

MEMORANDUM

TO: Crown Point-Ticonderoga Merger Study Advisory Committee
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of June 19, 2013
DATE: June 24, 2013

Attendance:

Committee Members: Seth Celotti, Mike Cherubini, Joyce Cooper, John Donohue, Dave Iuliano, Tom Fish, Brian Kiely, Agatha Mace, Peggy Patnode, Seanna Porter, Nancy Rich, Tara Spaulding, and Michelle Young

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Superintendent Advisors: Shari Brannock and John McDonald

Observers: Donna Clarke, Mary Hope McGinness, Torri Potter, Dan Gibbs, Rene Sprague, Penny Comes, Victoria Russell, Bette Pertak, Kathy DeBrobander, Linda Kimball, Todd Waldorf, Bonnie Landry, Jon Landry

Location: Crown Point School

- 1. Welcome and housekeeping items:** Jessica Cohen welcomed everyone to the fifth meeting of the Merger Advisory Committee. She reviewed the process that would be followed at each meeting of presentation to the committee and committee discussion followed by questions from the audience.
- 2. Additions and corrections to the May 29, 2013 meeting notes:** There were none.
- 3. Review of committee meeting dates, locations and procedures:** Jessica reminded everyone that the July 24th date was changed to **July 23** because of a conflict. The remaining dates, topics, and locations for the meetings will be:

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

4. Overview of Staffing. Alan Pole began the presentation on staffing by reminding everyone that education is a very staff intensive process and is directly linked to the program that districts offer. Discussion of staffing is done within the context of the programs that could be offered within a merged district as well as the potential for staff reductions that could be achieved through combining of the two districts. During the March meeting of the Advisory Committee, the focus was on the instructional programs. One of the “takeaways” from that presentation was:

“Combining the two school districts into one may potentially result in the reduction of about 60 existing class sections. This will offer the possibility of either more electives, staff reductions, or a combination of both.”

Since the 60 class sections are split over all of the core subjects as well as electives, it does not appear that there will be many opportunities for reduction in staff. It is more likely that a merger will result in being able to offer additional electives for the students.

5. Teachers and Teaching Assistants. The focus of the presentation moved to a comparison of the teacher contracts from both districts. The review indicates that, aside from the salary schedules, the teacher contracts are fairly similar. A review of the salary schedule for both districts indicated that both districts have a traditional teacher salary schedule that is structured with years of service and payment for graduate hours. There are differences in the amount paid at each step. The average teacher salary in Crown Point is \$48,598; it is \$57,382 at Ticonderoga.

Each contract also contains a clause on employment conditions that provides employment guarantees for teachers if a merger of the district was to occur. These clauses will reduce the potential savings that might otherwise be found in a merger.

If a merger were to occur, new labor agreements would need to be negotiated. Alan indicated that while it is not required, typically salaries are “leveled up.” If that were to occur in a merger between Crown Point and Ticonderoga, the total cost to level up Crown Point teacher and teaching assistant salaries to the Ticonderoga salary schedule would be \$328,958.

Also reviewed were the costs for stipends for athletics and extracurricular activities. There were opportunities for reducing coaches because of current duplication of teams. An estimate of \$15,000 was made for the costs of increasing the number coaches if additional sports were added. The result was a potential saving of \$24,628.

6. Administrators and Supervisors. The number of administrators and supervisors in the two districts were reviewed. Crown Point has 6.6 positions and Ticonderoga currently has 10 positions. If the two districts were merged, the number of administrators

and supervisors could potentially be reduced from a total of 16.6 to 12.0. The estimated administrative savings in a merged district would be \$202,694. Any decision about reducing administrative and supervisory positions would be made by the newly merged board of education.

7. Support Staff Contract Comparison. There are more similarities than differences in the contracts for support staff in the two districts. One of the differences is in the salaries paid. As a result, a potential leveling up amount was calculated for the similarly titled positions of bus driver, custodian, and cleaner. If the two districts were to merge and the support staff salaries of these titles were “leveled up,” the additional cost of salaries and benefits would be \$76,645.

8. Summary of staff costs in a merger. The analysis of staffing costs included a cost for leveling up teacher, teacher assistants and support staff salaries for a total increase of \$405,603. The reduction of 4.6 administrative staff would save \$202,694 and the elimination of duplicate coaching positions would save \$24,628. This means that the net impact of the staffing changes in a merged district would cost \$178,281.

9. Summary of presentation. The following “takeaways” and recommendations were shared with the committee:

- Teacher contracts are similar but salaries for all types of positions are higher in Ticonderoga;
- Administrative/supervisory positions could be consolidated in a merger;
- Support staff contracts are similar but most salaries are higher in Ticonderoga;
- The financial impact on staffing in a merged district could cost approximately \$178,281.

10. Committee Discussion. A number of questions were asked regarding the impact of the existing employment contracts on contracts for a newly merged district. Alan explained that all of the provisions of the two contracts would stay in place until a new contract was negotiated. When a new contract is negotiated, that contract would govern salary, benefits, and other working conditions. Other questions were raised regarding the tenure and seniority status of teachers from the two districts. It was explained that when a merger occurs, the teachers from both districts bring their years of service, tenure status, credits, and degrees to the new district. One listing of teachers is developed with everyone listed according to their seniority and tenure area.

Questions from the audience focused on where the money will come from to pay for the leveling up of salaries and how tax rates would be determined. The July meeting will focus on all of the financial data including the impact of the state incentive aid, potential tax rates, and mechanisms for dealing with merger transition costs.

Other questions dealt with how programs for students with disabilities would be determined and whether or not the programs would be equivalent in the new district. One Committee on Special Education would be formed and decisions in accordance with the students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) would be made.

11. Next meeting: The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 23 at Ticonderoga Elementary School. Since all of the buildings in both districts have been toured, there will be no more tours before the upcoming business meetings. The business 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 June 19. 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 – 7.23.13 in Ticonderoga!

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