

Better Together for Public Education

Exploring School District Unification in Marin

DRAFT Meeting Minutes October 25, 2021

I. Call to Order

Sheri Mowbray called to order the regular meeting of the Better Together Coalition at 12:00 on October 25, 2021 on Zoom.

II. Roll call

The following members were present: Sheri Mowbray, Sloan Bailey, Laura Anderson, Catherine Way, Ruth Dell, Shelley Hamilton, Valerie Pitts, and Mark Burton. Guest: Doug Mowbray

III. Minutes from August 16, 2021, September 13, September 28, and October 13 meetings approved

IV. Open issues:

a. Review of Discussions with T. Taupier & J. Sellers

- Impression is that they are supportive of continuing to explore what we need to do to get more data.
- Reviewed the history of the County EE Task Force and the importance of a partnership should this go forward.
- Reviewed unification history of Sausalito and Marin City and the. Difficulty in meeting state requirements.
- School boards should be told about this idea to garner support.
- COVID-19 has showed how much communities value “local control”
- Reviewed the fact of declining student enrollments in the county and in many Marin districts.
- Suggested that members of our group attend the December EE Task Force meeting.

b. Review of Discussion with Assemblyman Levine

- Impression that it’s too early in this process to be reaching out to a legislator.
- Wait until there is a “clear ask” for what we would like his help with. Come back later.

c. Review of meeting with League of Women Voters

- They are well versed in all matters of unions, parcel taxes, bond issues, etc.
- Suggested that we not proceed with public town hall types of meetings without clear and sufficient data.

d. Review of Meeting with Cathy Domenico and Feasibility Analysis Proposal, October 22, 2021

- Cathy Domenico of Capitol Public Finance Group, LLC, Roseville, CA
- This consultant seemed like a good fit with our committee, has a good depth of knowledge of Marin schools, logical and professional manner with a plan on how to collect data.
- What are the outcome measurement we want and frame the study around these outcomes.
- What are the ultimate goals and realistic outcomes?

- What are the real costs and what are the perceived costs?
- One possible outcome is that a study would provide helpful information to smaller districts that don't have the capacity to take this on themselves.
- Unless a study can show significant changes, including cost savings, it's likely that we won't get community support.
- Concern over where the funding sources are for this feasibility study. Maybe a patchwork of sources.
- Should we start our own 501c3 so that we can fundraise for a study? What are the challenges?
- Should we partner with an already existing group that is working on education issues?
- Concern that since this type of study process is so long that the data will get "stale" as the process moves forward which means we will need to factor in an updated study.
- Parents need to be engaged in this discussion before it will gain the traction needed.
- Groundswell of interest from parents or trustees would provide focus.
- How do we increase community awareness of this issue?
 - Should we start to utilize community contacts through social media such as Nextdoor? We could get "brand ambassadors" in key neighborhoods to assess what the conversations are about in regard to school unification.
 - Social media might have challenges to distorting the conversation and information which we won't be able to control.
 - Town Halls and community group discussions
 - Paid advertising
 - Create a one-page FAQ and Mission Statement

V: To Do Items:

- Reach out to Marin Community Foundation about funding for study: **Catherine and Shelley**
- Reach out to Sonoma Supt of Schools about their project - **Valerie**
- Work on one-sheet to send to school districts, PTAs and Foundations - **Sheri, Doug, Shelley**
- Reach out to Marin Grand Jury leadership - **Catherine**
- Reach out to COST leadership - **Valerie**
- Reach out to MJB about her 5-superintendent idea - **Sheri & Laura**
- Collect contact info for school board members, superintendents, PTA and Foundation leaders - **Laura**

VI: Adjournment

Sheri adjourned the meeting at 1:00 pm. Next meeting November 8, 2021.

DRAFT Minutes Submitted by: Catherine Way