

**Final Majority Report
RSA 195 Committee
Newfound Area School District
10/24/2014**

Petition and Vote:

By affirmative vote at the 2014 Town Meetings, both the towns of Bridgewater and Hebron petitioned SAU4 in accordance with RSA 195:25 to conduct a study to determine the feasibility and suitability to withdraw from SAU4.

The primary reasons were:

1. To improve student outcomes by reconfiguring the BHVD school to k-6 or k-8 including a locally based school board. This would continue high academic standards, a coherent curriculum, effective instruction, strong leadership, results-based accountability, and sound discipline. That formula has been proven to pay-off in the primary grades and this would allow greater local control to extend that pay-off for an additional 3 years through grade 8.
2. To manage effective educational costs with no significant increases to the towns taxpayers.
3. To support parents and constituents of both towns long standing concerns relative to the educational quality at the NASD middle school and its impact on the high school.

Actions by the Newfound Area School Board

The RSA 195 Withdrawal Study Committee was formed during the spring of 2014. During the summer, two subcommittees considered the educational and cost issues associated with that petition.

Reports From The Subcommittees Noted The Following:

1. The number of school age children within SAU4 member towns is in serious decline. (That trend is consistent with declining student enrollments in the State of NH.) Future estimates of student enrollment conclude that this decline will continue into the future and have potentially impressive impacts on schools. Bridgewater and Hebron will have very low potential enrollments. Both towns are currently a minority in the BHVD School and the District.
2. The SAU4 administration indicated that other NASD towns students enrolled in BHVD may not continue in that location but be transferred to other buildings to avoid paying tuition to the newly formed district. (That would be a decision for

the SAU4 School Board). The original premise of the petitioning towns was no student would be forced from the school. Groton would be at most risk if that scenario played out followed by Alexandria.

3. Expenditures to run the BHVD are inelastic. Fewer students would not result in significantly lowering costs to BHVD School. To achieve lower costs (assuming no tuition revenue) would mean cutting some programs, moving various positions to part-time and potentially negatively impacting educational quality by combining grades and other cost containing ideas. In addition, neither town is eligible for State Adequacy Aid. The BHVD School is currently a high performing school recently recognized by the NH Department of Education.

4. BHVD Building Lease. The BHVD building is not owned by the school district. It is owned and financially supported separately by the Bridgewater - Hebron Village District consisting of the towns of Bridgewater and Hebron. (The building and contents are leased to NASD for one dollar a year.) To void the lease prior to its established dates without a mutual agreement could result in a costly and lengthy legal conflict.

Other Factors:

While the withdrawal study was in process, the SAU4 School Board separately debated the issues of the current school configurations within NASD. A recent School Board vote to submit a plan to reconfigure to a K-6 elementary model was passed by that Board for 2016-17 school years. The RSA 195 committee at its October 15, 2014 meeting endorsed the proposed reconfiguration to a K-6 model. (The Selectmen representing each community affirmed the idea to convene a meeting in the near future to assist in the support of the K-6 model)

Conclusions:

Those aforementioned dynamics, coupled with declining enrollments, the cost/tuition issues and the potential to damage a currently successful educational model in BHVD led the RSA 195 committee to conclude the following: By a 9-2-3 vote, it was decided to turn down the request to recommend to NASD voters the Bridgewater-Hebron withdrawal petition at the current time. It was concluded that while withdrawal was feasible, it is not suitable at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Moriarty, Hebron Selectman

Terence Murphy, Bridgewater Selectman