



# SAUI5 Withdrawal Assessment Committee

Final Report

March 12, 2017

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# Committee Formation & Purpose

- In March 2016, the Town of Auburn voted to form a planning committee to study whether Auburn should withdraw from School Administrative Unit 15 (SAU15).

## Ballot Question:

Are you in favor of the Auburn School District supporting the formation of a planning committee pursuant to RSA-194-C:2 to study whether Auburn should withdraw from SAU #15; and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 for this purpose?

(Recommended by the School Board) (Recommended by the Budget Committee)

- The measure passed, with 55% in favor. (Yes: 850; No: 683).

# Committee Members

- New Hampshire State Law governs the process to conduct a withdrawal assessment.
- Per Revised Statute Annotated (RSA) 194-C:2, the Committee needed to be comprised of four members of the public, two members of the town's School Board, a member of the town's Budget Committee, and the current Superintendent (as a non-voting member of the Committee). The Committee members included:

Name (alpha by last name)	Type of Member	Voting Member?
Janice Baker	Public Member and Chair	Yes
Samantha Belcourt	School Board Member	Yes
Joanne Linxweiler	Public Member	Yes
Phil Littlefield	Superintendent	No
Heather Lockwood	Public Member	Yes
Becky McCarthy	Secretary	No
Alan Villeneuve	School Board Member	Yes
Dave Wesche	Budget Committee Member	Yes
Bill Wood	Public Member	Yes

# Current Superintendent Services Model

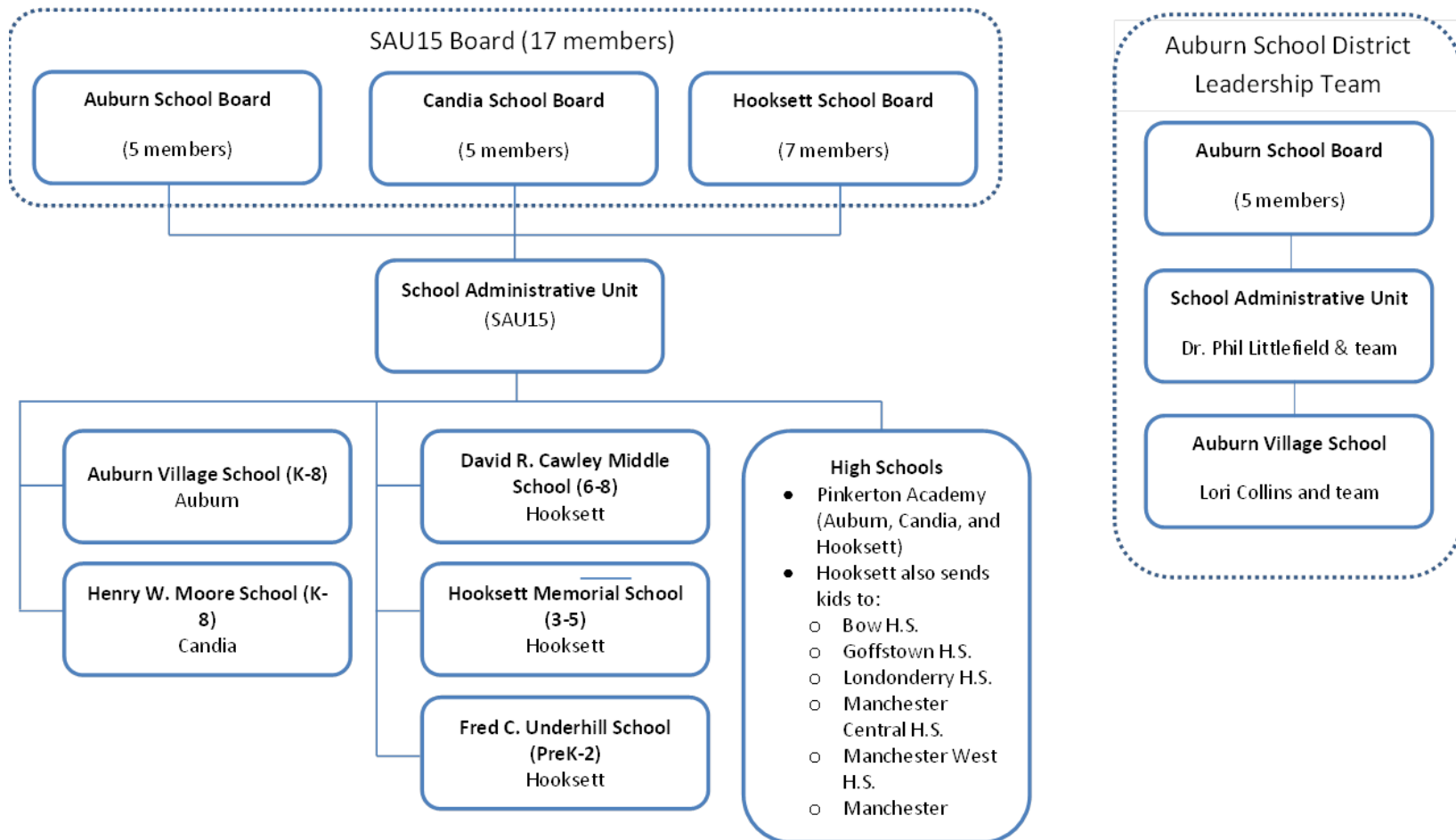
- SAU15 provides Superintendent services to School Districts in the towns of Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett.
- The services provided by the SAU are governed by state law outlined in RSA194-C:4. At a high level, they include:
  - Establishing an educational mission which indicates how the interests of pupils will be served under the administrative structure.
  - Governance, organizational structure, and implementation of administrative services including, but not limited to:
    - Financial management of the budgets of the SAU and the three school districts
    - Recruitment of staff at the SAU and school district levels; supervision and evaluation of staff at the SAU level and some at the school district level
    - Negotiation and management of labor contracts
    - Compliance with state and federal laws
    - Development, review, and evaluation of curriculum, coordination of the implementation
    - Provision of staff training and professional development, and development and recommendation of policies and practices necessary for compliance relating to curriculum and instruction
    - Student transportation

# Current Governance Model

- SAUI5 is governed by the SAUI5 Board which is comprised of members of the School Boards of the Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett School Districts.
- The SAUI5 Board meets quarterly throughout the year and votes on matters related to the SAU, including SAU goals, budget, curriculum, professional development, Superintendent performance and compensation, etc.
- School Boards of the individual towns meet once or twice per month and vote on matters related to the School Districts, including School District goals, budget, policies and procedures, etc.
- Most of the focus of the Auburn School Board is on Auburn Village School (AVS) as AVS is the only school completely governed by the Auburn School District. Auburn's high school students attend Pinkerton Academy in Derry which is governed by a 14-member Board of Trustees. Two members of the Board of Trustees are Auburn residents.
- Auburn Village School is led by the Principal who reports to the Superintendent of SAUI5. The Superintendent in turn reports to the Auburn School Board as well as the SAUI5 Board.

# Current Governance Model, cont.

- The current governance model is outlined in the diagram below



# Committee Activities

- In order to ultimately make a recommendation as to whether or not Auburn should withdraw from SAUI5, the Committee set out to understand why withdrawal was being considered. Specifically, the Committee needed to understand the current problems the School District was trying to fix and/or the goals it was trying to achieve.
- Additionally, per RSA 194-C:2, the Committee needed to assess the educational and financial impact of withdrawal to the School Districts in Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett.
- To do this, the Committee conducted research and established three Sub-Committees:
  - Interview Sub-Committee
  - Educational Impact Sub-Committee
  - Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee



# Research

- The Committee reviewed 10 withdrawal studies conducted by other NH towns to understand their reasons for considering withdrawal and the findings from their assessments.
- The Committee also researched publications related to school district withdrawal or school/school district consolidation. Specifically, the Committee reviewed reports by:
  - The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies published in March 2015 called “School Consolidation in New Hampshire”
  - The Class of 1964 Policy Research Shop at Dartmouth College published in May 2016 called “Consolidation as a Potential Cost Saving Measure for NH’s Education System”
- Finally, the Committee spoke with Art Bettencourt at the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) to discuss pros and cons of a school district withdrawing from an SAU.
- The summaries of the withdrawal studies as well as the two reports are included in the Appendix.

# Interview Sub-Committee Observations

- The Interview Sub-Committee had the following observations:
  - There are several concerns regarding the management of the Auburn School District by the Superintendent's office:
    - Slow response time to address maintenance issues (i.e. playground equipment, portable skirting, mold in the portables, quote for new windows requested 3 years ago but not received, etc.)
    - Poor SAU communication to the Board or AVS Administration (i.e. when facilities director or janitors are out (planned or unplanned), credentials of new hires, etc.)
    - Inconsistent use of Auburn School Board approval to spend District funds and inconsistent spending practices (moving funds from one line item to another on some occasions but not others), both of which result in delays in getting things done
    - Lack of response to the request by the Auburn School Board to develop a plan to address 3rd grade test scores
    - Lack of response to the request by the Auburn School Board to improve the ALPS program, resulting in the School Board's decision to de-fund the program rather than continue current level of operation
    - Lack of school administration and teacher input to and trust for professional development and curriculum development; so less buy-in/ownership with the teachers when initiatives are implemented
    - Less than promised level of mentoring of AVS principal upon arrival and sub-par treatment from SAU in early days of tenure
    - Infrequent SAU staff visits to AVS to walk the plant, connect with administration, teachers, and parents, and understand Auburn's needs
  - There are several concerns regarding the management of the Superintendent by the Auburn School Board:
    - Inconsistent School District goal-setting from year to year, inconsistent management of goals throughout the year, inconsistent year-end goal review
    - Insufficient orientation of new Board members
    - No Auburn School Board member submitted an evaluation of Dr. Littlefield in 2016
  - The current state of the relationship between the Superintendent's office and the Auburn School Board is problematic and it's impacting the ability of the two organizations to work collaboratively and lead and guide the Auburn School District.

# Interview Sub-Committee Observations, cont.

- The Interview Sub-Committee had the following observations, cont.:
  - The relationship between the Superintendent's office and the Auburn School Board, and Auburn's perception of the value of SAU management hasn't always been like it is now – and it's not entirely clear what's behind the change. Specifically, previous Auburn School Board members have communicated good management and good working relationships with the current Superintendent team.
  - Candia, Hooksett, and Auburn have significantly different experiences in working with the SAU – and it's not entirely clear what's behind the differences. Specifically, Candia and Hooksett believe the current SAU leadership and management are top-notch, the SAU is tough but fair, principals are given the autonomy to run their schools, etc. Auburn disagrees.
  - The Auburn School Board has made attempts to change or improve SAU management in recent years, but initiatives have not gone through due to the lack of votes. Specifically, Auburn has 5 of the SAU Board's 17 votes. Examples of recommendations Auburn has made include:
    - Improvements to the Superintendent evaluation process
    - Not extending the Superintendent's contract
    - Reviewing Superintendent office staff salary/benefits for parity

# Educational Impact Sub-Committee Observations

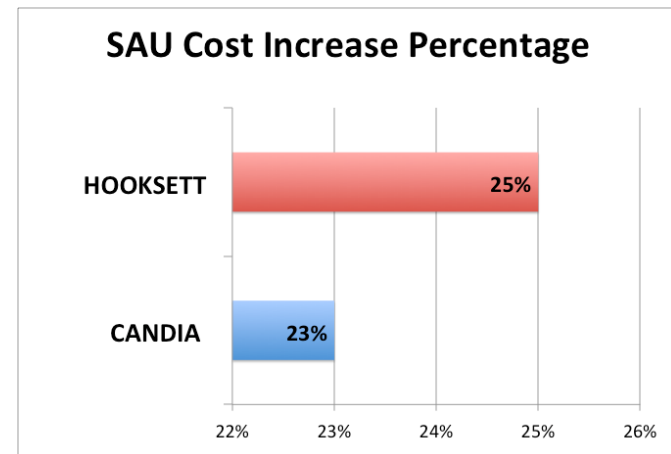
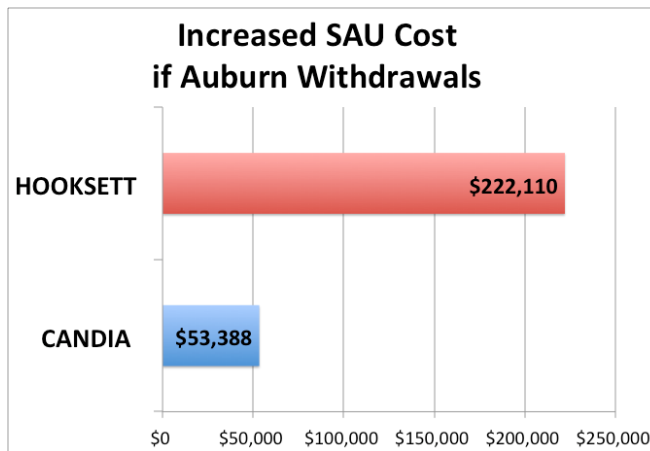
- The Educational Impact Sub-Committee looked at the educational impact to Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett if Auburn were to withdraw from SAU15.
- The Educational Impact Sub-Committee had the following observations:
  - There are no studies that empirically prove that single district or multi district SAUs are better in terms of curriculum, instruction, professional development, or student achievement.
  - In the absence of empirical evidence, the Sub-Committee identified qualitative benefits and drawbacks of withdrawal.
  - **Benefits of withdrawal:**
    - The 'lift' to transition curriculum development and implementation from the SAU to Auburn would be minimized by the curriculum capacity currently in place at AVS today. Specifically, AVS has coordinators for math, language arts, science, social studies, and technology.
    - Curriculum can be more focused on what our school wants versus the wants across the SAU.
    - Professional development could be more focused on the needs of AVS personnel versus the needs of personnel across the SAU.
  - **Drawbacks of withdrawal:**
    - Teachers and staff would lose professional collaboration with Candia and Hooksett that current governance model provides – and would need to establish new relationships with new School Districts for such.
    - Teachers and staff would lose the instructional resources currently available on the SAU website.

# Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee Observations

- The Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee looked at the financial impact to Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett if Auburn were to withdraw from SAUI5.
- Several assumptions went into the analysis:
  - If Auburn were to withdraw, it would involve a transition year in which the Auburn School District would be managed by SAUI5 while the new SAU would be developed and implemented.
  - During the transition year, some SAU staff would be hired to develop and implement the new SAU. As part of their duties, these staff would hire the remaining SAU staff so that the SAU was fully staffed in order to carry out the duties of the new Auburn SAU after the transition year came to a close.
  - There may be opportunities to consolidate and optimize job duties between the new SAU positions a single district SAU would introduce and the existing positions within the Auburn School District. But in the absence of a task analysis to understand the job responsibilities of current district positions, these consolidations/optimizations are not identified. As a result, the full-time equivalents in the following analysis show the level of work effort required to run a single-district SAU and should not be interpreted as a count of specific positions.
  - The new SAU would need office space in the Town of Auburn.
  - Auburn cannot assume that the current level of SAUI5 services and therefore the current SAUI5 budget would decrease if Auburn were to withdraw. As a result, the financial analysis assumes that the Candia and Hooksett School Districts could absorb the current cost of SAUI5 if Auburn were to withdraw.

## Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee Observations, cont.

- The Auburn School District allocated **\$275,498** to SAUI5 for its share of SAU costs in SY2017-2018.
- If Auburn withdraws from SAUI5 and creates its own SAU, the cost of SAU services in the transition year would be **\$783,447**. This is an increase of **\$507,949** over what Auburn currently spends on SAU services. The cost for every year thereafter would be **\$662,518**, an increase of **\$387,020** over current spending.
- The increases include, among other things, costs to build an SAU office on an available plot (80'x40') on the Safety Complex property and 4 full-time equivalents to run the Auburn SAU. Three (3) full-time equivalents are projected for the transition year to establish the Auburn SAU.
- The financial impact to Candia and Hooksett if Auburn were to withdraw are as follows:



# Committee Recommendation

- After much discussion and consideration, the Committee voted to not withdraw from SAUI5 for the following reasons:
  - Doing so would be a distraction from the school renovation project currently proposed
  - The cost of running a single district SAU is greater than the current cost of SAU services.
  - The management problems and relationship challenges between the Auburn School District and SAUI5 may be addressed through means other than withdrawal – and these other means should be attempted first
- It's important to note that the Committee's vote not to withdraw was not an endorsement that the Auburn School District should remain with SAUI5. The topic of Auburn's withdrawal may come up again at a later date, and this report was developed in part to inform a future Committee should Auburn residents vote for another withdrawal study at some point.



# Appendix



# Committee Meetings

Date	Purpose
5/26/2016	First meeting. Purpose was to bring Committee Members up to speed as to the ballot question the voters passed, what RSA 194-C is and the guidelines and timeframes for conducting a withdrawal assessment, and vote to nominate the Committee Chair.
6/22/2016	Discussion as to the problems and/or goals leading to withdrawal consideration. Review of SAU 15 and Auburn Village School budgets. Identification of sub-committees and members. Review of withdrawal assessment timeline.
7/20/2016	Interview Sub-Committee update. Review of recent withdrawal studies conducted by other towns in NH. Review of School District separation and consolidation trends in NH.
8/17/2016	Interview Sub-Committee update. Educational Impact Sub-Committee update. Review of recent withdrawal studies conducted by other towns in NH.
9/14/2016	Interview Sub-Committee update. Educational Impact Sub-Committee update. Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee update. Review of withdrawal assessment timeline.
9/26/2014	Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee update. Interview Sub-Committee update. Discussion and vote to/not to withdraw.

# Interview Sub-Committee Meetings

Interviewee	Date, Time, and Location
Peter Barbuto, former Maintenance Director at AVS	7/15 – Peter sent e-mail in response to our questions
Darrell Lockwood, Chester Superintendent	7/25 – 9am @ Chester Academy
AVS School Leadership (former and current)	7/26 – 9am @ AVS
Leslie Leahy, Chester Principal	8/1 – 9am @ Chester Academy
Hooksett School Leadership (Stephen HARRISES, Matt Benson)	8/4 – 9am @ Cawley Middle School
Ron Pedro, former AVS Principal	8/8 – 5pm @ Safety Complex
Former AVS School Board Members (Anita Gildea, Elaine Hobbs, Kathy Porter)	8/8 – 6pm @ Safety Complex
AVS School Board & Gordon Graham	8/9 – 4pm @ AVS
Mike Berry, Hooksett School Board Chair	8/17 – 9am @ Tucker's
Maureen Murgo, Auburn School Board member	8/18 – phone call with Joanne, followed up by written responses
Bob St. Cyr, Candia Principal	8/19 – 8am @ Dunkin Donuts
Keith Leclair, Auburn School Board member	8/24 – 6pm @ AVS
Mark Comeau, Auburn School Board member	8/24 – 7pm @ AVS
SAU15 Leadership	8/31 – 8am @ SAU Office

# Educational Impact Sub-Committee Meetings

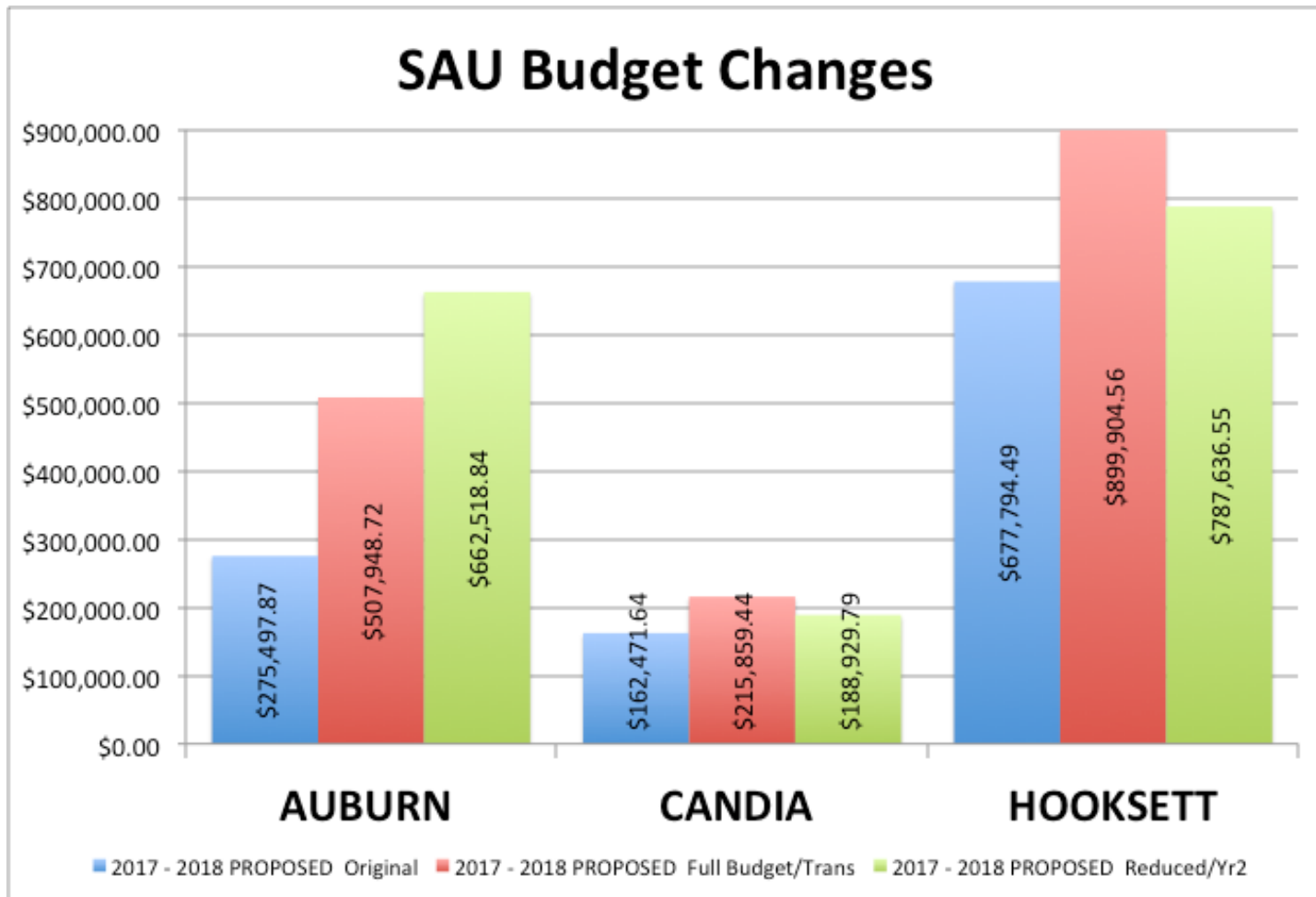
Date	Purpose
6/29/2016	Established the purpose of the Sub-Committee as well as the approach and tasks for the work it needs to do.
7/20/2016	Reviewed educational impact of withdrawal to Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett

# Fiscal Impact Sub-Committee Meetings

Date	Purpose
9/19/2016	Reviewed approach to SAUI5 Task Analysis, SAU assets, ideas for housing an Auburn-only SAU,
9/20/2016	Conducted Task Analysis of SAUI5 staff
9/25/2016	Reviewed financial impact of withdrawal to Auburn, Candia, and Hooksett

# SAUI5 Budget Changes

- The following graph represents the current cost allocation for SAU services per School District (blue), the cost of such if Auburn were to withdraw from SAUI5 and SAUI5 maintains its current budget (red), and the cost of such if SAUI5 reduced its budget by 20% due to Auburn's withdrawal (yellow).



# School District Consolidation / Separation Trends in NH

- In 2015 and 2016, a couple reports on school consolidation in NH were published, and they provide good information on NH's education system. They look at consolidation at three levels - schools, school districts, and SAUs. They are summarized below.
- School Consolidation in New Hampshire – *report by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies (March 2015)*
  - Point of study is to have NH consider not continue to have policies that discourage consolidation.
  - Study indicates NH should consider consolidation in response to (1) declining school enrollments; (2) declining State financial aid; and (3) increased pressure on districts for reporting, assessment, and accountability from state and federal governments
  - Policies that discourage consolidation include: (1) 2012-2015 moratorium on higher reimbursement rates from State for new building construction to multi-town districts; (2) no State voice pushing for consolidation since the 1960s/1970s; (3) change in law in 1996 that allowed districts to withdraw from SAUs over the opposition of other districts within the SAU and the Board of Education (BOE)

# School District Consolidation / Separation Trends in NH, cont.

- School Consolidation in New Hampshire – report by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies (March 2015)
  - History of SAUs in NH
    - 1973 – 42 SAUs; lowest number ever
    - 1980s – big growth in single district SAUs driven largely by enrollment increases in southern NH districts
    - 1983 - 53 SAUs
    - 1992 – 67 SAUs. BOE issues moratorium on creation of new SAUs and BOE authorized to combine districts
    - 1996 – removal of BOE veto power on a district's withdrawal plans
    - 2014 – 92 SAUs
  - School enrollment has fallen more than 10% over the past decade. Population aged 5-19 projected to fall 13.4% from 2010 to 2025 (from 256k to less than 222k)
    - Rockingham County – 22.7% decrease
    - Hillsborough County – 12.7% decrease
    - Merrimack County – 13.6% decrease
  - No uniformity in national research in terms of the relationship between school/district size, school quality, and student achievement

# School District Consolidation / Separation Trends in NH, cont.

- Consolidation as a Potential Cost Saving Measure for NH's Education System  
– *report by the Class of 1964 Policy Research Shop (Dartmouth College) (May 2016)*
  - Point of study is to look at consolidation of schools, districts, and SAUs as cost saving measures due to declining enrollments and shrinking school-age population
  - NH spends \$14,928 per student per year with local funds accounting for 57.4% (\$8,567) and state funds accounting for 36% (\$5,377).
  - As an alternative to consolidation, some districts and SAUs trying to save money have looked to other types of arrangements for SAU services including third-party agencies that provide services to various districts or direct collaborations with districts. NH has 3 educational alliances that provide a range of resources to their member SAUs, inc. professional development and consulting (North County Education Services, Southeastern Regional Service Center, and Strafford Learning Center)



# Withdrawal Studies

- The Committee reviewed 10 withdrawal studies conducted by other NH towns to understand their reasons for considering withdrawal and the findings from their assessments.

Town and Profile	Reason(s) for Withdrawal	Result and Timeframe
Hooksett (SAU15) – 2005? 3 SDs in the SAU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local control</li> <li>Wanted SAU focus on Hooksett's construction of a high school</li> </ul>	
Hooksett (SAU15) – 2006? 3 SDs in the SAU		
Wakefield (SAU64) 413 students K-8 2 SDs in the SAU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fairness – SAU supports 2 more schools, 28 more employees, and 166 more students in the Milton SD than in the Wakefield SD. But Wakefield pays 57% of the SAU's costs.</li> </ul>	Submitted plan in Fall 2015 and approved by voters in Spring 2016.  Will be separate SAU as of July 1, 2017
Goshen (SAU71)  79 students K-12, of which 55 are K-8; all students attend schools in neighboring towns (no operating school)  2 SDs in the SAU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local control (Goshen has 1 vote; Lempster has 5)</li> <li>Impractical to be in a combined SD since Goshen kids go to Newport schools</li> <li>Different vision than Lempster</li> <li>Goshen claimed withdrawal is cost-neutral, but Goshen had 36% of the students and paid 32% of the SAU costs; also SAU allocation was \$96k whereas single-SAU costs were \$82k. Confusing...</li> </ul>	Submitted plan in Fall 2015 and approved by voters in Spring 2016.  Will be separate SAU as of July 1, 2017

# Withdrawal Studies, cont.

Town and Profile	Reason(s) for Withdrawal	Result and Timeframe
<p>Franklin (SAU18)</p> <p>1518 kids aged 5-19; other town in SAU is Hill with 255 kids aged 5-19; Hill operates a K-6 school but kids in these grades have the option to attend Newfound SD; all kids grades 7-12 attend Newfound SD</p> <p>2 SDs in the SAU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local control</li> <li>• Recognize that they are effectively their own SAU since Hill SD recently decided to send its kids to Newport</li> <li>• Cost reduction of \$40k per year due to elimination of 1 position</li> </ul>	<p>Submitted plan in Spring 2016.</p> <p>Will be separate SAU as of July 1, 2017</p>

# Withdrawal Studies, cont.

Town and Profile	Reason(s) for Withdrawal	Result and Timeframe
<p>Chester (SAU14)</p> <p>623 students (as of 2003-2004) for grades 1-12. One school for grades 1-8, and high school students go to Pinkerton.</p> <p>3 SDs in the SAU</p>	<p>Five types of problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication – not good, resulting in perception of indifference to needs of Chester</li> <li>• Proximity – SAU location in Epping impeded ability of SAU to interact with Chester</li> <li>• Goals and Objectives – different among the 3 towns; all 3 towns send kids to different high schools</li> <li>• Service – innovation at district level, not coming through SAU; while level of service is adequate per RSA, current structure naturally supports Epping more since they have a high school</li> <li>• Cost Effectiveness/Value – when comparing cost and level of service, Chester not getting value; also, SAU decisions have often run counter to Chester goals &amp; objectives; operating cost of having own SAU would be the same as what Chester paying now, but there would be one-time transition cost that would be higher</li> </ul> <p>Over the years, different town have had different needs of the SAU, so in those years, the other towns get less SAU services. Also, Chester's assessed property value was increasing faster than Epping's and Fremont's, resulting in Chester paying a disproportionately higher share of the SAU costs.</p>	<p>Submitted plan in October 2005, with plan to be own SAU as of July 2006.</p>

# Withdrawal Studies, cont.

Town and Profile	Reason(s) for Withdrawal	Result and Timeframe
<p>Epping (SAU14)</p> <p>1095 students (as of 2003-2004) for grades K-12. Not sure how many schools, but high school kids go to Epping High School</p> <p>3 SDs in the SAU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked with Fremont for many years to build a new high school in Epping, but Fremont voted in 2004 to send its kids to Sanborn High School (not Epping HS). As a result of this action, the 3 towns in SAU14 send their kids to 3 different high schools in 3 different SAUs. And so there's no commonality in the K-8 grades and it's hard to coordinate curriculum, professional development, other things.</li> <li>• Over last 10 years, districts have been increasingly assuming more SAU services- i.e. hiring special ed directors, curriculum coordinators. – so value of current SAU services in question.</li> <li>• Withdrawing is cost-neutral (actually would be \$6500 less or \$15,000 less in an Epping-Fremont SAU given Chester's plan to withdraw) to staying since change in allocation formula has Epping paying more</li> <li>• Many other reasons on page 5</li> </ul>	<p>Submitted plan in October 2005, with plan to be own SAU as of July 2006.</p>
<p>Dunbarton</p> <p>371 students in K-12</p> <p>3 SDs in the SAU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanted to withdraw from SAU19 (which included the New Boston and Goffstown school districts) in order to join the Bow SAU since Dunbarton had recently entered into an agreement with Bow to send its high school students there.</li> <li>• So purpose of study was to not to go on their own but to align with the SAU which would oversee their high school students</li> </ul>	<p>2012-2013</p>

# Withdrawal Studies, cont.

Town and Profile	Reason(s) for Withdrawal	Result and Timeframe
<p>Fremont (SAU14)</p> <p>435 students (as of 2003-2004) for grades 1-12. Not sure how many schools (likely only one), but high school students go to Sanborn Regional High School.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanted to remain in 3-district SAU but conducted study since Epping and Chester were both considering withdrawal from SAU14.</li> <li>• Cited the same pros and cons as Epping's study</li> </ul>	<p>Submitted plan in November 2005, with plan to be own SAU (by contracting services from Epping) as of July 2006. This was intended to be a transition step while Fremont explored forming a cooperative district with Kingston and Newton. Cooperative never happened, and Fremont remains its own SAU.</p>
<p>Dunbarton (SAU19)</p> <p>371 students K-12</p> <p>3 SDs in the SAU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less about withdrawal than about reorganization.</li> <li>• Study done to prepare for Dunbarton's possible withdrawal from their SAU19 and consolidation under Bow's SAU67 so that all kids in grades K-12 in both Bow and Dunbarton can be managed under a single SAU.</li> <li>• \$24k annual savings to consolidate with Bow</li> </ul>	<p>Submitted plan in October 2012</p>

# Other Information References

Item	Importance	Link
Title XV Education, Chapter 194-C School Administrative Units	Outlines the withdrawal assessment process as well as SAU duties	<a href="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xv/194-c/194-c-mrg.htm">http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xv/194-c/194-c-mrg.htm</a>
Title XV Education, Chapter 89 School Board, Superintendents, Teachers, and Truant Officers; School Census	Outlines the role of a School Board	<a href="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/nhtoc/nhtoc-xv-189.htm">http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/nhtoc/nhtoc-xv-189.htm</a>
NH School Board Member Association	Outlines the role of a School Board	<a href="http://www.nhsba.org/member_role.asp">http://www.nhsba.org/member_role.asp</a>