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Town Clerk of Bolton

August 31, 2015
Joint Board Retreat
Bolton Town Hall
7PM – 8:30 PM

Attendees: James Bruner; Christopher Davey; Robert DePietro, Katherine Galle, Matthew Giuffre; Richard Hayes; Elizabeth Sawyer Krueger; Gwen Marrion: Robert Morra, Robert Munroe, Robert Neil, Sandra Pierog; Alison Romkey; Ronald Rousseau: Morris Silverstein

Staff: Joyce Stille; Kristin Heckt; Linda Savitsky

Welcome/Meeting Purpose& Ground Rules/Introductions & Confirmation of Meeting Purpose:

Emily Hultquist, Principal Planner & Policy Analyst at the Capitol Region Council of Governments introduced herself as the retreat facilitator. Ms. Hultquist stated her understanding of the purpose of the meeting as a chance for three town boards to come together as one group to discuss their thoughts on the proposed financial operations consolidation and the findings of the feasibility report by Linda Savitsky.

Ms. Hultquist laid out the ground rules for the discussion and discussed the schedule and logistics of the meeting. The schedule would allow for Linda Savitsky to give a brief overview of the feasibility report and for the board to ask technical report questions. A board discussion would follow. Ms. Hultquist stated that she would take meeting notes on flip chart pages and post them up around the room. She also pointed out the "Parking Lot" flip chart which would hold ideas or questions that might be off topic, but valuable to follow-up on. Finally, Ms. Hultquist identified the "Let's leave with..." list of things that this meeting will try to accomplish in order to move to the next step in this process.

Once the welcome, meeting purpose and ground rules were complete, Ms. Hultquist asked board members to introduce themselves and to add any further items to the "Let's Leave With" list. No further items were added.

Draft Feasibility Report Overview and Brief Q&A

Linda Savitsky presented a brief overview of the Draft Feasibility Report and answered technical questions on the report.

Board Discussion:

The board entered into a discussion of their thoughts and opinions on the proposed financial consolidation and the process of coming to a decision on this matter. Many of the thoughts were phrased as questions. Some questions were directed at Ms. Savitsky which she answered with the permission of the facilitator.

Discussion Notes

- How is the current communication working between finance departments of the Board of Education and the Town?
- How will personnel be affected by the outcome of this process if the decision is to move forward with the consolidation?
- What is not currently being done that needs doing in the area of financial operations?

- How will the town save money under the proposed consolidation plan?
- What are the efficiencies if the new position will not eliminate current positions and will not save money?
 - The new position will eliminate overlap in work produced.
- Is this a premature discussion? Need to know more about efficiencies/\$
- Perhaps there are other ways of getting to efficiency
 - -what does the cost of this new position look like?
 - -who reports to whom?
- Cross training provides tremendous flexibility – it works at state departments – cross training would be an advantage of an umbrella position
- The Town may not need treasurer anymore – this should be examined within this process
- Consolidation would create a position with different mix of duties – maybe some savings
- Some things aren't being done that could benefit the town to be accomplishing within the finance department such as accounting and preparation for annual audit
- Who would this position report to? Board Thoughts?
 - Both parties have to have access to this personnel
 - MOU is required for success
 - Joint reporting is most successful
 - Superintendent should be part of reporting
- It is important to have financial people close to the department they service because there is confidential information/synergy amongst staff/familiarity in case of unplanned absence or loss of staff
- With current technology, methods of communication and secure file sharing, staff does not need to be in the same place to work.
- It is important to have trust amongst employees
- It is important to have consistency in policy – or consequence of different results across departments – cross training
- What is the point? Primary goal of the Board of Finance is to hold down property taxes and the mil rate
- Are we looking at consolidating departments/functions with different towns? Economies of scale;
- We need a structure in place that is more efficient and cost effective.
- Other towns have staff that prepare financial statements in preparation of annual audit

Linda Savitsky: Bolton pays half to a third of what other towns pay for their audits and those towns already have prepared much of the financial statements internally

- Ability to do audit preparatory work internally is key with possible change in current external auditor
- Part of the process moving forward needs to be understanding of operations – staff also need a comfort level
- Board members need to understand the qualifications and characteristics of a successful merger facilitator

What is the number one reason for consolidation?

Linda: 1) Maximize resources (software system) and
2) Better reporting – not as paper intensive as we are currently

What are the biggest challenges going to be for boards?

Linda: Break past tradition, working in a collaborative process across boards, space, currently a challenge, but can be turned into a positive

What kind of salary would the person get?

Linda – need to explore more and define job description

Who owns the process of fleshing out the position details? What is that going to cost?

Linda: Boards need to determine what they want collectively

These three boards need to determine the questions - What you want to do? Why? Where? When?

We are still in data gathering phase

Transparency will be enhanced if an umbrella financial position is put into place.

Parking Lot

List of other towns that have consolidated financial operations (*Linda provide list so that boards can use as a benchmark*)

Need detailed description of jobs/positions – how do they interact? Multiple ways we could go about this? Outline of process (*Create a sample organizational chart for discussion*)

How can we reach out to these towns? E.g. Middletown/Smaller Towns (*Linda to provide list/contacts*)

Union Involvement (*to come at a later meeting once more data is gathered*)

Salary discussion (*to come at a later meeting once more data is gathered*)

Where do efficiencies come from? (*Linda to provide examples like the one offered: State grant tracking*)

Accuracy of budgets/competency (*separate discussion needed – consider if/when creating a job description*)

Wrap Up & Next Steps:

The boards discussed the next meeting date. Staff will work on coordinating schedules for early October – possibly the second week of the month.