09-03-26 Meeting: Advisory Committee for School Consolidation Study

Meeting Notes

Advisory Committee for School Consolidation Study

- **Introduction to Phase 2**
  - The McKeesport area school district was identified as a partner for consideration in Phase 1 of the study.
  - Phase 2 involves collaborating with both Duquesne and McKeesport to validate data, gather feedback, and discuss key considerations for a potential consolidation.
- **Role and Purpose of the Advisory Committee**
  - The committee is purely advisory; members will not be asked to make formal recommendations or take a public stance.
  - The primary goal is to surface information in three areas:
    - Identify issues and factors that could affect the timeline or feasibility of consolidation.
    - Determine commitments required from school districts, the Commonwealth, or other parties.
    - Surface non-negotiable constraints held by community members or the school districts.
- **Information Handling**
  - Information gathered from the committee will be summarized and included in the Phase 2 report.
  - The report will be forwarded to the department and then to the legislature, per the school code.

Advisory Committee Meeting Schedule and Topics

- **Meeting Structure**
  - Five sessions are planned to follow this orientation meeting.
  - The schedule may change based on information and availability.
- **Topic Schedule**
  - **September**: Governance, including school code on mergers and administration of a consolidated district.
  - **October**: Enrollment and staffing, using current-year data for both districts.
  - **November**: Facilities and programs.
  - **December**: Safety and security.
  - **Final topic**: Finances, concluding in December.
- **Meeting Logistics**
  - Attendance is flexible; members are not required to attend every session.
  - Slides and data will be shared in advance of each session.
  - All future sessions will be joint with Duquesne and McKeesport members.
  - First session tentatively: September 16th, 17th, or 18th, pending McKeesport's confirmation.

Information Dissemination and Public Transparency

- **Reporting to the Public**
  - School board members and administrators on the committee are asked to report activities at their public meetings.
  - Slide presentations and meeting summaries can be shared publicly to ensure transparency.
  - The intent is to make all information a matter of public record.
- **Methods for Public Communication**
  - Primary method: updates during public school board meetings.
  - To accommodate interest, meetings may move to larger venues (e.g., auditorium).
  - Other methods: posting summaries on the district website, email blasts, or bulk mail to all households.
- **Collaborative Communication**
  - Ensure communication methods and messaging are consistent between the two districts.
  - This is considered a key factor for success.

Committee Operations and Next Steps

- **Meeting Agendas and Materials**
  - An outline with agenda and talking points will be shared before each meeting.
  - Presentation slides will be sent in advance.
- **Follow-up and Additional Discussions**
  - Follow-up conversations with specific individuals are anticipated to gather detailed information beyond the main committee meetings.
- **Submitting Agenda Items**
  - Committee members can suggest agenda items by contacting Speaker 1 and their colleague Saraya.
- **Internal Committee Coordination**
  - Duquesne committee members suggested holding a pre-meeting to align internally before the joint governance session.

Next Arrangements

- Ian to send the presentation slides from this meeting.
- Ian and Saraya to confirm and share dates and times for upcoming sessions.
- Duquesne representatives to define and document their public dissemination approach (public meetings, website, email, bulk mail), ensuring consistency with McKeesport.
- Duquesne committee members to decide whether to hold an internal pre-meeting before the first joint governance session and clarify its objective.