

**TOWN OF OLD ORCHARD BEACH
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2008 - 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL CHAMBERS**

A Special Town Council Meeting of the Old Orchard Beach Town Council was held on Tuesday, September 23, 2008 in the Town Hall Chamber. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The Chairman indicated that a presentation would be made this evening by the Regional Planning Committee for proposed Regional School Unit 56.

Present were:

**Chairman James Long
Councilor Roxanne Frenette
Councilor Shawn O'Neill
Councilor Robin Dayton
Councilor Sharri MacDonald
Town Manager Stephen Gunty
Assistant Town Manager V. Louise Reid**

A Regional Planning Committee (RPC) made up of members from Saco, Old Orchard Beach and Dayton Consolidated Schools have been regularly meeting to comply with L.D. 499 (school consolidation). The members include an elected official, a school board member and a community representative from each of the three towns. The purpose of this committee is to form Regional School Unit 56.

Members of the RPC Committee attending were:

**Old Orchard Beach: Gary Curtis
Peter Flaherty
Jack Turcotte – Superintendent**

**Saco: Dave Galli
Ron Morton
Shirley Jones
Alan Cartwright
Mike LaFortune, Superintendent**

**Dayton: Millie Tuttle
Lisa Morse
Jim Trask**

Members of the Old Orchard Beach School Board attending were:

**Kay Dutton
Deborah Evans
Laura Bolduc
Dennis Robillard
Patricia Clark**

Members of the committee spoke including Gary Curtis who started off the presentation by indicating that the reason we are here this evening is that it is the law. Maine law requires that all schools participate in an administrative reorganization plan. This is the plan and this is the plan with its attendant research and supporting comments. The law and ballot question both call this administrative reorganization. The RPC (Regional Planning Committee) was charged with crafting a plan for the communities of Saco, Dayton and Old Orchard Beach. The plan had to be in compliance with the law, had to provide a quality educational experience for the students of the three communities, and had to make every attempt to provide this educational experience in a fiscally responsible manner. We believe we have done the job we were charged with doing. We believe the savings this plan envisions will enable the delivery of an enhanced educational experience for both our students and our teachers. No local schools are to close, no teachers will be let go. It did not take us long to learn that the folks in Saco and Dayton are just as serious and just as committed to providing a quality educational experience for their young people as we are in Old Orchard Beach. It cannot be stressed too much. We are talking about an administrative reorganization. Geographically, economically and socially the sharing of our schools' administrative functions offers an ideal opportunity for Old Orchard Beach, Saco and Dayton to make dramatic strides in the quality of education offered to our young people. Again, what will not change are the schools in each of the communities will not close. The teachers in those schools will continue as now. The sports programs will continue as they are now. The Seagulls will play in the same leagues and in the same class and will retain its Old Orchard Beach identity. The music programs and marching bands will continue as they do now. Other uses such as little league, soccer leagues, town recreation programs will continue as they are now. Parent Teachers Organizations and Booster Clubs and their events will continue as they are now. Old Orchard Beach High School graduation ceremonies and certificates of graduation will continue as they are now. Gifted and talented and AP courses will be expanded. Library resources will be expanded. Health programs will be expanded. Teacher professional development opportunities will be expanded. It is hard to find a negative result of such an administrative reorganization. This is a watershed moment for all three communities insofar as being able to offer an enhanced quality of education in a fiscally responsible manner. We can't talk about such a change without considering the finances. Conservator ably we project savings of over \$650,000 during the first three years of operation. There are savings that the State has mandated in administration, transportation, special education and grounds and maintenance. There also a number of "miscellaneous" savings that will be realized. We also include in the discussion of this reorganization the very real and severe consequences of not complying with the law. The three communities involved stand to lose more than \$3.5 million dollars in State subsidies the first three years of operation. For Old orchard Beach this would mean the loss of over one and a half million dollars that would have to be made up by the local taxpayers of Old Orchard Beach. While not savings in the strictest sense of the word, we can surely say that this would be a significant cost advantage.

Peter Flaherty, one of the most respected educators and a member of the Regional Planning Committee conducted a power point presentation to given an overview of the plan, following which question and answers were considered.

Recent legislations require a **50%** reduction in central office operation costs. The State recommended reductions are:

50% in administrative costs;
5% in transportation;
5% in Special Education; and
5% in building maintenance and grounds.

The following membership included:

Dayton: Millie Tuttle, Lisa Morse and Jim Trask.
Old Orchard Beach: Peter Flaherty, Roxanne Frenette, Kay Dutton and Gary Curtis.
Saco: David Galli, Ron Morton, Shirley Jones and Alan Cartwright
Superintendents: Mike Lafortune, Eric Matthews and Jack Turcotte.

Part of the work of the RPC was to form sub-committees such as governance, finance, publicity and buildings and grounds. The sub-committees have actively reviewed various aspects and details of the consolidation.

The following schools are included and will remain part of the RSU:

High Schools

Old Orchard Beach High School
Thornton Academy “Contracted Private School”

Middle Schools

Saco Middle School
Loranger Middle School

Elementary Schools

Young
Fairfield
Burns
Jameson
Dayton Consolidated School

Saco, Old Orchard Beach and Dayton Consolidated Schools came together to form the RSU 56 because they share a common educational philosophy that provides students with the best education possible, while maintaining our neighborhood schools.

Consolidation means that the school units of Saco, Old Orchard Beach and Dayton will consolidate administrative services to reduce the following departments.

Superintendent
Special Education Director
Curriculum Coordinator
Business Manager
Maintenance Department
Transportation Director

Committee members have spent the past year working with the new legislation dealing with school consolidation. The committee members have worked long and hard for the best of all communities.

This does not mean the school will close. By State law, no school can be closed as part of the consolidation plan. We have written into our plan that no school will be closed for five years. Only through approval of the voters after a recommendation from the school board can a school be closed. All schools will continue to operate as they currently stand, however, some administrative and specialty teaching positions may be shared among each unit. Sharing of specialty positions can actually broaden services and programs to schools which are otherwise too small to support such services on its own.

Each community will elect a local representative(s) to the RSU Board of Education, based on community population.

Current sports will continue as they are today, with teams at each High School and Middle School, under the auspices of the Maine Principals Association. We will also have the ability to utilize sports programs that may only be available at one school, with the potential for increased athletic opportunities.

The legislation specifies penalties for non-compliance. Penalties reflect a percentage loss of state funding for education for each town. Also, a loss of future state building aid for school construction/renovation.

A number of Councilors and citizens responded to questions that were asked. It was the opinion of the RPC that any savings from regionalizing the three districts administrative offices and the elimination of duplicate services and/or personnel will result in a savings of plus or minus \$200,000. It is further projected that savings in the areas of transportation, special education, maintenance and grounds will result in savings of plus or minus \$20,000. Miscellaneous savings such as software, licensing, board insurance, etc. should also show a demonstrable savings to the RSU. It was the opinion of the RPC that some of the savings realized from the elimination of redundant services or duplicate personnel will be needed for start-up costs of the newly created RSU, and that some of the savings from improved efficiencies and operating procedures will be needed to sustain quality educational opportunities for all students and staff. The RPC also recognizes that cost avoidance from penalties will be in excess of three million dollars (\$3,000,000) in the first three years of operating. The Committee has been advised that the annual State penalty for failure to comply with the law will be \$1,102,870 for the first year of non-compliance and will escalate each ensuing year as the district's property values increase. Loss of position on building assistance lists and other State aid will also be in jeopardy. The question was asked if the RSU passes, what happens insofar as electing a new RSU board? The three school boards will meet to pick an "INTERIM SECRETARY" who will act as de facto superintendent of schools. He/she will meet with the boards to set an election date for the RSU Board. This will be done in close collaboration with the clerks in all three communities. The Interim Secretary and a transition committee set up by the school Boards will also begin the normal prep work for a budget for fiscal 09-10, and will begin advertising for staff positions (superintendent, etc). What happens if OOB does not vote to consolidate? Do we have to do anything else? If we do not have a plan approved by January 30th 2009 we are in violation of the law. If we do not have a plan in place and

working on July 1, 2009, financial penalties will be imposed. For OOB, this would amount to +/- \$461,000 the first year. We would also lose any preferential position on State aid such as aid for new construction. We would still have to actively seek partners in a regionalization effort, as we are not covered by any of the waivers written into the law. Can the cost sharing be adjusted as time and circumstances warrant? Yes. The plan has written into it the first review of the formula in the third year of operation. At any time the RSU Board can vote a change in the plan, but it must be voted for and passed by a majority in all three communities. Could you cite examples of "miscellaneous" savings. Insurance costs of one governing board instead of three, licensing fees for software would be paid by one entity instead of three, centralized food service, are three examples of such savings. How would OOB be protected with only 2 members of a 7 member board? The votes on the Board are weighted. Saco has votes totally 61% of the vote. Budgets and substantive changes to the plan require 67% of the vote. Will there still be budget validation referenda? Yes. Could you explain a bit more fully about the turning over of school property(s)? Property is conveyed to the RSU for educational purposes only. Alternative use of the facilities such as little league, PTO functions, Booster club functions, etc, would continue as it is now. If at any time in the future the RSU does not need the property for educational purposes, it reverts back to the town that it is in for such purposes as the town may elect. What happens after the 5 year moratorium on closing any local school? Schools still could not be closed unless the community within which the school is located votes to agree to the closing in a town referendum.

The Chairman thanked the Councilors and citizens for their attendance and also to the Committee for the hours of hard work they have extended in this regard.

ADJOURNMENT:

Respectfully Submitted,

**V. Louise Reid
Town Council Secretary**

I, V. Louise Reid, Secretary to the Town Council of Old Orchard Beach, Maine, do hereby certify that the foregoing document consisting of five (5) is a true copy of the original Minutes of the Special Town Council Meeting of September 23, 2008

V. Louise Reid