

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

Meeting Agenda  
November 23, 2020, 2-4 pm

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

General Email: [schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu](mailto:schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu)

**Commission Attendance:** Dave Luneau, Mel Myler, Dick Ames, Rick Ladd, Jay Kahn, Jon Morgan, Bill Ardinger, Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu, Corinne Cascadden, Iris Estabrook, Barbara Tremblay, Chris Dwyer, Susan Huard, Val Zanchuk, Mary Heath, Dave Ryan, John Beardmore. Also Present: Bruce Mallory, Jordan Hensley, Carrie Portrie. 18 attendees from the public listening in.

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

Just after 2pm Dave Luneau welcomed attendees and called roll. Dave discussed the plan for the afternoon's meeting and expressed that he hoped the conversation would reflect on whether or not the content in the final report fairly represents the work of the Commission. Dave reminded the group that the group is unable to conduct deliberations via email, and to send post-meeting notes and feedback on the draft report to Bruce. The Commission approved the minutes of 11/16's meeting unanimously, with the exception of Rick, who briefly stepped away from the meeting.

### **Discussion and action on contract extension with Carsey School**

Dave described the contract extension to the contract between the Commission and Carsey School, and noted the extension provides that public comment will continue to be collected through the Commission's email and website. He also informed the Commission that the contract extension was reviewed by USNH and legislative counsel. Mel moved to accept the contract extension, and Mary seconded it. The contract extension was approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission, with the exception of Rick, who had to step away again briefly.

### **Discussion on Final Report structure**

Bruce – does the report as a whole, in particular the substantive findings and recommendations, reflect the work of the Commission? Formal vote is next Monday, and please add your individual member statements by end of day on Friday, 11/27. Bruce reiterated that the report is the Commission's, not Carsey's, and that the Carsey staff is here to support the work of the group. Bruce thanked the group for their patience as the report has been put together into the day's draft from.

Bruce placed the concluding findings and recommendations section of the report on the screen to help facilitate the discussion from the group. Bruce also noted that the executive summary would be written after consensus will be reached by the group.

Chris – A structural comment. I think the report works well for the first several sections (through engagement), but get into some cycles of repetition which takes away the power of the findings that are coming after that. There are some key parts in those sections that are not covered in findings and recommendations, and that are important. But there are other parts that repeat things from the history/background. I think that will detract – reader will give up if they are hearing the same things repeatedly. Glad they will be in the executive summary.

Mel – combining three work groups together to reduce redundancy.

Iris – findings and recommendations are repeated verbatim and again below in the final section. Should be reserved for the end.

Bruce – we'll work to eliminate those repetitions without losing the essence of the work group reports. The reason they are all repeated verbatim again is so that they are all together in one place.

Bill – One possible way of getting at that is to maybe think about moving the findings and recommendations at the end – could consider moving findings and recs to the top after the executive summary with citations to where they are in the text, leaving intact the integrated items but referred to by the reader when they need to. May help the reader tie things together. Will still be duplication in that approach, but would preserve the work group reports.

Bruce – agree that it would be an efficient way to present findings and recommendations.

Dick – I concur with Chris. Two kinds of redundancy: overlap but not exactly between fiscal policy and adequacy. Sometimes said before slightly differently – should meld together for better consistency. Move from repetition to emphasis.

David Ryan – what struck me is that this was almost dissertation-like, where you tell what you're going to tell and then tell it. Can provide a roadmap and then contextualize through the document.

Bill – in the executive summary should describe a bit more about how the Commission is structured to then support how the report is laid out.

Bruce – want to frame around the design thinking process the Commission followed.

Bruce then moved to a discussion of each of the findings of the Commission:

Chris – Do you have a way you want to get copy edits? Bruce – please send edits via email, noting the text and location in the text.

Bill – Could we scan handwritten comments? Bruce – sure. Bill – what if someone wanted to delete a whole finding? How would that be processed? Bruce – in terms of deleting a finding, probably would not at this point as we hope to reference the group's consensus. Can address individual thoughts in individual member statements.

Chris – in AD-F1: state's minimum standards are inputs. Don't disagree that they are what they are, but wouldn't want anyone to think that minimum standards have much to do with accountability or an adequate education. Rick – we use standards in different ways – what is this referring to? Bruce – we can make sure that we are consistent with statutory language? Iris – don't think they are called minimum standards anymore, should get rid of the word minimum.

General agreement to that point across the Commission. Barbara – standards are important to include because they are there for districts to hold to account, districts need to know. Rick – minimum IS in RSA 186. Bruce – will double check to make sure that this is accurate.

Some discussion was had around the word “minimum” and its appropriateness.

AD-F3: Chris – would it help to have a footnote about special education not including “catastrophic” aid. Noted that it is no longer referred to as catastrophic. Dick – need to make sure this language is consistent with the language in the adequacy section. Bill – I think it is important that whatever findings are presented be exactly the same language, don’t want to leave differentials. Val – need to specifically mention the cost for calculating costs – it’s the summation of the weight times the base cost, plus the base cost. Need to describe better. Iris – the way it has been expressed here most understandable, but what this represents is a certain distribution that was readable in the simulator tool. There needs to be a way to link this statement to the distribution that results from it so that people can see what that looks like. Dave – that can’t be overstated. It is about the distribution of total education costs—that’s what the ECM and weights get you to. Dave – moving away from per pupil to costs of education for school districts. Iris – have to reference here and maybe elsewhere. Jay – there are 168k students, weighted there are 470k students. That 470k is assigned across the school districts. The ECM distributes those costs.

Discussion was had about the best way to compare costs and show the results of the ECM and weights.

AD-F4: Jay – should be split into two.

AD-F5: Rick – what do we mean by resources? Rick will send some clarifying language

AD-R7: Iris – need to put the word quality before early education programs. Used before but not carried over. Also on p. 34 there should be a reference to that added. Barbara agreed. Corinne noted that there could be a reference to the NH early learning standards.

AD-R1: John – on the three biennia phase-in...did the work group consider types of phase in and land on three? How do we note our displeasure or lack of support for a recommendation? Think this is too specific, how to reconcile? For the record I don’t agree with any phase-in.

Jay – we know that districts have already set rates for FY22, and structural aspects for FY23 that would need to go into place/notification to districts. Some people had said they were concerned by length of phase-in. Trying to respond to worries about timeline. Dave – what is important is that it is more than one budget cycle. Has to be predictable for towns and districts creating budgets. Iris – Agree with John’s objection, three biennia is asking for trouble. Avoiding a shock to the system is where the collar came in last time, and that can lead downhill. Think there could easily be more positive language that calls for implementation to happen as soon as possible. I thought phase-in was coming from fiscal policy, not adequacy.

Discussion was had and there was some consensus around recommending that the plan should happen as quickly as possible.

AD-R3: Rick – in special education outcomes, it’s IEP goals not state average outcomes. Dick – it’s about the opportunity, and not pre-judging any child’s abilities.

Some further discussion around expectations and opportunity, and language in AD-R3.

AD-R5: Mary – building aid placed on a moratorium – concerned about the previous 20 year distribution cycle, which could lead to the issues that came to a head in 2008. A concern with that. What we need is a system. This statement could lead us back to the problem we had in 2008. Iris – if all we’re calling for is the return to previous distribution cycle and more funds...the projects are backed up to such an extent that students are at risk. Need to be more aggressive, maybe even calling for a plan. Jay – can get some of the specificity elsewhere into the report into this recommendation.

Dave – on FP, just because we raised some of these FP items in the section, doesn’t mean they necessarily need to go in the summary. Can now edit to remove redundancy.

FP-F6 (two of them): Wording on more needy communities should change – there are both needy communities across property wealth and student characteristics. On the second, what is meant is an empirical approach (not evidence-based). Bill – agree, like needy but need to say what we mean by needy (property wealth, income wealth, performance...general term that people understand, but need to reference in report what more needy means by what measures).

FP-F11: Bill- not on individual owners but on property taxpayers. Probably should say that.

FP-F10: Chris – can accept on residential, but not commercial.

FP-R1: John – can we also include taxpayer equity here? Dave – generally get taxpayer equity from student equity, but not necessarily the other way around. Bill – I prefer leaving it the way it is, because taxpayer equity fundamentally part of tax policy. Some of the recommendations in here around relief provisions for taxpayers who have a particular circumstance are directly target to taxpayer equity issues. In the past, where the legislature has muddled is the concept of student equity, where we are trying to get a progressive distribution of public education resources, we have not found the anchor that lets policy get to a true answer. My own view is the Commission’s work with AIR has identified is that NH has a regressive distribution of spending resources, including state aid. If you fix student equity, you’ll have a taxpayer equity effect.

Some further discussion of how to phrase language linking student and taxpayer equity.

FP-R4: Some discussion of what was meant by the language in that recommendation.

FP-R6: Chris – need to make sure we reference low and moderate income and net worth homeowners and renters.

FP-R2: Corinne – change should to must. Rick – need to be careful. Like the word should. Some discussion about the Commission’s recommendations vs law.

Bruce requested Commission members to direct further opinions and edits to him to land at a place that Commission members will comfortable with. Iris asked about the timeline moving ahead. Some discussion was had on the timeline, member statements, and the process going ahead.

## **Public Comments**

Jeff McLynch, NHSFFP: Earlier today the NHSFFP sent a memo to the Commission regarding today's draft. Hope that all will read. Reiterated that the Commission's work could use five changes: should seek to achieve equity for both students and taxpayers, the Commission's final report should specify sources of revenue to be used to provide an adequate education, the final report should recommend a funding formula with specific dollar amounts and goals, the final report should properly reflect school funding court rulings, and the final report should avoid a protracted timeline for implementation. Jeff wished the Commission a happy Thanksgiving as well.

Jane Ferrini, Portsmouth: Thanked the Commission. Echoing comments from before that other sources of revenue be considered more fully and remove the recommendation that SPT be remitted in full to the state. Many costs have been downshifted to localities. Portsmouth alone has lost over \$7 million over previous decade. Retirement funds also should be considered, state has not kept its percentage of contribution. For Portsmouth on retirement alone has been a loss of \$12 million over last several years. Also noted lack of catch up formula in meals and rooms tax.

Direct further public comments to Commission Chair David Luneau at [schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu](mailto:schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu)

### **Upcoming Meetings**

The next, and final, Full Commission Meeting is Monday, November 30, 2020

### **Adjourn**

### **Documents:**

Documents for this meeting can be found on the Commission website under 11/23 materials - <https://carsey.unh.edu/school-funding/school-funding-study/resources/meeting-documents-video>

### **RSA 193-E:2-e**

- a. Review the education funding formula and make recommendations to ensure a uniform and equitable design for financing the cost of an adequate education for all public-school students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in the state.
- b. Determine whether the New Hampshire school funding formula complies with court decisions mandating the opportunity for an adequate education for all students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with a revenue source that is uniform across the state.
- c. Identify trends and disparities across the state in student performance in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 based on current school funding options.
- d. Re-establish the baseline for the costs, programs, staffing, and facilities needed to provide the opportunity for an adequate education.
- e. Study and produce recommendations regarding all costs and existing funding for special education, including listing any currently unfunded special education mandates issued to date by the state department of education.

- f. Study integrating into the education funding adequacy formula a factor that accounts for the number of Class A, B, and C properties in a community, and the distribution of education funding costs across those numbers and classes of properties.
- g. Consider other policy issues as the commission deems necessary.<sup>1</sup> The commission may consult with outside resources and state agencies, including but not limited to the department of education, the department of revenue administration, and the legislative budget office.

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission has asked to be sure that public charter schools and Career Technical Education Centers are included in any analyses and policy recommendations.