

Arundel – Reorganization Planning Committee (RPC)
Public Information Memo #4
October 5, 2007

Arundel Citizens:

Many, many meetings have been held with both **RSU 57** (Arundel, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport) and with **RSU 56** (Arundel, Saco/Dayton/OOB) in the last six weeks. So many meetings that your Arundel Regional Planning Committee has been out an average of 3 nights a week, every week, trying to keep up with rapidly evolving events. We have been trying to consolidate the factors important to this decision by separating fact from fiction, ‘knowns’ from unknowns, and documenting the results into a Decision Matrix. Like any major decision about the future, there are always unknowns and uncertainties.

- 1) First and foremost, this is **primarily a decision about the long term future of the educational opportunity for Arundel’s K-5 children.**
- 2) High School **CHOICE is expected to remain intact permanently** (subject only to State legislative change).
- 3) The **Middle School CONTRACT is expected to be honored by all parties for its full term, including the new RSU.**

Current Status

Recent meetings with the two RSUs may give you a flavor of the discussions we have been holding with each group. The two most recently documented meeting minutes are included for your review.

RSU 57

RSU 57 MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2007

Attendance: Maureen King, Jack Reetz, Dana Peck, Gayle Spofford, Pamela Richard-Wuerthner, Jason Nedeau, Leslie Whitney, Joel Downs, Jon Renell, Steve Kingston and Stuart Barwise.

MSAD71 and Arundel met at 7:00 p.m.

The committee reviewed the letter of intent with Kennebunk and Arundel. The MSAD71 letter of intent with Arundel has been approved by the commissioner. Jon Renell said that both letters of intent with Arundel/MSAD71 and Arundel/Saco/Dayton/OOB have been approved. Dana Peck said Arundel is now on a parallel course with Arundel/MSAD71 and Arundel/Saco/Dayton/OOB. Arundel is looking at financials and individual items on the plan with Saco/Dayton/OOB. The Arundel School Board will make a decision on who to go with at their October 10, 2007 meeting. Jack Reetz said the first task of the Arundel/Saco/Dayton/OOB financial group is to address the 50% cut in administration. In administration, Arundel pays approximately \$204 per student. A number of Arundel community members are not sure where Arundel will fit best. Once budgets are lined up, there will be a clearer picture. There was a discussion on the makeup of the RSU 57 Board. What would the representation from each community look like? Mr. Peck reported that Saco uses wards, would RSU57 create wards?

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He said looking at the four towns (Arundel/Saco/Dayton/OOB) no one town could carry the other three. The makeup could be Saco/OOB – one ward; Saco/Arundel – one ward, and Saco/Dayton – one ward.

John Sharood reported that MSAD71 has not had a formal meeting on the next steps because they are waiting for Arundel's decision. MSAD71 wants to pursue only one plan, and that is with Arundel. John Sharood is concerned that Arundel is working parallel plans until the end of the planning process. John asked what MSAD71 could do to help Arundel arrive at their decision. Dana Peck said there is a meeting with Arundel/Saco/Dayton/OOB on Thursday to look at comparisons; they will have a better idea after that meeting. Jon Renell said initial concerns are what it will cost Arundel to be part of an RSU. What will happen to their school? What type of representation in the RSU will they have? Will they keep the middle school contract with Thornton? Saco promised Arundel they would not close any school for at least five years. Pamela Richard-Wuerthner said the only way a school can be closed is if the community decides, not the RSU. Jack Reetz said the top priority is the education of the kids.

Gayle Spofford said the current MSAD71 School Board has never had a vote where Kennebunk has voted against Kennebunkport, not all votes are unanimous, but the weighted vote has never been used, in recent history. She doesn't understand why representation on a Board would be an issue. Dana Peck said it has to be addressed but it is not a deal breaker. He wants to know how we can work together with equity. John Sharood said the concept of autonomy needs to be understood. The RSU needs to become one unified school system. The Board does not decide how the taxes are shared in the community because that is up to the selectman. Pamela Richard-Wuerthner said the ultimate goal is to have one board, one unified school system, and education of all of our children. We need to convince the public this needs to happen. John Sharood pointed out that MSAD71 has been a district since 1968 and knows no other way of doing business. He said that Jim Rier has made it very clear that Arundel will have high school choice and be able to retain their middle school contract with Thornton Academy, whether they join an RSU or not. During the next nine years, only the selectman can change the contract with Thornton Academy. There will be a conversation about the renewal of this contract in four years. When the contract expires, the decision then becomes the responsibility of the RSU. Jon Renell asked how the funding for school choice will be broken down, is it a debt Arundel will own? John Sharood said the cost of school choice will become part of the RSU funding formula. If the cost of school choice exceeds the state average, then the overage will be the responsibility of Arundel. If Arundel parents wanted their students to stay in MSAD71 for middle school, they would have to pay the state set tuition. Jack Reetz said Arundel went with Thornton because it was cheaper than building a new middle school. In the Thornton Middle School contract there is no minimum number of Arundel students, there is a maximum of 350. Maureen King asked who would negotiate the Thornton contract in four years, the RSU or the selectman. John Sharood understood from Jim Rier that it was up to the voters of Arundel to decide on which way to go, and it was up to the selectman to negotiate the contract because in four years there will be no school board in Arundel. Dana Peck said he couldn't speak for all selectman, but the decision to continue the contract would be by a referendum vote, it would be a community decision.

Dana Peck said some selectman look at finances and some like him look at the educational outcome of students. Jack Reetz said he is on the Budget Board in Arundel but he also looks at educational outcome for students. John Sharood said the educational outcome of students is MSAD71's number one priority, and the second priority would be to deliver education in a cost efficient manner. Mr.

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Sharood said it is MSAD71s philosophy to make decisions using data and research, and this makes it easier to justify decisions to the community and students. The Board hashes out facts before making a decision and this takes the drama out of Board meetings. Dana Peck said that Jack Reetz has run spreadsheets, K-5, on how Arundel compares to MSAD71 in MEA scores. They will use this information as they go through their analysis, and at this time there is very little data to compare. Both Arundel and MSAD71 have begun to use the NWEA test, which will have more data to compare in the future.

Gayle Spofford said that MSAD71 and Wells/Ogunquit are moving forward with collaboration talks. There will be a meeting on October 2 at 5:00 in Wells. The discussion will include collaboration discussion about transportation, sharing high school courses, incorporating York County Community College, special education, grounds, and sharing equipment.

There is concern regarding facilities. There is a Facilities Reorganization Committee looking into MSAD71 facilities. They are in the middle of doing their research, and there are no answers yet. They will report their findings to the MSAD71 School Board on November 5. If a school were to be closed it would take at least two years after the RSU forms, and it is a long and involved process that has a lot of community input. Jon Renell asked about the portables at the high school. John Sharood said MSAD71 is looking for ways to eliminate the portables. Jon Renell asked if there are extra rooms at the middle school. Tom Farrell said the middle school is full, for the time being. Maureen King said that is where the bubble is right now. Jack Reetz said Arundel was surprised that Saco guaranteed to keep Mildred L. Day School open for five years. The community cares about keeping the school in Arundel open. There has been a lot of misinformation about renovating the school. It was stated, at a previous meeting, that it would cost a couple million dollars to renovate and this is not true. Jon Rennell said nine years ago the Mildred Day School was gutted and renovated, except for the roof. The community is looking at about \$140,000 in repairs. They have \$40,000 in reserve and need to come up with \$100,000, which is a far cry from the 2 million suggested at another meeting. John Sharood said an engineering survey of the school would need to be done at some point. He pointed out that two years ago MSAD71 had engineering reviews done on their schools.

John Sharood said Kennebunk citizens are concerned that consolidation with Arundel will increase taxes. Dana Peck said it would cost approximately \$780,000 to bring Arundel teachers up to the level of MSAD71 teachers. He asked how this burden would get distributed. John Sharood said a lot of work will need to be done and each contract will have to be looked at individually. The increase would be picked up per capita, and the RSU can't change that. Jon Renell asked if MSAD71 had a community meeting on consolidation. John Sharood said all Board meetings are televised; there is a Finance Committee that community members are part of, there is a School Budget Committee with the town and MSAD71, and community members are active in MSAD71 committee work. Leslie Whitney has watched the MSAD71 Board for the past five years and commented on how transparent they are. She asked if Arundel would be involved in these committees if they became part of the RSU. John Sharood said they would because all committee's are district-wide. Maureen King said that MSAD71 also has advisory committee's, in each school, and Board committee's with community membership. Gayle Spofford said the creation of the School Board agenda comes from the community. She said the Board relies on the community because they can't look at everything.

Dana Peck wondered if a student lived on the Kennebunkport/Arundel line would they go to Consolidated School or would there be an added cost for transportation to bring these students to

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Mildred Day School. Maureen King said this could become an issue if a lot of students were involved and it would have to be worked out with transportation. Dana Peck pointed out that the dynamics of the Mildred Day School will change. John Sharood said that some kids could be grandfathered to say at Mildred Day School no matter where they lived. Steve Kingsbury said some students may have to be shifted to keep a community school open. Dana Peck wondered if Consolidated School was overcrowded, could some of those students go to Mildred Day School. John Sharood said if you look at this from a transportation standpoint, town lines don't make sense, and they never have.

There was a discussion on curriculum. MSAD 71 has standardized their curriculum and it is K-12. How do you work out which curriculum is best? These questions need to be answered. John Sharood said you can't tell the difference between Kennebunk/Kennebunkport students and Arundel students once they hit the high school. The Board does not get involved in curriculum planning until after the administrators have developed a plan, they then bring the plan to the Curriculum Committee, and they in return report to the Board. The Board then endorses or does not endorse the proposed curriculum plan. All curriculum brought to the Board is well researched and thorough. Tom Farrell said that professional development is a priority in the MSAD71 budget. No teachers teach something new without professional development. If there are high expectations for teachers, they must have professional development. Also, new curriculum is tested with pilot programs. It is the administrators' job to inform the community on how the district assesses their school system. MSAD71 has a great team and Arundel would be part of that team. Leslie Whitney pointed out that the Board is open-minded about curriculum; an example is the IB program at the high school and middle school. Gayle Spofford asked how Arundel assesses staff. She said MSAD71 has spent a lot of time developing an assessment tool to help teachers become the best they can or to develop a plan to help them become the best they can. Arundel does have an assessment tool with performance expectations. Tom Farrell said the evaluation tool MSAD71 uses is simple and easy to use. In MSAD71 the superintendent also has a performance tool that has goals and objectives that are presented to the Board.

It was suggested that this committee tour all the facilities in MSAD71 and Arundel.

Saco/Arundel/Dayton/OOB did not start discussions until the financials came in, and the group is digging into details now. The MSAD71/Arundel group is at the right level of discussion, and it is a small group. Jon Renell wondered if a facilitator should be hired while the committee is in the planning stages, because it would take the weight off the co-chairs. Maureen King wondered if we could pick a facilitator or would one be assigned. Dana Peck thought the facilitators were already booked. Maureen King pointed out that this committee stepped out alone and kept moving forward. She did not see the sense in hiring a facilitator at this point and trying to bring them up to speed. She thought the committee could figure things out for themselves. It was agreed not to hire a facilitator.

John Sharood said he could still do the financial analysis for the committee, but could no longer be a co-chair due to work commitments. A new co-chair will be decided at the next meeting. The data John works with comes from Jim Barnes and his team, and they are a good team.

MSAD71 will now wait for Arundel's decision. A tour of the buildings will be the next event.

Pamela Richard-Wuerthner wondered how an RSU Board was picked. John Sharood said the law gives three choices: Wards, At Large, or Weighted Vote. Arundel is looking at wards if they join Saco. John

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Sharood thought a 10/12 member RSU board would be reasonable, the same configuration as the MSAD71/Arundel RSU Committee. MSAD71's Board is represented by town, and that is never a 50/50 split. If it comes down to it, there is a weighted vote and this hasn't happened in several years.

Audience members – Saco has promised to keep Mildred Day School open for five years, and this becomes a selling point. How far is the RSU57 going to guarantee keeping the school open? How do we clear up the rumor that Kennebunk is going to close Arundel? Jon Renell said some people are not even aware of consolidation. John Sharood suggested we reach out to PTA groups and rotary groups to get feedback. In the future, there will be a survey asking for parent input. There is no data available to make any guarantees about keeping a school open, or closing a school. John Sharood said that no school can be closed or a new school built unless it goes before the voters. Dana Peck said he is not in favor of the five year guarantee; everything can change in five years. Steve Kingston pointed out that each town has a vested interest in their schools. Each community is in the same boat. No one is driving the bus, we are all working together. Jon Renell said that the bottom line is what is best for the children.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

RSU 56

Regional Planning Committee Minutes

September 13, 2007

Members Present:

Gerald Clockedile, Facilitator
David Galli, School Board Saco
Michael Lafortune, Supt. Saco
Ron Morton, City Council Saco
Alan Cartwright, Resident Saco

Sheila Dube, Resident, Dayton
Lisa Morse, School Board Dayton
Peter Flaherty, Resident OOB
Rick Mathews, Supt. OOB
Roxanne Frenette, Town Council OOB

Sharri MacDonald School Board OOB
David Lane, Selectman Arundel
Lynn Cote, School Board Arundel
Alan Richard, School Board Arundel
Jack Reetz, Arundel Resident

A meeting of the Regional Planning Committee was held Thursday, September 13, 2007 at Saco City Hall.

Dave Galli opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes from the September 5, 2007 meeting were approved with one change.

Dave Galli reviewed the items on the agenda and thanked the Superintendents for all their assistance in gathering the requested information for the committees. Dave also stated that the only agreement that has been decided, is to meet regularly.

Dave Galli brought up the concern of smaller schools being closed. He suggested a proposal that would become a part of the final plan stating: No school could be closed for 5 years unless the community in which the school is located decides to close it. The 5 yrs would start when the RSU begins.

Jake confirmed that it is possible to write the proposal into the plan.

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Saco, Old Orchard Beach and Dayton reported that their Letter of Intent for this RSU had been approved by the Commissioner. Arundel's Superintendent wasn't there to report if they had been approved.

Jake informed the committee of a provision in the law stating that RSU's can create local School Committees for Site Based Management, but the Budget would be off limits.

Lisa passed out an updated Financial Template - which at this time shows Saco at a disadvantage.

She also passed out a draft worksheet that the committee could use to build on. The spreadsheet was a comparison of the four districts Administrative costs and possible ways to cut 50%.

Jake stated that the guideline being used as a basis for the Administrative costs is based on \$204 per student, based on the EPS. You can spend above the EPS, but the town/RSU will have to make up the difference.

When writing the plan for this RSU, the committee needs to include what will happen if one town drops out. All items and issues need to be specific in the plan.

The committee split up into the four groups to look at the gathered information.

- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Establishment of the RSU Board
- Descriptive Introductory Data
- Financial Analysis

At 8:45 the committee reconvened and each group reported on their progress.

Finance - Ron Morton reported each member had been given an assignment. This committee will be meeting on Sept. 19th to work on the Financial plan.

Descriptive Data - Lynn Cote reported the information gathered from each community will be put together on one map for better comparison.

Collective Bargaining - Rick Mathews reported the group had broken up into sub-committees. Sub Committee reports included a comparison of Health Ins which was very close ranging from 89% to 100% for single coverage, Professional Development reimbursement averaged about 12 credits, Workdays 180-182, Sick leave 15 yearly with total accumulation ranging from 145-180, Personal 3-4 days, Bereavement & ILF 5 days. Contracts are being compiled in order to be compared.

RSU Board - Dave Galli reported the committee would like to hire a Demographer to help achieve equality in the wards. They are also requesting Vision Statements from each town to form a 20/20 Vision Statement.

Meetings Scheduled:

Wednesday - September 26, 2007

Thursday - October 11, 2007

Wednesday - October 24, 2007

Minutes prepared by:

Lynn Ouellette, Transcriber

Respectfully submitted by:

Michael Lafortune, Superintendent

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Finally, assuming you've read this far, the next **MOST IMPORTANT** meetings are posted on the school website. We hope you can attend.