

Pending Approval

Town of Lincoln, Vermont

Special Selectboard Meeting with Patrick Reen, ANESU School Superintendent

(This meeting held from multiple remote locations via GoToMeeting).

November 12, 2020 6:30 PM

In Attendance: Selectboard Chair Bill Finger; Vice-Chair, Paul Forlenza; members Bay Jackson, Will Sipse, and Oakley Smith; Selectboard Ass't/Bookkeeper Ann Moreau-Kensek

Guests: Patrick Reen, ANESU Superintendent; Sarah McClain and Rob Backlund, Lincoln representatives on the ANESU School Board; Tory Riley, Principal at the Lincoln Community School; Sally Ober, Town Clerk; Christine Birong, Kim Callahan, Jenny and Brian Bates, Clara and Dave Carroll, Judi Danforth, Tiffany Denis, Mike Fisher, Mary Gemignani, Matt Germon, Anna Howell, Diedre Kelly, Amy and Gregor Masefield, Devon Macleod, Katie Manaras, Nancy McClaran, Molly McEachen, Jeff Meller, Julie and Doug M., Dan Ober, Alison Parker, Patty Schoenhuber, Trish Shepard, Tom Siegfried, MaryBeth Stillwell, Christie Sumner, Erin Warnock, James Warnock, Su White, Mary Yates.
By phone: Jonathan Mingle and Liza Cochran; and Beth Nelson

Bill brought the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. He introduced the Selectboard and briefly addressed the reason for the meeting. He instructed people who wanted to speak to send a message to Oakley so everyone would have an opportunity to talk. He noted Ann was taking minutes and the meeting would also be recorded.

Sarah McClain spoke about the School Board wanting to meet with Selectboards in each town.

Patrick Reen came to talk about the direction the board is going and to get different perspectives, on possible school closings. He further discussed declining students number and the possible ramifications over the next few years as well as some possible options.

Bill first invited Selectboard members to weigh in and invited residents on the call to follow.

A robust question and answer period followed. Many people thanked Patrick Reen and the School Board for their hard work. The following subjects were discussed:

- Residents expressed concerns over losing the Community School and brought up the value of the school in helping to create the sense of community that makes Lincoln a good place to live.
- The impact to the community at large- many people move here because Lincoln has the reputation of having one of the best elementary schools in the state.
- The possibility of doing something different- maybe at the high school level, and the pros and cons of that.
- What the process would be if Lincoln decided to pull out of the school district and other options the Town may have.
- The tax impact if we don't change anything
- The tax base and operating costs
- How the pandemic potentially skews the projected numbers of students enrolled because more people are homeschooling this year, and how many will come back into the system is an unknown. Several people suggested for a pause in the process because of this.
- The current plan looks five years out- some suggested that is too far with the pandemic creating unknowns.
- What research on the effect of a town losing its school shows.
- Possibility of merging with other districts to cut the number of administrators.
- Bringing these concerns to the legislature, because we are not the only school district facing these dilemmas.
- Vermont's aging population
- The Brigham decision to make education equal across the State
- Whether different school districts across the state view social services and education similarly and the formula Vermont uses. Separating out structural costs vs education and social service.
- Act 46 and if the school closes it won't be reopening
- It's not about brick and mortar, it's about community.
- When does the budget become sustainable?

- The Lincoln Community School bond for building repairs/upgrades and upgrading the Mt. Abe building
- The consistent rate of students attending LCS over the years, and the increase in staff. Can some people overlap jobs with a smaller population of students?
- Students get to know the community through their learning at the school.
- Communicating with legislators how vital this is.
- People move here because Lincoln is an engaged community, and the school is part of that.
- This is huge and intense, and it is hard to be transparent There must be a voice for small schools.
- No question on Patrick Reen’s advocacy for kids- but has he asked a first grader playing at the Potato Hill playground how they feel about this?
- What do we gain? What will we lose? Will it save money? Usually it doesn’t.
- Sustainability of tax threshold
- Keeping school programs
- Several people expressed that they moved to Lincoln because of the school and value things like allowing their children to ride bikes to school and being a part of the community.
- Lincoln School is doing Team Leadership with students, as well as other effective programs to teach metacognition and habits of mind.
- Envisioning a future in Lincoln with more and less expensive housing, better broadband, etc.
- High level of engagement of families in school activities and having a tangible sense of the budget.
- There is research on the financial costs in closing a school, but it doesn’t speak to the children’s experience.
- Children become familiar with the school and teachers before they enter school at assemblies, Thanksgiving dinners, etc. Can’t put a price tag on that value.

Patrick Reen responded to the questions and noted that it was helpful to hear the range of perspectives, and valuable to hear stories and the depth of the school in the community. He expressed gratitude for the level of respect at the meeting and reiterated that he is an advocate for the students.

Having exhausted all questions, Oakley handed the meeting back to Bill.
Brief discussion on steps if Lincoln withdrew from the Union.

Bill asked the Selectboard to stay after the meeting. Given that there were no more questions or discussion, he thanked everyone, and attendees expressed thanks as well. Everyone except the Selectboard left the meeting.

The Selectboard went into executive session on a motion by Will and second by Paul at 8:53 p.m., to discuss a personnel matter.

Exited executive session at 9:33 p.m.

Adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Ann Kensek through 8:53 p.m. and Bill Finger 8:54 – 9:33 p.m.