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**TIMBERLANE REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD**  
**Atkinson, Danville, Plaistow, Sandown**  
**New Hampshire**

**Public Hearing on Articles of Agreement**  
**February 26, 2015**  
**7:00 PM**

**Performing Arts Center**  
**40 Greenough Road**  
**Plaistow, NH**

**Board Members Present:**

Mr. Bealo, Mr. Blair, Mr. Collins, Mrs. Delfino, Mrs. Green, Mr. Sapia, Mrs. Sherman and Mrs. Steenson. Absent: Kelly Ward

**Call to Order:**

Madam Chair Steenson: All right. Before we begin, I would like to make some announcements. We would like to thank the following people for coordinating this evening's public hearing. We actually had to call in some favors, as this is school vacation week and not all of our tech people are available.

First, I'd like to recognize 2014 Timberlane graduate Ben Chretien from Danville, and Timberlane senior Jeremy Walker from Plaistow for all things technology this evening. This was the favor we needed to call in.

Also, thanks to our people at the PAC, Lynn Mastorakos, Patricia Di Rienzo and Raymond Guilmette for organization from set up to break down. It really does take the coordination of many to bring our school board meetings and hearings to the folks at home, which brings us to tonight's hearing.

This public hearing is being videotaped and will be posted online and broadcast at a later date. It was not possible to produce a live broadcast this evening. We will get it uploaded to the website as soon as we can.

One more item I would like to announce, and that is the 2014 Annual Report is available online with hard copies to be made available at district town libraries and town offices. Individuals may also request a hard copy by contacting the superintendent's office.

So, this evening we have a public hearing on Articles of Agreement. Today's date is February 26th, 2015, and I will call this meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Mrs. Danahy, would you call the role, please?

Mrs. Danahy: Mr. Bealo?

Mr. Bealo: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mr. Blair?

Mr. Blair: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mr. Collins?

Mr. Collins: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mrs. Delfino?

Mrs. Delfino: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mrs. Green?

Mrs. Green: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mr. Sapia?

Mr. Sapia: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mrs. Sherman?

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Mrs. Sherman: Here.

Mrs. Danahy: Mrs. Steenson?

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you Mrs. Danahy.

*Would you all rise and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance please?*

Group: *I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you.

*I have a very brief presentation to begin this evening.*

*So, first question in everyone's mind, "Why are we holding this public hearing during school vacation week?"*

*As you can see by the slide, I won't go into great detail. Per the Articles of Agreement, Number 15, the public hearing must be held a minimum of 10 days prior to the vote, and the public hearing notice must be published in the newspaper at least 14 days in advance of the public hearing and it must include language of proposed amendment.*

*In this case, the language of the proposed amendment could not be finalized until after the deliberative session. Once the public hearing window is determined, we needed to have a quorum of the school board. So, you can see what the windows were that we had to work with, why it involved this school vacation week.*

*So next, "What are the Articles of Agreement?" It is an agreement between the towns of Atkinson, Danville, Plaistow and Sandown, originally established in 1964 when the cooperative school district was formed. The agreement outlines how the newly-formed cooperative school district would operate as it relates to school board membership, district property, funding, etc. The Articles of Agreement in their entirety are posted on the school district's website.*

*Now, "How often have we looked at and thrown these things out for discussion, debate and voting"? In terms of adoption and amendment history, they were originally approved in 1964. The amended Article 3 in 1970, which changed the designation of elementary grades from 1 through 6 to the first 5 years. We amended Article 2 in 1978, which added a statement relative to the election process. We amended Article 3 in 1994 to allow, with conditions, 4th and 5th graders to attend another in-district elementary school at a parent's request, and we amended Article 3 in 1999 to allow, with conditions, any elementary student to attend another in-district elementary school at parent's request.*

*Now, "Why are we here this evening? Articles 5 and 6, we have the current language, which states "The operating expenses of the Timberlane Regional School District payable in each fiscal year shall be apportioned on the average daily membership of pupils residing in each pre-existing district of the cooperative school district during the 2nd preceding fiscal year as determined by the State Department of Education".*

*The proposed new language is "The operating and capital expenses of the Timberlane Regional School District, payable in each fiscal year, shall be apportioned at a rate so each pre-existing district pays the same local school rate of taxation based upon the equalized valuation, as most currently available, as determined by the State Tax Commission. All forms of aid and local school impact fees from each pre-existing district will be applied to reduce the operating and capital expense before apportionment.*

*Article 6, the current language is "The capital expenses of the Timberlane Regional School District, payable in each fiscal year, shall be apportioned on the equalized valuation as most currently available as determined by the State Tax Commission". The proposed new language of Article 6 is "nada", because 6 would be repealed.*

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*That's my entire presentation. I would like to invite anyone who wants to speak to come toward the microphone, but first I would like to introduce Mr. Shawn O'Neil, who has authored this amendment, and I'm sure he would like to make a brief presentation.*

*You're welcome. You sure may. Come on up.*

*Have you shown it to the tech guy, or? You're not using our laptop?*

Shawn O'Neil: *No, just going to use the cord.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Okay. It was my understanding we were only using one laptop. That's why I asked. Would you like to stand here?*

Shawn O'Neil: *Yes, if you don't mind. Okay.*

*What I have here is the first part of it, the philosophy*

Madam Chair Steenson: *I don't think everyone can hear you and you won't be picked up on the video, so I think you should probably use another microphone.*

Shawn O'Neil: *This one?*

Madam Chair Steenson: *I don't know.*

Shawn O'Neil: *Testing.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Ben, can we get that to work?*

Shawn O'Neil: *Testing.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Thank you.*

Shawn O'Neil: *Thank you. Okay, the philosophy behind it, is a different approach than what we're currently doing, and I'll read it.*

*"We came together as one entity to form the Timberlane Regional School District in 1964 for a common goal. In a similar manner, Rockingham County was formed by the various towns that compose it to support a common goal. Portsmouth and Rye currently pay the same county tax rate as Atkinson, Danville, Plaistow and Sandown, which is currently \$1.08 per thousand.*

*That rate is derived by taking the operating budget, which is about \$80,000,000, and distributing it across all towns based upon their equalized assessed value.*

*There is no function in determining the rate of the number of patrons at the Rockingham County Jail or the number of beds occupied at the Rockingham County Nursing Home from a particular town. It's all one homogeneous entity.*

*Now I wanted to break down here the dollar amounts. This is to get in the financial aspects of it. From that MS 22 and 24, the budget was \$67 million dollars, and what was left on that was roughly \$9 million dollars, which was income and also surplus that was left on over from previous years. When you take that into account, the total appropriations that we had to raise is \$58.2 million. Then we had to turn around and we had the capital expenditures of \$2.5 million, so we also had reducing that. We had current expenditures of \$55.7 million, less town-specific which was taken from the MS 24, that is \$144,000.*

*That's the sum of all 4 towns of the local school impact fee that they get for building constructions. Each town's governing body sends in the amount that they wish to have applied to it. That was an aggregate of \$144,000. So, the current expenses to apportion would be \$55.5 million.*

*To break down how capital expenditures work. We have \$3.6 million in the past current fiscal year. We got 1.1 in building aid. We took zero out of the capital reserve, so the amount that had to go to be raised is the \$2.5 million. This \$2.5 million would be applied currently as Article 6*

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would go across the EPV Value. The previous slide had the number that would be on an ADM Value.

This is breaking down the state aids that we get from the various towns. The retained number is the retained tax is the state school tax, which is roughly about \$2.42, or \$2.45 per thousand. That money is told by the Department of Revenue to raise that amount for your equalized property value. It then turns around and says that money that we just told you to raise that is now part of your state aid. They take it out of one hand, give it to you in your next hand and say "That's your money". That sums to \$6.1 million in aggregate.

Then you have all these other grants that are over here on the right-hand side, which total \$11.3 million dollars. Those are comprised by a variety of factors, one is the average daily. The state awards money per student. They also award money for special needs. They also award money for free and reduced lunches, and they also award money for English not being the primary language, but that's the amount that each town gets. The sum of those altogether is \$17.5 million.

Here's the ADM ratios that we have of the totals amounts, and then of course, the ratios that they have. Here are the equalized property values that we have, and how much each town has respectively, also in a percentage. We have roughly \$2.5 billion dollars of equalized property in the 4 towns.

This is, as I was saying earlier, the \$144,000 is how much each town sent in this past year for their school impact fees they got from building.

Now, what this proposal's going to do is, from the previous slide I had, an example is that we had to raise is \$55.5 million. Since the capital expenditures would not be segregated, we have to put that back in there. We put that \$2.5 million back in and a total expense of \$58.1 million that would need to be raised.

The total aid that all communities receive is \$17.5 million. The total impact fees is \$144,000 so we subtract and get the total appropriations of \$40 million over the \$2.5 billion dollars of assessed value. It comes out to a tax rate of \$15.93 each, for each town.

Every town would pay the same exact amount per thousand of assessed value, just like the county taxes apply.

Now I wanted to break this down into how it would be done through the various forms the Department of Revenue does locally for when your governing body is setting their tax rate.

The local amount would be raised locally is \$40 million, and the total new school apportionments would be increased by the amount of the award that they're getting from the state.

That's why Danville's jumps up from \$5 million to \$9 million, because they're getting 3 point something of aid, and then respectively all the various towns. This would be the tax rate that you would see on your bill. It would be a constant \$15.94 for each town, for the local school tax rate. The 2013 State School Tax rate would have been consistent at the It is the combined of the two, of \$18.37 or \$18.39. These are the deltas of each town that would be contributing to that.

These next couple of slides here are from a report from 1964. It was a report to the voters. How this whole process of the school district was composed. They had respective planning boards come together and find alternatives means to support the schools. To seek out solutions for a school district because when you start reading this 60, 70 page document. Each one of the 4 towns came to the conclusion that nobody could do this alone.

It's a really insightful read of the time and the thought process. In fact, it actually has in there a section that talks about the detailed analysis of every warrant, Article of Agreement and gives the philosophy and the viewpoint of why the specific verbiage was chosen. It's quite insightful.

I don't think I want to go through each one of these and read each one, but they're illustrating

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*the point here that with our tax rate, Atkinson is finding it's impossible to locate a high school within a practical distance that will accept our upper grades. We can't build our own high school. The regional is not formed at this time. Your committee is unable to recommend any alternative course of action that would be practical or economical.*

*The same thing with the voters of Plaistow, they realized that they were a good size, but they also realized that they couldn't go it alone with regards to building their own high school. They needed Atkinson, Danville and Sandown just as much as everybody needed each other.*

*This is one from Sandown. One of the interesting points which was actually highlighted on the copy that I received, but the point that's really emphasized is "the cooperative proposes a solution by which a group of communities may provide for a good education for young people without straining the economy of any one community". It's a pretty powerful statement and insight back in 1964.*

*Here's another interesting point that was made on the report, "Plaistow, since it is the largest town in the district and will contribute more than 50% of the finances to operate the district would have the extra member. That's why Plaistow has 3 seats on the school board. Currently in 2014, Plaistow was responsible for 33% of the budget.*

*Now, what I wanted to do is change the philosophy. The current implementation of an ADM, the town is responsible for every child that it sends and the cost incurred by that child. It becomes analogous to an "a la carte" system. If this child goes to the school district, the town is on the hook for the cost incurred for that.*

*Currently, right now, the cost goes against what is written in the Articles of Agreement, but what I'm going to be saying is "I don't agree with" because it goes against the philosophy of what the proposed solution is going to be. Right now these are the amount of ADM's that we have for the respective towns for children that need special needs.*

*Under the proposed warrant article it becomes agnostic because it's all shared equally, but right now there's no cost differential because a child that requires special needs and the child that does not. That cost is just part of the operating budget and increases the total cost of all ADM children, and it's not segregated out as a separate cost. This is why, when you try to compare other districts for example Pinkerton, they advertise they can offer an education for \$10,900.00, that doesn't include bus transportation, and it requires any kind of special needs that's not there. When you try to compare things you have to turn it around and make everything comparable, apples to apples.*

*These are the towns' numbers that are defined as special needs, and the state actually gives \$1,900.00 for every child that requires any kind of special needs. That money is actually retained by the town, but yet the cost associated with all of that is distributed across the entire student population, which just by and in itself would violate what the ADM of the current implementation is of the Articles of Agreement. I don't agree with it because I believe we're all in this together and it should be equally distributed across all bodies. That's just something to think about. Thank you.*

**Madam Chair Steenson:** *We can take questions or I believe Mr. Bealo from the school board has a brief presentation, and I'd be happy to allow him to do that, and then we'll take questions from the floor.*

*Sure, that's a good idea, so while he's setting up, are there any questions? If you'd like to wait until you've heard the other presentation this evening. It would be nice, but yeah, I was under the impression everything was going to be on one computer with SD cards.*

*Mrs. Green? Can you speak into the microphone?*

*One moment, Ben, can we get the microphone's working for the school board?*

**Ben:** *They're in the computer.*

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- Mrs. Green: I think it's working now. There it is.  
Would Mr. O'Neil be able to give us this presentation electronically afterwards?
- Shawn O'Neil: Yes, I can.
- Mrs. Green: Yeah, somehow?
- Shawn O'Neil: Yes, I can do that.
- Mrs. Green: I appreciate the depth of detail you went into here, and I did not know the ADM by SPED before. That's very interesting information, thank you.  
I did have a couple of questions, I'm sorry? I do have a couple of questions and I'm not sure if you're able to respond to them, but as I understand it by your proposed language, I think, all this state adequacy aid is going to have to go to the district and not to the individual towns?
- Shawn O'Neil: How this formula would work is because we know, pre-determined, how much we're getting from the state. You take that state amount and then you use that to offset the dollar amount, to bring that amount down to the actual amount, that's the \$17 million dollars total. Then, when you turn around in the DRA formulas, the way that you apportion it is that you turn around and you add back that award on top of the dollar amount. The one slide in there had the difference between what they're going to be charged and then what they get allocated, because when you take that allocation and you take the award, you subtract the award and you're back to the dollar amount that they're using to figure.
- Mrs. Green: I understand that entire thing, and I think you made that very clear, and I appreciate that. My question, though, "Doesn't the Adequacy Aid have to be directed to the district?"
- Shawn O'Neil: The dollar amount, it actually is directed towards the town, but the dollar amount that you are going to be apportioned is not. You have to take out and think of ADM in any kind of student. You're going to be charged a rate such that everybody pays the same tax rate. That's the final goal, and you adjust the numbers as such, that happens to raise the amount, when you take everything into consideration, you raise that \$40 million dollar amount, which was the sum of what is needed to be raised minus all of the aid to equal the sum of all of the respective towns.
- Mrs. Green: Okay, I don't think we're quite answering the same point, but if your proposed language did pass, when would this be implemented?
- Shawn O'Neil: It would be the following year. As soon as this becomes inactive, which would be, in theory, March 11th.
- Mrs. Green: Right, so it would be this calendar year?
- Shawn O'Neil: Right.
- Mrs. Green: So, the next tax bill that went out would be reflective of this in December? Wait a minute ...
- Madam Chair Steenson: If you're not sure, say so. Are you confident it would go into effect immediately?
- Shawn O'Neil: I believe it would. That's my viewpoint.
- Madam Chair Steenson: We can get a firm answer on that from our attorney if need be.
- John Sherman: John Sherman, Vice Chairman, Plaistow Board of Selectman. The first tax bill that comes out, at least in Plaistow, is 1/2 of what your tax bill was last year. So, this would not affect the first tax bill, but I believe it would affect the second tax bill, and therefore would affect it greatly, if you know what I mean. It would be doubled-up on that December tax bill, but the first one that comes out is 1/2 of what you paid last year so it wouldn't affect that first one.
- Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you.
- Mrs. Green: Thank you.

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*Madam Chair Steenson: I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Bealo so he can do his brief presentation, and then we'll take any further questions.*

*Mr. Bealo: Great, thank you. I hope there's not too much feedback from this. I apologize in advance for when it happens.*

*I'm not here so much to rebut Shawn, but to offer some other data and maybe a different analysis at the end of the day. Okay, here we go.*

*So, just to take a quick look at today's demographics, I only have 2 slides with numbers on them. For the most part they're charts, but this is interesting information. Each row is a different town, so we go Sandown, Danville, Plaistow and Atkinson, and the bottom's New Hampshire averages.*

*The first column is median home income. Interestingly enough Atkinson is the highest in the district. Surprisingly to me, Sandown was 2nd, Plaistow 3rd, Danville 4th.*

*Next column are the median home values, and again, Atkinson's the highest value, then Plaistow, Danville, Sandown.*

*Present tax rates are in the middle of the chart. I wasn't sure of the set-up we were going to have. I'm having a hard time reading this. Oh, I can see it right here.*

*Then we come to look at median taxes using the present formula. That is taking the present tax rates and multiplying them by the median home values in the town, in each town. Surprisingly the distribution's pretty tight. Plaistow is lower than the rest, I suspect because of all the commercial property we have in town, but among Sandown, Danville and Atkinson, the spread only varies by about \$400.00. That's the property taxes per dwelling.*

*Median taxes as a percent of income, I thought would be an interesting thing to look at. Notice that 3 of the 4 towns are at about 5.8% if you want to look at the taxes that way because, at the end of the day, you don't want to sell your house to pay the tax on the property. It really ends up being what kind of income you have.*

*The rightmost is just median taxes as a percent of the home value. There's a little more spread there, from 1 1/2 to 2.2%.*

*Okay, so, why not change to an equal tax rate system? Let's start off with that. Right now, the present system directly links how many educational resources are used by a town to how they're taxed, how much they're taxed. All of the children in Timberlane are treated the same. The question is "Are the town's treated the same tax-wise?" Right now it's a "You pay for what you use". On average the SPED is not broken out separately.*

*The proposed system removes this link and taxes are only based on the town's property wealth. I believe that's a problem because the town's with lower property wealth and a growing number of students have no incentive to try to change the situation, and every incentive to work hard to get as much money as possible from the richer towns. Am I saying our Selectman and planning by different towns would do this? No, but it's available. There's no incentive to become a more balanced town. How towns are run as a responsible neighbors, because the neighbors have no say in the planning of another town. Example, Plaistow has no say in how Atkinson runs their town, and vice versa, and Danville and to Sandown, and "all around the mulberry bush".*

*Now, tax rates, Mr. O'Neil dwelled on tax rates, but tax rates vary for a number of reasons and not just solely how much money the school district needs. The budget, clearly, is there, and that's controlled mostly by the school district, although legislature helps us along a little bit in mandates. Total town property values are part of it, and that's not controlled by the district, only individual towns. Land use, how much commercial versus residential. Again, this is not controlled by the district, heavily influenced at least by the individual towns. Median home value is not controlled by the district again, only by the individual towns. While you can't change it on a dime, the towns can affect the home values in that town, at least on new properties.*

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So, Timberlane controls less than a quarter of the variables in setting tax rates, the individual towns, three quarters. Based on that, I'm not good with equal tax rate based system we have very little control over it.

This is an interesting chart again. Historically, and I'm going right back to the beginning of time, 1964, for this school district. This shows the tax rates for all 4 towns in Mr. O'Neil's proposed formula. The yellow line is Sandown. The black line is the unified equal tax rate base system. The blue line is Atkinson. Green is Danville. The red is Plaistow.

You'll see tax rates vary greatly. It's actually quite shocking to see that back in the early 1970's, tax rates for some of the towns were above \$40 a thousand. This is straight out of the Timberlane Annual Reports.

You'll also see all the way to the far right is present time, and we dip down and now we've come up a little bit, but I would say that ever since about 1986-ish, Sandown and Danville have had higher tax rates than Plaistow and Atkinson. That's definitely for sure.

I guess what I'm most interested in looking at in my kind of analysis is looking at "How much does it cost each town to fund a pupil in the school district?" Assuming Plaistow taxes paid for Plaistow students, we divide the amount of money Plaistow's taxed by the number of students Plaistow has in the district.

The left chart shows how this changed over the last, again, since the beginning of time, 1964, to present. The right chart on the same exact scale is using Mr. O'Neil's proposed formula. Again, the colors of the towns are the same. Yellow is Sandown, red is Plaistow, green Danville, blue Atkinson. As you can see, as we go towards present time, the right most parts of both charts. The amount paid per pupil in each town diverged in the 1980's. Plaistow and Atkinson have been paying considerably more per pupil than Sandown and Danville. Right now, the difference between Atkinson's payments per pupil and Sandown's is about \$3,600.00.

Under the proposed formula, the difference in how much the towns would be paying is twice that, about \$7,700.00. One of my questions is "Why should Atkinson be asked to pay 2 times more than Danville to educate each of Atkinson students?" I just don't see that as a really sound policy.

Mr. Bealo: Okay. Tell me if I'm going too long.

Looking at things on the Timberlane tax per median household, again, per median property in the towns, the blue bars are present formula. The red bars are using the proposed formula by Mr. O'Neil.

As you can see, Sandown and Danville are the on the left, these 2 towns, go down considerably. Plaistow goes up a bit. Atkinson goes up considerably from blue to red in each case.

Strangely enough, taxes are as a median income as in the town. Right now, 3 of the towns are essentially at 5.8% tax. Danville is at about a 7.5% as shown by the blue bars. If we change our formula, Sandown now ends up being below 5%, Danville at about 6%, Plaistow just over 6% and Atkinson just over 6.5%.

The final effect of this proposed change, it removes the linkage of resource use to cost. I think that's a fundamental link that we need to retain. It removes the incentive to fix issues or change issues, I should perhaps say, internal to the towns. The towns negatively affected by the proposed change would have no say in getting the situation fixed or changed at all.

There's a real uncoupling there of responsibility and authority to make change. In my mind, authority and responsibility need to go hand in hand, and the proposed system takes them apart. Under any change, somebody's ox is going to get gored, as they say. I don't believe there's such a thing as a perfect system. No one's going to get something for free. At least we're all not going to get something for free.

This proposed change, I should say, sets up a town conflict that troubles me greatly, and so I urge

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*the voters to vote no on the proposal.*

*This is Peter Bealo personally speaking. I am not speaking for the board. I'm not even speaking for the other members of the Plaistow Delegation. Thank you.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you, Peter. Do we have any questions? One moment, can we make sure that's on, Ben?*

*Sing a song for us. Let's do a test.*

*Maryann S.: Mr. Bealo, if you could go back to the chart you had which had the existing formula on the left and the new one on the right, and per towns how much different the tax per student was going to be?*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Could you give us your name and town?*

*Maryann Springer: Sure. Maryann Springer, Danville.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you.*

*Mr. Bealo: Which chart again was that?*

*Maryann Springer: So, next one down. That one! Could you explain to me, please, how, if currently the formula is based on average daily membership, which means the number of students you have in the district. The district budget is apportioned accordingly, how those costs per pupil per town could be different?*

*Mr. Bealo: Good question, when I first saw it I had to think a little bit too. They change because each town is given a different amount of aid by the state.*

*Plaistow receives just over a million dollars. I believe Sandown's about \$4 million. I think Danville's \$3 million; I might have those 2 reversed. So, there's a significant difference in the amount of aid. That comes into what the cost per pupil, per town is.*

*Maryann Springer: Okay, and the allocation of that state aid to towns seems to me to be in conflict to the way Article 9 is written, in the Articles of Agreement.*

*Mr. Bealo: I need to see Article 9.*

*Mr. Bealo: Article 9. Oh, it's a long one. "The state foundation aid to which each existing district would be entitled to if it were not a part of a cooperative school district, shall be credited to each pre-existing district's share of the total operating budget". That's exactly what happened. When they say "each district", they mean each town.*

*Maryann Springer: Okay, and that's something that Mr. O'Neil's proposal would do away with, right?*

*Mr. Bealo: Correct, but nonetheless if you look on the right chart, that takes into account the fact that all of the aid gets split up among the towns. It's split up before the taxes per town are computed in the proposed system. We still have a divergence, even a more significant divergence of cost per pupil.*

*Maryann Springer: Thank you.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Anybody else?*

*Mr. Consentino: Phil Consentino. Selectmen from Atkinson.*

*If I'm not mistaken, over the years the town of Atkinson has paid more into the school district for payments and to cover the cost of education than any other town. My question tonight is, and I've heard so much conversation back and forth, and a lot of charts being put up. Mr. O'Neil did a fantastic presentation. But my basic question has not been answered through all these debates "If this new proposal goes through, how much more is the town of Atkinson going to have to pay and how much less will the town of Danville have to pay?"*

*Madam Chair Steenson: I'm going to allow Mr. O'Neil to answer that. I'm simply moderating, and where it's his warrant article, he might be able to best help you.*

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Shawn O'Neil: I do not have what you have here. I have a tax rate. So, what you're looking for is not a tax rate. The new tax rate with this proposal, if it was adopted, would be \$15.94. I believe that you guys were paying 12 something, so it's going to go up \$3.00 per thousand.

Madam Chair Steenson: Are you asking or saying?

Shawn O'Neil: That's what I'm saying.

Madam Chair Steenson: Okay. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Bealo: Mr. Consentino, I actually have that data buried in one of about 10 spreadsheets in the computer that I have next to my chair. I'm really not prepared to answer you right now, but after this meeting's over, if you want to hang around for a few minutes we can pull them up and I'm sure I can show you that later on.

Mr. Consentino: The bottom line to this whole situation is, the town of Atkinson is going to be penalized because the town of Danville did not regulate their growth and what-have-you in their town. So now, why is Atkinson subsidizing another town when, over the years, we've paid more into the school district, a million dollars more than anybody else has? Is that the correct analogy that I have? Atkinson is going to be subsidizing Danville? Is that basically it, in a nutshell?

Group: Yes.

Madam Chair Steenson: That's it. Please state your name and town please.

Mr. Springer: Mr. Springer, Danville. Is this microphone on?

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. It should be, Ben?

Mr. Springer: Hello.

Madam Chair Steenson: It's on, yes it is.

Mr. Springer: I'm sorry I missed the gentleman's name.

Madam Chair Steenson: Mr. Consentino.

Mr. Springer: Mr. Consentino? I'd like to address some of the comments you're making.

Mr. Consentino: Yes sir?

Mr. Bealo: Does anyone have questions on this stuff, or may I just take my memory stick and sit down?

Mr. Consentino: I have no question on what you're presenting.

Mr. Bealo: John, you? Okay.

Mr. Springer: I would like to address my question and comment to the Chairwoman and to Mr. Consentino because I've heard this type of comment several times in the last few weeks and months when these questions have come up. I'm pleased to hear that it's not coming from the School Board this evening, because I have heard some of that tone in the past.

*The indication that one town is trying to penalize another town because one town has not done a good job managing growth or development.*

Madam Chair Steenson: Can I stop you there so I know exactly what you're saying, and the school board has not used that kind of language. Residents are welcome to use whatever language they'd like. This is an emotional issue. People feel strongly.

Mr. Springer: Yes, it is.

Madam Chair Steenson: They have emotions. There are words we can choose to use which imply objectivity, and there are words we can choose to use which imply bias. Neither is right or wrong, but as board members I firmly believe our job is to remain objective. This is not our warrant article, as you know.

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Mr. Springer: Correct.

Madam Chair Steenson: *But, we have a responsibility to the community to present it and to allow Mr. O'Neil to speak his mind here at this public hearing. So, no, we have not used that language. I respect Mr. Consentino's opinion and he can use that language, but the board has not.*

Mr. Springer: *Please, please, please, do not misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not attributing what he said specifically this evening to the school board in general.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Yes.*

Mr. Springer: *But, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, and I know I'm not, tones and comments of that nature have, in fact, been used by members of the school board on evenings when you may not have been moderating.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *That could be.*

Mr. Springer: *So, and that's not to take away any of how difficult the job is for a chairperson, so please let me just make my point.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Absolutely.*

Mr. Springer: *In response to Mr. Consentino, essentially over the last 5 decades, all the towns have changed radically. However, when you look at things like Rockingham Planning Commission which Atkinson is a part of, Plaistow, Danville, all a part of as well, the development plans that have been put in place through master planning and other concepts that they take a part in and have taken a part in for many decades, has been precisely followed by Danville. I wish, at this point, that we do not focus on that kind of issue. What another town has had the benefit of, relative to geography, relative to road systems, has nothing to do with some of the unavoidable choices that Danville, Sandown, Plaistow or any other town has made in response to their circumstances.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Thank you. Mr. Sherman?*

John Sherman: *John Sherman, Vice Chairman of the Plaistow Board of Selectmen.*

*If the tax rate for Atkinson is going up \$3.00 per thousand, is that what you said, Shawn? The Atkinson total valuation is about \$820 million dollars, so that's \$820,000 thousands. So, if it goes up \$3.00 per thousand, then Atkinson will be getting a extra payment or new requirement of just under \$3 million dollars? \$2.8 million. Is that the math? Does somebody have a calculator? \$824,000 thousand times \$3.00 per thousand, so that's a sizable impact to Atkinson.*

*Going back to what Mr. Consentino said. One of the things he said is "I think Atkinson has paid more money to the school district than any other town", I don't think so. Not back when, if you go over the history of the town's. They actually used to have over 50% of the student enrollment, so over the history of the school district I think Plaistow has paid more taxes than Atkinson.*

*I'd like to read something. This is from the Plaistow Board of Selectmen and I'd like to read it into the record:*

*"The Plaistow Board of Selectmen by consensus is opposed to changing the Article of Agreement as proposed by Warrant Article Number 10 on the 2015 Timberland School District ballot. We are unanimously not in favor of changing the school district funding formula so that all school district expenses, both operating and capital costs, are based on equalized property valuations. If any change is to be considered, we would instead support apportioning all school district expenses based upon school enrollment. That is, average daily membership or ADM."*

*I don't have any questions, but I wanted to read that into the record.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Thank you. Would you have a copy of that for Mrs. Danahy, so that she can make those available to the minutes? Thank you so much, anybody else? Mrs. Delfino, go ahead.*

Mrs. Delfino: *Mr. Sapia and I were just checking the figures in relation to Mr. Consentino's question. Plaistow*

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*has paid the most in taxes since the district was formed, and Atkinson has paid the 2nd most.*

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you for clarifying that, Mrs. Defino.

Mrs. Defino: Sure.

Madam Chair Steenson: Mr. Sapia? Yes, and then we have a gentleman who'd like to speak.

Jack Sapia: My wife would love to be able to turn me off like this. As I see this, Plaistow's paid roughly \$158 million more. Phil, to your point, Atkinson is 2nd with \$135 million more than Sandown, these are the total numbers and Danville paid \$103 million.

*I'd just like to say this article is what got everybody decisive. I would suggest, and it's only my opinion, that moving the responsibility from one town to another is not the right method to move forward. When we were looking at a library in Atkinson and it got shot down 2 or 3 times, what we did is we'd form a joint task force of contractors, librarians, of the library people. We were able to reduce the cost by a half a million dollars. Not only did we do that, but people said you couldn't exist with a library less than 16,000 square feet. We were able, when we worked together, to work it down to 11,000 square feet and get the same amount of productivity out of that building.*

*My point in this is "We should be forming collectively, a task force, that goes up to the State House and helps us fund the unfunded mandates and the challenges that we have for our kids". I don't like this back and forth, Mr. Springer, any more than you do, and I got to tell you I understand when people are struggling, but we're all struggling. Each one of our communities, But, then again we want to keep our kids on the competitive edge when it comes to education. The things we're not touching base on are the infrastructure and some of the things that we're not addressing, because every year we feel as though we need to come in level-funded.*

*So, I think we all need to get together, work on it. I think each community, they can create their own little committees, if you will, and look at ways of driving the revenue and having revenue streams come into the district. Each community's got to do it individually, and then I think we've got to work together. Might I suggest the Selectmen and a group from the school board or the budget committees get together and work on these things, and go up to the Statehouse and say "Are you going to give us these unfunded mandates?" and "You want a great education?"*

*I'm in the college search right now with my son, and if you look at some of the in-state rates of some of the colleges on the west coast and in the mid-west, it's \$8000, \$9000 for in-state tuitions. In the state of New Hampshire, I believe UNH is the highest in-state university in the country.*

*The problem isn't here with us. We want to educate our kids. We want to do a good job, but we have to do our due diligence. We have to do our homework, and we've got to go up there and make proposals and inform our elected officials.*

*So, that's where I'd like to bring this. That's what I'd like to steer this discussion in that direction of how we work together collaboratively to drive revenue streams.*

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you, Jack. I have a gentleman who's been waiting, and then I'll get to you, Mrs. Green

David Kerns: I'm David Kerns from Plaistow. I've been a resident in Plaistow now for almost 50 years, so I've been here in the town since this district was formed, basically.

*What's interesting to me in reading some of the items of discussions in the press and other places about this proposal that the description of the way we're doing it now was somehow seems unfair. It struck me kind of interesting because, as you pointed out Madam Chair, in your presentation, that there were 5 amendments to the Articles of Agreement, all related to educational issues. Not related to financing. It struck me as that "Well, the structure was fair in '64, and in '74, and in '84, and in '94 and even 2004. Nobody made any real serious concerns about it, what Plaistow and Atkinson pays Plaistow had a 50% share at one point. So Plaistow an Atkinson probably paid 60% to 70% of the total cost of the district based on the per-student*

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method. Nobody in the other towns complained. Now the valuation that headcounts are balanced, they run between 22% and 30%, and the impact is felt more by these smaller towns. Now all of a sudden it's unfair.

My question is "How can something be fair for the district, and all of a sudden become unfair, and making it fair by transferring a large block of expenses to Atkinson and Plaistow?" I just have a real problem with that and that's why I oppose the change. Thank you.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Mrs. Green?

Mrs. Green: I'd like to clarify. To me, there's a confusion going about what town paid the most. There were two different numbers. There's the absolute number in taxes that each town paid, and then there's the cost per pupil that each town paid over the history of the district. So, what number are we talking about when we say that Plaistow or Atkinson paid the most to the district over the history?

John Sherman: The absolute number.

Mrs. Green: The absolute number. Okay, thank you.

John Sherman: I only brought that up because Mr. Consentino did. I just wanted to correct the information.

Mrs. Green: Okay, so the absolute number is greatest for Plaistow?

John Sherman: Absolutely.

Mrs. Green: Uh-huh. Nevertheless, it could be the case; the highest per pupil rate is Atkinson.

John Sherman: You might look at the graphs behind you.

Mrs. Green: Yeah, and it was. That's because Atkinson gets less government support than the other towns.

John Sherman: Sure.

Mrs. Green: It is, yeah.

John Sherman: Sure. If I could piggyback on what you're saying if you don't mind, as we are sitting here in this lovely PAC, which is a nice building and a great facility for the school district. If we were to build it right now, Atkinson would have to pay twice as much as the town of Sandown, even though Sandown has more students.

Mrs. Green: Right, because that's the capital formula.

John Sherman: You're taking that capital formula and spreading it across the operating costs, you can see the impact.

Mrs. Green: Correct.

Madam Chair Steenson: You're good.

Joshua Horns: Joshua Horns of Sandown, just a point of clarification. In the mid-90's, this was addressed. There was a committee formed and it actually went to vote to change the funding formula in the same way that it is right now. Thank you.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you.

Eric Beyrent: Eric Beyrent, Sandown. I'm more interested in the practical considerations of this proposal, this one article. It seems to me that if we were going to make changes as broad as this, we would want to have buy-in from the Selectmen across the 4 participating towns. We would want to have a committee made up of members from all 4 towns rather than having 1 person from 1 town put this petition together.

Did you, Mr. O'Neil, go through that process at all? Have you spoken and presented to all the Selectmen and formed a committee of any kind?

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Shawn O'Neil: *Well, you've got a lot of questions there.*

Eric Beyrent: *Sorry.*

Shawn O'Neil: *I'll address each one on its own. We as a Board of Selectmen for Danville, was a unanimous decision by us to put it all together. We have, as a Board of Selectmen, thought any town has no RSA rights to put a warrant article. Only the school board can do that. We could do that locally, but not as a school board. So, that would require someone to come before the school board and convince them.*

*Our Danville representative, Mr. Collins, is not here tonight. We actually started to introduce this whole concept to the school board and it was re-soundly received a negative review from that. At that point, I realized that it would be not worth my time or effort to go down that road to do that.*

*As Mr. Horns had just indicated, this whole process was actually done back in the mid 90's. Actually a warrant article was put before the voters. A committee was determined, and it was from representatives of all different towns. They came on up with changes to change the formula, because they could see the inaccuracies in the current formula. They recommended this. They put it in front of the voters and it was rejected by the voters.*

*That's where I think, and as you can see from the Plaistow Board of Selectmen, it's unanimous and it's just basically its dollars and cents. The ones that are going on up don't like it. I can understand that, but when you turn it around and you have a town that's going to come down \$6.00 a thousand just to be where everybody's paying the same exact rate for the county. Why isn't everybody up in arms? "Why are we paying for the Delta's and for Rye, in Portsmouth?" They should be up in arms. Why do they have to pay to subsidize our prisoners at the Rockingham County Jail, or our elderly at the Rockingham County Nursing Home?*

Eric Beyrent: *It seems like there was a lot of thought that went into putting the Articles of Agreement together. There was a committee. There were deliberations. They struck a balance. They came up with something together, and I don't see that process here.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Mrs. Delfino would like to weigh in.*

Mrs. Delfino: *Mr. Collins, who is one of the Danville representatives on the School Board, did make a presentation about this some time back, and as I recall in that presentation he showed a spreadsheet that detailed how other cooperative school districts in this state have set up their funding formula. Many of them are 100% ADM like we are, and many of them have a combination of ADM and EVP. I don't believe any of them were 100% based on property values.*

*This is a very radical shift, and it's not typical when you look at the state as a whole for other cooperative districts. I said, at that meeting, at the time, that I think this may be a worthwhile conversation to have and it sounds like this conversation was had back in the 90's. The fact that it failed in the 90's, to me, says that even more this needs to be a cooperative discussion. This isn't going to work when it's 1 town against everybody else. I understand in some respects this district is split. If you look at the way they vote goes on the budget every year, Danville and Sandown tend to vote it down. Atkinson and Plaistow tend to vote for it.*

*I've said before, we won't get very far as a district if we don't come to some kind of balance, but I don't think this is the way to do it. I think this is unnecessarily harsh. I think if something like this is going to happen, you do have to have a conversation. A lengthy conversation over time, to get buy-in, and I would think it would be something that would have to be introduced gradually if at all.*

*That's to clarify a little bit about what the discussion was with the School Board, and I think that, if anything, this is going to do more to split the district. I don't think in the long run that would be good for anybody.*

Jason Grosky: *Jason Grosky, town of Atkinson. Good evening everybody, and thank you everyone in the audience*

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who came out for this tonight. I think this is a very important issue, and as I've told residents in Atkinson, I think this is the single most important school-related issue. For residents in Atkinson and perhaps Plaistow as well, this is the single most important school-related issue that is on the ballot this year.

I echo what Mr. Bealo said, and what Mrs. Delfino said. This is something that is proposing a very drastic change from the way that business has been done over the course of 50 years and you cannot make or put forward such a drastic change by just hoisting in onto the ballot, without there being some real legitimate deliberation. When I mean deliberation, I'm not talking about us showing up at a public hearing 2 weeks before the vote comes up. What Mr. Collins proposed, and I believe Mr. Sapia might have said it as well, took some gumption to even throw the idea out there. The same is true for Mr. O'Neil. It takes some gumption because you've certainly got some residents in other towns that are not pleased with the way this has gone.

But, to start the discussion, even if Atkinson didn't like it, Plaistow didn't like it. Danville, Sandown didn't like it. You need to reach out to the elected leaders, to the officials in those towns, and see how we can work together to try and find a common result that we can all live in and work towards together.

That's something as I've seen in my meetings here at Timberlane, as I think you folks have seen, at times we do not get far without the art of compromise. The art of compromise is what you need to put something like this forward and try and get buy-in from voters across 4 towns.

I wanted to follow up on a couple of points that were made. One by Mr. O'Neil, I would tell you in my professional life, I deal with Rockingham County and county business all day long. Rockingham County's 37 communities, 300,000 people. We're talking about 4 towns, and our 4 towns are on the smaller side, maybe 25,000 people. Emulating and following the quote "the efficiencies of Rockingham County" is not something that I think is good for the Timberlane School District or our 4 towns. That's not something I want to model myself after, and if that's the case, maybe we should be reaching out to Rye, to Portsmouth, to Hampton, to Raymond, to Londonderry and maybe we start talking about a 37 community regional school district, all of Rockingham County. Of course I say that very facetiously because it's ridiculous, as is the notion of trying to follow the way Rockingham County taxes its' communities. It's ridiculous for us to try to emulate that.

This doesn't exactly answer Chief Consentino's question, but I think it gets it to the point in a way that we can all understand. Having gone through what the tax numbers are now presently, our present formula versus the proposal that's being put forward by Mr. O'Neil, I took a look at this and broke it down in a simple way. For example a home that is valued at \$300,000 in each town, now, a \$300,000 house in Plaistow might be different than an assessed \$300,000 house in Atkinson, Sandown and Danville. You might be able to buy more for your \$300,000 or for your assessed value of \$300,000 in one community compared to another, but in each of the communities if your home was valued at \$300,000 and this proposal was to go forward, residents in the town of Sandown, in a year, would see their tax bill fall by \$705.00. The town of Danville taxes would drop by \$1356.00. Then it comes to the "Well, who's going to pay for ... I've heard the word 'subsidize' used ... who's going to subsidize that?"

Well, that comes to Plaistow and Atkinson. Plaistow's taxes would jump \$210.00 a year if you have a home assessed at \$300,000, and if you're someone like me in Atkinson, if you live in a \$300,000 home there your taxes are going to go up \$753.00 to offset that. That's if you live in a \$300,000 house, let alone if you live in a \$200,000 or \$600,000, those numbers certainly go up or down on that same scale.

I'm very much against this. I would not just encourage voters in Atkinson and Plaistow to vote against this. I would encourage voters across our district to not support this. In the future I would hope, if and when this discussion comes back up, it's done with the attempt to try and get buy-in from the communities. To get input from other communities and find ways where we can

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*compromise and work on things together.*

*I thought it was very fitting the slide that Mr. O'Neil put up. He noted when he did so, the slide for Sandown, that the purple highlight on the slide was not his highlight. It was there already, but it was trying to put together a cooperative school district "without straining the economy of any one community". That was 50 years ago, and now you're asking us to do the exact opposite today. Thank you.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Mrs. Springer?*

*Maryann Springer: Yes, Maryann Springer from Danville*

*Madame Chair, could you refresh our memories on Mr. Collins' proposal on this issue?*

*Madam Chair Steenson: I don't have it with me. No, I'm sorry.*

*Maryann Springer: It wasn't as radical as the warrant Article, is that right?*

*Madam Chair Steenson: It was not, and I don't remember specifically what it was exactly. I think it was 80/20 but I cannot provide that information for you.*

*Maryann Springer: Something like that.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Yeah, exactly.*

*Maryann Springer: So, it was what many of you are promoting, which is a more moderate change, and I think I heard people saying that this should be done in a more thoughtful and progressive manner, not as a warrant article with such drastic change. Mrs. Delfino, I think you mentioned a discussion. What was the School Board's action on that proposal?*

*Mrs. Delfino: The School Board didn't take action. I don't know if it was unanimous, it was close to unanimous. They did not care for his proposal and there was no further discussion. I think that when some people, and maybe I'll speak for myself, but I think I'm speaking for some others when I say that people talk about getting more buy-in or having more conversation, I would envision representatives from all 4 towns; school board representatives, Selectmen, budget committee members, community members over the course of many months, if not a couple of years. This kind of buy-in discussion to really look at it from all sides before a warrant article is proposed. I think that's what some of us are suggesting, and I think that's one reason why there was no further discussion to Mr. Collins' presentation because it was another "solution out of a box".*

*Maryann Springer: I do hear what people are saying as to the effects of this warrant article being too drastic of a change to taxes and increase them into communities. They would also offset some tax burden that's pretty significant in the other two communities. In the spirit of everybody working together I think that has to be recognized. I'd like to hear some commitment to action from either individuals on the school board or the school board as a whole to get the conversation going, in case the warrant article does not pass. Thank you.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Mr. Sapia, and then I have people out here who want to speak.*

*Jack Sapia: I would just like to expand a little bit on what Jason said when he made the comparisons on the \$300,000 home. We ran a comparison... I'm not picking on one particular town, but the same exact home on the same exact piece of property that's on the market today, a house in Atkinson is on the market for \$74,000 more than the \$300,000 home in Danville. If you make those tax rates the same, there are so many moving parts to this. How do you make parody with that? Once again, shifting tax burdens back and forth, I really don't think that helps the situation. You asked for a commitment. If we put together that committee or that task force, I'd be more than happy to march up to Concord and do whatever we can. That may take us a year or 2 years, but if we stick with it we can get it done. Just like the library in Atkinson, we were able to fit the round peg in the square hole. We got it done and I believe it can be done.*

*I don't stand in favor of this article because what it really does is have two towns that have paid*

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*the most will have to pay more, and the 2 towns that have paid in the least will pay less. I think that's fundamentally unfair. I think there are different avenues we can go down to get relief for the tax burden. I'm a taxpayer. I don't like paying them, but we have to because we want the services. So, like I said, I think there are other avenues we should pursue besides something as radical as this. Thank you.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: I would like to remind people when I give them the chance to speak; I hope you'll have something new to bring to the conversation if you do choose to speak. Mrs. Springer, I am not opposed to the board initiating conversation if this warrant should fail and go from there. I want you to know I think it's a very good idea.*

*Mrs. Delfino wants to speak briefly*

*Mrs. Delfino: I just wanted to say "Sign me up". I'm happy to participate in any conversation in whatever capacity I can. There you go.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Mr. Sherman?*

*John Sherman: Still Vice Chairman of the Plaistow Board of Selectmen. Two new points I'd like to make: Number 1 is I've also been on the town budget committee for 25 years, and in that time I've never had one, not one, not a single person come to me and say "Gee, I wish more of my taxes were based upon my property value". The tendency seems to be, people not happy that their taxes are based on their property values.*

*My 2nd point which I think is a new point; I'd like to congratulate Shawn O'Neil for bringing this forward. This is a difficult subject to bring up. He is here representing his town and fighting for what he thinks is best in his town. I'm sure it's been a difficult situation and I think there's a lesson to be learned about how he has gone forward and presented this issue. He's done it without contention. There are other things that have been happening in our towns and in the school district as well, and they seem to be very contentious, and he's done a classy job as far as presenting this information and I thank him for that.*

*Kate Rochford: Hi. Kate Rochford, Atkinson. I just have one basic question. "Do we have a slide that shows how many students from which town were there in '66 compared to today?" Just to show the comparison.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: I do not. Mr. Bealo?*

*Mr. Bealo: I also do not have one. Again, same answer I gave Mr. Consentino. I don't have it that I can plug in and give you. I have it in my laptop. I'm happy to bring it up after this meeting and ... Maybe Mr. Sherman?*

*John Sherman: Thank you so much. I can answer that question. I used to work for the school district in the mid '70's. I ran the data processing department as it was called in those days, and I can tell you the percentage of students per town at that point in '76, let's say, was 50/30/10/10. Plaistow was almost exactly 50% of the student enrollment. Atkinson was almost exactly 30%. Sandown and Danville were each about 10, Sandown being a little bit more. Sandown was like 11 and Danville was like 9. So, for the most part, 50/30/10/10 was the split in the mid '70's.*

*Kate Rochford: And what are we today?*

*John Sherman: That was on the slide that was presented earlier. Plaistow was 31%. Sandown was 26. Atkinson was 23 and Danville was 20. Wrong numbers.*

*Mr. Bealo: Atkinson 23.*

*Madam Chair Steenson: Come to the microphone please.*

*Mr. Bealo: The ADM membership in Danville's was 19, Plaistow's 30 and Sandown's 26.9, so Atkinson would be 27%*

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Kate Rochford: Thank you.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Mrs. Green and then Mr. Springer

Mrs. Green: I do also want to commend Mr. O'Neil for standing up and drawing attention to a problem, because what you are drawing attention to is symptomatic of the fact that there is a strain on our 2 communities in this district. As I've said before, I don't think it has to do with how the tax is levied amongst the communities. I think it has to do with the fact that our budget is too large in absolute terms and it's becoming too great a burden.

As for the notion of compromise, there is a fundamental difference going on here amongst the towns. I'm not sure urging everyone to compromise and March off to Concord but, these statements underlie a particular political philosophy that not everyone shares.

I personally don't think this is an issue of funding at the state level. I think it's an issue of controlling our own budget so that we can live within the means of all the towns in our district.

Madam Chair Steenson: Mrs. Green, nobody here this evening has implied that their opinion is shared by anybody else. I just want to state that for the record. Mr. Springer?

Mr. Springer: I'd like to commend Shawn as well, especially in light of the things that were said just now because about 3 or 4 weeks ago or more, when I talked with him about this, I had some very particular concerns. For example, occurred between Mr. Consentino and I. My concern was that it was going to create exactly that type of response. It was going to bring these things right to the surface. While that can be productive, if it's handled properly, my expression to Shawn was, "You know what, I think we're looking at a symptom rather than a problem here".

I still feel that after listening to all of this evening. Mr. Sapia, I appreciate your comments, but it does concern me quite a bit when you refer to going to Concord and doing other things to find more funding sources. The reason for my concern is quite straightforward. When we go to Concord or when we go to the federal government for more funding sources, that's just taxes pure and simple. That's not like you're going out and building a product and selling it in the marketplace and getting more money for it. Not the same thing. We need to be extremely careful in the mindset.

Now, on the other hand, if we have a school system which is dropping in membership ... Pardon me, not membership, I shouldn't put it that way ... Enrollment, which it has. We do not have as many students here as we did just a short few years ago. If we truly do have an excellent school system, there is potentially a funding source that should be examined in this group that you're proposing. How can we attract students from other towns? This can be done. It does fall within the guidelines of law. What would those towns be willing to pay to have schools come to Timberlane?

I actually believe that we do have rather an excellent school here and that we really should be showcasing it. I do not want to see these divisions focusing on a symptom, the symptom being that we're not truly being nearly as efficient with our money as we should be. Nor should we ever, once again respectfully, be looking for more funding, which is another way of raising revenue source, rather than as you so eloquently indicated with the library example, doing something equally as good or even better with less in terms of space or allocation of sources.

Madam Chair Steenson: Wait, Mr. Sapia. We are not here to debate economic, let me speak please.

Jack Sapia: Just want to put it out there in reference to the group that you want to raise.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Thank you. We are not going to rebut. We are not here to debate economic ideology. We're not here to debate the current school budget. Those topics are relevant to some degree to the topic at hand, but we're here to discuss 1 warrant article. We have strong opinions and that's good. That's what makes this country great. However, I would like to stay at the topic at hand, and if anyone has anything more to say about this particular warrant article, I'm welcome to

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hear you speak.

Mr. Blair?

Mr. Blair:

*One side effect of this new proposal that hasn't been mentioned is when a town re-evaluates its value and goes through the assessment process. Even in light of having a flat school budget, if a town all of a sudden goes up in value because they do a reassessment, for no other reason than the assessment, they are going to incur more tax burden from the school. The other towns are going to benefit from their increase in property values.*

*The same is true if we go through evaluation and their town drops in value. Then all of a sudden the other 3 towns would incur an increase in taxes just because another town went through a re-evaluation. Imagine you purchased a car with 3 of your buddies. For example the way you decided how you would pay for the ongoing maintenance, upkeep and operating expenses on that car would be based on how much your house is worth rather than on how much you used the car.*

*Personally I am not in favor of this. Mr. O'Neil said something very interesting when he was reading from the Articles of Agreement. He said "We cannot do this alone". Yet, his proposal was done by a single town as opposed to the 4 towns that got together to make this district. I am in agreement that if we really want to explore this and we really want to change this formula, we need to get the buy-in of the 4 towns so that when it goes to a warrant article on the ballot, it could have been "Approved by the Selectmen, approved by the school board, and approved by the budget committee". Thank you.*

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you Mr. Blair. Mr. O'Neil?

Shawn O'Neil:

*I'd like to address a couple of statements that have been made. In regards to Mr. Blair's comment about a re-evaluation, the Department of Revenue does an equalized value. That is always 100% fair market value and that is an ongoing process all the time. It would be a moot point when the town would perform an re-evaluation of properties.*

*To address Mrs. Delfino's question about it being an erratic decision, or proposal, this proposal I do agree is unique. One of the questions it does add it takes all of the aid that every town gets and applies it to offsetting that. No other school district does that. It's just simply a ADM of this percentage, EPV this percentage and figure out the numbers and whatever it lies at. This is a different proposal and it is unique. I do agree with that, but it's definitely something to give fair consideration to. I yield the mike.*

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Sir

Leon Artus:

*Leon Artus, Atkinson. From what everything's been said tonight, is that the membership in the school is down. Atkinson and Plaistow's average daily enrollment is down. Sandown's and Danville's is up. Under the current way we're assessed is a percentage of property value and the amount of kids that go to school from each town. That's being taken away if this were to pass.*

*Atkinson and Plaistow have been the donor towns since the beginning of the school district. Now that our membership is down and their membership is up, they are asking us to take on a greater responsibility and continue to be a donor town. That isn't fair.*

*I think the bigger issue is this, and I don't know how Danville managed to get this on the school ballot, but they did. Now it's going to be voted on by all 4 towns when it should have been an individual town decision anyway.*

Madam Chair Steenson: No, we're following the law. We're following RSA. Not to worry about that.

Leon Artus: Well

Madam Chair Steenson: We don't have a choice.

Leon Artus: Well, that may be the case

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Madam Chair Steenson: *It is the case.*

Leon Artus: *But now what people aren't taking under consideration, is the real issue. It is on the ballot. If Atkinson and Plaistow does not have a strong voters turn out and Danville and Sandown do, having a conversation about this next year, if it doesn't pass, is mute because there's a very strong chance if that were to happen, this will pass this year. If that happens, because it is on the ballot and it was put forth by Danville, they just turned around and did themselves a favor and stuck it to Plaistow and Atkinson.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Thank you Mr. Artus.*

Leon Artus: *Well, I think the point is ... The issue is, this could very well pass if voters from Atkinson and Plaistow do not turn out. That was all because of Danville putting it on the school ballot.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *That is correct. Thank you.*

Leon Artus: *That's not fair.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *No. It is legal. Mr. Bealo?*

Mr. Bealo: *A couple closing points for me at least. Mr. Artus, I think that's why it behooves you to be working in Atkinson to turn out the vote, and me to be working in Plaistow to turn out the vote. I'm certainly doing that, and I hope you're doing that as well. I look at that as part of my job. I'm in the process of doing that. I have been doing that.*

Leon Artus: *I would like to work with you on that.*

Mr. Bealo: *Well, just, you do Atkinson and I'm doing Plaistow. We're good.*

Leon Artus: *We are trying to do that? Unfortunately*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Mr. Bealo has the floor. Can he finish and then I'll recognize you again if you choose to speak? Mr. Bealo, would you*

Mr. Bealo: *I wanted to go into a totally different point*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Thank you.*

Mr. Bealo: *Which is there was a call to have school board members commit to working on this formula in the future should this fail, and try to come with another option? In some people's minds more equitable. I'll just say different. I guess I want to take a contrarian view that I wouldn't, because I don't think it should be the school board doing this. It should be the Selectman of all the 4 towns, maybe with school board members helping them accomplish this task. This is not a school board issue, and as much I know as Mr. O'Neil doesn't recognize this, a good chunk of the problem is how land use has been done differently in all 4 towns over time. The school board cannot touch that. I can't even comment on it as well as our Vice Chair of the Plaistow Broad of Selectman. Mr. Sherman, who's still here and still Vice Chair, I believe can. I do believe it's really more of a Selectmen issue.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Thank you Mr. Bealo. Again, I would like to encourage anyone who would like to speak to keep in mind that we have heard a lot tonight, and we've heard some repetition ... And we've been going about 90 minutes, so if someone has something new and or different to add I would encourage them to step forward.*

Mr. Artus: *I would like to comment on his comment.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *Name. You need to*

Mr. Artus: *Leon Artus from Atkinson, we are working in Atkinson to do that. It's not an easy job to educate the public, the whole town of Atkinson in a very short period of time. Keep in mind a lot of our people are snowbirds. They go south, and they're taking absentee ballots. If they look at that ballot as an absentee ballot and they're in Florida or wherever, so much of those warrant*

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articles, spending warrant articles are so difficult to understand. Particularly this discussion we are having this evening. The way Mr. O'Neil presented it was "Is it going to be fair across the board". That's not true, but they're not going to understand that. So, if they just take his word that it's going to be equal across the towns, "Oh that sounds good". It could pass, and that's where we are going to take it on. We've always been the donor town, and now you want me to go out and educate everybody in Atkinson before March 10th?

Madam Chair Steenson: Mr. Artus

Mr. Artus: Wish me luck on that, but it's probably not going to happen.

Madam Chair Steenson: No one is asking you to do that, but we wish you luck with it if that's what you choose to do.

Mr. Artus: No, he did.

Madam Chair Steenson: Great.

Mr. Artus: He asked me to work with him and I'll work in Atkinson to do that ...

Madam Chair Steenson: Okay.

Mr. Artus: He did say that. That's going to be a difficult task. The big danger here is, because it's on the school ballot, this could pass and you won't be having a conversation next year on how to make it fair because it's already going to be done.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you. Ms. Johansen?

Jo Johansen: Jo Johansen, Danville. I have a question. Has this been approved by legal counsel and is legal?

Madam Chair Steenson: Yes.

Jo Johansen: If this passes, is it binding?

Madam Chair Steenson: Yes, yes it is.

Jo Johansen: It is binding?

Madam Chair Steenson: Yes.

Jo Johansen: Thank you.

Madam Chair Steenson: You're welcome.

Mr. Bealo: They need 2/3's majority to pass.

Madam Chair Steenson: That is correct. We need a 2/3's majority across the district to pass. Not a simple majority. Mr. Consentino?

Mr. Consentino: I don't know if this is anything that you people will be getting directly involved in. It's specifically for Atkinson, but it directly affects the Timberland Regional School District all together. My memory serves me right that I thought it was so far out in left field that I just sort of let it go, but I guess it's still there, that a petition warrant article was put in for the town of Atkinson to get out of the Timberlane Regional School District. From what I've heard in the past, if that happens the town of Atkinson has to buy or build a new high school because we won't be in it. There is a cost effect that the Timberlane Regional District has with the Academy School that the town of Atkinson would have to pay back to the district. Has it come across to you people at all pertaining to that warrant article? If not, Mr. Artus' the one that put it in. Maybe he can explain why he wants Atkinson to secede from it. Thank you.

Madam Chair Steenson: I don't think the board is going to comment on that. Mr. Artus, is that your warrant article?

Mr. Artus: Yes.

Madam Chair Steenson: Would you like to speak very briefly to it?

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Mr. Artus: Yes, there are other alternatives than to be part of the Timberland Regional School District. That warrant article speaks directly to studying the feasibility of leaving the Timberlane Regional School District. There are many other alternatives that need to be explored, and have been used by other towns, by the way, in the state of New Hampshire who have withdrawn from their school districts and have accomplished it very effectively. A better education for less cost we need to study that.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you.

Mr. Artus: This is not a warrant article to withdraw but, it's a warrant article to study the withdrawal.

Madam Chair Steenson: Thank you for clarifying that, and since this evening is really about a different warrant article, Mr. Consentino, if you have any further questions on that issue please feel free to contact Mr. Artus directly yourself.

Madam Chair Steenson: Mr. Sherman.

John Sherman: I'm sorry to get up again, but it's new information. She just asked if this warrant article was in effect binding?

Madam Chair Steenson: If we really have to do it, if it passes.

John Sherman: It's a citizen-submitted warrant article, right?

Madam Chair Steenson: Correct.

John Sherman: Have you folks done a legal opinion as to whether that is legally binding?

Madam Chair Steenson: We have.

John Sherman: And?

Madam Chair Steenson: It is.

John Sherman: Legally binding. Even though it's citizen-submitted?

Madam Chair Steenson: Correct. I'm beginning to regret the fact that I saved the district a few dollars by not having our attorney here this evening, but again every time we call an attorney in, we pay. I have documentation at home, at the SAU, we have consulted our counsel to great extent on this issue. I do regret that he's not here this evening. I just didn't want to pay him to come again.

John Sherman: That's fine. Thank you.

Madam Chair Steenson: Certainly.

Mr. Consentino: May we have a copy of that written opinion?

Madam Chair Steenson: Can you have a copy? You can make a request if you'd like.

Mr. Consentino: Well, I'd like it put on the Timberlane School Board website, that legal opinion, so we can all see it.

Madam Chair Steenson: I'll talk to the superintendent when he comes back into town.

Mr. Consentino: Okay.

Madam Chair Steenson: Anything further? I would like to adjourn.

Shawn O'Neil: One last thing

Madam Chair Steenson: Sir.

Shawn O'Neil: Is that I'd like to actually request that if I provide the school board with that 1964 report to the voters, which I think you should probably already have in their archives somewhere. If you do have that, it's a wealth of knowledge and I think it really gives an insight into what things were like back in that time frame. I'd like to forward it to the SAU to actually be part of the district's

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documents.

Madam Chair Steenson: *That would be great. Can you email that to me and Dr. Metzler?*

Shawn O'Neil: *Yep.*

Madam Chair Steenson: *That would be fantastic. Thank you.*

*If there's nothing new to add tonight, I want to thank everyone for coming this evening and making an effort to really care about your district and the decisions that are made. We really appreciate your involvement and please drive safely going home. And we're adjourned.*