**SJR 4 – Education Funding Improvement Commission Meeting #3**

**January 7, 2016**

**Bear Library, Bear**

**MINUTES**

**Member Attendees:**

Madeleine Bayard Jill Floore

Ray Jones Avery David Blowman

Brian Maxwell Claudia Porretti

Lindsay O’Mara Ed Ratledge

Kevin Carson Darryl Scott

Rod Ward Rep. Ruth Briggs King

Ashley Dalzell-Gray Walter Gilefski

Mike Jackson Mark Stellini

Sally Maldonado Barbara Rutt

**Members Not In Attendance:**

Kristin Dwyer

Vicki Gehrt

Sen. Gary Simpson

**Non-Member Attendees:**

Meaghan Wallace for Rep. Earl Jaques Rep. Kim Williams

Wendy Strauss for Robert Overmiller Rep. Paul Baumbach

Tanner Polce for Sen. David Sokola Tina Shockley

Donna Johnson Karen Kleinschmidt

Mike Matthews Shirin Skovronski

Bill Doolittle Susan Gooden

Peter Hartranft Kevin Eitner

Paul Tregoe Emily Falcom

Bob Sulber Jerry Gallagher

Jason Hale Jea P. Street

Lynne Howard Rourke Moore

Elizabeth Lockman Jackie Jenkins

The third meeting of the Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 4 Education Funding Improvement Commission was held on January 7, 2016 at the Bear Library in Bear. Chairman of the Commission, Darryl Scott called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Introductions were made by everyone. The Chair reiterated the group’s mission to review national and international practices in education funding and review previous studies in order to effectively make recommendations for an improved student focused funding system in Delaware.

The Chair gave an overview of the agenda, noted there were several presentations and that there would be the availability for public comment at the end of the meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed by all. Barbara Rutt motioned to approve the minutes with Rod Ward seconding the motion. Everyone was in favor and thus the meeting minutes were approved.

Several members gave updates on other funding task forces and commissions. Brian Maxwell reviewed the Expenditure Review Committee Report (Attachment 1) and noted a report would be going to the Governor and Joint Finance Committee on January 29, 2016. This attachment will be posted on the SJR 4 webpage. Jill Floore gave an update on the WEIC Student Success Committee which deals with transitional redistricting and will work to transition students from the Christina School District to the Red Clay School District. The group is looking at the cost for transition, as well as the root causes and needs of students. Ultimately, the number one recommendation is to address the lack of resources for ELL students, high poverty students and special education K-3. They need a formula to address this. Other recommendations they are considering are a proposed weighted unit funding for ELL and poverty students, local issues and issues not addressed by the state. Ms. Floore noted that the equalization formula is not working and there is a non-equal tax base (which may require a referendum). She noted that a report will be submitted and voted on by the State Board of Education in January and will then be sent the General Assembly.

Next, David Blowman gave a detailed overview of the Existing Unit Funding Structure. There were several documents in his presentation, all of which are labeled and referenced within and will be put on the SJR 4 webpage. He explained how the number of needs based enrollment (number of students) in each category translate into Division I units earned by each district (Attachment 2). Units are used to calculate needs based positions in districts. He provided a detailed look at enrollment and units by school, including Special Education Enrollment Units, within the Brandywine School District and Laurel School District (Attachments 3 and 4). Additionally he explained the Academic Excellence Option Report (Attachment 5) and how units for academic excellence are calculated. He gave an overview of what Equalization was and how it is calculated (Attachment 6).

Next, Ray Jones Avery, Jackie Jenkins and Elizabeth Lockman gave an overview of equitable funding recommendations made by the Delaware Education Funding Improvement Commission via two PowerPoints entitled, “Wilmington Education Strategy Think Tank (WESTT) Fair & Adequate Resourcing of Schools and an Edumonics Lab report entitled, “Delaware State Ed Finance: Review and Recommendations.” These two reports, labeled as Attachment 7 and 8, will be posted on SJR 4 website.

The Chair noted that we would discuss the Review of Modeling at our next meeting, which would include alternative student weighted funding.

The Chair then acknowledged those who wanted to provide public comment. Mike Matthews indicated he would like DEDICATED UNITS for positions like guidance counselor, unified arts, and behavior interventionists outside of the unit count system. He feels every school should have those DEDICATED UNITS based on the number of students in the school. He is not a fan of the current weighted funding model as it will potentially allow principals to get rid of more experienced teachers just because they have higher salaries. In Red Clay a few years ago, a principal told an AMAZING reading specialist with 25 years of experience that he could get "two new teachers for the price of her salary." Is that what weighted student funding will look like? It's very concerning. HE LIKEs THE UNIT COUNT FUNDING SYSTEM, but notes it just needs to be "beefed up" and improved.

Next, Shiri Skovronski spoke proactively for counseling and the overwhelming need students have for it. She believes there are inequities in how counselors are funded. She noted that counselors are used for several things (planning, hall monitor, etc.). She noted that counselors need to be used for what they are hired to do.

Next, Ms. Susan Gooden, a retired librarian, spoke about the need for librarians and libraries. She too noted that librarians are not included when figuring unit count, though they are essential to student growth.

Next, Peter Hartfrant suggested that we determine those “best in class” schools and see how they are spending appropriately per student with great results. We should examine how they do it and insist on replication.

Next, the Chair thanked those who made public comment. He noted that the next committee meeting would likely be February 8 and everyone agreed that a doodle survey for the exact time would be conducted. He noted it may be in Dover or in Sussex County.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Approved as Amended 02.08.16