

Commission to Study School Funding (RSA 193-E:2-e)

Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2pm via Zoom Webinar

Commission Attendance: Bill Ardinger, John Beardmore, David Luneau, Val Zanchuck, Susan Huard, Mary Heath, Iris Estabrook, Dick Ames, Chris Dwyer, Mel Myler, Jay Kahn, Corinne Cascadden, Barbara Tremblay, Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu; David Ryan, Jon Morgan, Rick Ladd. 31 phone listeners from the public.

Call to order/tech check:

Rep. Luneau welcomed everyone in attendance and opened the meeting. After roll call, thanked everyone for bearing with the technical challenges of working in these challenging times. Commission members provided an update of how they are doing.

Group Agreement Review:

Bruce reviewed the commission's group agreements and shared examples from New Hampshire Listen's best practices developed doing online work during the pandemic.

Progress to date review:

Bruce reviewed the work that has happened during the commission's hiatus from regular meetings. He affirmed our charge and addressed how the commission can best fulfill the charge given to this commission. Reminded commission of the design thinking process and how that is being used to tackle commission's work. Reminded commission of previous presentations – materials posted online at Carsey-Commission website, and noted that no presentations have occurred since commission took a break from meeting. Noted that workgroups may set up presentations to their workgroups. Reviewed status of RFP and proposals from vendors, with the screening committee working to make a recommendation to the commission. Iris Estabrook asked if information on non-recommended bids would be given to rest of the commission. Dave gave information on the RFP review process, and asked commission members what they would need to hear about regarding proposals to be in a position to move forward with a proposal. Iris asked for high level review of why proposal was selected and how they fit our goals and methodology. Bill wanted to know categories and who we are looking at, as well as number of respondents. Chris clarified that we are not planning to have more than one successful bid. Jay mentioned that we should be able to summarize strengths and weaknesses and provide clarity. Mary asked if we had concerns from bidders about amount of money to complete task – Dave mentioned that there we had not heard big questions about award amount or inability to do

everything we asked from a research vendor. Mel added that quality of proposals was rich. Rick added that process going well and references the final step to confirm.

Review of Workgroup charges:

Dave noted that the main goal here was for everyone to provide input and understand what each group is working on.

Jay began with adequacy and distribution – believes that it is foundational for our work.

Highlighted the importance of how narrow/broad the charge needs to be (for ex: pre-K, how does it fit?) and the need to consider disparity, equity, and input and output factors we may wish to consider. Need to get to what is the cost of an adequate education, what goes into it? Can drive to cost right away, but cost is a function of the quality we want to achieve. Should consider 2008 and changes of adequacy since then and disparities created by current structure. Ultimately need to come up with cost of adequacy and a function of cost, within a basis of accountability and review. Need to examine data and sources that can be turned to in creating definition of adequacy. Many things could be considered, including teacher-student ratio, turnover, per-student spending, socioeconomic factors/per family income differentiated by community, remoteness/rurality/density of school districts, proficiency levels, college-going rates, and more. Can be informed by work in other states, NH data, and observations from key leaders and educators. Iris noted that the current draft is just that, a draft, and need to be flexible and outline costing more directly. Need to decide what we want to do – address disparities, fund adequate education, or both? Dave noted that work of all workgroups will need to be taken up by full commission as well, and adequacy encompasses a lot. Interested in whether or not adequacy group will review what minimum standards are for public education. Dick mentioned that he appreciates that this is a dynamic process – but thinks that costing should be key piece of adequacy. Jay completely in agreement and will make it more explicit. Reiterates that cost will be a function of what you want it to be. Dave noted again that all workgroup meetings are open to all commission members and public.

Dave discussed fiscal policy group – will be responsive to the needs of what the adequacy puts forward, but at the same time workgroup will require a lot of attention, data gathering, and modeling. Fiscal policy is tax policy. Are we going to keep funding via local property taxes, or will we try to do something different? Fairness, as courts have mentioned (proportional and reasonable) will be paramount. Fiscal neutrality also a factor – access to an adequate education not dependent upon what district you live in. Want to begin with data identification/location so that group can model various options from adequacy, as well as practical considerations. Not saying fiscal policy should have strong influence on adequacy, but they are related. One of the reasons we are working in parallel among the groups. Some options may or may not be viable, but need to consider a broad spectrum of options. Bill asked whether it is within group's scope to talk about what share of total burden for education born by localities vs state? Can we

consider? Dave said that he thought it did fall under workgroup's scope. Looking at various pros and cons of what group is modeling is important. Rick mentioned that alternating subgroups and full group will keep everyone in the loop. His is concerned about the current Covid-19 economy, and thought that commission needs to be cautious right now about asking for new revenues or changing up the revenue system. Dave agrees that is fair, and should be considered by subgroup and full commission. Considerations around timing of changes, hold harmless to prevent abrupt changes, etc – everything needs to be on the table. Rick also notes need to be flexible going into future. Chris noted that we likely will break out what will be a formula and what is categorical – may be different streams. Dave thought that those breakdowns likely will spring out of adequacy/distribution, particularly on the distribution side. Recognition that there are crossovers.

Mel led with a note that engagement during this time will be challenging. But as we come up with recommendations, it's very important for the public to know what our process is all about and what the work looks like. The idea is to have a number of interventions within the community so that public can have an informed debate about options. Will need to work closely with other groups to understand recommendations and take them to the public. Important that there is an informed conversation going forward around this complex issue. Engagement will be key to take recommendations and ultimately turn them into public policy. Already some engagement activity. UNH Survey Center will have 8-10 questions to gauge public opinion. Will involve students and engage them in the process. Public engagement process very important later on, to refine recommendations and get further input. Corinne seconded student engagement piece as being very important. Rick suggested expanding student voice to include young adults a few years out who are working or in college, asking them how well schools prepared them and what they feel was good and where they needed more. Noted that it's important not to just ask "do you need more revenue" but also "how should we go about getting that revenue?" Mel noted the need to move from "my kids" to "our children" in terms of thinking about education. We have a tendency to look at our individual community, not as much thinking more broadly across the state. Mel thinks is the kind of conversation we need to have. Mary noted that a key question is how to make sure money is going to schools and is not purely tax relief. Jay asked how we might be able to take advantage of student voice earlier than the fall.

Jay asked whether there was latitude for workgroups to meet outside of regularly scheduled every other week meetings. How much flexibility is there? Rick had asked whether or not students who are working online could be contacted now – engagement workgroup will take that up Thursday.

Scheduling/Calendar:

Bruce will work with Mel, Jay, Dave, and others to bring other presentations to the commission. Working to finalize schedule through June, likely on an every other week schedule.

Workgroup meetings – **May 7, 2020, 10am (Adequacy), 1pm (Engagement), 3pm (Fiscal Policy), all via Zoom**

Next full commission meeting – **May 11, 2020, 2pm-4pm via Zoom**

If there are further thoughts, please email Dave, Bruce, or workgroup heads. Jordan will email any public feedback to the commission. Calendar will be sent out by Bruce to commission.

Dick noted that current documents around the ConVal case have been posted to the Carsey-Commission website, and they are worth reading.

Documents:

- Agenda 5/4
- Adequacy Group Draft Charge
- Engagement Group Draft Charge
- Fiscal Policy Group Draft Charge