

To: Members of the MSAD 51 Community

From: Peter K. Bingham, MSAD 51 Board Vice Chair

Date: July 10, 2007

I hope everyone is enjoying the summer. Normally, this is a time of the year when the Board is organizing for the coming year and doing some long range planning. This summer, however, we are being confronted by two major issues, the high school renovation and consolidation. As a result we will be meeting several times over the summer.

Our first meeting was held on July 9. First, we welcomed our two new members Jim Bailinson from Cumberland and Virginia Dwyer from North Yarmouth. Bob Hasson gave us an update on the high school project that began the day after the close of school. We are working on the first phase which includes renovations to the roof and construction of the two story addition between Greely Institute and the high school. We did encounter some problems with the roof decking, but these have been resolved and renovation is proceeding. Steel work on the new addition will begin shortly. Bob also reports that the bids on phase one of the project have been received and are well within projections. The Board has appointed Bob Vail as the board liaison with the administration and the construction manager for the project. Bob is beginning his ninth year on the board, has previous experience on the Cumberland Planning Board and is a respected local contractor. John Aromando, a former board chair and chair of the high school facilities planning committee has agreed to assist us through the approval process of phase two.

The second issue involves the consolidation legislation that was passed this last June. It's arguably the most significant educational legislation in 50 years. This is very complicated stuff on a very fast track. As reported in the local press we have been in contact with our neighboring communities, and have been involved with studies to help determine the economic consequences of such a merger. As has been reported significant discussions have been held with Falmouth and additional ones with Yarmouth. According to the legislation, we must make a report to the Department of Education by August 31 on our plans to identify a potential merger partner or partners. The Board has appointed members Dave Perkins and Susan Campbell who along with our administrative team will continue to hold discussions with representatives of the neighboring municipalities. Once a partner or partners have been identified, a reorganization committee will be formed to begin to work out the many technical details. This committee will consist of school board members, educational personnel, municipal representatives and members from the community at large. The work will involve a multitude of public meetings and hearings along the way. If an agreement is reached, most likely the plan will be presented to the voters next June – probably at the municipal election.

This is going to take a great deal of effort on everyone's part. If done correctly, it presents significant educational and fiscal opportunities over the long run, especially with enrollments projected to decrease. In the short run there will be the difficulties of integration and start up. In Cumberland and North Yarmouth we are fortunate in having over 40 years of operating under a school district format. Like any marriage that lasts that long, we've had ups and downs, but working together, we've been able to build one of the highest performing school systems in the state at a per pupil cost below that of many of our peers. The district format will be a new experience for our neighbors.

As further meetings are held over the next few weeks, I'll keep you informed as best I can of what's going on.

Peter K. Bingham  
Vice Chairman, MSAD 51 Board of Directors.