

An Ad hoc Agriscience Committee meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, July 3, 2012 at Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Director of Finance/Operations James Reese; Board members Charles Cosgriff and Maryanne Van Aken, NHS Principal Andrew O'Brien, Agriscience Director Bill Davenport; Assistant to the Finance Director and retired Region 6 Business Administrator Helen Stewart; Region 7 Business Administrator Roger Newbury; Woodbury Selectmen Jerry Stomski and George Hale; Bethlehem Board of Finance Chair Len Assard and member Mike Devine; Woodbury Board of Finance members Bill Butterly and Charles Bartlett; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton

The meeting began at 9:40 am when Mr. Goeler requested each participant introduce him/herself and restated the committee's charge to build consensus around an accepted formula for determining the impact of out of district students attending the district's Agriscience program. He said the purpose the committee is to find the *true* impact to taxpayers and determine the real numbers for determining this impact.

Mr. Goeler asked Director of Finance, Jim Reese to provide an overview of per-pupil-expenditure (PPE) and the various ways of determining this number. Mr. Reese commented that there are various acceptable ways of determining PPE depending upon its purpose and use for comparative purposes. For example, the State factors out a number of variables in determining PPE. Determining the PPE by dividing the number of students into the budget does not provide a true number from where to determine the true costs of the program to the taxpayer. The committee will look to isolate the agriscience PPE, as it will provide the basis for further discussion related to costs.

Further discussion centered on:

The Need for a Uniform Formula:

A uniform formula would be desirable; there is a difference between regional school districts and municipalities in how net cost per pupil is determined, as debt service is absorbed by the municipalities.

Charging Sending Districts for Special Education Costs:

Sending towns are billed for special education costs to cover any agriscience student receiving such services. The additional revenues collected offset district expenses for special education, as many of the services we need to provide are already in place, thus providing a financial benefit to taxpayers.

Charging Sending Towns for Transportation:

Sending towns also pay for their students' transportation. It was noted that, after pulling out transportation and special education, the PPE is lower than the figure some have used when raising the issue of agriscience costs as they relate to out of district students. There was consensus around the belief that per pupil expenditure should not include a baseline figure that would include transportation and special education costs, since sending districts pay for these expenses.

Determining Net and Gross Expenses and Revenues:

The importance of looking at revenue v. expense to get net cost to taxpayer was raised.

Also considered was the cost to outplace agriscience students, if the program did not exist, and becoming a "sending" town. In addition, the group discussed the importance of factoring in benefits of the program that cannot be determined in dollars.

The discrepancy in funding between agriscience and magnet schools was noted; although the agriscience educational model is a proven one, as it takes students from school to career and incorporates technology. It was also noted that our program accounts for 40% of the total NHS population.

There was a comment that the quality of education as a whole has a ripple effect in the town; therefore, this is not an insular discussion. Much like valuing a business, the committee will seek to quantify a number – but there needs to be consideration as to what the program costs and what it is worth. There are "quality" aspects of the agriscience program and the addition of out of district students that cannot be represented in a number.

The committee decided it would reconvene on July 24th at 5 pm, to allow for questions raised today to be addressed, and to provide an opportunity for additional presentations be made to satisfy requests from Committee members.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Carlton, Board Clerk
Regional School District 14 Board of Education