

Committee on Joint School Services

MINUTES

November 7, 2019

The Committee on Joint School Services met in a regular, bimonthly meeting on Thursday, November 7, 2019 at Jackson River Technical Center with the following members present:

Jonathan Arritt	Covington City School Board
Gerald Franson	Alleghany County School Board
James Griffith	Alleghany County Board of Supervisors
Tom Sibold	Covington City Council
Allan Tucker	Covington City Council
Jacob Wright	Alleghany County School Board

Also present were Mr. Eugene Kotulka, Superintendent, Alleghany County Public Schools; Mrs. Melinda Snead-Johnson, Superintendent of Covington City Schools; and Christy Armentrout.

Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and led in a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Approval of minutes:

Mr. Wright asked the committee members to review the minutes from the October 17, 2019 and October 24, 2019 meetings. After reviewing the minutes, Mr. Franson made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Tucker seconded the motion, and it was passed by unanimous aye vote.

Chairman's update:

Mr. Wright updated the committee members that the two consultants recommended for the fiscal studies by Troutman Sanders had officially been contracted, and that the final cost came in at 20% under budget. The consultants, Dick Salmon and Jim Regimbal, will have a rough draft of their fiscal study to the committee for consideration before the December 19, 2019 meeting. They hope to have a final calculation by the first week of January 2020. The consultants will be meeting with the directors of finance from both school divisions in the near future. Mr. Wright expressed appreciation for all of the work that the finance directors have put toward helping with this project.

Old Business:

None

New Business(1-13):

Payment of Bills: Bills in the amount of \$1,520.00 were submitted to the committee for approval of payment. A motion was made by Mr. Franson to approve the payment of bills. A second was made by Mr. Griffith, and the motion carried by unanimous aye vote.

Discussion on Governance:

Mr. Arritt stated that board governance will be very important because of the role the governance will play in how the schools were operated. He noted that he felt that the public comment meeting was profitable for bringing up issues to consider when moving forward with the idea of how the board of a joint school system will be governed. The committee then proceeded to examine different ideas for how a board could be made up to effectively represent the interests of all those involved.

It was noted that there are a lot of options available within the parameters that the law has set forth. Mr. Sibold led some discussion on how things are currently done in the county and the city and possible options if the boards were to be elected or appointed. Mr. Wright noted that in the past both localities had tentatively agreed to a 4/3 composition with a 5/2 super-majority for matters of significance.

There was some discussion of a possible super district scenario, as there would likely be 5 districts and the 2 super districts could be superimposed. The committee members agreed that it is difficult to come to a conclusion on board governance without knowing what the districts would look like. It was noted that Troutman Sanders should be contacted in order to obtain a copy of the 2009 consolidation map that broke up the districts across boundaries.

Discussion was then directed towards the idea of electing board members at large. In theory not having a strictly districted board would lend itself to finding those people who are most willing to serve. This could help unite the community and put away the county versus city mentality, which could help the new board to focus on what is best for the kids. Out of this discussion the idea of a board comprised of 2 members from Allegheny County, 2 members from Covington City, and 3 members at large was discussed. The committee members expressed interest in this as a good way to gain consensus among the residents of the entire Allegheny Highlands.

Mr. Arritt noted that term lengths would also need to be established if the boards are elected because it could be a potential nightmare to have the entire school board up for election at one time. There was some discussion of possible 2 year terms for some districts and 4 year terms for other districts.

Other questions that the committee members decided should be asked of the attorneys were what the definition of boundaries for governance could be in terms of city, county, or at-large elections, and whether or not charters would need to be changed in order to shift to an elected school board as opposed to an appointed one.

In closing, Mr. Wright noted that the December 19 meeting will not be a summit, but a regular meeting. He stated that he hopes to be able to present a rough estimate of the money needed from the state by that meeting. Mr. Tucker noted that if the committee does not have a plan in place by then, that he would be uncomfortable going forward to ask the state for money, and that he felt the committee should just continue the work and ask for the money when a more concrete plan was in place.

Adjournment:

Mr. Wright called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Tucker made a motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Date Approved

Clerk

Chairman