

BERKSHIRE COUNTY EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Saturday, September 16, 2017

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Nessacus Middle School

Present: John Hockridge, Chair, MASC Division VI, (member) North Adams School Committee
Michael Case, Vice Chair, MASC Division VI (arriving at 10:08 a.m.)
Douglas McNally, (former) Principal, Taconic High School, (current) Berkshire Compact for Education
Regina DiLego, Chair, Lanesborough School Committee
Dr. Jake McCandless, Superintendent, Pittsfield Public Schools
Neil Clarke, MTA Senate District Coordinator
Robert Vaughan, Chair, Lenox Public Schools
Carl Stewart, Chair, Southern Berkshire Regional School District
Dr. William Cameron, (retired) Superintendent, Central Berkshire Regional School District
Brian Fairbank, Chair, The Fairbank Group
Andrea Wadsworth, Lee Public Schools Business Administrator, former School Committee Chair
Dr. Cindy Brown, Vice President for Academic Affairs, MCLA
Dr. Jake Eberwein, Dean, MCLA Division of Graduate and Continuing Education
Nat Karns, Executive Director, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Ellen Kennedy, President, Berkshire Community College
Dan Caplinger, Vice Chair, Williamstown Elementary School Committee
Liz Lafond, MASC Field Consultant and Recording Secretary
Robert Putnam, Superintendent, Adams Cheshire School District School District
Dr. Barbara Malkas, Superintendent, North Adams Public Schools
Michael Wise, Moderator, Town of Great Barrington
Bronly Boyd, Bronly Boyd, Chairman of Boyd Technologies
Poppy Doyle, Mohawk Trail Regional School Committee
Nathan Levenson, President, District Management Group
Karla Baehr, Senior Advisor, District Management Group

Task Force Chair, John Hockridge, called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m.

DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA PACKET AND OTHER DOCUMENTS TO MEMBERS & PUBLIC

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

John Hockridge offered a brief update on Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee's decision to withdraw from task force membership. He encouraged TF members to watch the Berkshire Hills SC meeting and the discussion that took place around the TF's work. He believes that some misunderstandings of the work led to the vote. Any decisions made by communities are up to those communities and only those communities.

MINUTES OF MEETING 34: AUGUST 26, 2017

MOTION: Bill Cameron made a motion, seconded by Bronly Boyd, to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2017 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF CORE MESSAGE

Nate Levenson indicated that the Core Message had gone through multiple revisions. The idea is to look at the message and discuss whether it encapsulated the past months of framing and discussion by the TF. It is important that TF members are in agreement with the message from the TF.

OUTREACH PRESENTATION REVIEW

Karla Baehr explained that the webinar presentation will be Tuesday, September 26th. This is intended as a review of what will be presented in the webinar. The ask is to look for what is in the proposal that perhaps does not need to be there, and whether there is something missing that should be in the presentation; also, accuracy of the messaging is important.

Narrators ran through the proposed script and slides.

Following the presentation, there will be opportunity for questions and answers from webinar participants.

The Webinar can be found [here](#).

There was discussion about various slides and narrative in order to better organize and present the information

Question - whether there could be a second webinar produced for people outside the education system. This presentation includes high level information that will be understood by education insiders, but not necessarily by community members.

A broader public presentation definitely needs to follow.

There was discussion about the best way to disseminate the webinar invite to area school committee members, superintendents, business managers, central office administrators, school principals and association leaders; request to add MCLA & BCC staff.

The North County meeting is scheduled for 10/17. This meeting will be open broadly to the public. Sessions for Central and South Counties are still being planned. The idea would be to have a slimmed down version of the Webinar, however, there would be a folder with all the slides available, should questions come up. The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition meeting is being used as the conduit for that presentation. If there are networks that gather people in South and Central Counties, that might be a way to look at organizing those meetings.

There will be a presentation on November 16th, at the 7-Town Meeting. That meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. at Wahconah High School. Pittsfield will have a separate, Joint School Committee/School City Council Meeting; that was requested by the City Council President.

There are multiple, different opportunities and avenues to get the message out. The TF needs to be sure that the message is consistent where language will be tailored for the audience, but there cannot be deviation from the core message.

BCETF LONG RANGE ROLE DISCUSSION

As phase 3 was finishing, it became clear that there needs to be a phase 4 of the work. Phase 4 is not just a continuation of the previous phases. The TF will need to have deeper discussions about the structure of future work at an upcoming meeting.

This group has studied the problem, identified and studied possible options for solving the problem, and put forward a recommendation, with outreach to be done over the next couple of months so all of the county will know what the aspiration is.

Phase 4 is a different piece of work and there needs to be a different structure to do that work. The structure needs to be something that is more sustainable over the long haul. This is a good time to sunset the Berkshire County Education Task Force 1.0, and develop a new Berkshire County Education Task Force, 2.0 that is focused on the work of supporting districts to move forward.

The TF will need to affirm or revise the proposed new charge and organizational plan and then invite current members to continue if they want to contribute and invite new members who wish to engage with the new charge.

The new charge would be to advocate, support, assess and celebrate progress toward a single school district for Berkshire County by 2027.

The new organization forms the idea of working through subcommittees. Subcommittees will have co-chairs who will be members of the TF. Subcommittees will meet in between the every other month meetings of the TF. The job of the TF is to make sure there is coordination, ongoing movement and support. The TF can also help sort to which subcommittees work goes, all in service of supporting districts that want to move ahead and create conditions for other districts to begin to move forward. Some of the subcommittees may need very specific technical skill, such as state law, transportation reimbursement, etc. It could be much easier for subcommittees to find experts to attend a specific number of meetings to work through an issue. Subcommittees will be: Outreach, Governance, Municipal & School Finance, and Legislative.

Nat said there will be transitions and there needs to be commitment to getting to new superintendents and new school committee members across the region, to educate them about what is and what is not. Constant reeducation of the new faces will be critical.

Regina DiLegio said part of the work in the next phase needs to include an educational/programming subcommittee so that there is a clear sense of what is not being provided or what the TF is striving to encourage districts to do.

This is also a place to include other organizations that are doing work that ties into the next phase of work and broadens the scope of who has a stake in the efforts.

Cindy Brown agreed with bringing the educational/programming piece front and center in the next phase of work. She also suggested joining the governance and legislative subcommittees because there is big overlap of the work.

Michael Wise suggested that there should be a labor relations subcommittee to assist with the transitions.

Task Force members should think about the subcommittees and structure and discuss at the next TF meeting.

In the next phase the TF will be in service to the pioneering districts. The pioneering districts have to lead the way. The districts that are moving forward are driving the bus. The TF will need to find out what they want to help them.

John Hockridge and Andrea Wadsworth left the meeting at 11:31 a.m. Bill Cameron was designated as chair in John Hockridge's absence.

OTHER DISCUSSION & PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Michael Wise told TF members that he spoke at the Berkshire Hills School Committee meeting last week, pushing back against the claim that the TF's work was driven by finances and tried to emphasize that the TF believes the work was driven by quality of education.

NEXT MEETING DATE: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2017

Suzanne Bump, the State Auditor will be present at the next meeting.

There were some concerns expressed about attendance at that meeting because it is a long weekend.

Bill Cameron agreed to talk with John Hockridge to resolve when the meeting would be scheduled.

MOTION: Mike Case made a motion, seconded by Barbara Malkas, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The BCETF meeting of September 16, 2017 adjourned at 11:43 a.m.