

BERKSHIRE COUNTY EDUCATION TASK FORCE
SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 2017
TIME: 9:00 AM
NESSACUS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Task Force Chair John Hockridge called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

Present: John Hockridge, Chair, MASC Division VI, (member) North Adams School Committee
Michael Case, Vice Chair, MASC Division VI
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
Carrie Greene, Vice Chair, Mt. Greylock Regional School Committee
Robert Vaughan, Chair, Lenox Public Schools
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
Nat Karns, Executive Director, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Dan Caplinger, Vice Chair, Williamstown Elementary School Committee
Paul Butler, Chair, Adams-Cheshire Regional School Committee
Shawn Armacost, Chair, Central Berkshire Regional School District
Robert Putnam, Superintendent, Adams Cheshire School District School District
Dr. Barbara Malkas, Superintendent, North Adams Public Schools
Jonathan Butler, President, 1Berkshire
Michael Wise, Moderator, Town of Great Barrington
Bronly Boyd, Chairman of Boyd Technologies
Liz Lafond, MASC Field Consultant and Recording Secretary
Karla Baehr, Senior Advisor, District Management Group
Nate Levenson, President, District Management Group

Distribution of Agenda Packet and other Documents to Members & Public

Welcome/Introductions, Members, Consultants and Public

Chair, John Hockridge opened the Task Force's 30th meeting. The TF began its work in July of 2015. He thanked members for staying with the process and for doing the work.

There is an update on membership in the packet. South, Central and North Counties are all fairly represented; the Task Force has thirty active members, with representation from every school district in BC, except for Farmington River.

Minutes of Meeting 29: May 20, 2017

MOTION: Mike Case made a motion, seconded by Bill Cameron, to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2017 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

DMG: Nate Levenson, President and Karla Baehr, Senior Advisor

Confirming Scenarios to Model

Nate Levenson told TF members that DMG is deep into the data and they want more feedback on the assumptions to be sure that the work is moving in the right direction. The goal is that the models are reasonable. DMG wants to be transparent on the assumptions that have been made.

The goal of the models is not to just look at finances. Community outreach was conducted to be able to get the models closer to what community stakeholders want from their schools.

The three lenses through which the models should be looked at are:

1. Educational benefits
2. Implementation complexity, i.e., how implementable is the model (will political support, legal environmental, make it easier/harder.)
3. Financial implications

Revised Draft Goals and Preamble:

Revised Preamble (as presented):

The Berkshire County Education Task Force has as its first priority ensuring that all Berkshire County student are prepared to succeed at each step of their personal and educational development and leave high school well-prepared for success in a changing global world. Based on our study of conditions in Berkshire County and the aspirations of the 400+ students and adults who participated in our April Aspiration Outreach Meetings, we have identified these three goals against which we will assess the options we are examining to address the fiscal and demographic challenges Berkshire County faces.

Revised goals (as presented):

ALL students will have improved and more equitable access to – and success in – high quality career pathways and elective courses and activities.

For ALL students, enhanced safety nets to support their academic and life success, e.g., guidance counseling, reading services, curriculum for social-emotional, special education services.

For taxpayers, a more equitable and fiscally sustainable way of funding education and other municipal services.

Revised preamble (as revised at meeting):

The Berkshire County Education Task Force has as its first priority ensuring that all Berkshire County students are prepared to succeed at each step of their personal and educational development and leave high school *able to function as informed citizens and be* well-prepared for success in a changing global world. Based on our study of conditions in Berkshire County and the aspirations of the 400+ students and adults who participated in our April Aspiration Outreach Meetings, we have identified these three goals against which we will assess the options we are examining to address the fiscal and demographic challenges Berkshire County faces.

Revised goals (as revised at meeting):

All students will have improved and more equitable access to ~~—and success in—~~ *-and opportunity for success in* - high quality career pathways and elective courses and activities.

For *all* students, enhanced safety nets to support their academic and life success, e.g., guidance counseling, reading services, curriculum for social-emotional, special education services.

For taxpayers, a more equitable and fiscally sustainable way of funding education and other municipal services.

Review assumptions for financial modeling, education modeling and implementation factors:

DMG reviewed the factors they have been using as they consider the models. There was lengthy discussion and feedback on what should go into the models. DMG will share back with the organization of the feedback received at the next meeting.

Review and update of school districts, current status as supervisory union and/or region, and current enrollments.

The five scenarios being modeled are:

1. Do nothing differently
2. Three regional supervisory unions
 - This structure would allow and encourage shared staffing and shared services that would be a significant step to begin to tackle the demographic and financial challenges BC faces. The primary purpose of a supervisory union is to share central office staff and costs. This scenario would be a modified version of supervisory union that would allow school committees of towns, or municipalities, or regional districts, and of existing supervisory unions, to vote to create a supervisory union, thereby expanding the definition of who can form a union and clarify what services it could provide so as to enlarge the definition. This scenario would require some special legislation that would apply to the Berkshires, rather than changing all supervisory union laws.
3. Centralized supervisory union

4. Three regional school districts
5. Single school district

Proposed regional boundaries

There was discussion on the proposed regional boundaries and the wide use of school choice in the county. It's important for all districts to know that any of the scenarios can evolve over time, that no one has veto power, that no one is forced to go where they don't want to go or to do things they don't want to do. Those are things that will increase the ease of implementation.

The group talked about the complexity of implementation and management of models and the framework for assessing scenarios.

Financial considerations

This will be the most difficult area to reach consensus/agreement. Scenarios are being modeled based on what happens in other districts of similar size. Averages will be used for calculating positions. Data collection has been ongoing around staffing salaries. Approximately 80% of budgets in the county is personnel costs.

Core assumptions include the idea that if a school footprint does not change, the classroom staffing will not change. There will be a lot of potential for benefits to breadth of offerings, but not in classroom staffing changes.

Next Meeting Date: Saturday, June 24th, 9:00 a.m.

Future Meeting date (tentative): Saturday, July 15th, 9:00 a.m.

MOTION: Brian Fairbank made a motion, seconded by Jake McCandless, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The BCETF meeting of June 10, 2017 adjourned at 11:43 a.m.