LRP
Tuesday, December 3, 2019
4:45 PM

In attendance: Joe Phelan, Tom Burnell, Diane Lyons, Steve Jenkins, Jaclyn Savolainen

Jaclyn asked the committee about past consideration or discussion of school mergers, since it came up as a discussion post on Facebook last week. The Long Range Planning Committee has not pursued a formal merger study, as these take years leading up to a multi-school district vote, and factors in property tax rates differences, state aid calculations, combined wealth ratios, transportation distances, sports, etc., are often considerations that do not favor the success of merger studies and votes. Both districts have to be interested in merging, and since Red Hook was not interested in merging with a closer district when the issue was raised quite a few years ago, the Committee didn’t think it made sense within our mission of a 3-5 year plan to formally perform the costly study required before a merger vote of two school districts. In the discussion, it was noted that Germantown and Webutuck are successful school districts significantly smaller than Rhinebeck, so the Committee felt that we can continue to be successful as a standalone district with necessary adjustments, especially in light of recognitions of excellence that Rhinebeck CSD has received over the previous years.

The Committee also discussed the letter and graphs that are being prepared to be sent to school staff in preparation of the Long Range Planning Committee’s “listening sessions.” The letter and graphs are to be finalized by the next LRP meeting and to be distributed to staff prior to winter break. The tentative dates for these after-school “listening sessions” on long range planning will be either January 7th or January 9th.

Joe discussed his meetings with the three building principals around the topic of declining enrollment and possible school restructuring options since the last LRP meeting. A suggestion of a K-4, 5-8, 9-12 structure was discussed, but ultimately the Committee felt that this might just shift the problem to other buildings and doesn’t solve for declining enrollment pressures and full-time staff. The administrators also felt that they could keep things the same and continue to share staff across the middle and high schools. The Committee asked Joe to explore the development of mock master schedules when there are 3 sections in the middle school, so we can access how realistic this would be in keeping the middle school pedagogy intact.

Due to the additional research needed within the context of structure options, the December LRP presentation will be delayed until early next year.

Next LRP meeting: December 12

Respectfully submitted: Steve Jenkins