

Committee on Joint School Services

MINUTES

September 26, 2019

The Committee on Joint School Services met in a regular, bimonthly meeting on Thursday, September 26, 2019 at Jackson River Technical Center with the following members present:

Jonathan Arritt	Covington City School Board
Gerald Franson	Alleghany County School Board
Matt Garten	Alleghany County Board of Supervisors
James Griffith	Alleghany County Board of Supervisors
Erika Hunter	Covington City School Board
Tom Sibold	Covington City Council
Jacob Wright	Alleghany County School Board

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

Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and led in a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Approval of minutes:

Mr. Wright presented copies of the minutes from the August 22, 2019 and September 5, 2019 meetings to the committee members. After taking a moment to review the minutes, Mr. Garten made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Griffith seconded the motion, and it passed with a unanimous aye vote.

Old Business:

Obtaining Legal Representation (1-07): Mr. Wright updated the board regarding legal representation, which has been contracted to Troutman Sanders. Mr. Members of the firm, who have been in contact with Mr. Wright and Mr. Arritt, have begun to address the issues of governance, budget, and equalization of pay, as was agreed upon by the committee at the last meeting. Mr. Piepgrass, the lead attorney assigned to the project, indicated to Mr. Wright that the concerns of budget and governance are simple to address, because they can cite what other school districts in similar situations have done in their research. The trickiest issue will be the one of equalization of pay, as this will require an in-depth, unique study.

Studies related to equalization of pay have been done in the past, but not on a wide scale. Mr. Jim Reginal has been recommended to Mr. Wright as someone who might be the best choice to conduct the equalization of pay study. He is affiliated with the Virginia Association of Counties Analytics (VML/VACO), and is interested in looking into this project. His company is called Fiscal Analytics. He will need to be approved by the committee and then Troutman Sanders will help negotiate pricing for his services on this project. Once that has been done, the firm will be able to give the committee a timeline for the study.

Troutman Sanders has also stated that both school boards will need to meet with their Superintendents, Directors of Instruction, Directors of Finance, Directors of Transportation, CTE Administrators, and Dr. Rainone at DSLCC.

Mr. Wright asked the committee to consider the possibility of involving local partners in the project. He suggested that perhaps the Allegheny Foundation may be willing to get on board to support some aspect of the consolidation project.

New Business:

Mission Statement: Mr. Arritt presented the committee members with a Mission Statement for the Committee on Joint School Services to consider for possible adoption.

The proposed mission statement reads as follows:

Mission Statement

The Committee on Joint School Services will examine all relevant quantitative and qualitative data available in consideration of consolidating Allegheny County and Covington City Public Schools in accordance with § 22.1-25 of the Code of Virginia. The goal of this effort will be the maintenance of and continued pursuit of excellence in instruction and educational opportunities for the students of the Allegheny Highlands while maintaining the fiscal responsibility the citizens of our community expect and deserve.

Mr. Garten made a motion that the committee approve this as its mission statement. Mr. Franson seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous aye vote.

Mr. Franson asked that the committee to consider putting up a website in order to dispel misconceptions within the community about what its intentions are moving forward in its mission to create joint services among the two school systems. His suggestion was that the website could have information such as the mission statement, copies of the agendas and minutes for all meetings, and a place for the submission of questions from the public.

Mr. Wright interjected that the committee does plan on having a forum for public comment and to ask questions, however, at this point in time it is not feasible to do so because the process is in such early stages that answers to their questions are not available.

Ms. Hunter asked that perhaps board members not be outspoken on social media and provide answers to questions from the public any more due to the fact that there are no answers in writing about anything yet. The committee agreed that a website would be a good idea, and that perhaps even a FAQ section would be a good idea.

Mr. Wright agreed to begin moving on finding a local business that could start the website. He noted that after the October 17 meeting the committee will be able to develop an idea of what information should be provided there. Mr. Kotulka noted that Mr. Wright would need to follow procurement policies and obtain quotes for website services.

Ms. Hunter asked when the public would be invited to comment at one of the meetings. Mr. Wright believed that information from the attorneys would be available by the October 24, 2019 meeting, and that public comment could feasibly be allowed at that meeting. Mr. Garten stated that a larger forum would be needed for that meeting,

and that a sign-up sheet to facilitate orderliness should be utilized. Time limitation on public comments was also discussed.

Secretary of Education Visit (1-08): Mr. Wright informed the committee that the Virginia Secretary of Education would be touring the Alleghany Highlands on October 9, 2019, and would be making stops at each of the schools on that day.

Next Steps (1-09): Mr. Arritt asked the committee to begin considering what the second phase of the project should be once Troutman Sanders addresses the initial concerns they have been presented with. He wanted to be able to provide them with direction once they are finished with phase one. Mr. Garten stated that he would be more comfortable allowing Troutman Sanders to let the committee know what the best next steps would be based on their expertise. Mr. Wright agreed with Mr. Garten, and said that Troutman Sanders had indicated that they would direct phase two of the project, and that the committee should focus on meeting with finance directors and gathering information in the meantime.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m. on motion by Mr. Arritt.

Date Approved

Clerk

Chairman