

Memo

To: Newmarket School Board, Newmarket Town Council

From: Randy Bell

CC: Mike Martin

Date: September 2, 2014

Re: Progress Report

This is the first of many progress reports to be prepared for this Joint Project with the Newmarket School Board and Town Council. We were pleased to have our proposal approved unanimously at a joint meeting on August 21, and look forward to a productive and useful project. Following is a summary of our activities since that meeting, and some recommendations for future activities.

On Monday, August 25, Jane and I met with Bruce Mallory of NH Listens, at UNH, to discuss his work with Newmarket Common Ground. We discussed the composition and purpose of Newmarket Common Ground, and also talked about the need for our work and theirs to be complementary. As we understand it, Newmarket Common Ground's purpose is to hold structured community meetings to address issues facing Newmarket Schools, to heal earlier wounds, and to help build a consensus for a long term solution to facility issues for Newmarket Schools. Bruce will be meeting with the leadership of this group on September 17, and we agreed that it would be a good idea for Jane to attend that meeting. We can then further report on the possibility of shared efforts. Bruce also told us that members of Common Ground would be reaching out to School Board members.

On August 27, I met with Mike Martin to discuss the overall project, to do a brief tour of the facilities, and to gather some preliminary information, which I have been reviewing. I am also gathering information from various sources that will help us move forward. Mike has been accessible and supportive, and I am appreciative of that support.

On September 4, Jane and I will meet with Newmarket administrators to review the work they have done on describing and defining quality issues for Newmarket Jr/Sr high school students. Bernie and I will also meet with administrators, including Christine Blouin, to review last year's new school plan, a draft plan for an addition/renovation project, and to tour the current Jr/Sr high school. Finally, Mike and I are working to schedule a meeting with Bruce Mallory on that day or soon thereafter.

By September 4, Jane, Bernie and I will establish a series on meetings to carry on our work. We will also schedule a meeting with Steve Fournier and other Town officials, to gather their perceptions about facility needs.

We have assumed that the School Board will want us to attend the September 18 meeting, to spend some time to discuss timelines and work progress schedules, and to sharpen the focus of the study. We are happy to do that, and we also suggest that if, possible, we schedule a separate "work session"

with the Board, so that we are not simply one item on a busy Board agenda. It will also be easier to be sitting around a table to discuss this work. We would suggest that members of the Town Council be invited to this meeting, that the meeting be held in public, and that it be televised. The public should be invited to attend, but public participation should be structured.

In order to begin the work on tuition possibilities right away, we are going to assume that High School Students will be the focus of such efforts, but that Junior High School Students may also ultimately be considered as well. We assume further that students will be transported to a central place in Newmarket, to be then transported to the other high school. We are assuming travel time of no more than 45 minutes to the second location, and are drawing our geographic boundaries on this initial assumption. We will also need to meet with Newmarket's transportation company to assess the feasibility and cost of various proposals.

We know that a first order of business for the School Board on September 4 is the establishment of an Advisory Committee. This is an important step, and we know the School Board is approaching the process carefully. As you know, we have recommended that the Advisory Committee be composed of two members of the Board, two members of the Council and a limited number of at-large members. We suggest that either two or four at-large members be appointed, equally by the School Board and the Town Council, each following their own policy and procedure. We are suggesting an even number because we are trying to model a consensus building process, rather than a voting, divisive process.

We are excited and optimistic about this project. We all know that there have been "bumps in the road" during consideration of our proposal. It is inevitable that other such bumps will be felt along the way, but, while people hold passionate positions and opinions, we believe that even in disagreement, citizens and elected officials in Newmarket are of good heart, and hold the needs of Newmarket students foremost.. We look forward to continuing our work with you.