

Town of Lincoln
Special Selectboard Meeting
Save Community Schools Remote Presentation
August 19, 2021

Meeting Minutes [Draft]

Those Present at Burnham Hall to facilitate presentation:

- Saving Community Schools (SCS) group representatives: Erin Warnock (EW), Jim Warnock (JW), Paul Forlenza (PF), and Jeanine [last name inaudible and not available in writing]
- Technical Support: SB member, Oakley Smith (OS)

Remote Access Meeting Participant Present: Up to 74 participants via Zoom, of which included citizens, Lincoln town staff, SBS members including presenter Mary Gemignani (MG), and SB members

Meeting call to order at 7:00pm

Meeting Protocol & Facilitation

- EW outlined flow of the meeting lead by local group, Saving Community Schools (SCS)
 - Emphasizing long QA session at the end, requesting that questions and comments from participants wait until this portion
- SCS from group met with superintendent and the business personnel from MAUSD
- JW shared how the group defines and views the values of LCS
- Prior to beginning formal presentation, JW noted that if Lincoln did withdraw, LCS would remain a public school and not privatize

Presentation of proposal to be voted on at a special Town Meeting on August 24 “Shall the Town of Lincoln withdraw from the Mount Abraham Unified School District (MAUSD)?”

How does withdrawal work?

- SCS presenters displayed presentation through Zoom screen share
- Each presentation slide and presenter outlined withdrawal topics and logistics, including:
 - School board structure
 - Definition of school choice policies, context, and their history in Vermont
 - Future relationship and dynamics to Supervisory Unions (SU) post withdrawal
 - Teacher retention and contracting
- SCS is making slides and recording of delivered presentation available to the public through the SCS website

- <https://www.savecommunityschools.org/>

Withdrawal Timeline

1. SCS presenters showed chart to outline sequence of timeline
 - 1.1. Lincoln town vote to withdraw
 - 1.2. If withdrawal passes, the four other MAUSD towns (Monkton, New Haven, Bristol, and Starksboro) would vote to allow withdrawal within 90 days of Lincoln's vote
 - 1.2.1. This vote would be on the same day in each of the towns and it has to be unanimous across with each town voting in favor by simple majority
 - 1.3. If MAUSD towns vote to pass withdrawal, State Board conditionally approves withdrawal, pending acceptance of exit agreement
 - 1.4. Town vote to elect school board, identify staffing, declare assignment of SU, and budgeting
- Presenters provided a general review of benefits to town's withdrawal from MAUSD at this time and of the following presented timeline. Presenters presented motivations and logistics behind reasons for pursuing withdrawal on this specific presented timeline.

Act 46: Reality

- SCS presented the history of Act 46, its context, and its intentions
- SCS presentation emphasized certain aspects of the language included in Act 46 and how that language has been interpreted and applied

Superintendent Proposal

- Brief review of MAUSD Superintendent, Patrick Reen, proposal to repurpose LCS and board hiring of out of state consultant, Mr. Levinson, to review proposal to establish a committee to vet proposals after proposal submissions close
- SCS presenters provided a brief summary, history, and status of a proposal that provides alternatives to closing
 - Proposal is still available for viewing
- SCS presenters Review of Phase I and II took place on slides
 - Provided summary of findings from secondary research conducted regarding the pros of smaller schools shared
- SCS member, MG, presented slide on impacts upon children with special needs and rights in an effort to demonstrate how their services and rights would be met by an independent LCS community
- SCS presenters reviewed current status of merger study committee

Financial Implications

- Presentation continued with a review of how we currently fund Lincoln education
 - Slide showing portions allocated through property taxes
 - Compared pre and post Act 46 taxes using graph
 - LCS building renovation buy back process explained
- Outlined group's process for developing proposed budget and definition of Personnel and Services estimates

- SCS presenters provided projected tax estimates to best address answers and concerns regarding impact on taxes should MAUSD withdrawal take place
- Information presented regarding current and projected student enrollment threshold penalties
- Possible alterations to staff FTE
- Comparison of current LCS statistics to other MAUSD towns presented
- Slides reviewing history of community sweat and financial equity investments in LCS

Post Presentation Q&A Session

- How many students are not only at the school, but in each grade
 - Statistics available on SCS website
 - www.savingcommunityschools.org
- Who would negotiate teachers contracts
 - Re-reviewed that it would be with SU and teachers will be working for board here in Lincoln
- If we withdraw, town would be not taking on additional pension liability
- Procuring staff who work in MAUSD in multiple schools (ie: reading specialists) might be impacted by withdrawal
- Town resident, Deirdre Kelly, shared comments on personal perspectives and asked:
 - Wanted to explore and hear elaboration regarding impacts on grade 7-12 education - would Lincoln have less control for 7-12 students?
 - JW responded that yes, as tuition kids town would have less say
- What will happen if other MAUSD towns don't vote to let Lincoln withdraw
 - Lincoln will simply stay as part of MAUSD
- Town resident, Alan Kamman, shared comments on perspectives and shared:
 - Rep. Cordes is proposing legislature to refigure education funding
 - Would like to know if Lincoln could rejoin MAUSD if we wanted to reverse withdrawal at some point?
 - SCS members looked at minutes from other issues like this, and Lincoln can always stop the process of withdrawing
- Town resident and former legislator, Mike Fisher, shared some about his experience as an Act 46 Study Committee member
 - Reviewed Act 46 history, intention, and language
 - Based upon Fisher's legal knowledge Act 46, Superintendent Reen's proposal not following the acts articles of agreement with how Reen is utilizing the definition of repurposing and this use of the term "repurposing" not a reasonable interpretation of the articles of agreement
 - Fisher commented on how the proposal has been
- Town resident and MAUSD board member, Rob Bucklund, stated he was speaking at this meeting on behalf of himself and not the MAUSD board when sharing comments and perspectives on the value of LCS in the community and the local culture of Lincoln
- Question asked re: incentives for other towns to vote to support Lincoln's withdrawal

- PF incentives by other towns to withdraw: we are the expensive school and it'd be a financial advantage for them to have us leave
- PF reminded everyone that they can vote no later than 7pm on August 24th and polls will be open from 7am to 7pm that day

Meeting adjourn 9:12 by SB member, OS

Respectfully submitted by Christine Birong-Smith