

Superintendent Report - March, 2022

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Annual School Budget Communication and Meetings

Public hearings were held in person during the month of February. Participation was predictably low. The annual school meetings are underway this month. Annual reports have been distributed. Here is our list of annual school budget meetings.

- March 1: Colebrook School District: 7:00 pm Gymnasium
- March 2: Pittsburg School District: 6:00 pm Gymnasium
- March 7: Stewartstown School District: 6:00 pm Multipurpose Room
- March 8: Clarksville School District 6:00 pm - Town Hall
- March 8: Columbia School District 7:15 pm - Town Hall

North Point CTE Center Application Update

Commissioner Frank Edelblut has requested a meeting to review the plans for the CTE Center prior to approval. This meeting will be held on March 9 at 5:30 pm at the Colebrook Cafeteria. The proposal calls for implementation of the North Point Career and Technical Education Center and up to seven programs and the college credits that are available. Industry credentials are available as well.

- 1) Health Sciences - 24 College Credits
- 2) Criminal Justice - 20 College Credits
- 3) Education - 17 College Credits
- 4) Human Services - 16 College Credits
- 5) Hospitality and Culinary - 19 College Credits
- 6) Automotive - 16 College Credits
- 7) Computer Technology - 22 College Credits

Integrated CTE programs with academic curriculum and workplace partnerships provide learning that is more inclusive, rigorous, relevant, and effective in preparing students for a career and /or college. These new programs will serve students throughout the SAU 7 region and beyond.

Colebrook Building Expansion Committee

The Colebrook Expansion Committee meets monthly to guide the work of the school expansion work. Recently, the committee met on February 23 and provided an update concerning the visioning work completed and discussed plans for the building assessment work by the engineers and architects. This meeting was well attended and included two Canaan Board members.

Remember - all board members from SAU 7 schools are invited to join these committee meetings. All input is welcome in this inclusive process. The next meeting will be held on March 23 at 5:30 pm at the Colebrook School Library. An agenda will be forthcoming.

March School Board Meetings

Following the town elections, all school boards will conduct reorganization procedures. This process includes the election of board members to various roles such as chair and vice chair. In addition, members will be able to volunteer for one or more committees. Following school board reorganization, the SAU 7 Board will meet on April 7 at 6:00 pm at Pittsburg School and undergo a similar reorganization process.

School Board Member Webinars

The NHSBA provides several webinars for new and returning board members. Topics include Effective meetings, open meeting law and new board member orientation. If you are interested in these development opportunities, please contact the NHSBA website directly:

<https://nhsba.org/training-events/webinars/>

COVID Update

We have been monitoring cases of COVID 19 in our schools and community and I am pleased to report that the number of cases has decreased. At the same time, we have removed mask mandates from schools and school buses based on updated CDC and NH DHHS guidance. As you know, there are many who are immunocompromised or who have family members who are at risk and who may choose to wear masks. Masks are still considered a strong mitigation strategy. However, based on the guidance referenced above, masks are now optional in our schools.

We have a limited supply of rapid tests available from the state of New Hampshire and are acquiring more. These are made available to parents and staff if their student or the staff member has symptoms.

Legislative Update

We continue to monitor legislative happenings at the federal and state level which are related to education. I am a member of the NHSAA legislative committee which meets periodically via zoom. This group of superintendents monitors bills pending in Concord and reaches out to legislators when there are issues of concern to address.

The NHSBA also provides regular and timely updates for board members. Be sure to check your email for this important information, Here are highlights from their most recent report in March.

Given the number of bills that have been acted upon in the House Education committee over the past few weeks, it is anticipated that there will be a substantial amount of education related bills heard on the House floor, on March 15-17, and on the 31st.

HB 1223: Relative to Meeting Attendance Requirements for Elected Members of the Budget Committee and School Board.

This bill requires in-person attendance by an elected member of a budget committee or a school board except under extenuating circumstances, and provides for an immediate vacancy if an elected member fails to attend 2 or more meetings or 25 percent of such meetings annually, regardless of the reasons for not attending.

HB 1393: Relative to the Adoption of School District Budget Caps.

This bill, presented as “an enabling bill”, would allow a district or community to enact a budget cap that adjusts the maximum bottom line budget, using a formula based on a specific dollar amount, times the average daily membership/enrollment of students in the district, combined with a provision for determining the annual inflation index. There is also a provision within this bill, to override the budget cap, using a $\frac{3}{5}$ majority or a super majority vote of the legislative body.

HB 1033: Prohibiting Recipients of State or Local Grants or Appropriations from Using Such Funds for Lobbying

This bill significantly impacts the ability of local, school, and county officials to speak and engage in the legislative process, and unintentionally seems to put an additional burden on local officials. The amendment inserts a prohibition on the use of funds for lobbying into RSA chapter 195 (for schools). The amended language states that “no state grant or appropriation” or “funds collected from property taxes” can be used for lobbying by local governments. While the original version of the bill prohibited the “recipient” of funds from using those funds for lobbying, this

amended version now prohibits the municipality from using funds for lobbying. HB 1033 would prohibit a municipality from using *municipal* funds to lobby the state. Just as the state makes decisions about the state budget through the legislature, municipalities, through their legislative bodies, should be able to make their own decisions about how to spend funds at the local level. Most political subdivisions have decided that it is more cost effective to contribute to organizations that speak on their behalf, rather than pay to send employees or elected officials to the legislature every week.

HB 1431: Establishing the Parental Bill of Rights.

Primarily, NHSBA believes the bill is unnecessary, in that it seeks to put into place, what is already in law. For example, parents have the right to enroll their child in a public school, private school, home education program or other educational options and New Hampshire law is already replete with these options. RSA 193:1 lists a number of educational options for parents. Further, parents already have the right to review all school records pertaining to their child. The Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA; 20 U.S.C. 1232g) is the federal law that governs this. FERPA is clear that parents have a right to review school records of their child. FERPA also covers when a student may be video recorded and specifically requires parents to either opt-in or opt-out of allowing a school to video record students/children. Provisions of RSA 186:11 already allow parents to opt-out of health or sex education. Parents have access to standardized test results. Parents have the right under RSA 91-A and RSA 186:11 to review course material. Additionally, NHSBA has numerous sample policies that speak to parental engagement and numerous provisions within the bill. To NHSBA's knowledge, most school boards have policies in place, publicly posted on the district's website, that already implement what this bill seeks to accomplish. NHSBA would encourage parents to reach out to their local school boards or local superintendent to inquire about policies that speak to the provisions within this bill.

HB 1195: Relative to Public Comment Periods at Public Meetings.

This bill, as amended, provides that there must be a public comment period at the beginning of each public meeting of a school board or school administrative unit (SAU) board. The public comment period would be held before any substantive business is conducted. Individual comments could be limited to three minutes and the comment period need be no longer than one hour. The period would need to be no longer than necessary to hear all those who wish to speak. This would not limit a board from receiving public comments during other times during a meeting. The original bill required all public bodies to have a fixed public comment period. The amendment provides only for school boards and SAU boards as that is where the testimony heard by the committee indicated that a problem exists.

Education Related Bills Being Brought to the House Floor on March 10th:

HB 1053: Relative to The Hourly Rate Paid to An Employee For Hours Worked But Not Previously Scheduled.

NHSBA Position: Tracking/No Position

Committee Recommendation: Ought to Pass

HB 1147: Relative to Governmental Records Available Upon Request.

NHSBA Position: Oppose

Committee Recommendation: Inexpedient to Legislate

HB 1195: Relative to Public Comment Periods at Public Meetings.

NHSBA Position: Oppose

Committee Recommendation: Ought to Pass As Amended

HB 1322: Modifying the Governmental Records Exempted From RSA 91-A.

NHSBA Position: Tracking/No Position

Committee Recommendation: Inexpedient to Legislate

HB 1175: Relative to Recording Interactions with Public Officials.

NHSBA Position: Tracking/No Position

Committee Recommendation: Majority- Inexpedient to Legislate, Minority- Ought to Pass.

If you have any questions or need additional information concerning the legislative information, please contact me.

Meeting Reminders

***SAU Board Meeting - Thursday, April 7
at 6:00 pm at Pittsburg School***

Think Spring!

Respectfully submitted,
Debra Taylor, Ph.D.
Superintendent

