

Introduction

What tonight is and what tonight is not:

We are members of the configuration committee tonight.

We heard loud and clear that people wanted to be a part of the conversation earlier than later.

Review our role

Seeking input to bring back to the full board. The meeting began in January. Needed to be deliberate and more intentional. Despite the fact that the conclusion is the same, it has not been the same process.

Pointing out ways it was different:

Guided this process that our priority of planning should drive the structures of the system.

Wellbeing of students is at the forefront of the conversation. Very focused on programming and instructional standards for our district. Another important way it was different, we had community members from every district this time. Leadership by one of the potentially affected schools. Specific examination of specific models and programmatic aspirations that we want to see in our future.

Frame it in a response to the questions. If there is an opportunity to respond we will. Some public comments indicated that there was explicit disagreement and there was also explicit agreement.

What kinds of benefits or opportunities can come with multitown schools?

Doesn't that assume that Calais and Doty will be closed. Non starter.

Could you explain why the configuration committee chose this plan again?

List of criteria the first time around, needed clearer criteria the second time around. We spent nine months listening to testimony from internal district experts, people outside of the district.

Programming opportunity- preserving and expanding on programming.

I don't see here what expanded opportunity you are offering if you shutter the schools.

Let me give you an example- we looked at the deficits and the challenges and inequity presented by multigrade classrooms. To us the cost was bigger and more fundamental... a lack of equal instructional time. There are benefits, there are disadvantages that are social/emotional in nature. Your instructional time with teachers is limited in a multi-age program. A larger school would give us the opportunity to have more single grade classes. We felt strongly that was a benefit.

Who is this a benefit to? How can this be a benefit?

Longer bus times, impact on their access, impact on the communities. You can't look at this in small cases. I know what the impacts of eliminating a school in a community. Northern New England are the best states to be in with climate change... we are going to see population rises.

Let's not weaken our communities. I would love us to have an expanding population. I also want to point out that one other criteria that we had was a short bus route. We believe the bus route won't be longer. Every school is 7 miles around the area. I do not buy that, I don't think it's safe.

Concerns:

There are a lot of assumptions being baked into having our kids in a building that is 5 mins from our community. I am going to answer that. I was a road commissioner. I know that this is not an assumption. Two truths can exist at the same time.

Can you update us on the current assumption of the class sizes?

We are fortunate to have our superintendent here who provided a memo on classroom size. They fluctuate between a small of 10 and a high of 18 in a grade level. If we do multi-grade classes, we want them to stay the same every year. Not a $\frac{1}{2}$ one year and a $\frac{3}{4}$ another year. Curriculum would need to be rewritten each time. When we looked at combining within that building you would have 2 classes with 16-19 kids as opposed to multigrade classes.

How many are currently in school and what is the projection down the road. 89 students K-6 grade. 100 students total with Pre-k. Projected enrollment is actually pretty flat. It shows that the population would be between 79 and 85 kids in the next 5 to 8 years. Projected to decrease about another 5-6%. When we look at combining the schools, it would be a little bit larger than East Montpelier was about 10 years ago.

I am unable to find data about the impact on housing etc. How long will the kids be on the bus? The early estimates are 30-45 mins. East Montpelier it would be about 5 mins more. There are students that fall out of the 15 mins or 7 miles away.

Not a Q

Will there be space to grow if we have an increase in population? Capital expenses related to this transition. Utilizing almost every classroom. Every grade level could absorb 6-10 kids. Some class sizes would be 19. We have 46 at Calais and 32 at East Montpelier. If all schools were filled that would be best. It feels like we are trying to fix the symptom and not the cause. As a community it is an illness... the aging population is an illness. Sinking the ship even more. Focused on increasing the population and hope the it gets higher to hold the boat afloat. Selling point was the school. Possibility that three high functioning schools could be better than five schools that are suffering. We have to think about risk mitigation as a school board. There are factors at play... we had an early ed task force to increase our prek hours in the district from 10-25 hours. Having early ed programming is another option.

Everybody I know has made the community because of this school. The concern here is the premature idea of closing now. After the first configuration there was not a cost benefit. If we want to have a community we should be talking about closing this school. We need to be looking at housing younger people here. What I heard people say... the value of having smaller

classes. I believe in the value of what we have. We moved here two years ago...we chose Calais because it's a small community and small school. We chose to come here because it was a safe space. We knew there was more interaction between teachers and children. What it comes down to is cost. It isn't about our academics... it's about the cost of keeping Calais open... what can we do to bring the tax bracket down. How do we support our school and keep it financially viable and attract young families. What is the ultimate goal? For reducing taxes. I started more than 20 years ago as a teacher, then I moved to a really large school and made a choice that was important, to come back to a small school. The sense of community isn't the same in a larger school. I can get lost in that system. I knew I had to work harder, but I really think it's important to keep this small community school. That is going to continue. To reiterate what they are saying, we have been in Calais since 1999. We have four kids that came through Calais. We chose this community because of this school.

I am also new to this community and have two kids in the same grades as Daniel does. It is a deterrent for our family and our kids.. The model has a lot of opportunities for my kids. Expanded art program, music, band etc. We have those. I think that we are being short sighted. Do those other opportunities exist? I think the conversation around can we imagine what the opportunities are or can be.

We are focusing on why this is not the right direction to go. If we do go on this path, how can we imagine it better. This is about having a broader conversation. The question is what are the concerns... we have already discussed taxes? No. Better student outcomes? They have great test scores. But going from a small school where my daughter can go to the principal when she needs something.

With Act 73 why are we rearranging between these schools when we have other schools that could be fantastic candidates to merging with Calais. Rearranging the deck chairs, when there is going to be so much change.

I have two children who are developmentally delayed... How will this change? Or will it not change? If there is a certain number of staff FTE at Calais, will it be the same? Will it still be the same?

We are acknowledging that there are a lot of voices that are not in the room, we are trying to reach out as much as possible. I have thoughts on your question and I would defer to Steven. This is a traumatic experience for all of us, one of the groups is teachers and staff.

Our staffing will meet the needs of kids. We are required to staff in an appropriate way. Calais is served by one Special educator who has to cover the entire school. There are different staffing models based on those student needs. We do meet those needs when necessary and make sure every kid gets those services.

Why there would be an advantage? I know you don't want to ask for specifics. How do opportunities grow, is it funding based? I don't anticipate a big fluctuation one way or the other.

I would say the budgeting process looks at number of students and needs of students. How do we assign money for the needs. Some of the positions have to be part time. We are looking at where are the opportunities to have full time staff.

By combining schools you would get more full time staff which would increase programming? Our art teacher covers three schools.

Act 46: There has not been an improvement in academics. Equity is not improved by consolidation. You are saying there isn't financial benefits, so why would we make changes. It didn't happen 10 years ago, it won't happen now. I want to see student outcomes. You are promising these things but you don't want to be detailed. I have concerns about 6th graders going up to U32. Opportunities are for the upper 1% but not for everyone.

What is the number we need to meet to level out opportunities? Our students were intradistrict transfers, went from our home elementary school and the school board allowed us to do that. Has the district considered intradistrict transfers?

Transportation wasn't provided, so busing wasn't provided at all. To reiterate something you said, I don't think there is a theoretical optimum for full time staff. We voted for this because it is a significant improvement on status quo. Allows us more flexibility and resilience for the future.

Configuration committee voted for the proposal. District leadership voted for configuration. I will share a summary about how I see this being different. Will this go to voters? The voters will then say, but the board may not choose to move forward.

The vote was for putting it on the ballot, not to close the school. Community members can bring talents to school to benefit the children at not cost to the school.

There is an invitation to community members to come in and provide any expertise to our kids. I am not sure how many people are actually doing that. It is available. More pointed request would help the community to know what to ask.

Process question- if there is a vote this year, that it goes to town meeting and not a different time. We need to vote on town meeting day for strong voter turn out.

We have noted questions but we aren't ready to answer them. But you haven't gone through the questions you have down.

Potential timelines- there will be more opportunity for community involvement along this process. Public input is welcome at every board meeting. In lieu of the first board meeting, we have this listening sessions. That is opportunity #1. We don't have the level of detail of what it would look like in implementation. The board steering committee is going to be talking about more community involvement.

If this happens, will it happen for next year? This would be challenging for our children given time. I was envisioning implementation next fall. I think my guess is we will have a long runway before the board votes and before voters vote.

Has the bus route been practiced?

Is there a reason they did not go out before hand? We will have an online listening session which is more of the same. We can get the questions out. The questions were out there. I don't know the channels in which people receive their information. Maybe feedback about how to receive information outside of FPF and emails.

Is this the only configuration you have talked about? Has anyone talked about closing one school? We have ample opportunity to share our criteria and what we were looking at. What we want to see for our students and our district is that we felt that this model was the best for our community. Without visuals I can't give specifics. This is a listening session, it sounds like you have already decided. We are listening to the feedback from the public and Michelle and Elizabeth are here to listen.

5th graders to go to U32 next year. I also have a 5th grader and 7th grader who go to the montpelier schools. The receiving school needs to be very prepared to receive and accommodate students. Timeline seems very short to be prepared to move over to U32. Timeline seems short for creating a solid program. I don't see an advantage of large over small and visa versa. It's not as clear cut I don't think big means more and small means less.

You know that the state is coming down with expectations of redistricting supervisory unions. Knowing there was change coming made me feel sideswiped with another change. Schools have fewer students. I don't know if I would send my kids to East Montpelier. If there was one school on this flag it would be Calais.

Configuration committee is aware of what that means. There is still a lot of ambiguity about what is going to happen. Most schools are much considerably size to Calais. Multiple changes that you are asking the communities and staff is overwhelming feeling. This is a response to get ahead of that and think about things that may get ahead of us.

How can you decide on which schools to close? All five elementary schools are effectively being closed and we are rebuilding three schools. I think that the new school needs to feel like home for every student. Why those schools? A lot of it came down to geography, logical about bus routes, and facility size and the three facilities that felt like they could absorb the programs.

When Harwood had to reconfigure they gave us information for all the scenarios. That doesn't seem to have happened. I am hearing you say you want to see more information.

We are hitting the budgeting season for the district. If we are talking about closing the school, how will they know what the budget will look like with the closure of schools. We will face more cuts. Opportunities for our kids will not be there if the cuts continue to happen.

Can we have an open school option? Some families in east montpelier want to come to Calais and visa versa. I want that to be part of the conversation. Is that an option? Makes sense or feasible?

Related to the U32 facility.. One thing we did was examine the study that was done about merging montpelier/roxbury. We made enthusiastic overtures and they were not as ready as we were. To merge montpelier high school they would need to close the high school.

Proud of multitown schools... we need to articulate the why behind it. Pros and cons list. With that information we can say we can or cannot have this programming. I could get behind something if you could say my kids can have access to these things then I could get behind it. This is related to staffing questions it is hard to put numbers up against each other. The day is regulated it's not going to change unless you extend our school day there is no way to fit more in regardless of a change. As community members we can advocate for those things to happen. Just because we combine a school doesn't mean it's going to be better. How can we use community to get what you want? It's much different when you are going to multiple schools. I was going to ask, acknowledging not putting the cart before the horse. Is there a role or place for principals to provide some additional details? I have this many students, this kind of budget etc? Can they provide more detail for the community and for the board?

We haven't given a lot of attention or time to the middle school model.

We heard from the principal of U32 about what an expanded middle school model might look like. She shared that there were interesting opportunities when you have three grades together at the middle school level. You have more of the social/emotional growth trajectory. I have had numerous families come to me directly who have had 6th graders in small school that were growing out of that space. There is an exciting opportunity to make a more robust experience for our 6th grader. Teacher at U32 in the high school. I would not have any concern if my child was a 6th grader at U32. The middle school is it's own building. Would there be space for 6th,7th and 8th. Would they fit where it is now? Or would it spill over? There is work to do around that. Part of the administration's need from the board so we can make a decision in a reasonable timeline. Timelines for transition are built around board and community feedback.

We want our kids to be kids for a bit longer. The facility is great, but it sounds like there have been drugs coming in.

Timeline, if this were to go to a vote in March. Would it occur Fall 26-27? Steven encourages folks to tune into the budget discussion. Please note there is nothing on her about moving 6th grade... reading this there is no mention of 6th grade being proposed to be moved up.

The population at Doty is 57 and predicted is 50. You mentioned East Montpelier would be a new school..what would happen to staff. Do you get to move people or is it union driven. We want to make sure our staff is able to get preference. I don't think reapplying is a good term for us to use. For the most part we feel like we will need all of our teachers. Because we are one district and we are one union it is the same employer for all schools.

Principalship, how would that be decided? Would it go to vote about not feeling they are losing their leader. Do the principals operate under the same seniority as teachers? No, they do have contracts that we have to follow. It is not automatic that a receiving principal would have priority over the closed school. 6th grade going to U32.. and the differences between Calais and Doty's population. Does this have to be a packaged deal? If 6th grades move, then we would be very under for all schools.

Access to sports at East Montpelier you have to pay to play sports how will that work?