

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

Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2020, 2-4 pm

Website: <https://carsey.unh.edu/school-funding>
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/statstudcomm/committees/1506/>

Commission Attendance: Dave Luneau, Dick Ames, Rick Ladd, Corinne Cascadden, John Beardmore, Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu, Val Zanchuck, Barbara Tremblay, Chris Dwyer, Bill Ardinger, Iris Estabrook, Mel Myler, Mary Heath, Jay Kahn, Susan Huard, Jon Morgan; Absent: David Ryan; Presenters: Ann Marie French, Anne Edwards, Phil Sletten; Also Present: Bruce Mallory, Carrie Portrie, Jordan Hensley, Jenn Foor, Matthew Gerding; 12 attendees from the public listening.

Welcome/Call to order/Tech check/Chair's comments:

Commission Chair Dave Luneau welcomed everyone and conducted roll call. Dave announced a joint session of the House and Senate education committees will take place on July 21 beginning at 9am to gather information and talk about school reopening. Mel Myler and Jay Kahn expressed the importance of this meeting. They invited Commission members and members of the public to listen in find the information to join here: http://gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2020/HC_28A.pdf.

Calendar Notes:

- July 23rd – the adequacy workgroup will meet from 3-5pm
- July 27th – the Commission will meet from 1-4:30pm for an extended session focused on discussion of information shared thus far and next steps

Group Agreements: Bruce reviewed group agreements that the Commission uses for discussion.

Minutes Approval: Dave Luneau called for approval of minutes, Mel Myler called for approval of 7/13 minutes, and Barbara Tremblay seconded. Dave noted a need to change the date to July 13th and asked the Commission for approval and the minutes carried.

Presentations and Discussion Notes: Available at <https://carsey.unh.edu/school-funding/school-funding-study/resources/meeting-documents-video>.

Historical overview of school funding formulae in New Hampshire: Anne Edwards, Associate Attorney General, NH Department of Justice

Bruce introduced Anne. Anne provided a historical overview of school funding formulae in NH for the Commission. Anne will provide a summary of her presentation that will be posted on the Carsey School Funding website.

After the presentation Dave opened up for discussion. Dave asked about the question about per pupil costs in the school funding formula – what are the examples of the alternative ways to this? Anne referenced the formula used/law from 2005 and said the legislature could determine how much it takes to run a school and the logistics within and across districts (ex. staff, building, population, figuring out how to target money to poorer districts etc.) to determine the formula. Iris Estabrook talked about the base amount for adequacy and wondered how would it work to move away from this base and still uphold state responsibility? Ann talked again about framing the costs to run a school in NH with the

components that everyone believes are necessary for a school to be constitutionally adequate. She explained the need to define adequacy and how to pay for it at the state level then can offer targeted goals above adequacy. Bill Arding referenced Massachusetts (<https://carsey.unh.edu/school-funding-study/resources>) experience and legislature's response to re-determining their school funding formula. He referenced inequities among communities in MA and linked the experience in MA to NH in terms of major concerns for inequities in NH. Anne explained that under the Londonderry decision, there was a focus on adequate funding and targeted funding (See <https://www.courts.state.nh.us/supreme/opinions/2006/londo103.pdf>). Dave referenced determinations about school funding past 2005, which included differentiated aide, stabilization grants. Wondered if the factors of students in terms of vulnerability – could these be included in cost of adequacy? Anne clarified that these factors (differentiated aide) are often included in adequacy, and then the others are added above adequacy and determined by community need by the legislature. Anne will summarize her presentation for the funding website. Jay Kahn asked about constitutional adequate education. The constitution does not say adequate education but rather opportunity and advantages of education. The word in the constitution is left out when using the term adequacy. Anne affirmed that opportunity for a constitutionally adequate education. The legislature's wish at the time was a want for boundaries around what an opportunity for an adequate education was constitutionally. It's the legislature's role to define this. Jay made the point that schools have a lot they need to offer the opportunity. The abilities of the community, the family, and the child interferes with the realization of opportunity. Anne reasserted the option to include a summary of what a school costs, and other options (ex. targeting of aide as a factor in the formula). The legislature may decide what is needed to provide the opportunity of adequacy across communities. Chris Dwyer noted in the chat: I think the AIR documents (<https://carsey.unh.edu/school-funding-study/resources>) refer to the schoolwide adequacy approach as the resource approach, e.g., something more like our minimum school standards which can be combined with weighting per public approaches. Dave summed up: The court has not limited the legislature in terms of defining the cost of an adequate education. Anne affirmed that per pupil does not have to be the answer. Rick Ladd referenced HB337((2011) (<https://www.legiscan.com/NH/text/HB337/id/333618>) and talked about improper funding by community. He talked about 2005-2011 factor for funding that included per capita, then talked about the smaller numbers of students in the state, wondered if funding could be determined by per capita or per program? Anne referenced collars put in place to make sure communities did not receive too little or too much money for school funding. These remained in place for 10 years until Dover case (<http://schoolfunding.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/New-HAMPSHIRE-Decision.pdf>). Anne said they are willing to help as needed.

Measuring Disparities in Municipal Economies and Fiscal Capacities: Ann Marie French, Executive Director and Phil Sletten, Senior Policy Analyst NH Fiscal Policy Institute, <http://nhfpi.org/research/state-economy/measuring-new-hampshires-municipalities-economic-disparities-and-fiscal-capacities.html>.

Bruce introduced the NH Fiscal Policy Institute presenters Ann and Phil. Phil provided the presentation "Examining Local Economic Conditions and Fiscal Capacities." The five key takeaways from the presentation are listed on the first slide which are available in their entirety on the Carsey School Funding website meeting resources section.

After the presentation Dave opened up for discussion. Chris Dwyer referenced the last slides of presentation regarding looking at the average figures within communities – wide distribution of free and reduced lunch. How might the income indicators correlate with property wealth per capita? Phil acknowledged this was not an analysis they have done, but it is an excellent question. He referenced the Fiscal Policy Institute’s interactive maps – <http://nhfpi.org/data-viz>. Rick Ladd referenced the combined indicators relative to the state. He noted the median household estimates by county and finds himself disappointed (noting the vast differences of income in communities by county). Phil referenced Hillsborough county – this is an example of the gradation in income within NH counties. Communities that are lower incomes have differences in access to resources. The reliability of community indicators is less than county, but what Phil described in the presentation does show variability by community regardless. Dick Ames referenced MA’s effort index that helps with a local required minimum contribution. Dick asked if Phil knows how they measure income, and could Phil comment on the measures and data available. Phil noted the American Community Survey data needs cautious use and interpretation in terms of median household income. The reliability for public policy decisions that are more granular when analyzing household income at community level. Survey data only tells so much, and there are many low population data in NH and there are large swings per year. Modeling and longitudinal analysis may help, but caution is needed. Bill Ardinger referenced the IRS data – income by zip code. He asked if there is any way IRS data could be used to get the assessment of capacity of individual communities. Phil said it would need to be layered with other data using certain weights (remembering it is an incomplete picture. There is precision but not necessarily accuracy). These are slices of information based on a sample or set of data. Chris wondered if it would be helpful look at the data and focus on the excess SWEPT communities to figure out where the current approach may be in-line but may be off-base (ex. variability in poverty, access to food stamps). Phil mentioned Wolfeboro. It is an excess SWEPT community. It is also below median income. Phil reasserted that the metrics need to be looked at holistically to get a better idea of what’s happening. Jay Kahn referenced how the maps helped to show patterns. Jay talked about comparing low achievement and the 7 indices described by Phil. Jay wondered if that could be mapped? Could the correlation between the two be shown? Phil thought it would provide interesting exercise and referenced Reaching Higher NH’s work as something to look at. He also provided additional suggestions in terms of certain variables. Chris noted that composite indices is a useful approach, but care needs to be used to build the composite indices. composites can be misleading unless ranges are accounted for.

Workgroup updates and framing the July 27 extended work session (postponed for July 27th)

Bruce reviewed the agenda for the extended work session on July 27th. The focus will be on what the Commission had learned so far. Bruce will send the Commission the questions based on the design-thinking model the Commission has used in the process. The discussion will help AIR shape their presentation of cost model on August 10th.

Dave thanked everyone for their work on the Commission and mentioned the adequacy workgroup will meet on Thursday, July 23rd from 3-5pm. Bruce noted the factors, indicators, benchmarks etc. the adequacy workgroup will be discussing at the meeting.

Public Comments:

Diane LaChance (Hopkinton, NH): Diane noted she had only recently found the opportunities for public comment and concerned that people may not be aware of their opportunities for input.

Doug Hall noted in the Q& A: Following on Phil's presentation, I suggest one other factor to be considered in choosing or using any potential measure regarding income in communities --- how often is it updated? DHHS food stamp data is available monthly. Free/reduced meals is annual. The ACS data is questionable for small populations as Phil points out. The 5-year averages from ACS are updated to most recent 5 years.

Bruce encouraged people to also provide feedback to schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu.

There will be another public comment period in August and biweekly opportunities beginning in September. These will be in addition to the 15-20 minutes of public comment at the end of each commission meeting. Next open public comment period: Wednesday, August 12, 4-5 pm.

Adjourn

Dave thanks the presenters and adjourned the meeting.

Documents

- 7/20 Agenda
- 7/13 Minutes
- NH Fiscal Policy Institute: Examining Local Economic Conditions and Fiscal Capacities Slides