

Article 8 Community Advisory Committee
Interim Report
November 30, 2020

The Sunapee Community Advisory Committee has continued our work as directed by Article 8 which was approved by the Sunapee voters last March. As a diverse Committee of 9 volunteers, we represent many different points of view, and have worked hard over the last 5 months to converge on some issues which we hope can provide useful guidance to the School Board.

To that end, we took votes at our November 24th meeting on the issues on which the Committee and Subcommittees have spent the most time. It is the intent of this document to communicate the Committee's current thinking to the School Board.

- The Committee members share the view that our school system and the education that happens here is special in many ways. The only thing we agreed upon unanimously was that keeping Sunapee a K-12 district is a priority.
- There was also a notable preference within our Committee that it might be wise to delay any warrant articles for a year. The vote was 6 in favor of waiting, 2 opposed, and one who said he would need more information (abstained). This would give additional time for research and due diligence about issues and trends caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including but not limited to the evolving technology, an increase in homeschooling and charter schools, and population trends. It was felt by some that such a delay might make sense financially as well, given that The Sunapee Safety Services building will be paid off in 2022.
- We agreed that the District should aggressively pursue attracting qualified students from surrounding towns that will thrive in our educational environment. The tuition students should fit into our current desired class sizes, and should not require any additional faculty, staff or facilities. This is viewed as a long term plan and it is realized that it may take several years to have significant impact. The thinking is that additional tuition students will provide budget relief, put us more in control of school size, and increase the long term financial viability of Sunapee Schools
- The Committee took a vote on two current projects being considered by the School Board for the renovation of and/or addition to the current Sunapee Central Elementary School. The larger (\$10.6 million project) was viewed favorably by 6 committee members, unfavorably by 3. (It is our understanding that this proposed renovation would address the fire and life safety issues and have a new heating and ventilation system. This would be the most comprehensive solution and would focus on the priority of the health and safety of our students and staff.)
- In the event that the \$10.6 million proposal should fail to gain the necessary support within the community, the Committee slightly favored (5-4) the idea of spending an estimated \$5.1 million to renovate Sunapee Central Elementary without an addition. Some feel this is a band aid solution and that we would be back trying to find an alternative solution again in a few years.

- It is the Committee's understanding that, as a result of Tuesday November 24's meetings with Aries, it does not look like there is sufficient space (without significant expensive site work) to have modular buildings for the Elementary school. Therefore, the Committee did not vote to express our feelings about this. Perhaps with additional time, this could be an area to be further explored by the School Board.
- Some on the Committee felt that additional consideration should be given to a long term plan to convert the existing SMHS facility to a K-12 facility. Can the interior structure be changed and/or enhanced to accommodate the anticipated numbers? It is understood that trying to accommodate all Sunapee students in a single facility may be somewhat at odds with increasing the size of our school through bringing in additional tuition students.
- There was a general sense that the Sunapee community would be well served if the Sunapee Schools and the Town of Sunapee would work more closely together to explore possibilities for savings and/or cost leveling by exploring joint procurement, timing of projects, as well as other cost saving measures and efficiencies.

We thank the Sunapee School Board for forming this Advisory Committee and allowing our group to volunteer to help find solutions in the best interests of both the students and the taxpayers. We feel our work has been productive and has been a voice of the community. We thank the Board for their cooperation with our Committee as well.

It is our intent to continue to meet as a Committee and we welcome any feedback from the School Board, School Administrators as well as community members that will inform our work. The Committee is also open to adding additional volunteers as our work continues.