

# D.O.E. Request for Regionalization

## A Look at Reorganization

November 29, 2017

After several discussions with Board members this fall and the state of Maine's administrative push to have school departments consolidate, we requested information from Drummond/Woodsum on School Reorganization Options and Considerations.

In the process of evaluating reorganization options the school committee should consider:

- The organizational documents and laws that will govern each alternative for school reorganization.
- The reorganization process which include interested partners and terms that would have to be negotiated.
- How each form of school reorganization would change the governing and legislative bodies.

# Reorganizing as a Regional School Unit (RSU)

## Municipal School Unit

- Geographic and political scope is the town boundary.
- School Board representatives of one town.
- Legislative body is the Town Council.

## RSU

- Geographic and political scope is at least two town boundaries.
- School Board representatives of two or more towns.
- Voters at a district referendum or district meeting is the legislative body.

## Municipal School Unit

- School Board must have budget approval of the Town Council and then it goes to referendum.
- School construction must be approved by the Town Council.
- Insurance of debt is decided by the Town Council.

## RSU

- The School Board submits an approved budget to a district meeting. The approved budget from the district meeting is sent to a districtwide referendum vote.
- School Board will call and organize a district wide referendum election for construction.
- The School Board decides the amount and timing of debt to be submitted to district voters at referendum.

# RSU Budget Deliberations and Development

- EPS costs and additional local funds must be allocated among member towns.
- EPS costs are apportioned between towns based on their student count percentages.
- Statewide maximum tax effort (a statewide mill rate times that town's adjusted property valuation) is applied to each town's share.

- The state kicks in subsidy to the RSU for each town that cannot pay its share without exceeding the maximum required tax effort.
- With respect to additional local funds for costs not recognized by the EPS funding model a cost sharing formula agreed to at the RSU's formation will apply.

# RSU Reorganization Process

- Section 1461 of Title 20-A sets forth the process for organization.
- School units involved initiate the formation of an RSU by filing notice of intent to reorganize with the D.O.E. Commissioner.



- Guidelines for formulation of a reorganization planning committee include representation of each municipality by at least one School Board member, one municipal officer, and one resident, with participation by superintendents or municipal administrators.
- Reorganization planning committee engages in a public process to determine the pulse of the public and negotiates the terms of a reorganization plan proposal.

## RSU Reorganization Plan Identifies

- composition, appointment, and method of voting by the School Board
- powers and duties of the School Board
- transfer of assets, assumptions of debt, disposition of property, other participating school unit's obligations and transitional provisions
- each member municipality must hold a referendum asking voters if they favor approving the plan to reorganize

## RSU: Other Considerations

- A school unit may join an existing RSU in much the same manner as required for the formation of an RSU.
- Submittal to a November referendum would be necessary to open an RSU on July 1 of the following year.
- Recommendation to include at least six months to negotiate a reorganization plan prior to School Board approval and submittal to the Commissioner.

## Reorganizing as an Alternative Organizational Structure (AOS)

- Organizational structure composed of two or more school units that share some administrative services but retain their own separate School Boards.
- Governance of AOS is controlled by the terms of a reorganization plan and interlocal agreement.
- AOS School Board is made up of members appointed by and from the member School Boards.

- Under Chapter 115 of Title 30-A an interlocal agreement must be approved by the School Board members.
- An AOS is required to consolidate system administration, administration of special education, transportation, and business functions.
- An AOS must adopt a core curriculum, procedures for standardized testing and assessment, consistent school policies, and consistent bargaining agreements.

- An AOS is charged with hiring a Superintendent, Special Education Director, Transportation Director, and Business Manager. They also oversee the Central Office.
- School Boards of the AOS members remain in place and continue as the governing bodies for their respective school units.
- AOS budget is approved at a budget meeting of voters without submittal to a validation referendum. The costs of the budget are allocated to members following the AOS plan and interlocal agreement.

- An AOS does not have the authority to borrow.
- Process for forming an AOS is similar to the process to form an RSU.

# Reorganizing as an Community School District (CSD)

- School unit of more than one municipality responsible for the governance of some, but usually not all public school grades within its boundaries.
- Commonplace for grades 9-12 within a geographic span.
- Members retain their own School Boards for elementary (Pre-K to 8) education.



- Governance responsibilities may be split between a board of trustees and school committee or a single school committee.
- Members of a CSD governing board are initially appointed by the municipal officers of the participating municipalities and are thereafter elected by the voters.

- CSD school committee is responsible for the operation of the authorized grades, may acquire and hold property for the purpose of operating schools and prepares the annual CSD budget for submission to the budget referendum.
- Borrowing generally requires referendum approval.

## CSD Reorganization Process

- Maine Legislature has repealed the statutory process to form a CSD.
- A private and special law would now be required to form a CSD.