Meeting you can change the vote in a snap. He stated that at the very least it buys them another year of not having to spend more money. He stated that we have to have our decision submitted by December. Gadomski stated that the timeframe is tricky and it may handcuff you for another year in any event. He stated they do not vote until March, and then you are going to submit a plan to the DOE for approval, you have to do a Community Forum and then you have another 30 days after that and then another 60 days after that, you are not automatically in September or October say that now is the deadline. He stated that it may have to go another year after that. Patten stated that his question is, with us remaining SAU 56 and Rollinsford withdrawing, and no expectation that they will contract with us, what does our plan look like when we submit it if we say we want to remain status quo and we decided to make no change? Gadomski stated that he had reviewed the timeline that the School Board Association Attorney had sent and what he reads is if this committee decides to not move forward it is a vote from the City Council and it goes nowhere. Patten stated that a report does not need to be submitted. Gadomski stated not from what he reads. He stated that if this committee decides not to withdraw and the City Council votes on that, then this committee is finished. Hanlon asked why this committee's vote needs to be prior to theirs? He stated that Somersworth started the process earlier. Hanlon asked if they could push it out to match theirs? Gadomski stated that one year from appointment is when the committees go through. He stated that he needs to find out if there is a way for the City Council to extend the appointment. Witham stated that he thinks the vote at City Council could be more of a resolution. He stated that it would say that the Somersworth City Council on the recommendation of the Somersworth Withdrawal Committee is remaining SAU 56 and not withdrawing pending an affirmative vote in Rollinsford to withdraw. He stated that if they do not vote to withdraw then the City Council recommends withdrawal. Messier stated that all of these points are valid. Rivers asked when we were appointed? Hanlon stated that it does not matter when we were appointed, they were appointed after. Gadomski stated that this committee's appointment was in the January-February timeline and theirs came after the annual meeting, closer to April 1<sup>st</sup>. Hanlon stated that if they had waited till April they would have been OK. Patten stated that it does not matter when they submit their plan, it is when their voters choose. Messier stated that the City Council can vote on their plan but it is not going to happen automatically. Gadomski stated that after the vote it needs to go to the State Board of Education and they have up to 60 days to approve it. Hanlon stated that the SAU, because of contracts cannot just dissolve correct? Gadomski stated that this is an easy one. He stated that some SAUs to dissolve would take up to a year with the buildings, the kids and the busses. Hanlon stated that if there are contracts and someone has to pay you, is there a clause that if we both withdraw, that they will stay so that SAU 56 does not really disappear? He stated that if you both decide to leave, is there something in the contracts that SAU 56 will continue.

Gadomski stated that you cannot both decide to leave. Hanlon stated if we both decide to leave can we then change our minds and say they can leave and we'll stay? He stated that in this way we have left ourselves an out. Witham stated this goes back to his "resolution". He stated that the cleanest way to deal with this in his opinion is can the Somersworth City Council get an extension to act after the Rollinsford vote in March? Gadomski stated that this ball could be rolling in everybody's direction and all it takes is one local person at a meeting. Messier stated that they may get an idea in December or January of how this is going to go. Patten stated as to a backup plan I would not be surprised if this was anticipated. He stated that one community can have an advantage over the other and by having a backup plan you can at least have an out. Messier stated it is like a divorce and how quickly you want it to go and how peaceful you want it to be. He stated that Rollinsford would withdraw because they are a frugal community. He stated if the cost is more the people will vote it down. He stated that Gadomski has some information to gather. He asked which direction should we be moving in? Witham stated that they need to hold their Community Forum which at that time they would articulate that we support this idea. Gadomski stated that he had reread the RSA as to the Community Forum needs to hold a Public Hearing on the Plan at least 14 days with notice to each district. He stated that if a committee recommends a withdrawal after that hearing the committee needs to hold an additional public hearing at least 14 days prior to the submission to the Board of Education. Patten asked if we cannot extend, should we withdraw? Gadomski stated that they have a committee meeting on August 6<sup>th</sup>. He stated that that if you were to have a committee meeting after August 6<sup>th</sup> it would still allow you time, with the additional information or no new information, to schedule your Community Forum in late August or early September. He stated that you need to give 14 days' notice before your first Community Hearing. Patten stated that you need to post the Public Forum at least 14 days prior to having it. Hanlon suggested a meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August. Witham agreed. He stated there may be new information. Gadomski stated at that meeting you can decide when you want your Community Forum. Hanlon stated that he thinks they need to plan out their own withdrawal. He stated that was the actual motion to create this committee was to withdraw. Patten stated that it was to investigate withdrawing. Hanlon stated no it was to withdraw. Patten stated that it was to investigate withdrawal. He stated that some people knew that is what they were going to do but not everyone. Messier stated that once this withdrawal happens the SAU becomes a part of the Somersworth School Board. Hanlon stated that it doesn't because the School Board cannot hold and retain money like the SAU Board does. Gadomski stated that you still have an SAU, and it is still a line item. He stated that if you are a standalone school district you still have SAU staff and district staff. He stated that you have two school boards that are one in the same.

3. **Adjournment:** Witham made a motion seconded by Patten to Meeting adjourned at 6:25 PM.  
**Next meeting: August 13, 2019 at the SAU at 5:30 PM.**

Melinda Sullivan  
Board Secretary