

DRAFT

**Dresden Finance Committee
Tracy Hall**

**Monday April 16, 2007
Norwich, VT**

Present: Cheryl Lindberg, Thomas Blinkhorn, Henry Scheier, Irv Thomae, Al Converse, Paul Tierney, Robert Bruce and John Hochreiter. Public attending: John Kitzmiller.

The chairperson (Cheryl Lindberg) called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM and began with an introduction of the newest member Robert Bruce. Mr. Bruce is the Hanover School Board representative to the Hanover Finance Committee and therefore a member of the DFC.

There was some initial discussion that this meeting may not have been adequately warned in the Dresden community but it was noted that we are scheduled to meet regularly on each third Monday of the month and alternate between Norwich and Hanover.

Henry asked that we put together a calendar for the year that might propose topics for particular times of the year. The chair will take on that project.

There was a motion made by Tom and seconded by Henry to approve the minutes of the March 19 meeting. There was one spelling change on the second page paragraph 2 the last sentence beginning Cheryl committed; the word here should be her. The motion was reaffirmed with the change. All those present at the meeting approved the motion with Paul abstaining as he had not been sworn in at the time of the meeting.

Discussion followed regarding the minutes of the January 25 meeting. Prior to the meeting there had been an e-mail circulated delineating talking points that the secretary wanted covered if in the event he was involved in taking notes he could not add to the discussion. At the January 25 meeting the DFC discussed the advisability of members of the committee discussing those items electronically without the public having full access to the discussion. It was determined that there should be no discussion of a broad nature undertaken electronically and that no decision should be made without full public disclosure and discussion. John will check the minutes of January 25 and make sure that there were no attachments or references other than those shared at the public meeting. Any ideas for discussion should in the future be forwarded to the chair for inclusion in the public meeting.

There was a motion made by Tom and seconded by Henry to approve the minutes of the January 25 meeting. The motion was carried unanimously by those present at the January meeting.

The chair then moved the discussion to the Quality of Education Committee. Tom briefed us on the sub committee on governance and their focus on procedures and authority. There will be a full meeting to review all sub committees on May 3 at 3:30 PM and it is presumed that the meeting will take place in the Richmond School. There are also links to the working papers of the committees on the SAU 70 web site. Paul reported on his work with the qualitative subcommittee where he suggests that the group has had difficulty in achieving focus on definition and planning. Bob noted that he was not as pessimistic about the results of that committee because he believed that they are in fact making headway and that the discussion among participants with differing perspectives was positive and worthwhile. Paul told the DFC that access to any meaningful data was what is driving his sense of lack of progress. There followed a general discussion about what relevant data was and its availability. The issue seems to be that comparative data among schools or districts has been ignored in favor of comparisons to individual school or district goals. Al noted a frustration echoed in the community by the secrecy. It was suggested that secrecy was the only way to have honest and meaningful discussion in the meetings due to some distrust among the parties.

Bob reported on the work of the two Teacher Compensation study groups. He noted that both group's actions and activity are bounded by rules of collective bargaining and confidential negotiations and not available to the public. He could say that the groups are meeting and are planning for a public meeting at some time in the future. Their plan is to first deal with compensation and then evaluation. Bob referenced three e-mail attachments that he had provided the DFC prior to the meeting. (a) Alternative Teacher Compensation, (b) Professional Development Plan titled Grand Plan, (c) Teacher Pay. The documents will be attached to the final minutes.

Cheryl then began a discussion on the Dresden Investment Policy. There was a discussion as to why the policy was being looked at and the need to clarify roles among staff, the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and the elected Treasurer of the District. The DSB (Dresden School Board) is ultimately responsible for the operation of the District and therefore wants to establish good workable guidelines and procedures for its financial operation.

Tom noted that it is a very good and timely policy and would like to produce even more clarity in the document.

There were additional questions about the document:

- 1 There is a statement in the document that it is consistent with NH law. It was wondered why there is no reference to VT law.

- 2 There was a discussion that definitions should accompany the policy as to Treasurer, District Treasurer, add a reference to the Assistant Superintendent of Finance, reference to specifics of Funds.

There was a question from page 1 relative to Funds and its direction to the Audit document, shouldn't the policy work on its own and not point the reader to another document?

Again on page one the phrase creating and defining might it be better to eliminate the word creating.

As the discussion progressed toward the more specific it was noted that Tom had a number of other questions or suggestions and that a word by word analysis of the document would be counter productive to our meeting. The document is in fact the responsibility of the DSB and our ideas and thoughts should be channeled to them for their consideration.

Tom noted and others agreed that the issue of transparency and responsibility are of utmost importance to the District.

Henry expressed concern that one elected body may try to control or affect the actions of another elected official or body. He noted that it is not unusual for organizations to have conflicts in terms of their treasurer. The position by its nature is one of oversight and fiscal transparency.

There was a motion made by Paul and seconded by Irv to table discussion of the policy and to continue sharing of ideas via e-mail so that we could have an informed discussion at our next meeting. The motion was voted favorably 4 votes to 3 with Bob abstaining. The item was tabled until next month.

The chair brought the discussion to the budget process. Bob reported that there is a budget calendar and that the DSB would like to step up the process to begin in the spring before goal setting takes place. He additionally reported that the DSB would like to meet with administrators to produce a contingency process that addressed innovation and what he called zero based planning.

Henry asked that we as the DFC interface as directly and as early as possible with the DSB Budget Committee.

There was a discussion of the openings that exist for an elected auditor of the district. Bob was asked about how the DSB was going to fill that vacancy. It was suggested that it be advertised that such a vacancy exists.

Paul asked that we focus on what it is for each of us that drives or decision process in the budget deliberations. He would like us to think about what factors we consider in validating our decisions about the budget.

A motion was made by Paul and seconded by Irv to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor at 6:15 PM.

The next meeting will be May 21 at 4:00 PM in Hanover.