BERKSHIRE COUNTY EDUCATION TASK FORCE
SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2017
TIME: 9:00 A.M.
NESSACUS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Berkshire County Education Task Force Chair John Hockridge opened the meeting at 9:11 a.m.

Present: John Hockridge, Chair, MASC Division VI, (member) North Adams School Committee
Michael Case, Vice Chair, MASC Division VI & Central Berkshire Regional School Committee
Dr. William Cameron, (retired) Superintendent, Central Berkshire Regional School District
Neil Clarke, MTA Senate District Coordinator
Carrie Greene, Vice Chair, Mt. Greylock Regional School Committee
Dr. Jake McCandless, Superintendent, Pittsfield Public Schools (arriving at 9:18 a.m.)
Dr. Jake Eberwein, Dean, MCLA Division of Graduate and Continuing Education
Shawn Armacost, Chair, Central Berkshire Regional School District
Douglas McNally, (former) Principal, Taconic High School, (current) Berkshire Compact for Education
Dr. Cindy Brown, Vice President for Academic Affairs, MCLA
Regina DiLego, Chair, Lanesborough School Committee
Jon Lev, Superintendent, North Berkshire School Union
Carl Stewart, Chair, Southern Berkshire Regional School District
Robert Vaughan, Chair, Lenox Public Schools
Dr. Barbara Malkas, Superintendent, North Adams Public Schools
Dan Caplinger, Vice Chair, Williamstown Elementary School Committee (arriving at 9:48 a.m.)
Bronly Boyd, Chairman of Boyd Technologies
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

Minutes of Meeting 28: April 29, 2017

MOTION: Mike Case made a motion, seconded by Bill Cameron, to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2017 meeting, with amendment noted below. The motion and amendment carried unanimously.

>   Carrie Greene requested that further clarification be included in the April 8, 2017 meeting minutes (page 2), which is included in the April 29th minutes, as follows: *Williamstown and Lanesborough are discussing amending the current regional agreement to expand the 7-12 region to include the two elementary school districts.*

Vote on New Member (South County) – Bronly Boyd

Bronly Boyd is a resident of Stockbridge, the founder and former CEO, Chairman and Treasurer of Boyd Technologies, now retired, a member of the Board of Trustees of Berkshire Health Systems, member of the Berkshire Hills Regional Agreement Amendment Committee, and former member of the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee. Bronly Boyd's membership adds to South County representation on the Task Force.

MOTION: Mike Case made a motion, seconded by Carl Stewart, to approve Bronly Boyd as a member of the Berkshire County Education Task Force. The motion carried unanimously.

Jake Eberwein asked for an updated list of task force membership.

DMG

Advisor Drafted Goals

Based on TF members' feedback from work groups at the last meeting, adjustments have been made to the draft goals, against which each scenario will be assessed for educational impact.

> Preamble:
> 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 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 option we are examining to address the fiscal and demographic challenges Berkshire County faces.

> Goal #1
> Original: For high school students, better and more equitable access to more offerings in career pathways, electives and co-curricular activities.

> Revised (1):
> ALL students will have improved and more equitable access to – and success in – high quality career pathways and elective courses and activities.

> Revised (2):
> ALL students will have improved and more equitable access to – and success in – high quality career pathways, enrichment and elective courses, and co-curricular activities.

> Goal #2
> For all students, better and more equitable access to strong student support services.

> Revised (1):
> For ALL students, enhanced safety nets to support their academic and life sciences, e.g., guidance counseling, reading services, curriculum for social-emotional learning, special education services.

> Goal #3
> For taxpayers, stable or reduced per pupil cost, county-wide.

> Revised (1):
> For taxpayers, a more equitable and fiscally sustainable way of funding education and other municipal services.

Review of Highlights of Feedback from April 29th Small Group Look at Scenarios

There was lengthy discussion about the County and whether towns fall into North, Central or South County configuration for the purposes of modeling, or whether the model should be an East/West configuration.

> Modeling will begin with the map drafted by DMG. Assumptions underlying each part of the model will be explicit and laid out so that it will make it easy to make permutations afterwards.

> Request for map to include overlay of visual representations that show roads, locations of current schools, capacity versus current populations of schools, demographic information regarding special populations, and accountability status.

> Minimum size for high schools will not be part of the initial modeling. Virtual programming was not taken into account during the initial conversation of minimum enrollment sizes.

> If schools could accomplish synchronization of schedules, a multitude of financial efficiencies and program offerings would be a significant benefit. This could be talked about as the conversation moves forward because resulting efficiencies and ability for expanded course offerings would be significant.

Small group discussions at the last meeting centered on staffing needs. The three big needs indicated were: business operations, curriculum and technology. Services that could be shared that were most mentioned: purchasing, special education, transportation, technology, curriculum, facilities and maintenance, and food services. There was also mention that shared staffing and shared services should be combined into a single scenario in modeling. This county does not have a structure for shared services. Districts are on their own in determining whether to and how to share services. Other parts of the state have collaboratives that provide structure to shared services. Berkshire County needs a structure for sharing services. One structure for doing that is a regional school district.

> Scenarios being used to start modeling are: (5) no change, (4) shared services and staffing, (3) new or expanded districts, (2) three districts or supervisory unions, (1) single supervisory union for Berkshire County.

> There could be enormous potential in thinking about supervisory unions as an option because supervisory unions leave a lot of local control but they are a structure in which a wide range of services can be shared. Conversation has been launched with DESE to begin to understand the limits of the Massachusetts law, and to look at whether there would be any legislative adjustments, or adjustments in practice, that could be part of the model or a potential recommendation related to that model.

> A supervisory union could function as a bridge to a full-fledged district or it could be a solution for the long haul.

> Supervisory unions also allow for districts to opt in on schedules that work best for the districts/towns.

Modeling will include:
Logistics and consideration of complexity,
Timeframe to implement the scenario and realize benefits,
The number of stakeholders/districts to be aligned,
Ownership and how likely stakeholders in the community will be to embrace the scenario.

The TF broke out into groups to talk about what might need to be included in assessment of models.

> Groups noted that there needs to be consideration given, under logistics, to legal or regulatory ramifications of any change that might be necessary to manage complexity.

> Also to be considered are relationships with stakeholders such as select boards, school committees, etc., and the legal issues around existing contracts.

Online Survey Consideration

At the last meeting there was come conversation about whether there would be value to doing an additional survey. The question was measured against the matrix that looks at the cost against the difficulty to implement, and what the benefit would be.

> Nate Levenson said that if there wasn't major turnout for the community sessions, he did not think there would be much to gain from doing an additional survey. It is a tool that could be used further in the process, after there are recommendations that are shared out, to get feedback on a specific set of topics. There has been learning about community values and there was ample opportunity for folks who wanted to have a voice.

> Barbara Malkas said she would be concerned further that it could be a complication if there was not broad participation in the survey.

Next Meeting Date: Saturday, June 10th, 9:00 a.m.

At the next meeting DMG will bring the assumptions and formulas they are using to do the modeling. If the assumptions are wrong, they will need to know at that point. They also want to make sure the assumptions are clear so that folks can believe in the work. If the assumptions are logical, but the answer that comes out is not what was expected, there is a much better chance of acceptance because of the comfort level with the assumptions that built the recommendations.

Future Meeting Date: June 24th

Models of the scenarios should be ready for this meeting.

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

The Berkshire County Education Task Force Meeting of May 20, 2017 adjourned at 11:52 p.m.