

MEMORANDUM

TO: Crown Point-Ticonderoga Merger Study Advisory Committee
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of January 30, 2013
DATE: February 4, 2013

Attendance:

Committee Members: Seth Celotti, Mike Cherubini, Joyce Cooper, John Donohue, Dave Iuliano, Anita Johnson, Tom Fish, Brian Kiely, Agatha Mace, Shana Macey, James Major, Peggy Patnode, Seanna Porter, Lynne Reale, Nancy Rich, Tara Spaulding, Tom Wranosky, and Michelle Young

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Superintendent Advisors: Shari Brannock and John McDonald

Observers: Kathy DeBrobander, Victoria Russell, Mary Hope McGinness, Beth Wright, Sheri Granger, Cynthia Floor, John Whiteley, Richard Gladu, Mark Russell

Location: Crown Point School

1. Shari Brannock, Superintendent of Crown Point, welcomed everyone to the district and introduced the merger study consultants and John McDonald, superintendent of Ticonderoga. Committee members were asked to introduce themselves, their connection with the school districts, and their reasons for participating in the study process.
2. Alan Pole provided an overview of the motivation for school districts to engage in a merger study including higher expectations for students, declining enrollments, and challenging financial times.
3. Meetings of the District Advisory Committee will be held from 6:30-8:30 pm as follows (specific schools and rooms to be determined):

Date	Topic	Location
January 30	Organization, Overview, and Enrollment Projections	Crown Point
March 6	Instructional/Extracurricular Program	Ticonderoga High School
April 17	Facilities	Crown Point
May 29	Transportation	Ticonderoga
June 19	Staffing	Crown Point
July 24	Finances	Ticonderoga
August 21	Review Findings and Recommendations/React to Draft Final Report	Crown Point

If there is a snow day on the day that a meeting is scheduled, the meeting will occur unless the superintendent in the district that the meeting is being held in cancels it.

4. A contact list of the members of the Merger Advisory Committee was shared with email addresses and telephone numbers. Members of the group were asked to verify the accuracy of the information, as email will serve as the primary means of communication between the consultants and the committee members. Whenever possible, meeting materials will be emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Paper copies of the materials will be made available at each meeting.

5. Meeting notes will be provided after each meeting. The notes will be emailed to all committee members and copied to the two superintendents. It will be the responsibility of the superintendents to distribute the notes within their district, as they deem appropriate. It is anticipated that, at a minimum, notes will be provided to board members and posted on each district's web site. Meeting notes will also be emailed to the District Superintendent, the State Education Department, and the Department of State. The Power Point that is used at each meeting will also be posted on the districts' websites after the meeting occurs.

6. All meetings of the advisory committee will be open. Members of the public will be welcome at these meetings. At the conclusion of each meeting, the observers will have the opportunity to offer comments or ask questions.

7. Alan Pole presented a PowerPoint overview of the school district merger process in New York State. He began by reviewing the reasons for considering reorganization including the ability to increase course offerings and the potential for upgrading facilities, as well as the ability to reduce taxes by eliminating duplication and consolidation of functions. He also reminded everyone that reorganization may be difficult because of the

fear of losing local identity, the uncertainty over board representation, increased busing time for some students, and the natural resistance to change.

He indicated that the merger study is designed to provide information for the school districts, the communities, and the Commissioner on enrollments, program, facilities, transportation, staffing, and finances. The study will describe the current status of the districts and will provide a set of recommendations for the new board of education to consider should a merger occur. Each of the Boards of Education will have an opportunity to decide how to proceed once the study is concluded.

The study will use data to provide objective information to make decisions on adding classes and/or reducing staff, creating building configurations by grade level, adding bus runs and drivers, calculating potential staffing savings, and assessing the financial impact of the merger. Alan indicated that decisions will not be made for the new district regarding the name, colors, or mascot, the specific classes to be added or the staff reduced, the new bus routes and stops, or deciding when staff savings might be realized or how financial decisions will be made. These are the decisions that, if a merger occurs, the new board of education is responsible for making.

The role and function of the School/Community Advisory Committee was reviewed. He indicated that the function of the committee is to advise the Boards of Education and the consultants, to communicate with the public about the process, and to prepare informative materials. The committee includes 9 people from each school community including 5 community members, 2 teachers, 1 building administrator, and 1 support staff. The superintendents are not members of the committee but serve as resources to the committee. Committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings, freely express their points of view, be key communicators with stakeholder groups, and be a respectful, contributing member of the committee. Alan asked that all committee members come to the meetings with an open mind.

He emphasized that the consultants bring an outside, unbiased perspective and will ensure that the process is open. They will maintain contact with the State Education Department and the District Superintendent, will produce meetings notes after each committee meeting and will be responsible for the final report. The recommendations in the report will benefit student learning and will be educationally sound and fiscally responsible. They will also be independent of special interest groups. The final report will not recommend whether or not a merger should occur.

The draft time line for the merger study was reviewed. The study begins with this meeting in January 2013 and is slated to be completed by August 2013. The study will be reviewed by the State Education Department in September 2013 and presented to the Boards of Education in October 2013. From October through November, the districts

will have public information and discussion sessions culminating in a decision by the two Boards of Education to go forward. If both boards vote in go forward, then an Advisory Referendum will be held in January 2014 and, if the votes in each district are positive then a Final Referendum will be held in February 2014. If that vote is positive in both districts then the new district will begin operations effective July 1, 2014. While these dates are all subject to review and change as circumstances occur, they are the schedule that has tentatively been identified by the State Education Department for this study.

8. Jessica Cohen presented an overview of past enrollments for Crown Point and Ticonderoga as well as projected future enrollments for both districts. The study begins by reviewing enrollment trends as enrollment influences all decisions regarding staffing, class and curricular offerings, facilities, transportation, and finances.

Enrollment in both districts has been declining over the past few decades. Since the 2000-2001 school year, the enrollment in Crown Point has declined 27.2% from 349 to 254 and the enrollment in Ticonderoga has declined by 24.8% from 1,076 to 809.

To predict future enrollment, the consultants employ the Cohort Survival Projection method that uses information on the number of births in each school district over a period of years and calculates patterns of enrollment. A cohort survival ratio is developed that tracks how each cohort of students changes as it moves through the grade level. This ratio, used with the live birth information, predicts what the enrollment will be for a period of years given consistent and predictable conditions. It does not take into account significant economic development changes such as a major employer leaving or entering the area and other similar changes. However, it is not anticipated that either of these conditions will be taking place within the borders of these two school districts.

Using this method, the Crown Point enrollment is predicted to increase from 254 in the current school year to 286 in the 2019-2020 year, an increase of 32 students. Ticonderoga's enrollment is predicted to decrease from 809 this year to 757 in the 2019-2020 year, a decrease of 52 students. If the districts were to be merged, the combined enrollment projects a relatively constant combined enrollment from 1,062 students in 2013-14 to 1,044 students in 2019-20.

The number of home schooled students, non-resident students, and resident students enrolled in non-public schools are all factors that are considered in projecting enrollment. Over the past five years, an average of 24.4 students from Crown Point, and 51.8 students from Ticonderoga were enrolled at St. Mary's K – 8 school in Ticonderoga. While there is no indication that St. Mary's will change its status or close during the next five years, if it did, the impact on the newly merged district would be minimal increasing the enrollment by 75 – 80 students or 8 – 9 students per grade level. During the same time period, an average of 17.8 students were home schooled in Crown Point and 7.6 were

home schooled in Ticonderoga. Crown Point does not have any non-resident students; Ticonderoga has 39 students in grades 7–12 from the Putnam School District.

9. Comments and questions were entertained from the committee and the observers.

- *Do you believe that the Governor or State Legislature will force districts to merge in the future? If that happens, is it better for us to merge now and get the financial incentives that may not be available later?* New York State has a long history of being a local control state. While the Governor and Commissioner have talked about encouraging more consolidation of districts, it does not appear that mergers will be required any time soon.
- *Why is the number of students who are home-schooled in Crown Point higher than that in Ticonderoga?* The percentage of students who are home-schooled differs in districts depending on the student population. Parents may choose to home school students for religious, academic, athletic, or other reasons. Information was provided from the district that the number represents four families.
- *What is the difference between the type of merger that is being discussed in this study and what happened when Hague was annexed to Ticonderoga in 1979-80?* In a consolidation by annexation, the district being annexed is combined under the governance of the district that will remain. When Ticonderoga annexed Hague, the Ticonderoga School District Board of Education remained and the Hague Board of Education and district was subsumed by Ticonderoga. In the type of consolidation that is being considered in this study, both school districts would be abolished and a new district would be identified incorporating the boundaries of the former districts. A new board of education would be elected to govern the district.
- *What were the results of other merger studies that the consultants had done?* Alan indicated that he had been involved in 8 studies, that 1 merger will take place this July, that 3 studies are currently in process, and that a vote will be occurring in March in Abe Wing regarding the annexation of the district with Glens Falls.
- *Who will own the final report and how will it be made available to the public?* The study is being funded by the New York Department of State and facilitated by the New York State Education Department. Both of the agencies will receive copies of the report. It was emphasized, however, that the final report as well as all of the information shared with the committees would be available on both districts' websites and through the districts' boards of education.

10. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 6, 2013 at the Ticonderoga High School. A light dinner will be available for committee members beginning at 5:00 p.m. A tour of the high school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the Merger Advisory Committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on January 30. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 3.6.13 in Ticonderoga!

C: Shari Brannock
John McDonald
Craig King
Suzanne Spear
Jay O'Connor
Sean Maguire