

Strategic Planning Committee

Meeting Summary (1-23-07)

The committee convened at 7:30 pm. All committee members were present.

We discussed the goals of the committee and why the committee was formed:

Goal: To list and examine the most likely school consolidation options, and to list and examine shared services options.

Why?: As responsible public servants, we should always be looking for ways to improve services and/or lower costs. Also, bills that are about to be signed into law in Trenton may lead to a State of NJ commission with the power to recommend consolidation of small towns and require that votes be taken in those towns on whether to consolidate.

The goal of this committee will be fact-finding in nature. When we have finished our work, we will not recommend whether to consolidate or share services, but we will have gathered much useful data to guide citizens and policy-makers.

We listed the following **consolidation options**:

- I. Status quo. Keep Califon School as an independent K-8 district.
- II. Merge with a nearby school district
 - a. Lebanon
 - b. Tewksbury
- III. Merge all three districts
- IV. Create a K-12 district
 - a. Voorhees and all its sending districts
 - b. Voorhees/North and all their sending districts
- V. Instead of starting with what we have in place, pretend that we were starting from scratch. Design an ideal school system that delivers the highest quality education at the lowest cost. Then decide how to get from where we are now to the proposed ideal.

We listed the following **shared services options**:

Curriculum Planning	Shared Business Administrator
Joint Purchasing	Shared Child Study Team
Joint Professional Development	Shared Special Services
Maintenance, Building & Grounds	Shared CSA
Joint Health Insurance, Joint Other Insurance	
Computer and Technology Services	

When considering the various options of merging with a nearby district or districts, we should gather facts of what would happen if we closed Califon School, or if we kept Califon as a K-8 neighborhood school serving a geographic portion of the new enlarged district, or turned Califon School into an intermediate school serving 1 or 2 grade levels of the enlarged new district.

If Califon remained a small K-8 school option within a larger district that had elementary and middle schools, the presence in one district of completely different school models (large v small, K-8 v elementary/middle) can result in parental complaints about equity (e.g. “why can’t my children go to _____”). The ability to shift boundaries of what child goes to which school within a larger school district has the advantage of optimizing class size, but may result in parental complaints as well (e.g. “I want my younger children to go to the same school that their older siblings went to”).

We mentioned that since we do not represent a quorum of the school board or the town council, we can e-mail each other, gather data and communicate ideas between meetings.

Zee offered to contact Lebanon Township to gather some information. Duncan offered to communicate with leaders at the high school.

We adjourned at 9 pm. Our next meeting is on Tuesday, Feb. 6.