



2Districts8Towns

MINUTES: 2D8T STEERING COMMITTEE

DATE: February 3, 2024

LOCATION: Mohawk Trail Regional School

ATTENDING:

Paula Consolo, Buckland

Julie Talbot, Charlemont

Jenny Van Wyk, Colrain

Ellen Purinton, Hawley

Elizabeth Finn, Heath

Judy Coles, Plainfield

Paul Hollings, Shelburne

Robin Pease, MTRSD Facilities Manager

Kristen Tilon-Baker, Executive Director, Mary Lyon Foundation

Sheryl Stanton, Superintendent MTRSD/HRSD

Martha Thurber, Chair, MTRSD School Committee

Elizabeth Van Iderstine, Chair, HRSD School Committee

Jake Eberstein, Project Manager, BERK12

Brendan Sheran, BERK 12

Judy Rush, BERK 12

Senator Paul Mark (joined the meeting at 1:15 pm)

Superintendent Stanton called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. Participants introduced themselves and spoke about why they volunteered to join the Committee and what they hope will be accomplished at this meeting.

Superintendent Stanton [presented information](#) to illustrate the causes and urgency of the Districts' current financial crisis and the history of MTRSD sustainability efforts.

BERK 12 Project Manager Jake Eberstein then [presented additional information](#) about the roots of the issues faced, not only at Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont, but also in rural and declining enrollment districts across the state. He also presented background data on the financial status of District towns. He then turned to providing background information on BERK 12 and its key professionals. The work plan for the project, the focus on collaboration with towns and community input, and the timing of the work and work product were also presented and discussed.

Senator Paul Mark discussed current legislative efforts to address inadequate funding of rural schools. He noted the difficulty and perils of "re-opening" the funding formula and encouraged the group to focus instead on advocating for supplemental rural funding to address the

inadequacies of that current formula. This led to a discussion of current “unfunded mandates” – policies and programs the state requires but does not provide funding to implement.

Finally, the group discussed the role of the 2D8T Steering Committee, which includes being “thought partners” as data is presented and information is considered; reviewing various reports and other work product from BERK 12 and providing feedback; reviewing/evaluating potential options developed to improve sustainability; and serving as a two-way communication channel between the sustainability effort and the communities/constituencies represented by Steering Committee members. The group also discussed potential subcommittees that will be formed around interest areas (e.g., educational quality, finances, district operations) and comprised of interested town officials and community members, chaired by a Steering Committee member(s).

The group then voted to elect Elizabeth Van Iderstine and Martha Thurber as Steering Committee Co-Chairs.

Jenny Van Wyk volunteered to take minutes at future meetings.

Next meetings:

Thursday, February 15 at 5:30 pm (Superintendent’s Conference Room at Mohawk Trail Regional School and remotely via GoogleMeet)

Thursday, March 21 at 5:30 pm (Superintendent’s Conference Room at Mohawk Trail Regional School and remotely via GoogleMeet)

Submitted By:
Martha Thurber

Approved 2.16.24