

Approved Independent Schools Study Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

December 20, 2017

Present:

Committee members: Senator Philip Baruth, Chittenden County; Representative Emily Long, Windham County; Nicole Mace, VSBA; Liz Shayne, The Schoolhouse (CIS); Seth Bongartz, VISA; Jeff Francis, VSA; Jo-Anne Unruh, VCSEA; Michael Livingston, Sharon Academy (CIS); Bonnie Johnson-Aten, Vermont State Board of Education; Molly Bachman, AOE General Counsel

Agency of Education: Suzanne Sprague

Others via phone: Ken Kramberg; participants from the following numbers:
802-279-4262; 908-938-1616; 802-917-1227; 802-595-0253; 802-828-1311; 802-316-9271; 802-436-2112

Senator Baruth convened the meeting at 9:03 a.m. and asked for a roll call of the committee members. He asked if there were any pressing changes to the report. Molly Bachman, AOE General Counsel, asked for a change in the language in the summary on the second to the last paragraph. She offered that the narrative suggests that there was progress made on financial disclosure but Secretary Holcombe has stated that the draft language gave the State Board of Education less ability to determine financial capacity than current law which states that it is something the Board must consider. She asked that the wording be changed to include unable. Senator Baruth said that he would prefer not to make changes to the draft unless the changes must be made. He indicated that the report is clear that not everyone has agreed to the language.

Troy McAllister, Headmaster of the Community High School of Vermont, interrupted the meeting to say he found it concerning that the report does not indicate that it was Secretary Holcombe that was creating the non-consensus and he was further concerned that at a hearing for public comment it is too late to make any changes. Senator Baruth clarified that the meeting is not a hearing for public comment. He said it is a public hearing but that the public does not speak when they desire. Senator Baruth said there is business that must be conducted and he would be able to comment at the end of the discussion.

Bachman said she had a specific suggestion to the draft. She suggested striking the words "while in the way the committee was able" and saying the committee was "unable" to make substantial headway. Senator Baruth did not agree and suggested that the word substantial be removed. He asked for input from the committee members. There was no objection.

Unruh said that regarding the appendices that the Agency of Education (AOE) and VCSEA, she sent an amended document to Senator Baruth that updated the title as well as clarified wording in the section titled, "Placement and Location." She requested that the amended version be used instead of the one that is currently attached. Senator Baruth asked Unruh to send the amended document to

DesMarais to update the document. He said that he received a submission from Francis and he would ask DesMarais to replace it with the new submission.

Bongartz said that the appendix E still indicates that it was drafted by the AOE. He requested that the reference to AOE be removed from the title. Unruh offered the explanation that she and Laura Pelosi received a copy of the original draft. Unruh consulted with the VCSEA Board and moved forward with amendments to it. Unruh said that the document is viewed as a working draft with VCSEA making comments. She added that the working document's title reflects the work of the AOE and VCSEA. Bongartz objected to that because the independent school representatives did not have a chance to respond. Baruth asked to remove the portion that indicates that a copy was sent to the independent schools because they did not respond. Bachman said she agrees with Unruh's description that it was intended as a working document and responses from both parties were expected. She said that it is fine to eliminate from the title that the document was sent to both parties if the committee agrees.

Unruh clarified that she will send the amended document to DesMarais. Senator Baruth asked Unruh to copy to Suzanne Sprague as well.

Senator Baruth invited Troy McAllister, Headmaster of the Community High School of Vermont, to address the committee. McAllister said he was concerned with AOE working with the lobbyist, VCSEA, and excluding the independent school community. He said that it appears the AOE and VCSEA met separately to work on language and the full committee was not given time to comment on it. McAllister said that if the document's title shows the AOE it indicates that it is the stamp of the state. Senator Baruth asked Unruh to comment.

Unruh said that she and the Secretary did not meet separately. Senator Baruth said that in the Legislature and this committee, people work together and in good faith. He continued that the topics were difficult and all parties tried hard to include the independent school representatives as well as the public school representatives.

Senator Baruth called for a vote. Mace asked for a roll call vote.

Representative Long – yea

Nicole Mace – yea

Jeff Francis – yea

Jo-Anne Unruh – yea

Seth Bongartz – yea

Michael Livingston – yea

Bonnie Johnson-Aten – yea

Liz Shayne – yea

Molly Bachman - yea

Senator Baruth – yea

Senator Baruth thanked the committee. He said that he will be taking up the report in his legislative committee. Senator Baruth said that the study committee members will be requested to supply testimony.

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 a.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Suzanne Sprague.