

Surry School District

Public Hearing Related to the AREA Planning Committee Revised Agreements

September 16, 2024 • 7:30PM

Members in Attendance: Timothy Peloquin, Chair, John Davis, Carol Lothrop, Frank Buffum, Melinda Garland, Rebecca Russo – Treasurer, Bruce Smith, resident, Kim Caron Superintendent

Call to order 7:30PM

Tim Peloquin explained that the AREA agreement is not a contract, but rather the foundation for the contracts, and outlines the process for coming to agreement. There are three agreements - one for grade 6, one for grades 7-8, and one for grades 9-12. Surry is the only district that sends elementary children to Keene, and so there is not currently an AREA agreement for elementary school, however we can ask that KSD consider one, though there really isn't a need at this time.

He noted that the three agreements are identical and outline how the contracts work. There is a small discount, around 2.5% for the schools in the AREA agreement. Every sending town except Winchester is a part of the AREA. We are asking for comments, and then we will hold a vote to approve our acceptables of the rewritten rules, which generally happens every 10-20 years.

Bruce Smith commented that he knew this was coming, and there was room for improvement in the way this was advertised, we did not include information on how to easily access the proposed agreements for review. He was able to access it after asking at the Keene School District AREA meeting, and noted the other schools with postings also didn't include a link. Tim acknowledged this and noted that we can send things like this to the Selectpersons for distribution to the town email list in the future.

Rebecca Russo commented that if people feel there is no choice or that the town is locked in, they may not feel there is a reason to vote. She noted that she is concerned that we are locking ourselves in. Tim responded that the AREA is the framework, not the contract itself.

Bruce Smith noted that the agreement says that all sending districts will be provided a report, which seems like a good thing, and also saw that the agreements provide that the AREA sending towns can have one voting seat on each Keene School Board sub-committee. Tim said that Surry is the only town that volunteered to participate on a sub-committee at this time. He also acknowledged that we will receive a report once per year, and that it will be more consistent for Keene to produce all of the reports at the same time each year.

Bruce commented that George Downing said that, up until this point, there has been generally poor attendance from the sending towns at the AREA meetings. Carroll and Tim noted that we have gone to the meetings the past three years or more.

Kim Caron, the Surry School District Superintendent, acknowledged Becky's comment about school choice. He said that AREA is all or nothing, and that we would need to send all of our children to Keene, and that there isn't really a choice. Carroll asked if townspeople would want any alternative choices to be paid by Surry. The town is saving quite a bit by having children attend other schools such as charter schools. Bruce noted that at the time of the annual report, 18 Surry students were tuitioned out of Surry, 7 were homeschooled, and 16 were attending area charter schools.

Carroll made a motion to close the public hearing, Tim seconded it, and all were in favor.

Hearing was closed at 8:12 PM