

## **School Consolidation Taskforce Meeting**

November 2, 2017

Booker T. Washington Elementary School

**Members Present:** Rep. Earl Jaques, Susan Bunting, Kevin Carson, Heath Chasanov, Tammy Croce, Mark Dufendach, Kevin Fitzgerald, Natalie Ganc, Victoria Gehrt, Walt Gilefski, Loretta Greig, Lauren Hudson, Gina Jennings, Rep. Joseph Miro, Eugene Montano, Kevin Ohlandt, Robert Overmiller, Michael Petit de Mange, Angeline Ravello, Jordan Rosen, Fred Sears, Jon Sheehan, Dan Shelton, David Sokola, Sean Sokolowski, Jeff Taschner, Mary Nash Wilson

**Members of the public present:** Dr. Paulette Stevens

### **Rep. Earl Jaques opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.**

He introduced himself to the group and informed those present that if they wanted to make a public comment to please sign-up in advance on the sheet provided. He then covered the goals and purpose of the taskforce. He asked that the group not lose the focus of the task force, it is about the children and not the funding.

Rep. Jaques called for the approval of the minutes from October 25, 2017. Motion was made by Robert Overmiller to approve. Kevin Carson brought forward a correction to the minutes, stating 2<sup>nd</sup> page, under his report, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence, Item 2 should read “having 19 districts with more consolidation of services.” It was also noted that Jeff Taschner and Kevin Ohlandt were both present at the meeting. Minutes approved with corrections noted, seconded by Mr. Sears.

Rep. Jaques presented the information from the summary of recommendations received through public comment. There were 150 responses from public, majority in writing. There were public comment periods held in all three counties: Woodbridge in Sussex County; William Penn in New Castle County and Caesar Rodney in Kent. Recap of the numbers:

Remain as is/Status Quo:	49
For Consolidation:	101
General:	26
Statewide:	5
Countywide:	34
Countywide with Variation:	24
Other Submission:	15

Rep. Jaques stated that the subcommittees need further direction for steps to move forward and that there is a need to narrow down different suggestions received from the public in order for the taskforce to do meaningful research.

Rep. Jaques stated that we ended up with 6 models based on feedback from the public.

Structures subcommittee brought forward 5 models and one will be added which will be consolidation of vo-techs based on the input from the 3 countywide meetings.

1. Status Quo as is with 19 districts, no changes
2. 19 districts with more consolidation of services
3. 19 districts with only changing between no crossing between county lines
4. 19 districts with consolidation of vo-techs into a statewide system
5. 19 school districts with countywide revenue base
6. Straight county wide school districts

Does anyone have a model they want to add or discuss?

Mr. Taschner stated that under Item #2, there was discussion about consolidation of services and looking at programs. Visually impaired teachers from DHSS scattered across the state. Since the taskforce is looking at consolidation so services, it was suggested they also consider consolidation of programs. Jaques asked if anyone was objection to redefining it to not only consolidation of services but to also include programs. There was no objection, that change will be made.

These options are included because the public things that they will work. The data will be compiled to see if they will or will not save the state funding and made education better for our students. There has been a decision to move forward, researching these models is not an endorsement of the models, simply saying the taskforce needs to look further into them.

Rep. Jaques stated that the taskforce was ready to make a decision on these models moving forward and that he would like to vote on all 6 models at one time.

Mr. Sears inquired about one of the models being Status Quo. Rep. Jaques stated that it would be used as a benchmark to look at the other models.

Kevin Ohlandt asked of there was a quorum, Rep. Jaques stated that it wasn't necessary.

Mr. Chasanov asked if there was a reason the taskforce isn't voting on each one individually. Rep. Jaques asked if there was an objection to voting on all 6 separately, there were no objections.

Rep. Jaques called for a vote on the 6 models individually:

- Model #1: 1 Opposed, motion carried
- Model #2 – 2 Opposed, motion carried
- Model #3 - Majority opposed, defeated
- Model #4 Majority opposed, defeated
- Model #5 Motion carried

Model #6 Motion carried

Are there any questions on the voting?

Rep. Miro made a motion on #4 for taskforce to consider more than one school district in any one county. Kevin Ohlandt seconded the motion. Questions arose around where the vo-techs fall in the countywide school districts, would they be considered countywide as part of whole system or on their own. Rep. Jaques stated they would be part of the whole.

Mr. Shelton stated part of the reason on options to alleviate it being expanded to unlimited number of possibilities, states this motion would open door to more possibilities.

Mr. Sears stated he doesn't want all research on countywide, this option looks like too much to challenge. He stated that he didn't want any research to close the door. Hypothetically, transportation could be an issue, would have to follow-up afterwards.

Mr. Taschner asked when this goes to the four subcommittees, could any deviate from countywide model? Is there a subcommittee that is going to look at this topic? The taskforce has to figure out how it will all play out.

Rep. Miro was asked to repeat his motion: To consider more than one school district in any one county. The motion was defeated with voice vote.

Mr. Ohlandt asked to reclarify Rep. Miro's motion, if during subcommittee meetings a suggestion comes forward on new model that we move forward on it. Rep. Jaques asked if there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> on this, there was none.

Rep. Jaques reiterated the 4 options:

Model #1:	Status Quo
Model #2	19 school districts with more consolidation of services and programs
Model #3	19 school districts with countywide revenue base
Model #4	Straight countywide school districts

Rep. Jaques stated the next step was to end up with some type of model that all 4 subcommittees can use in their research and discussion.

Mr. Shelton stated he sent a model for Structures that looked at all like districts and asked to have Google docs set up so everyone could add their comments or edits from each subcommittee. Secretary Bunting informed the taskforce that the Department of Education was not authorized to use Google docs.

Rep. Jaques will request the IT department to look into having a format set up that all can access and edit.

A suggestion was made by Mr. Montano to have a Schoology group set up, Rep. Jaques was in agreement with this idea.

Rep. Jaques stated that there has been public comment asking if there are too many administrators within the districts. He is going to get an independent organization to look at the question. He has reached out to SREB and talked to the Governor. The Governor has committed to moving forward on obtaining an independent organization to do the research. The public will then be informed of their findings.

Sen. Sokola stated one of the items that has been looked at in the past was not so much as money that went to administrators but going to instruction. There needs to be better definition around those who directly engage with students but are never in a classroom. This administrator question has a lot nuances about it, the answer being sought may not be the one that is wanted. He is more interested in efficiency with instructional dollars. The taskforce could get more useful information if this is explained to those at SREB who will be conducting the research. Rep. Jaques was not opposed to this idea.

Mr. Ohlandt asked who would be paying for this independent research and was informed by Rep. Jaques that the Governor's office would be taking care of the costs.

Mr. Chasanov asked if the independent contractor would be here as part of our taskforce and was informed by Rep. Jaques that they would address the group and explain exactly how they are obtaining their data.

Mr. Taschner requested clarification on instruction from Sen. Sokola. Sen. Sokola's interpretation is that the subcommittee would come back with the definition for instructional administrators. Mr. Dufendach stated that federal information is available to be analyzed with definitions standardized and information is readily available.

Mr. Carson asked which subcommittee this would fall under and Sen. Sokola felt that it should be with the Teachers and Staff subcommittee.

Ms. Croce stated we need to ensure that the data is being pulled from districts within Delaware so we have true number of administrators by district. Rep. Jaques stated main reason for going to independent contractor was to be transparent in findings.

Sen. Sokola then introduced his new staff person - .

Rep. Jaques reminded everyone the next meeting will be December 7, 2017 starting at 6:30 p.m. at Leg Hall, second floor conference room.

Rep. Jaques asked for public comment.

Natalie Ganc: Her concern with district consolidation is the teacher pay and how will it affect contractual agreements. Also, her understanding from comments from Sen. Sokola that he is interested in cutting instructional costs, is that correct? She just went through the Delaware Budget for 2017 and found a couple of areas of concern: student assessment costs about \$6M, yet provides teachers with no information what so ever that is useful. . Also assessment computers cost \$257,000, and ELL population is 10,037 kids and at \$77 a test about \$803,000 I have learned in ELL trainings that it takes about 7-10 years for ELL to master academic language but they are expected to reach grade level state assessment at the end of the year. Rep. Jaques thanked her for her time.

Rep. Jaques called on Dr. Paulette Stevens, she deferred on making comments.

That ends the public comment period.

The meeting adjourned at 7:13p.m.