

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

**Wednesday, September 13, 2006
SAU OFFICE
7:00 p.m.**

**Communications Sub-Committee
MINUTES**

Present: Stewart Brock, Paul Bartolomucci, Craig Hicks, Ray Cote, Arthur Knight, Bart Goodeve

Stewart Brock began the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Stewart asked for an update on the meet and greet in each of the towns. Bart Goodeve said that he will meet on October 19th in Peterborough. Greenfield met on September 11th. Arthur Knight said that he is in the process of setting a firm date. Stewart said that he would remind people to get out there. Frankestown will meet on September 27th. Temple will meet on October 19th as well. Stewart said that he would post these dates in the local newspapers in boxed “advertisements” to inform the public of these meetings.

1. School Board Website

The ConVal School Board website was viewed. It was discovered that the ConVal website still had the Board Newsletter from 2003. However the current Board minutes are current.

Paul Bartolomucci said that he met with Carol Mamczak who updates the ConVal website. She is a part time employee of the district and works from home. Carol could link to the minutes and agendas as well as the board member emails. It was decided that the board members will be listed alphabetically by town.

Craig Hicks asked that before we figure out what else we want on the webpage that he would like to know how we want to treat the ConVal webpage. Arthur Knight said that we might want to look at a web designer. Tom Elliott is a web designer that he worked with at one point out of Amherst or Manchester. Arthur said that Tom was also hired to update the website monthly. Paul said that Carol has been trained and does the same as what as Arthur was detailing. Paul said that what we need to decide is what we want to communicate. Ray Cote said that it would be very useful to put this page up, point to the committees, and continue to look at what we want to do. Craig said that scholarships, funds, careers, technical schools, community colleges etc. could be listed. There is so much stuff out there that we need to decide what we want to do. Ray Cote said that as long as we are focusing on this, we can meet down the line. The budget discussion is next, and then we can talk about what we want to do. Arthur said that we need to develop them so they can easily be posted to the website. Ray said that it would be nice to be able to make the updates rather than have to contact someone to make the changes

for us. Paul asked how many people we wanted to give that authority to. Discussion took place about whether or not there should be a link from each school's web page to the board's site.

Bart Goodeve said that all of the things we might want to do have a personnel cost. Ray has a wealth of experience in this area as does Bart. You have to consider the time that it takes to get this updated. We need to try not to do things that we can't do. Ray suggested that we need to provide information about the budget and we need to figure out how to convey that information. We need to talk about information that is relatively timely that we don't have to devote our time to. Bart said that there is a public awareness issue here; there are probably not a lot of people that care what we have to say. Craig said that it is a tool or is a resource and that people need to know how to access the information they are looking for. Bart said that the point to consider is that it is one form of media available to us. Ray said eventually we can talk about what will automatically update. Stewart suggested we put a counter on the website to know how many visit the site. Ray suggested that a counter is old school but suggested rather that we consider the use of Google Analytics which is free. We could know who is looking and from where. Bart said that we could efficiently post budget information and point people in a direction to go view that information. It will do what we want it to do which is spread the word. Paul said that we could also scroll a banner across the site to include the most recent information. Ray said that with a lot of the stuff we are talking about will stay valid the following year so all we need to do is add a little bit and change the year. That way we develop a rich history while working slowly. Bart said that he would be happy to look at some of these things to translate them to simple form. Stewart said that we could simply state that "it is budget season" to let people know. Bart said that we should keep it simple and keep it very direct. Stewart said that it might be part of the list that we are looking at of things to accomplish. The biggest problem is a lack of information. Let's push the information out there so people can react. The Board goals should be listed on the site. Paul reviewed, that what we would like to see was a change in alpha by town, a link to each committee, a link to a budget page, a link to policy, a link to board members and a FAQ section on the Board site and a FAQ specific to the budget. We could post normal questions about the board. Ray said that if that is done well then that is a major start. Arthur said that if we are talking about putting the goals on then we would have to update every two weeks. It was suggested that yearly goals be posted and updated from there. The goals don't generally change for the year said Ray. Stewart said that if a goal becomes a priority of a board member then it becomes important to update on that specific goal. Bart said that the key is to have existing references compatible and useful. Otherwise you are putting the burden on someone to craft something. For example, Tom's short list is interesting and useful. It could be designed differently and posted. Ray said that we have the old technology on the site which means we write something and send it to Carol and then it is talked about which is a huge loop. He suggested that we push back from doing that this year and get away from Go Live and allow editing to occur. Ray said that once we put another person in this loop our information is going to be old. Bart asked if this was the best host for what we have in mind. Ray thought that it was. Paul said that you can do whatever you want to do but he cautioned that board members change and knowledge of how to use the software might be eliminated. Stewart proposed that when we meet as a general board we ask if they would prefer something

more static. Craig said that we are focusing on our website. We have the hardware, web, technology and discrepancies. We have three types of uses of technology. Craig asked if this information and communication of it is important enough to hire somebody. It will come down to pointing of fingers at who didn't do something. Bart said that Craig's question was not a valid question. It doesn't mean that we have to hire somebody to do this. Craig said that the town of Peterborough went through the same dilemma. Stewart said the first step is to get something up. We will flush out the long term later. Stewart said that we are looking at offering another channel through which communication will take place. Craig said that having our minutes posted on the web is huge. Paul clarified that we also want a link to the 06/07 goals. Ray suggested a "contact your rep" key to contact board members.

Paul asked what you want each school site to say. Ray said he is open to that but there should be the ability to contact the board rep. The site should be linked back to the main school board page. Craig said that we already have a way to click and contact the school board. Stewart asked who monitors that. Paul said that Denise, the Superintendent's Administrative Assistant monitors that mail. Bart said that it shouldn't go to Denise but should go to the Chair or the Vice-Chair. Stewart said that it is an internal loop and it shouldn't be on Denise or Keith. Paul said that normally when the questions come in, the board usually contacts the SAU for the answer. Bart said that it says contact the School Board and not contact your Superintendent. Craig said that since we have Public Comment on the agenda it could state that if you want to make a public comment to the Board that you should click here. Bart said that a little blurb should state what it is. Bart said that we need to stress that they are making an appointment not posting a statement. Ray said that nobody has any idea what this board is doing. If we are seriously interested in getting information out we should let people sign-up and get the agenda to meetings. Ray said that there is a standard way to do this. Somebody at the SAU would mail the list to the board members as well as those that have signed up. Ray said that it is not a major problem and if it were we could set it up on Yahoo. Paul said that he would talk to Keith and Keith could talk to Ken. Basically, people would sign up and we would push the information out to them. Ray said that it would only take several weeks to put together. Paul said that he would look into it but he could not promise that it could be done in less than thirty days. Paul would provide more information at the next School Board meeting on Tuesday. Stewart said it would be looked into and a formal request would come from there.

2. Budget Season Communications Plan

Stewart asked what type of information needs to be pushed out and how do we do this? Craig said that the one thing we need to do is provide the voters with more education about where we have been and where we want to go. Getting some sort of comparison on where we lie in relation to the towns would be helpful. The Selectman's Advisory Committee always talks about how much we spend and run things up. Bart said that we need to get on the same page about what our voice sounds like and not be defensive. We immediately get defensive like it is our mission to cut the budget. We need not be defensive in our responses and promotions. Stewart said that we need to try to speak as one voice. If we disagree, we have to find a way to speak together. Stewart added that the factual parts of the communication have to be presented aside from our personal

view. Bart said if we only respond to one town's concerns we will never get the regional perspective. Craig said that we have to get to "value". The one thing everyone asks when looking for a home is "how is the school district". It will ultimately pay off in the end. Bart said that we need to steer the conversation away from pure dollars. Bart said that when we talk about dollars we need to tie it to a link. We would need to say that we cut \$50,000 and this is the result. Bart said that when we built the elementary schools it was the same year that the funding formula changed. The public and the selectman were not allowed to think of them any other way other than together. It was how we got both of them through. Craig said that the people often want to hear the percentage and the dollar piece. Bart reiterated that we have to state the link, we cut and this is what we cut. Stewart said that maybe that is what we want to say, here is where we are today. Craig said that we could also clean up the revenues. We could say that it is the start of the budget season and this is where we are. Bart said that it has to be program neutral. He said that it is the only hope. We can't just look at how much we cut for example; we have to look at what was cut. Craig used the example of the bus contract. Paul said that the way we have managed these programs, bussing for example, has saved us this amount of money. Arthur said that educating the people is key in informing them about how much is out of our control.

Bart said that we have to be careful with how we state things. For example, the special education budget is called unfunded mandates. Bart said that one of the reasons we get these students is because we have an excellent special education program. Stewart said that like it or not, it is political. We need to state the mission simply. Bart said that for the upcoming Budget and Property meeting we could come up with the most commonly asked questions. Ray said that we need to think of the frequently unasked questions. Stewart suggested that at the meet and greets, a blank piece of paper be distributed for open questions. Stewart said that this needs to be sold to the Board. We need to all speak in a certain way. Ray said that it is important to never blame the kids. Bart said that we should actually champion the kids. Bart said that it was interesting last night when Gail became an advocate for the elderly and he turned it around to say that we need to be advocates for the children.

Bart said that we need to manage the conventional media that we have.

3. Newsletter

Stewart said that he was unsure what the best way to manage this was. The consensus was that newsletters are generally unread. Ray suggested that a checklist be listed. Ray said that we could stand at the local transfer station and hand stuff out and answer people's questions. Bart said that there must be something we can do to have a little bit more impact about what they are hearing. Paul said that notes must be distributed ahead of time saving them the time to take the notes themselves. Ray said that we should have an executive summary that goes out to them. Bart said that if a committee proposes something that is actionable, the committee could create a press release to provide information on the result at the end of that meeting. Ray said that you have to be careful that it is not thought to be a foregone conclusion before the meeting. Bart said that the press should get a statement from the sponsoring committee with the result. Paul said that one of the successes in Keene was to develop and sell the budget. One of the last things they did with the budget was to hold a press release. It contained the budget,

program neutral, listed new and cut items. Bart said that the beauty of that is to force the local journalists to act like journalists. If we hold a press conference and the press doesn't come, that gives us some leverage, down the road. Craig said that the Keene district provides a big handout that goes in the Keene Sentinel during budget season. Bart said that the idea is to force the question. Paul said that we need to be prepared to answer the questions.

Ray suggested that we draft a couple of templates in advance.

Stewart said that we want to prepare information in advance that is crystallized for the public. Bart said that press releases and press conferences are fairly routine. Ray said that Tom Welden is the only one that can write a letter for the Board to the press. Stewart said that the NHSBA says that the Chair needs to be the voice. Bart said that it doesn't mean he/she couldn't delegate that job. Craig said that we always get the guys from various towns that do the same thing year after year at district meeting. Bart said that it is an art to shut down some of this conversation without insulting them. Generally speaking, the crowd is generally with the Board. Paul said that we have different voting publics. The parents are approximately 30%. You have that other 60 -70% who don't get out and vote and don't participate in the process. Bart said that if we can get the overall level of interest up, even through controversy, it is a good thing. The notion of consolidating the elementary schools is controversial and would peak interest overall. Stewart agreed that it would stimulate discussion.

Paul said that another strategy is that if we have programs that we are moving or deleting they should go to the Education Committee so that it is done in a very planned way. Paul said that Keene had their Education Committees parallel their Budget meetings.

4. General Business

Stewart said that he would try to develop a template over the weekend. It would put a position out there. He asked everyone to think about what the topics would be. Ray said that it should be all positive, be about the children.

Stewart thanked everyone, Bart said it was fun. Meeting concluded at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda L. Marschok

