

MEMORANDUM

TO: Crown Point-Ticonderoga Merger Study Advisory Committee
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of April 17, 2013
DATE: April 19, 2013

Attendance:

Committee Members: Seth Celotti, Mike Cherubini, Joyce Cooper, John Donohue, Dave Iuliano, Anita Johnson, Tom Fish, Brian Kiely, Agatha Mace, Shana Macey, 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: Donna Clarke, Mark Russell, Jon Landry, Bonnie Landry, Tracy Bush, Jaci Pockett, Victoria Russell, Kathy DeBrobander, June Glebus, Michael T. Pierre, Alyson Russell, Tori Potter, and Chance Potter

Location: Crown Point Central School

- 1. Welcome and housekeeping items:** Alan Pole welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Merger Advisory Committee and began by thanking Superintendent Shari Brannock, Tara Spaulding, and Sheri Granger for the dinner arrangements. He also thanked Shari Brannock for conducting the tour of the Crown Point building, athletic fields, and bus garage.
- 2. Additions and corrections to the March 6, 2013 meeting notes:** The notes were corrected to reflect that the school organization in Ticonderoga is K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.
- 3. Review of committee meeting dates, locations and procedures:** Alan reviewed the process that would be followed at each meeting of presentation to the committee and committee discussion followed by questions from the audience. The group agreed to change the July 24th date to **July 23** because of a conflict. The remaining dates, topics, and locations for the meetings will be:

Date	Topic	Location
April 17	Facilities	Crown Point
May 29	Transportation	Ticonderoga

June 19	Staffing	Crown Point
July 23 <i>(Changed date)</i>	Finances	Ticonderoga
August 21	Review Findings and Recommendations/React to Draft Final Report	Crown Point

4. Current Description of Facilities. The discussion began with an overview of the instructional buildings in the two districts taken from the Building Conditions Survey that is required by the New York State Education Department to be done every five years. According to the surveys the buildings are all rated in satisfactory to excellent condition. The bus garages in the two districts are of similar size; Crown Point’s bus garage is newer, having being built in 2001. Ticonderoga’s bus garage was built in 1969 and has had some recent capital improvements.

5. Building Usage by Outside Groups. Both districts have similar philosophies on the usage of school buildings by community groups indicating a belief that the schools should be open and welcoming to community organizations. A table was provided that listed the variety of groups using the buildings.

6. Review of Data on Projected Enrollment and Classroom Usage. Since decisions about facilities are informed by the number of students enrolled, Alan reviewed the enrollment projections that were previously shared. Over the next five to ten years, the enrollment in Ticonderoga will decrease slightly and the enrollment in Crown Point will increase slightly. If the two districts were to merge, projected enrollments would remain relatively stable.

A review of the classroom usage in both the Ticonderoga Middle School and High School indicated that there is adequate space in the buildings to add students and sections from Crown Point.

7. Tentative Proposal for Grade Configurations in a Merged District. Based on the analysis of enrollment projections and classroom usage, a recommendation was made to have a Pre-K – 5th grade elementary school in Crown Point and one in Ticonderoga, a combined 6th – 8th grade middle school in the Ticonderoga Middle School, and a combined 9th – 12th grade high school in the Ticonderoga High School. This recommendation was made, in part, because in mergers the state perspective is that there needs to be a consolidation at the middle and high school levels. This is for the cost-efficiencies gained as well as for the potential for expansion of the number of program and course options.

8. Capital Construction Projects. A review of the construction and renovation projects in the two districts indicated that in Crown Point the new bus garage was built in 2001 and the old bus garage was converted to 3 elementary classrooms. In 2009, a \$2 million project provided partial roof replacement and gym infrastructure renovation. Ticonderoga recently completed a \$23 million major capital project that made significant improvements to the high school and the elementary/middle school.

9. Availability of Additional Building Aid for Merged Districts. The components of additional building aid for merged districts was described. New York State provides additional financial aid for buildings for merged districts for ten years after the merger. There are two types of additional aid provided. The first provides an additional 30% on top of the building aid ratio of the higher of the two districts up to 95% (98% for high needs districts) for new building and renovation projects.

A district's building aid ratio is based on the "wealth" of the district identified as the Combined Wealth Ratio (CWR). The CWR is determined using the total value of property in a district and the total personal income in the district. An average wealth district in New York State is rated at 1.0. Districts with a higher wealth have a CWR of more than 1; districts that have lower wealth than average are less than 1. Crown Point's CWR is .615 and Ticonderoga's is 1.261.

If this merger were to take place, the building aid for the merged district would be between 95% and 98%.

The second type of additional aid provided for buildings is that existing debt is aided at the higher of the previous districts' selected building aid ratios. If the merger were to occur, then the capital construction debt incurred by both districts would be aided at .946. Another way to say this is that the state would aid about \$.95 for every dollar of debt.

5. Summary of presentation: The following "takeaways" and recommendations were shared with the committee:

- Pre-K – 5th grader elementary schools should exist in both districts with the existing attendance zones;
- All students in grades 6 – 8 would be sent to a combined middle school in the current Ticonderoga Middle School;
- All students in grades 9 – 12 would go to a combined high school in the current Ticonderoga High School; and
- Two bus facilities should be maintained, at least for the short term.

6. Committee Discussion. The following questions were raised:

How can you ensure consistency of instruction in the two elementary schools? It was suggested that the development of a common curriculum by teams of teachers, administrators, and parents could be initiated to ensure that what is taught is consistent across buildings.

What will happen with the rest of the Crown Point school that is not in use for the elementary grades? There are a variety of uses that can be explored including municipal or non-profit offices.

Would staff be moved from one school to the other? All staff would be part of the new district staff and teaching assignments would be consistent with the new contract and in accordance with the educational needs of the new district.

Committee members discussed the information that has been shared during the first three meetings. Some of the comments included:

- More community members should be attending the meetings and more information should be made available to community members. The media should be encouraged to attend.
- The school is the center of the community. Merging would require two vast and different communities to come together.
- One of the important factors that hasn't been discussed is the finances of the merger. This will be discussed during the July meeting.
- The merged district would provide greater programming options to students.

7. Next meeting: The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 29 at Ticonderoga Elementary/Middle School. A light dinner will be available for committee members beginning at 5:00 p.m. A tour of the 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 April 17. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact us. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again - 5.29.13 in Ticonderoga!

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