

**WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD PUBLIC HEARING
WINCHESTER SCHOOL LIBRARY
FEBRUARY 2, 2012**

Board Members Present: J. Gile, T. Croteau, K. Whippie, C. Duquette, W. Hildreth
Administration Present: K. Dassau, P. Bigelow, C. Paulin, J. Lewis

C. Duquette opened the meeting at 6:30 pm under petitioned Warrant Article Nine RSA194 and read Article Nine to the group.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Rick Horton spoke on behalf of the Warrant Article. He advised the Article was added to explore the cost to bring the kids back from Keene. Advised they have asked the Board many times what options there are. He asked the Board if they have done anything on this.

C. Duquette advised they have asked Keene to join the AREA, which would also reduce tuition costs. Keene advised they weren't ready, at this time, to have Winchester join.

R. Horton – Keene tuition is \$3.2 million. He questioned how much they will receive in State aid.

K. Dassau advised he didn't have information on that.

R. Horton – Keene is constantly charging us too much money. Could we build a school here that other schools would want to send their students to? He asked what the options are.

Christine Wallace asked what are the benefits for pulling students from Keene?

C. Duquette advised it is not the Board's Warrant Article it is a petitioned Article. Explained she was part of the committee on closing the school and sending the kids to Keene. Feels they couldn't get the same opportunities in a small school.

K. Whippie advised Winchester is a very small part of Keene High School. They expect students to take certain classes, but then it is difficult to get them in those classes.

Jim Wallace advised he works in the Keene School District; feels we can't offer near the level of activities Keene can. Doesn't want taxes to go up, but need to do what is best for the kids. Hopes people won't just look at the cost, but what would prepare students best, for good jobs. Feels sending them to Keene gives kids the best opportunity. There are 60 after school activities offered, feels it is a good situation. Should be aggressive about the AREA; he encouraged K. Dassau and C. Duquette to be active in pursuing it. He wondered how many kids participate in extracurricular activities.

C. Duquette advised when the Board received the update from Keene almost everyone participated in sports or some type of extracurricular activity.

K. Whippie advised AREA towns all have to vote to agree to let us in; they would pay more tuition so we would pay less; feels it is not likely to happen.

R. Horton advised this is not just about the financial aspect; understands about extracurricular activities. They assure us that they are all Keene High School kids, but feels it is a social problem. Kids feel misplaced. He would rather have a smaller school, smaller graduating class. He thinks there could be other opportunities here. Feels it is the responsible thing to find out if it is something Winchester can do.

Valerie Cole feels before the school spends time and money, they should survey students and parents to see how they feel. She spends a lot of time at Keene High School and has yet to find someone unhappy.

Joan Franklin advised her son went to Keene under the Choice Grant. She lived through the time when the budget was cut to almost nothing; the community wouldn't support the school, like the Budget Committee won't now. Can't have it both ways; people either support the school K-12 or don't. This is how we got to Keene; the community was not supporting the school.

C. Duquette reminded everyone that they can speak and vote on this Article at the Deliberative Session. The issue has come up in different versions in the past and was not supported.

Bonnie McAlpine feels the same way as Joan Franklin. They didn't have the support; thinks they've burnt that bridge.

Andrew Wallace advised he is a former student; agrees there were struggles the first half of the first year, but all students were Keene High students. He feels there is no comparison to what was offered here. He is frustrated by the cost, but need to look at what is offered. Feels the town is not capable of offering the same. Feels the situation may not be perfect, but it is the best opportunity for students.

J. Gile is also a graduate of Thayer; never would have thought she would want kids to go to Keene. She doesn't like the \$25,000 for Special Education, but feels Keene has a lot to offer.

W. Hildreth advised she was dead set against going to Keene at the time of the proposal of closing Thayer. She would not vote for removing students from Keene this time; VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

T. Croteau feels Keene offers a lot, but due to increasing costs to Keene, feels they should look at the cost to bring them back.

Leonard LeBlanc feels they need to take a big step now. Ten years from now we won't be able to send the kids anywhere. The community will grow; need to find money to build now.

Rick Horton understands the feeling of lack of support. He wanted people to know that six out of eleven Budget Committee members voted for the budget before you. He feels they are short changing what we have for teachers, etc. by not looking into different options.

Mr. Wallace feels extracurricular activities are relatively easy to accommodate; beyond those, are courses Keene can offer. He doesn't think we lose community because we send the kids to Keene.

C. Duquette recessed the meeting at 7:10 pm; until after the March vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Higgins
School Board Secretary