

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

Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2pm via Zoom Webinar

Commission Attendance: Bill Ardinger, John Beardmore, David Luneau, Val Zanchuck, Mary Heath, Iris Estabrook, Dick Ames, Chris Dwyer, Mel Myler, Jay Kahn, Corinne Cascadden, Barbara Tremblay, Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu, Rick Ladd, Jon Morgan. Not present: Dave Ryan, Susan Huard, Bill Ardinger. Also present: Bruce Baker, Jenn Foor, Jesse Levin, Tammy Kolbe, Drew Atchison. 14 phone listeners from the public.

Welcome/Call to order/tech check:

Rep. Luneau welcomed everyone in attendance, called roll, and opened the meeting. Chairman Luneau noted that public comment is available by emailing schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu or visiting www.carsey.unh.edu/school-funding. Bruce Mallory reviewed the group agreements for the commission.

To be notified about any meeting changes, please review the Carsey-Commission website or email schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu.

Dave introduced Jesse Levin and the team at AIR, who then introduced themselves to the commission and vice versa.

Review and discussion of scope of work and contract with AIR; motion to authorize executive team to complete the process and enter into agreement

Bruce began by reviewing the contract, focusing first on some of the more technical pieces of the contract before shifting to a conversation on the scope of work. Noted that Bruce Mallory would be the point person for data requests from the commission and AIR to the NH DOE and other sources. Discussion was had on the difference between a formal definition of adequacy as compared to a functional cost-function modeling definition, where facilities fit into adequacy, and how AIR plans to approach those topics. Bruce reminded the commission that the work with AIR will be a conversation, and options on modeling and approaches will be decided jointly by the commission and AIR as policy recommendations are deliberated and developed. Dave noted that there was a similar model and simulator created for Vermont – one that can be found online and played with. Jesse noted that the Vermont model was less about adequacy and more about equity, and so the model developed for our commission will look different in some ways. Tammy discussed how the model has been used in Vermont (and still is being used) and how it helped the legislature and public understand the implications of various policy choices. Dick asked if this model would be able to help legislators create bills with different funding weights, AIR responded that it would (and had been in Vermont, for example). Rick asked how bigger communities in Vermont were viewing weights that benefit rural districts – Tammy noted that large and small communities are allies in finding the right balance of weights that work for everyone (poverty in larger districts, sparsity in small districts, for instance). Tammy noted more friction is between wealthy and less affluent districts, or high vs low spending districts. Dave discussed how the future model would be helpful in each of the phases of budget development – if everyone has access to the model as constructed it would help various entities craft budgets (executive branch and legislators in the house and senate).

Dick Ames moved to have Dave Luneau and the executive committee execute a contract with AIR pending the finalization of the small changes discussed this morning in the commission executive group's meeting with AIR and in today's meeting and a review by Ron Rogers. Myler, Ames, Kahn, Bergeron, Cascadden, Ladd, Estabrook, Tremblay, Dwyer, Zanchuk, Heath, Luneau, Morgan all voted yes. Other commission members were either not attending or no longer attending due to meeting conflicts.

Work Groups Reporting Out:

Jay discussed adequacy – thanking Bruce and Jordan for convening folks for meetings. Jay noted that he had at one point thought of the process of the commission's work as linear, but it is very much iterative/interactive. Noted how important he thought it was for AIR to integrate its work with the work groups. Adequacy met with three school business officers from Keene, Portsmouth, and Bow. A lot right with what we are doing with adequacy in terms of what is included, but the calibration of costs could be better. Noted that even some of the '08 funding formula proposed changes would not carry through to the present (teacher salaries on average, labs, etc). SBOs noted that more gradation may be needed. Challenged group to look at other special services provided by schools. Mentioned facilities – and noted that even if not including building aid in adequacy at present it is an issue that has to be considered in thinking about educational opportunity for students. Technology a similar issue. Had three special education administrators present next, coordinated by Jane. Discussed cost factors and how special education fits in with adequacy. Talked about need for understanding preschool. Correlation between poverty and special education discussed. Where we are at right now is trying to understand some of these outcome differentials and how they relate to inputs. Future discussions to be had include early childhood, building aid, and career and technical education. Noted that we wanted to be sure to cover all the pieces of adequacy and full bucket of education – some of it will be inside funding formula and some items in other pieces of legislation outside. Bruce noted adequacy's next task will be hearing from plaintiffs in ConVal litigation. Dave and Jay discussed that there were mutual dependencies between the work of AIR and the adequacy subgroup in particular.

Mel gave an overview of engagement. He first discussed how engagement worked to create a list of stakeholders across the state that we want to engage. He noted that the engagement group's first task is to engage with elected and municipal officials who have experience working with budgets. Sessions with them will be held in the coming weeks, with invitations to those groups going out today. Noted that these conversations will be held in an open format, so those from Rye may be talking with those from Claremont, allowing for rich discussions from multiple perspectives. In these initial sessions hoping to talk with 100-120 people.

Dave discussed Fiscal Policy's groups last week. He noted that the bulk of fiscal policy's discussions focused on the scope of work. Noted that the group overlapped with adequacy and engagement in meetings. Pushed out some task assignments in work group – identifying revenue sources for preK-12 education (Rick) as well as the changes in the mix of sources over the past 20 or so years (Dick). Noted that we have learned that funding models do not always age well without maintenance. Hoping to be able to address that with this commission.

Dave asked if we might be able to approve minutes next week, there were no objections.

Scheduling/Calendar:

Bruce gave an overview of the next couple of weeks' meetings.

Workgroup meetings:

June 1, 2020: 10am (Engagement), 1pm (Fiscal Policy), 2pm (Adequacy), all via Zoom. Please note that Adequacy and Fiscal Policy will overlap from 2-3pm

June 5, 2020: 10am (Fiscal Policy), 1pm (Engagement), 3pm (Adequacy), all via Zoom. Please note that this will be Friday, not our normal Thursday secondary time.

Next full commission meeting:

June 8, 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.

Documents:

- Agenda 5/26
- Minutes 5/11

Direct public comments to Commission Chair David Luneau at schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu