

## **Pownal Public Meeting**

March 12, 2008

There were roughly 32 public members in attendance at the meeting & roughly 14 members of the RPC.

### ***Questions & Comments:***

- Was the share proportional for communities in the transition budget?
- What I am hearing is 20% of the debt is phased in completely over 5 years. Does this mean the debt will be split proportionally after the debt is completely phased-in. You are bringing in part of Freeport's debt and Freeport will not be sharing the debt. Pownal will be taking on more than their share as they come in with no debt.
- How many of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Pownal over the next few years and how much to cost us what is our cost per student? How much does it cost for each student to educate?
- How do students from Pownal get benefit out of Freeport Middle School? It will be fundamentally unfair that the debt from schools Pownal students do not attend. Pownal School is already paid for and Freeport is not; who pays us back? The cost sharing does not seem fair. The new Durham Elementary is being built with additional money and the Pownal community has no say in it. Our kids will not be there so why would be pick up this debt? We are bringing assets that are free. It is not our problem that they have debt and managed things differently. We didn't have anything to do for that why we would pay for it?
- A statement of support of the plan. Combining communities give more opportunities and offers for students. This can outweigh the negatives. We need to look at consolidation on a positive note for unity.
- Any slides of what the debt is?
- A statement that there is no doubt that the RSU is a way to help the education of community. The concern is the finances. We don't hear that Pownal will be rewarded for coming in with no debt. It would be more agreeable to have debt shared from 2009 on. Who is saving money? I don't think towns are saving money.
- We are already paying tuition at Freeport High School. We are not paying rent. \$50,000 is about what we pay in tuition. Are we paying more than that after consolidation?
- As the population changes will the costs change?

- We need to buy into this because we don't have a high school. The cost sharing formula is not to our advantage. What is the per pupil expenditure on debt. How come if we are going in with no debt we will have the largest debt in all three towns?
- If this goes forth what will our tax rate per \$1000?
- What are the net changes in debt service payments and the net changes in each community? It is the debt being allocated across the three towns?
- If we were to crunch the numbers Freeport will go down, Pownal will be doubled. Durham would stay the same.
- Is the way to look at it that we are going to pay \$425,000 for Pownal to buy into the RSU?
- You have no option not to join. What happens if the town stands alone? What the state is saying is "you do it or else" as long as we have the governor we have.
- If we vote this down do we have other options with other districts? What will we do as an alternative?
- What about a Principal for Pownal? How much would that cost?
- Why are we not seeing slides on Pownal? How much will it cost for Pownal residents on their taxes?
- Where we do level out? What are the communities going to gain? What is the number for taxes? Give us a rough number; you are dancing around the question.
- This is the state law right not until the Governor's term is up and this can be voted out. You are rushing into this before a new governor gets in.
- You are extremely conscientious and the state is asking an impossible task with the deadlines.
- The Governor's whole rationale is that it will save the state money. It will cost the towns more money and the only way we will save is we do this so we will not get penalties. You need to separate the state savings and local district savings.
- Strictly speaking in financial terms it was stated that the Governor is perpetuating a scam on local districts. The state can cut education whenever he wants to. It was said that consolidation was to cut bloated

administrations and there would be no pain to communities. After investigating that it looks as if this is not true. We are now going to be hurt financially because of that.

- It looks as if there will be \$100,000 cut from the central office budget. Going down the road where would potential savings come from?
- Durham will still have school choice until 2013? Do we know how many students will be going to Freeport?
- The logical extension of the advantages is that a broader consolidation would be more advantaged. We are talking about a balance between a larger or smaller district. Is there some logical threshold for expansion?
- What is the feasibility of us dissolving our schools? Who would make that decision? Is the RSU able to make the decision to close schools?
- Could the town decide to keep a school open if the RSU decides to close it but pay the difference?
- Would the decisions regarding keeping programs such as Pre-K program be made by the RSU board?
- With a new board of directors Freeport will always have a majority vote no matter what. What about a 13 member board? We do not have the responsibility at this point within the schools combining and still have to pay the share. Would like to have the board of directors researched.
- A Major concern is about influence. We still lose and we have no power. Can the RSU decide to close Pre-K? Can people in Pownal do anything about that? This school is more than just a school; this is town center; If we have had our own school board then we have a say.
- You need to pick your partner and work with them; we have had a good relationship with Freeport long before now. You have to trust your neighbor. There is no plot to close our school.
- Freeport and pownal work well together. You have great facility and it is a resource. Pownal and Freeport have historical connections. This should be considered a new school district and we should no longer be thinking of just each community.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

## **Freeport Public Meeting**

March 13, 2008

There were roughly 28 members of the public & 13 RPC members in attendance

### ***Questions & Comments:***

- What is a “donut hole” community?
- Has there been discussion about how the schools will transition into RSU?
- Where are the numbers of how many teachers that may be added and costs?
- The tuition that is paid for Durham students comes from the taxpayers?
- Why are you paying money to tuition Durham students?
- Is Freeport paying 75% of the tuition for these students?
- You are getting a pretty good deal for a high school.
- This is a whole lot of information to ask question on with just seeing presentation.
- How much time does the RPC have until the plan needs to be in?
- There is support of consolidation principle. Public member had spoken to Chair of Falmouth/ SAD 51 and they are paying for their own students and in 5 years will start paying per pupil. Our plan should also do the same. It is not fair for Freeport to pick up. It was stated that Freeport has a lower median income than Durham and Pownal. The RPC has been encouraged to submit an alternative plan so communities would not face a penalty. The spreadsheet that shows the penalty needs to be set aside. In regards to debt; Freeport is giving \$44 million of assets over to RSU and is not having their neighbors pay their debt. This is not a fair plan. Some debt will never benefit all communities. If others are buying into the assets Freeport already pays for it should cost other communities more money.
- Explain the methodologies of cost sharing?
- Why did we not go per pupil?
- How is Falmouth/SAD 51 handling it? Have we talked to them?

- We asked the RPC to submit a Freeport/Pownal option. You can have 2 options. It was asked that Freeport submit that second plan approved by the state. We were told we will not be penalized. We have been asking to submit 2 plans since September.
- Concerned about relationships between the three towns. Public member agreed with other members who spoke that this is unfair deal for Freeport and Freeport is being asked to pay more than their fair share. Should follow what Falmouth has done. For a plan to be approved it has to be on per pupil basis. Townspeople would be foolish to vote for this as it stands now.
- The only equitable way this will work is if each town pays its own way. Bulk should be paid per pupil. Disagrees with my kids/your kids reasoning. Each community will be paying in different ratios. Public member stated they will not support this configuration plan and will actively work not to pass this. It was stated this public member had reviewed some of the numbers and projected his own numbers with cost per pupil and expenditures. He had brought copies of his own spreadsheet and would be happy to share them and discuss with Finance Subcommittee.
- Why does Freeport take Pownal students at the less cost ratio? It was stated that the key assumptions and drivers sheet if done properly will show a loss.
- There was discussion about how many students who will be influxing in to Freeport High School. It was asked why do people think we have so many students in private schools.
- Why we do all the sudden see a savings when at the last meeting there was a 23,000 increase? It was believed that the Curriculum Director position was taken out to show a savings. It was stated that fundamentally if we went per pupil this person would be supportive of the consolidation.
- The Plan is misleading. The education plan was wonderful and agreed with it but the plan does not fund it.
- Quality of education is a great idea. Public member was saddened by the fact that NCLB is put aside and consolidation does not support it. There are fairness flaws within the Plan. Costs should be per student basis and to be fair this is the only way to do this. State is subsidizing Pownal and Durham and not Freeport. Durham has a new school and road repairs funded by the state. RSU should receive the full cost of education and then be distributed if a student chooses to attend a different RSU. If there is school choice and parents choose to send them somewhere else they should still pay the full price of the student's education within the RSU.

Valuations will affect mil rate. This is a lot of work and it is appreciated. There were still many questions on capital and there are more questions than answers given.

- Public member stated they thought the RPC should look at per pupil model. Special rights have been reserved for choice in the other communities and Freeport does not choice. Durham kids that come here and should have to come in at 9<sup>th</sup> grade and it would not be fair to pull them out in the middle if they started attending another high school. Extending the school choice option was just to ease the pain so the other communities could feel better. Why did you preserve school choice for so long? Should be shorter. Why is a town with a lower median paying more? Freeport is unduely burdened and already paying their fair share. Freeport zones differently and the two other communities have cheaper land. A young family would have difficulty moving in to a high value town. Freeport should not be punished just because there may be a decrease in attendance at their schools. Public would like to see some of the sheets passed out at the RPC meetings. It was believed the RPC pulled out positions to make costs look better and made things very confusing. They would support consolidation if per pupil costs were used and school choice was shortened for other communities.
- In regards to the Plan from Falmouth/SAD 51. There is no way to compare apples to apples. Those communities have been combined and have two high schools. This area is different. In regards to assets it was understood that if a school was closed the asset went back to the community. If at some point in time Freeport high school was closed the land and building would go back to the community. The \$44 discussed was not a lost piece of asset for Freeport. If the school was closed then Freeport would then have the ability to sell the land. The plan now allows for get and give. It would not be you or us; it would be the RSU. This will take time. It will not happen overnight.
- What happens after 3 years? We may wish we didn't do this. Uncertainty is troubling. Will debt sharing would continue to be paid as the model shows? The assets would be hopefully be used until they are paid off. Durham has to pay for a roof that they are not even going to use again.
- What you are saying is live with this and if it's not working we will change it? If the model now is Freeport is paying more then walk us through another scenario where Freeport would not pay the majority too. Why are we giving power to the minority? When you tell people you are going to save within 5 years the High School will be at capacity. The RPC needs to include a capital improvement plan for expansion within the high school. If you tell Freeport voter that you save money now and then don't they will shut down because they were not told the truth.

- RPC was thanked for all their hard work. Public member stated they were totally confused by the Plan. It was asked if Freeport was going to pay 89% costs for total education and that it was lower for the two other communities. When we are talking about state aid how does that effect percentages? It was stated the RPC needed to speak up at meetings. It was asked that the RPC explain the percentages and how it affects towns if state aid is reduced. If state reduced aid in other towns will Freeport then pay more?
- How much of the school's budget will come from the state and do we have a modeling from 3-5 years from now? Towns may not want to be involved because Freeport gets less state aid. If we don't even have a formula it may be a disadvantage for us to consolidate. So many pieces that are missing. So little concrete facts.
- The public member stated they appreciated the RPC's hard work. IF this were a business transaction there would be more information than this with projections and hard numbers. To make a decision this big there is little information. Voting for something without this information doesn't work. Just don't want to make a bad decision. In regards to consolidation changing schools for students isn't the end of the world.
- Haven't seen or heard any numbers that make sense. Wanted to know where the RPC was pulling numbers out of. Member didn't understand enough of the information.
- We have been saying in Freeport the state will not be able to inflict any more disruption and that's why Freeport is called a minimum receiver. How much state aid will we be relying on? It was understood the RPC asked the Superintendents to build a projected budget and the public member felt this would be a great exercise. They stated they looked forward to the RPCs continued work
- It was made clear that there is a penalty and there are milestones to achieve. It was suggested that maybe the RPC should submit a plan but not recommend it to the people and maybe the communities should take the risk of penalties. It was believed that in 3 years of the RSU, Freeport would pay the same costs anyway. This member felt that using the terms of selling the plan to the public and how to market the plan were inappropriate phrases to use.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35pm

## *Durham Public Meeting*

March 18, 2008

There were roughly 35 public members & 12 members of RPC in attendance

### *Questions & Comments:*

- It was stated the proposition is not good for Durham and that many people within the community do not think it is a good idea. The committee is trying to railroad our town into having our students attend in one place. People are satisfied with what they have now. There has been a lot of guess work with the figures. There have not been figures to what the exact costs are years from now. This same committee tried to have students attend Lisbon Schools and this was turned down by Durham voters. You may be spinning your wheels because Durham voters may not pass this. It was believed that the people in Pownal were unhappy about taking on Freeport's debt. The Legislature does not like the law and this law takes away the management of our own schools
- Representative Snow-Mello wanted to hear the public's concerns. The RPC has done a fantastic job. School consolidation is in flux. The Legislature has been working on the 1932 bill up at the state. There are other communities having issues and they may become donut holes. The Legislature is concerned about communities receiving penalties. Some communities are having difficulties consolidating. The Commissioner has let some communities split and they still will pay penalties. The LD1932 will take away the referendum process and budget validation process from the voters which is concerning to the Legislature. voted the bill down as it is stated now because it took away voter rights. The Senate has disagreed with the House and there have been new amendments added. The bill should have been voted on today and it was tabled. There are several amendments dealing with consolidation. Overall consolidation was a good idea but the details are not helping for communities. The House and Senate want to do what is best for the communities and want the voters to be treated fairly. The public and committee were thanked for their hard work and dedication.
- If this does not pass will our children who choose to attend Freeport still be able to attend there?  
What is the "gravy" that the towns raise mean?  
When we moved to Durham our students were able to attend Freeport and that was taken away. Why did Freeport close their doors on us then?
- Question for Representative Snow-Mello. People in Augusta don't want us to spend more money. How is this going to save money for Durham? Pownal will spend more than Durham will in this consolidation. This will not save us money. Small communities are not going to save money.

They will only be saving money in Augusta and dnot helping the communities. This consolidation will hurt every community but Freeport. How are we supposed to vote on this if the state doesn't even know where we are heading? This will not work for Durham. It seems people have spent a lot of wasted time.

- It was stated that Freeport will be building a new High School...how long in the near future would that be?
- A Pownal resident stated that based on presentation the consolidation does nothing for Pownal. Economically there is nothing except there may be some advantage with better programs in schools. Pownal does not really have a vote within the board. Even if Durham and Pownal board members voted together they can not outweigh Freeport's vote. Pownal will have no savings and no voting power. If the penalty is only \$54,000 a year that is a hell of a deal. With the costs Pownal is paying every year they could pay for their own improvements. The penalty seems harmless. There is no logic reason for Pownal to join this consolidation. The resident stated he would love to debate this. It was stated that the savings theoretically within the RSU would be the tuition saved by all secondary students attending one High School. In looking at the terms it seems this is just a transfer of costs within the three communities. There is not many savings if it is just \$100,000 in administrative costs.
- Where are the numbers that show where the administrative costs savings come from?
- How much does that save for Durham?

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm