

School Consolidation Taskforce Meeting – HCR 39

August 1, 2017

House Hearing Room – Legislative Hall

Members Present:

Secretary Susan Bunting, Secretary of Education
Jon Sheehan, Education Policy Advisor for the Governor
Representative Earl Jaques, House of Representatives - Chair
Representative Joseph Miro, House of Representatives
Senator Brian Pettyjohn, Senator
Heath Chasanov, Superintendent Woodbridge School District
Dusty Blakey, Superintendent Colonial School District
Kevin Fitzgerald, Superintendent Caesar Rodney School District
Mary Nash Wilson, Office of Management and Budget Designee
Jeff Taschner, DSEA Representative
John Skrobot, Designee from School Boards Association
Robert Overmiller, Representative from Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children
Jill Floore, Parent of Wilmington City Public School student
Nacole Gardner, Parent of New Castle County Public School student
Mark Dufendach, Representative Vo-Tech School District
Matthew Meyer, New Castle County Executive
Michael Petit de Mange, Kent County Administrator
Gina Jennings, Sussex County Administrator
Lauren Hudson, Parent Sussex County Public School student

Rep. Earl Jaques opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. and introduced himself to the group. Individuals present were asked to do introductions and to indicate whether or not they were one of the 22 people that were appointed to the task force or members of the public.

Members of the task force and members of the public present introduced themselves to one another.

Rep. Jaques then stated that this would be a working taskforce and that the taskforce will do its best for the students of the State of Delaware.

The goals and purpose of the taskforce was discussed in accordance with HCR 39, Line 34-39. The taskforce responsibilities are to examine issues and existing research related to the consolidation of school districts, study and make findings related to the financial feasibility and impact of school district consolidation, study implementation challenges associated with school district consolidation; examine and identify incentives that may be used to encourage schools districts to consolidate or reorganize. Finally, make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly concerning a proposed direction for public education consolidation based upon its findings. A report is to them no later than January 30, 2018.

Previous challenges of all that occurred in the past were discussed and those in attendance were reminded that this was about the students and their success, not funding.

Secretary Bunting addressed the group and recapped some of the past reports including the WEIC study that focused on Wilmington schools. The review found there could be some benefits to consolidation, there were questions around what we would do with allocations. Please refer to the PowerPoint presentation that is attached.

Representative Jaques then asked to have a selection of Taskforce Chair as stated in HCR No. 39. Representative Miro moved to nominate Representative Jaques, the motion was seconded by Senator Pettyjohn, all voting members present were in favor of the motion.

There will be four sub-committees, each led by a chair and deputy chair.

Structure, Transportation and Manpower Chair Kevin Carson, Deputy Chair Rep. Jaques
Financial, Chair by Fred Sears, Deputy Chair Mary Nash Wilson
Academics and Children Needs, Chair Secretary Bunting, Deputy Chair Rep. Miro
Teachers and Staff Chair by Dusty Blakey, Deputy Chair Jeff Taschner

Clipboards with sign-up sheets were handed out; individuals present were asked to sign up for sub-committees they would like to be involved with.

Rep. Joseph Miro stated that only the 22 appointed members can vote whenever an official vote is taken. He reminded that 12 members must be present to have a quorum.

Meetings will be held over the next four months, all starting at 6:30p.m.

September 18	Woodbridge High School, Bridgeville
October 16	William Penn High School, New Castle
November 16	Caesar Rodney High School, Camden
December	TBD

Rep. Jaques opened the floor for public comment, each guest was given two minutes.

Kevin Ohlandt, Capital School District, stated that he found out about the meeting the day of the meeting. He felt that transparency was not at work for this “secret meeting.” The chair stated a better job can be done communicating the meeting dates. It was also stated that the group should focus on students first and not make this work about cost savings. It was stated that the Auditor would figure out where the money is going.

Walter Gilefski, Woodbridge School District – Is very much opposed to school consolidation. Gilefski is a member of Woodbridge School Board. Gilefski stated that residents of Woodbridge School District do not want consolidation, they care about children and also academics are not the only thing we should consider when we think about our children. Gilefski is not a National Rifle Association (NRA) member and would need to be convinced consolidation is the route to take. Gilefski will plan on attending future meetings and wants to be added to a distribution list.

Natalie Ganc, Smyrna SD. Ganc works for Caesar Rodney SD. She said she came to see what consolidation was all about. She stated that she is a little confused of how many schools are in districts. Ganc has special needs students and requested to be on a subcommittee list for teachers.

Rep. Jaques adjourned the meeting at 7:25p.m.