

**COMMISSION TO STUDY SCHOOL FUNDING
ENGAGEMENT WORKGROUP
MINUTES 9/29/2020**

Members

Present: Mel Myler, Corinne Cascadden, Dave Luneau, Jon Morgan, Jay Kahn. Absent: Susan Huard, David Ryan. Public Attendees = 7.

Call to Order

Mel Myler called the meeting to order. Took roll call. Each individual introduced themselves and location. Minutes of the engagement's 9/14 meeting were approved by all members present.

Discussion

Discussion was had of upcoming engagement activities, including focus groups with seniors, taxpayers, and youth, as well as upcoming public comment sessions. Carrie noted that the Reaching Higher NH video has been a useful tool. Youth voice opportunities will be shared out across a variety of areas.

Carrie then described the "crosswalk" she put together of points from public comments and engagement activities. The crosswalk draft can be found on the meeting resource page under the September 29 tab. Key questions: What does Commission want to highlight? What can the Commission recommend going forward? Crosswalk will continue to be a living document. Mel – when would it be appropriate for engagement group to share comments and information received so far with the full Commission? As Commission begins to narrow in, input from various groups should be reviewed for Commission members to use as a foundation beyond own individual perceptions. Dave – agree, should see this before positions are taken. Should get on to the agenda for the full Commission.

Mel – what was the outreach for 65+ and taxpayer groups like? Carrie – contacted NH taxpayers association, hoping for people from across the state. Have reached out to NH AARP, retired teachers, programs for older adults. For youth, have reached out principals, student governments, education leaders that Commission has previously been in contact with.

Carrie then moved on to the discussion guide she put together for focus groups of 65+ residents and taxpayer groups. Asked for feedback from the engagement work group. Conversation was had about the relative merits of the six questions listed. Mel – if the Reaching Higher NH video is relevant, should that be shown as a precursor to these conversations so they have some idea of what is being discussed as far as equity in education? Carrie – I think that would be fine since focus groups are not being recorded. Mel – always concerned that there needs to be a common experience to draw upon for groups and discussions. Might provide a foundational look before the conversation begins. Carrie – there are misunderstandings out there, important to know those as well as opinions. Jay – do expect that the more loose we become with terminology about funding schooling vs public schools, the more the door for what this Commission has done or failed to do will be magnified. Corinne – key to note that public schools are what we are talking about here. Don't know if we would get information of value from #5.

Group agreed to strike question #4.

Corinne – final question good.

General agreement on that point. Some clarifications on language.

Carrie then explained how the focus groups work, and noted that 90 minute long focus groups involve probably around an hour of actual group discussion.

Jay – want to raise the conversation about the goals of public education, often defined as providing an educated workforce and citizenry. Being asked about what is an adequate education. Can see how now we may be getting bottled up in our own words. But does summarize what the opportunity for an adequate education is. Not engaging the public in that question is missing an opportunity.

Corinne – so the question becomes, how would you know a student was being offered the opportunity for an adequate education? Jay – that is one way to come at it, could also ask what are the elements of an adequate education that lead to.

Carrie – can pull some similar questions asked in previous efforts.

Jay – we haven't defined what an adequate education is except for everything in 193:2-a.

Wondering what the public feels, suggesting that there is a shorter way to describe the outcomes. Don't require a student to take computer science to know about computers, do it so that they can be contributors to the workforce and in society. Have to find a succinct way of saying.

Dave – something brought up this morning is organized athletics. Question that is easy to relate to, and answer to that leads you to answers on other parts of the costs of education and whether they contribute to outcomes.

Jay – what it is that gets a student engaged in group activities and learning varies from person to person. This notion of the outcomes of public education, we should begin to search for that in statute or other places.

Dave – agree that we should find in statute, but also had a good discussion on accountability this morning that it should be looked at as a positive thing rather than a positive thing.

Conversation moved to whether the engagement work group needs to continue meeting with the same (or increased) frequency. Carrie noted that engagement work needs to be brought to bear in the work of other work groups. Mel – there are a number of opportunities in engaging the public now. Is getting that data back to the full work group the priority? My sense is that we should meet when we need to meet. Other two groups working to confirm AIR's data and build out recommendations while engagement hearing from people and assessing opinions. Carrie – want to hear from everyone what should be shared and asked during municipal leader focus groups. Dave – think that works well for adequacy and fiscal policy. Could use time slot for an overlap meeting, or yield time to engagement as needed.

Mel – Chris brought this up earlier, but we may need to begin to think about key points Commission needs to be making to the public. May be opportunities to do that, needs to be a common vernacular or some common slides that can help that conversation. Also helps to show what is the Commission and what is members speaking for their individual opinions. Could be used in extemporaneous presentations.

Dave – agree, especially as Commission reaches consensus on certain principles. Certainly to wrap around the final report. Might make sense to catch up with Chris Dwyer.

Mel – have a lot of work going into the next 6-8 weeks, but especially after recommendations are arrived at need to have a presentation. Need to gather what we're learning and then figure out how to share with others.

Bruce – two kinds of presentations here. One is what the Commission is, how it works, where it is headed. Separately, in December need a similar kind of packet about where the Commission landed and what legislative proposals being put forward are.

Mel – think they are complementary.

Agreement that both make sense.

Corinne – A PowerPoint to put out a summary would be useful. Would be helpful to get to go to smaller specific groups. Might be able to do smaller outreach to superintendents regionally.

Mel – agreed.

Dave – can we put this together and agree as a Commission about what this is vs personal opinions? Carrie – Chris, Val, and Bill have all been out discussing in public. Also think some forming of messages for DOE and state leadership important too. Should see if there is a group that wants to meet briefly and restate thoughts.

Further discussion was had about the details of how and why sharing about the Commission to the public could occur. Want to draw on the knowledge that has been created so far. Some dedicated discussion important.