

**JOINT FRANKLIN SCHOOL BOARD MEETING and TOWN OF FRANKLIN SELECTBOARD
MEETING
FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYM
April 13, 2015
7:00pm**

Present:

Franklin School Board Members: Tim Magnant, Chairperson, Bob Berger, and Thomas Gates.

Franklin Town Selectboard Members: Yvon Dandurand, Peter Magnant, Brooks Sturtevant, Ed Rainville

Legislators in attendance: Senator Dustin Degree, Rep. Steve Beyor, Rep. Mariann Gamache, Rep. Chuck Pearce, and Rep. Larry Fiske.

Others in attendance: Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary and about 51 community members

Call Meeting to Order- Tim Magnant called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Tim Magnant explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and talk to the Legislators about the School Consolidation Bill H361. He announced that the school board members were opposed to this bill and felt that this bill would be harmful to small schools such as Franklin.

Rep. Chuck Pearce provided a summary of the bill for the community members. H.361 calls for Integrated PreK-12 Education Systems that need to be formed and must have an average daily membership of at least 1100 students unless granted a waiver by the State Board. All districts will need to form either a joint contract or meet the integrate education system requirements by FY2020. Section 6 and 7 sets the rates for FY 16 at .98 for homestead property and 1.535 for non residential property. This is expected to increase taxes by 16 million. If efficiencies achieved through consolidation enabled districts to collectively increase the State's average pupil to staff ratio from 4.7 to between 4.8 and 4.9, education spending could be reduced by \$35 million annually. Chuck voted against this bill last year and voted against it this year because this bill is not good for small schools. Rep. Steve Beyor also spoke out against the bill and has voted against the bill. The bill has passed the Vermont House of Representatives and has now moved to the Senate Education Committee. Senator Dustin Degree serves on the education committee in the Senate. He stated that the committee has not taken up the bill. He believes that the administration is moving away from this bill. Dustin explained that although they are working away from small schools grant, currently only Bakersfield gets the grant. Dustin does not support this bill.

Peter Magnant, Chair of the Town Selectboard also spoke out against the bill. He believes that with one integrated school system, there will only be one board representing several school districts and we would lose local control of our schools. He thinks that the only way to save money will be to close schools and he felt that with Franklin being the smallest school in the Supervisory Union that it will be at risk of closure.

Ed Rainville, Franklin Selectboard member, felt that Superintendents support this bill because it will be easier for them and will enhance their position on how schools are run.

Jason McConnell, school board member from Sheldon, also stated that he feels that towns will lose local control of their schools. He was impressed when he came to the area that the schools were the hub of the community and the close-knit environment that our schools enjoy. He and the Sheldon Board are against the bill. He related that in Chicago, the schools are more like factories where the kids are sent to school. In our schools, we have more local control and accountability along with an opportunity to share values and more hands on experiences. He believes that we will lose more than we will gain.

Kim Gates, a community member, explained that we all struggle with property taxes but our goal is quality education and this bill does not address that. We have pride in our community and this bill does nothing to help our children become educated.

Jay Nichols, Superintendent of Franklin Northeast SU, lives in Richford. He explained that the current school system was built in 1892. He doesn't believe that the bill is perfect but he did explain that it provides more opportunities for kids. It will allow for a sharing of teachers and other resources that the current system does not.

Peter Magnant explained further that Franklin is one of the top rated schools in the State of Vermont. We have very personal experiences such as Speech Contests, grandparents day, Senior Dinner etc. All of these experiences are amazing and we do not want to lose the local control that Franklin has.

Senator Dustin Degree explained that to get everyone in a PreK-12 system, you will be combining administration, sharing resources etc. There will be less representation from the local towns and you

would lose autonomy over your schools. There are really big incentives to opt into consolidation but he feels it should be voluntary and not mandatory.

Travis Perry, Chair of the Sheldon School Board, spoke out against the 2% education spending cap. It favors large schools to small schools. Along with the implementation of this cap, the State passed a universal Pre-K bill last year, an unfunded mandate. This bill along with other unfunded mandates could cause a school district to increase their budget by more than 2% forcing them to find savings in other parts of their budget that have a direct education impact on kids.

Jay Nichols, Franklin Northeast SU Superintendent, agreed that spending caps are bad public policy and with 80% of the budget being largely personnel, it could impact the 20% of the budget that includes supplies, text books, equipment etc. It would be better if the state could take health care insurance off the plates of the local schools and they could save millions of dollars.

Representative Larry Fiske also stated that he did not vote for this bill and thought consolidation was a bad idea. Representative Mariann Gamache expressed her opposition to the bill and also expressed her support for school choice.

Other community members asked questions or spoke out against the bill.

Tim Magnant made one last announcement regarding voting for the Highgate Arena on April 14, 15 and 16. The winning arena will receive \$150,000 towards upgrading their local arena. To vote visit Kraft HockeyVille. Com, text 35350, or call 855-255-5975.

Tim Magnant thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pierrette Bouchard
School Board Secretary

These minutes were approved by the Selectboard at the May 6, 2015 meeting.
