

*RSU #14 Withdrawal
Committee
401 Webbs Mills Rd
Raymond ME 04071*

**November 14, 2018
6:30pm
Broadcast Studio
423 Webbs Mills Rd
Minutes**

Members:

- Rolf Olsen, Select Board Rep, Chair
- Teresa Sadak, Proponent Rep
- Katie Leveille, RSU #14 Board of Directors Rep
- Joe Bruno, Citizen Rep

Consultants:

- Dr. Mark Eastman, Retired Superintendent and Educational Consultant
- Dan Stockford, Attorney

1) **Called to order** at 6:30pm by Chair Olsen

2) **Minutes of previous meetings**

a) October 14, 2018

Motion to accept as presented by Mrs Sadak. Seconded by Mr Bruno.

Unanimously approved.

Motion to allow Dan Stockford and Mark Eastman to speak by Mrs Sadak. Seconded by Mr Bruno.

Unanimously approved.

Chair Olsen – There will be written minutes by Sue Look, however she broke her leg and will be taken from the video. In Raymond the official record is the video. Also, we wish speed recovery to Jani Cummings who also broke her leg.

The intent for tonight is to go through where we are and what we need to do. I would now like Dan Stockford and Mark Eastman to introduce themselves so the Committee and the Town will know what their expertise is and why we brought them on.

Mr Eastman – I retired as a Superintendent after 26 years from the Oxford Hills School District in 2010. After that I have been an educational consultant and have worked with about 14 different school districts across the State of Maine. A number of them were around the issue of withdrawal, most recently with the Town of Sebago. This process is an opportunity to discover if the withdrawal proposal is what the citizens want for their children. Not all towns vote to withdraw, some have withdrawn, some have renegotiated agreements. This is not a speedy process. As we start this process please realize that I will only be working for the Town of Raymond, not any other town.

Mr Stockford – I am an attorney with the offices of Brann and Isaacson in Lewiston. I have been practicing school law for over 25 years and represent a number of school districts. For the past 10 years I have represented about 20 municipalities or RSUs in withdrawals and many with Mark's involvement. His expertise has been invaluable. We look forward to working with you.

Mr Bruno – I don't think we are going into this predetermined to withdraw. This will lead to different discussions.

Mrs Sadak – There has been statements made that we already tried to withdraw and failed. That is not the case. What we did was negotiated a good cost sharing agreement. Right now, the school population is 82% Windham and 18% Raymond. With the original agreement we would be paying 45% and this year it is 35%. It was a good compromise for Raymond.

Mr Bruno – I was the chair of the committee and I think the Town was ready to withdraw, but we were able to negotiate a more favorable agreement. I think where we fell short was for us to be too frugal and not hire an attorney when we should have. The result was an agreement that has loop holes. I think the Town would have supported us and withdrawn in 2015.

Mr Eastman – It is important to realize as we begin that experience has tightened up the process. When we have had 2 willing participants, we have been able to move through the process fairly quickly. And now the state does not allow you to do that. If you do not have an agreement approved by the Education Commissioner by July 1st, you can not take a November vote. This has had a tendency to stretch the process out. This is not a process that is going to happen immediately. I think you should be aware of this.

Mrs Leveille – I think this should take time. I think people want to be sure. I have to be honest, that is not where my heart lies right now. I am open minded to hear what we are going to explore. We need to look at it in a good cadence in the best interests of the students, not the Town.

3) Time Line and Where We Stand as of Now

Chair Olsen – We know that we will need to request an extension. Where are we now?

Mr Stockford – The law provides that we have 90 days to negotiate an agreement. 😊 That has never happened in my experience. The Department of Education routinely grants extensions upon. I can't recall how many extensions have granted by the Town of Newry... All that is involved is to send an email to Paula Gravelle and include the date for the additional 90 days. The simplest way is for me to add this to my tickler file and I will send out a premade packet to Paula Gravelle when we see the date coming up and are not ready. I need to check to be sure when the 90 days begins.

Chair Olsen – There was some confusion with our letter getting under a pile of Paula's desk and not to the Commissioner when we thought so there is some question to the actual date.

Mr Stockford – I would propose that I touch base with her and we reach an understanding of what the correct dates are. I will then send an email clarifying where we are.

Mrs Leveille – Will we be copied on any communications you send?

Mr Stockford – I would plan to copy you all on my correspondence.

Mrs Sadak – Last time I think we got an extension of 180 days.

Mr Stockford – They used to be more generous.

Mr Eastman – You are on step 8 if you look on the State’s website. There are 22 steps. Step 8 is the longest because it is negotiating the withdrawal agreement.

Mr Bruno – Do you have all of our contact information?

Mr Eastman – I need to get it all. I have Teresa’s and Rolf’s.

Mr Bruno – I would like to see the 22 steps to go through if you have it in a pdf.

Mrs Sadak – It is on our website.

Chair Olsen – The video links and minutes will be linked from there.

Mr Eastman – So we can see how many hits there are?

Chair Olsen – I believe so.

4) Process for Getting an Extension

See above discussion.

5) Process to Get the Separation Agreement Done

Mr Eastman – The first thing would be to decide what is high priority for Raymond. We need to know what your position is and this will be done in executive session, probably at the next meeting. We will need to talk about strategy. There are a couple of approaches. The most common is committee to committee where you are all sitting at the table and each committee has a spokesperson. It is similar to teacher negotiations. It is an opportunity to trade proposals and caucus and look for areas of common ground. You look to come to a conclusion on each of the issues.

Mr Bruno – Can I clarify that? Is it a full committee? All members of the Withdrawal Committee meeting with all members of the RSU #14 Board of Directors? Or will there be a sub-committee?

Mr Eastman – That is one approach to have sub-committees. Another approach may be to have the chair of each committee along with the consultant and/or lawyer meeting at the direction of the committee. Especially if it seems that not much progress is being made. I have had experience doing it both ways.

Mrs Sadak – I have an issue with Sandy Prince and Chris Howe negotiating for the RSU. How will that be fair when technically they are working for both Windham and Raymond now?

Mr Eastman – Your concern makes sense, but that is the way we do it.

Mr Stockford – The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent should be taking direction from the Board. It tends to put the Superintendent in an awkward position.

Mr Eastman – Katie’s role, she may have some questions about her role in this whole process, we will need to clarify. When they go into executive session, I expect you will be excluded. Can you ultimately vote on the withdrawal agreement? You can. Usually it puts you in a tough spot.

Mrs Sadak – How did you get nominated for this position?

Mrs Leveille – We discussed it. Some of it is my background. I am a consultant for

Statewide Education Initiatives.

Mr Stockford – In most cases the municipality who is seeking to withdraw will come up with a proposal and share it with the RSU.

Chair Olsen – Essentially, we can do along those lines until the RSU forms their committee. Other than we can have our strategy session where our key points are but there is really no interaction until they form their committee.

Mr Stockford – In most cases the town that is seeking to withdraw will develop a proposal and share it with the IRS to either the superintendent or the attorney. We can talk about the best mode of communication. The RSU will meet to review that proposal and either develop a written counterproposal or we would schedule a meeting to discuss the proposal that has been made. So, I think that your primary mission to move the process forward would be to work with us in developing that initial proposal.

Mr Bruno – And these are all confidential obviously, not like FOIA?

Mr Stockford – Well, until you share the proposal with them it would be confidential as an attorney client privilege document. Once you share it with them, I don't believe there's a confidentiality provision in Maine law that makes it confidential.

Mr Bruno – So how do you go through a negotiation when you're giving them a document that is your first pass and all of a sudden it goes to their board and it becomes public information?

Mrs Sadak – They may take it up in executive session.

Mr Stockford – I think in most cases they're not publicized by the parties. But if there was a FOIA request some may actually get it.

Mrs Sadak – I think Chris Howe was he was advised. He said that this is not what Raymond wants, it's a negotiation. And that's when he said that when we approach it to them, they will go in executive session. When they did their shared maintenance agreement everything was an executive session. Nothing was done publicly on that. I think for the people of the town of Raymond I think they're going to want to know what's going on, to be honest.

6) Review of Procedures for Executive Session When Determining Negotiation Positions

Chair Olsen - This may be time to go to point six which is review the procedures for executive session with determining negotiating positions. I think people in here have a pretty reasonable idea what that is. But we always have to remember we're talking to the town right now. So, we don't get into a perception there that “they're trying to keep information away from us.” But when we're developing this I think it's important they understand what the purpose of executive session is, how that works, what the rules are, and what binds discussions and outside dissemination of anything from that, how that works so that they can understand that if something is discussed in there and they're not going to know about it, it is not because we're trying to hold it back from them because of what the nature of it is at that time.

Mr Stockford – Correct. I think the reason there needs to be the ability to talk in executive session about strategy and negotiating positions as if it's a negotiation. There's two

provisions in. The Freedom of Access Act that apply to these executive sessions. One is there's a provision that when parties are negotiating or developing negotiating positions around disposition of property of which these negotiations involve. If public discussion would affect the competitive bargaining position of the parties, then the law allows a discussion in the executive session. In addition, the withdrawal committee has the ability to meet in executive session to consult with legal counsel and that's an additional basis for the executive session. But it would be untenable if you had to disclose everything to the public, every good negotiating tactic or position. So, I think you will want to build in opportunities for public input as part of the process. In the course of negotiations, it's appropriate for you to solicit input from them. I understand from the discussion you've already had you intend to do that. As far as what proposals and concerns the citizens of Raymond have, what issues they want addressed. But also, as you get proposals back from the district, you'll likely want to allow an opportunity to get input from the citizens of Raymond about what is their feeling about what is being proposed by the district. Not everything needs to take place or should take place executive sessions, but certainly the strategy discussions about proposals are in Raymond's interest for those to occur in the executive session.

Mr Bruno – So if we are going to set up a next meeting to talk about priorities, isn't it now that we seek input from the public from the Raymond public, “What are your priorities as part of this withdrawal process? What would you like to see happen as part of the withdrawal process?” Is it now or after? Because if you're asking us what are our priorities, it is just going to be our preconceived priorities. Maybe the town is thinking differently than we are.

Mrs Sadak – I got a lot of input when I was gathering signatures and was really surprised. I'm hoping that as we do this that more people watch this and step up and come and say things. Most did not want to pay for...

Mr Bruno – A lot of it should not be financially based.

Mrs Leveille – Because honestly, I heard the opposite of what Teresa heard that day. The folks that I also probably keep company with people that have some of the same visions and values as ourselves, not saying that you have totally different values than me. That didn't come out right! 😊 I live in a pretty populated neighborhood. We all have young children and I can say that the consensus from what I've heard is not to withdraw. So, I think I agree with you 100%. I think we need to get their input at least to help guide some of those priorities.

Chair Olsen – We want to get all these ideas out. It's easy for people to say, “We don't withdraw.” But what is it that you are seeing that you feel is not going to be there if we withdraw? Now that becomes an important item to look at. Is it we don't want to withdraw because we're comfortable with where we are or is it that we don't want to withdraw because we feel we're going to lose “this”. The fact is that may not be the case.

Mrs Leveille – I agree with you 100%. I'm with you.

Chair Olsen – So then the point would be how do we get those people to come to talk to us? Hearsay is one thing, but to have people actually come in to say here's where my concerns are, I don't like blue, but I like red, etc. Now we could formulate positions and say, “OK, how do we make that palatable to them?” So, then the real question becomes, are those meetings better done as a workshop or as a formal meeting? I would think they would be better done as a workshop.

Mrs Sadak – What about having a workshop like when we did our first one? We had the subcommittee set up in 2015 and we had a whiteboard up here, putting notes up here and getting ideas from input from people as to what everybody's looking for. But here's one of my biggest concerns, how do we get people to come out to these meetings? We had someone speak up at last night's meeting (Select Board Meeting) asking how do we get people to be on committees. How did you see this happen in other towns? How did they get them to come out to fill the seats on subcommittees and to give input at workshops? There are certain things you do have to negotiate, like the bus lease, like the debt service. Are there certain topics that you have to negotiate and then it's throwing in our "extras"?

Mr Eastman – The analysis of why communities feel like they need to withdraw provides a lot of information for us to think about. Joe mentioned it's not about financial. In most communities that's a secondary issue. It's not every community is it a secondary issue, but most communities are concerned with the quality of education that their children are getting and are they getting the same programming and opportunities in Raymond as if they were at Windham primary or wherever. I mean we know they go to Windham ninth grade at this point. Is the 8th grade program offering the same opportunities for Raymond children as it is for Windham children? I mean those are the types of areas where parents begin to raise concerns. Is there a possibility that we might lose our middle school because of maybe a new middle school in Windham? I know at this point I haven't done enough research to know the answer to that question. But the concern about what their children are receiving for educational services and the fear of losing a school have driven a lot of these across the State.

Mrs Sadak – That's a possibility because the middle school is number five on the State list. They've been researching as to what the other schools were. I know that it can be expensive, but in this case if we're paying more tuition per student here in Raymond because we don't have as full of schools because you've got a middle school that they are building, why would you not want to close down the school here to combine the kids to save all that money? It's something that we have to consider. You kind of threw two things in there like loss of school and the education. Do we have to send our middle schoolers in Raymond to Windham? Is that going to be a possibility? That's something that we would have to look at.

Mrs Leveille – And I think these are things we need to keep in mind, but we can't make that assumption either. We don't want it being said that we're assuming, moving forward on the assumption that that's what will happen. We just need to keep them in mind right now.

Mrs Sadak – That's why I'm saying these are just different things that are big things that could play into all of this. You know as we watch this middle school unfold, too. We would not be doing due diligence if we didn't consider such things.

Mr Bruno – Raymond is a school choice town. Voted overwhelmingly to retain school choice. That is important to remember. It was about a three to one vote to keep school choice.

Mr Eastman – So Raymond children can go to Windham or to any other school in the area including private schools up to the rate that exactly the same year that you would pay.

Mr Bruno – Well it used to be whatever Windham tuition was that is what we would pay

to a private school. But since we became an RSU we pay whatever the state tuition rate is whatever the state determines the tuition rate to be at the private school. So, it's costing us a lot more money. I mean we're not paying the same tuition rate that we pay to Windham right.

Mr Eastman – So you could send children to Fryeburg Academy today based on the State rate?

Mr Bruno – Well, not the entire cost, but whatever the state determines, which is higher than Windham rate. There is some kind of a surcharge to it. So, you know that's not the way it used to be. As a matter of fact, we used to negotiate a 10 percent discount with every other school in the area until we formed this RSU. And then it's costing us fifty thousand dollars or more for private students because of the surcharge and everything else that we are paying. So, I want to make sure we keep that in mind that Raymond is a school choice town.

Chair Olsen – It circles back to what have you seen works to get people to come in and give input? That's where we need to get to take this next step. We need to get people to tell us what their fears are, what they would like. If we withdraw what would they want the animal to look like? How do we get them in here to tell us that? Because we need that in order to develop the strategy.

Mr Stockford – I think there probably is some value in sort of framing the issue for the public, framing the issues, and in the next meeting where we talk about issues it could maybe be helpful to identify issues that this group thinks that it would be helpful to get input on and perhaps in scheduling a workshop meeting, framing it in a way that we want input from the public on this set of issues. What is your priority as far as education for high school students? This may not be a particularly complicated one because I suspect that it's probably going to be the priority for most.

Mr Bruno – I think it's important that if you have school choice people can continue to send their kids to Windham even if we withdraw from the RSU. That's important. That's a real important thing. If you have a kid in the school system right now and you want to go Windham, there's no reason even if we withdraw that you can't send your kid to Windham.

Mrs Sadak – Those are some of the e-mails that I got. They're worried about this process playing out would their student be booted? I cannot see any educator or staff or whatever cutting that, and I think that we would have to put that negotiation.

Chair Olsen – We would have to have a contract.

Mrs Sadak – We got that from several last time, but I can't see any school booting a kid out. I really can't. If that's the case, then they're not in it for the kids' education. I said your child has the right to go there they have choice, and I cannot see Windham ever booting them out of there. You know the only issue that might arise is, and I don't know where that 82% is, but we had it happen with Poland – that Poland could not give us a contract because they could not take our kids they were already full, it was a new school, and they could only take siblings at the time as far as high schoolers. So that was one of the schools that we would not have an agreement with then, but that was before consolidation. That 82% is also middle schools, elementary schools, etc.

Mr Bruno – And when you look at school population declining the way it is, there are opportunities out there. I am not too concerned.

Mr Eastman – It's rare that a school district would turn down tuition. There would have to be some really serious overcrowding issues.

Mrs Sadak – And Poland was up front with us about that too.

Mr Eastman – One of the things that usually is my role is to interface with the administration because we will need information along the way. And so, what I probably would do, unless you have objections, sit down with the business manager and the superintendent and just say who I am and let them know that from time to time we're going to need information. In order to have that relationship and I don't know the business manager...

Mrs Sadak – Chris Howe. He's pretty cool.

Mrs Leveille – He's prepared and knows that at some point he's going to have to provide information.

Mr Eastman – So, I don't see that as a problem and it's really helpful to have that information so especially demographics as we look ahead. To some of the issues that school districts across the state. Maybe not RSU 14, but we're on the decline in 14 of the 16 counties is a real issue. I don't know what your demographics are in Raymond. But I sense from what I've heard that you have less population in your schools than you did five years ago.

Mrs Sadak – I think there is 224 at the elementary school and 188 I think at the middle school and I think we have 128 high schoolers.

Mr Eastman – How does that compare I was five years ago?

Mrs Leveille – Windham's been pretty flat.

Mr Bruno – When I was on the school committee there was a projection that by 2020, we would have over a thousand kids in our school. That's how we got the approval for Raymond elementary school and expansion for the middle school. Because the demographics show the graph going like this (motioned upward), up 700 and something and has gone down since.

Mrs Sadak – I think Windham is just on a mad, mad growth as far as permits, application permits, etc. I think their school numbers are still pretty flat now. They've been flat for a little while. But then like you said those numbers 82% to 18%, it's a big difference.

Mr Eastman – What's the reason they're number five on the middle school list is? Is it because it is an antiquated facility?

Mr Bruno – Built in 1970. Some of it is enrollment and some is maintenance issues.

Chair Olsen – And age of facility and condition.

Mrs Sadak – Aren't they in two schools, though? They are in the middle school and they're in that Field Allen school. Some of them out to walk between buildings to the middle schools.

Mr Eastman – That's helpful.

Mrs Sadak – But, they put in just for Windham students. They did not put in for any Raymond students. So, I don't know how many more, but they said one of the things that they want to be able to do is to project out another 20 years to be able to handle more kids coming in.

Mr Bruno - When they built their high school, they had to use the Raymond kids (number of Raymond students) to get that number.

Mrs Sadak – Chris said that they want to build that school nice and strong.

Chair Olsen – I was on Middle School Committee way back when, but they wouldn't let us project out more than five or eight years.

Mrs Sadak – I think that Chris was trying to talk, 20 years, we want this thing to last this long.

7) Sub Committees to Set Up

Chair Olsen – You get 20 or 25 useful life, you want to see what it will hold. In the ones you've done what are the logical subcommittees that you typically would see? Obviously, you've got a budget, you've got negotiation, you've got your program enhancement and things like that. The one that I think that we would want also it would be an inner town cooperation. Raymond has had in the past, and then when the consolidation happened it went away, we had the “One Raymond” concept. Which says if there are areas that make sense to utilize combined efforts between the town and the school do that rather than having two separate entities doing essentially the same thing. So, what could public works do to help on things like that. What can we do from the IT side to work there what can we do from the accounting side and things like that? So, I foresee some good initiatives that can take place and combining things there. Obviously, you've got some bookkeeping work to account for a lot because there are certain reports that need to be separate, but that's something that needs to be worked out. That's doable from an accounting standpoint, but what other...

Mr Eastman – I wrote a piece called *Breaking New Ground* a few years ago when we were talking about these issues and staffing an educational program was a subcommittee, contracted services, technology, operations, policies and procedures, administration, finance and governance with the committees that I had identified. I also have a piece that I will share with you called *The 100 Steps* that talks about each step you have to go through to create your school system. I am just in the process of revising that. But I think that you build a broad base when you make those committees and that's a way to get people involved and get people talking and some of the things that I've identified here helps frame their task and we have to look at as identifying the issues not necessarily we're going to withdraw so this is what we need to do. What are the issues that we need to face should we consider should we consider withdrawal? And then you just have to get about 70 people involved in these committees. A really good crew. I think the other one that was just overwhelming in the towns of Eustis and Stratton (in the shadow of Sugarloaf) we had about 80 volunteers. That's almost the whole town. But that plays out differently in each town. And half of the staff that runs Sugarloaf lives in Stratton/Eustis and the other half live in Kingfield or point further south, so it is really a lot like Raymond, a lot of young committed parents to quality education. So that probably has been one of the withdrawals success stories across the state.

Mrs Sadak – That list, because we're looking for applications, would be a really good thing to send out applications. These are the groups we're looking for people to be on. If we list what they are somebody can come back and say I know the technology, I know the education part of it. Somebody gave me a name somebody that was on Egypt Road that she just moved here and that she's a former teacher.

Mr Eastman – Those are the ideal, people who have an interest.

Mrs Sadak – Exactly. So, if we put the ad out that we're looking for people to be on subcommittees. Put what list you would like to be on, that would pool people because they're going to think that they can't get on.

Mrs Leveille – It might be helpful to give them just a little bit of an idea of time commitment too because maybe that could be what's turning people away as they don't want to get involved in something that might be more of a commitment than they can do so. I know it's hard, sitting in this seat I know it's hard to judge time commitment.

Mr Eastman – These subcommittees would meet on their own.

Chair Olsen – They meet on their own and then to come back and give their report to the overall committee. It is the only logical way to do it because otherwise you can't have an effective meeting with 70 people.

Mrs Sadak – I don't think it's one person to trying to take on like we're trying to take on and now we have it broken down into like 10 or 12 different departments.

Town Manager Willard – It occurs to me that we have groups already established. We have the age friendly community. We have our library committee. We have recreation committees. We have the various school committees that already exist. So, it would seem to me that it might make sense to solicit folks from those groups. Not every group may provide input or a representative to apply for membership and you can't let it get too large, too unwieldy. You can't have a 70 or 80-person committee, but if you've got 15 people maybe that represented at the range of folks in the community demographically, folks from the PTO folks and folks who are older people concerned about a different set of issues perhaps than young parents. But I think we could help with our ability to message via the Internet and Facebook and the electronic sign. We have a number of different ways that we can get the word out. So, I would be willing and wanting to help you do that, but I would look to those natural groups. At the town office, I could tell you that I hear a range of opinion about this. It's all over the place. I would agree with that there are people who right now in the absence of any information are really against it. There are other people who think it's the greatest thing and they're really for it and they don't really know what they're really against or for in my opinion right now. So, I think to get them in the room and say what is it that you're concerned about, tell us tell us what your thoughts are, and then that may help you form a framework or a basis of what kind of questions you need to answer.

Mr Bruno – So, at the next meeting, Rolf, are we looking at subcommittees set up after we read Mark's piece on how to do this?

Mr Eastman – I don't want to heighten anticipation too much... 😊

Chair Olsen – If nothing else, it gives some general landmarks.

Mr Eastman – It helps you focus on what are those key issues. I have a volunteer questionnaire that I need to review and send along. Sometimes you have people who want to be on every committee and that becomes problematic. People have a high level of interest and so forth. I'll send both of those pieces out and you can use them as you see fit. It might be helpful for us to know to have the meeting where we know initially what your priorities are. You represent these constituents and I think we have a nice balance here and that might help me think about any changes I might make to the task of the subcommittee. I don't know how you feel about that.

Chair Olsen – We could have a meeting in the short term where we do that, that would be an executive session. And then the option is to come out of an executive session and then go into looking at subcommittees or we will kind of have to work that through and see what's the best approach. But clearly when we're talking together that's going to be executive session meeting. So, by nature of that you probably wouldn't have a lot of people that want to come to that meeting because we're not going to say anything.

Mr Eastman – That's very frustrating for the public.

Chair Olsen – And frustrating to come here and all of a sudden OK. We have the choice to either go in the back room or if no one is here we just shut the mics off and do it that way. The logic would say that it will be two separate events.

8) How to Best Get Inputs from the Town's Citizens

See above discussion.

9) Frequency of Meeting

Mr Bruno – Soc we are on number 9 here, how often do we get to meet?

Chair Olsen – We are. We are following right along. From a typical standpoint once you have established where the negotiating position is going to be, you now are at the point where you're starting to have subcommittees do work. Once you once you get there, how often does main committee meet?

Mr Eastman – I think the urgency is different depending on your current circumstances. At this point there's no impending withdrawal. You have not taken the vote to withdraw. You're really doing an investigation. So, I don't think that frequency needs to be, as long as you can maintain a level of enthusiasm, the frequency doesn't need to be more than a couple times a month or once a month. I like the town manager's position. Let's tap into some existing committees because this. Raymond ran its old school system for a long, long time. So, you've got lots of history and expertise. You know some of the school districts that we work with towns just don't have a clue. When somebody says we get a hundred steps? 😊 So, I don't think that's going to be quite the case with you folks because I'm not saying it's best for you to do that, but you have some history knowing how to do that.

Mr Bruno – I think three of us were on committees when Raymond used to run its own school.

Mrs Sadak – I was up at the school board chair for two years.

Mr Bruno – Me, too.

Mrs Sadak – I think that's what a lot of people are feeling confident about when they signed the petition, "We did this before, we did great before." So, it's not that big fear of we've never been alone, which I think it would even scare me as a parent – what's it going to be looking like? And I think we still have quite a few teachers...

Chair Olsen – I think what has to be appreciated at that level too is that you've got a lot of new people in the town that really don't have the institutional knowledge that says, "We ran a school system here for 40 years. We did a lot of things. The reason we got into the

RSU was because of (*Governor*) Baldaci.

Mr Bruno – But let's not forget, Rolf, that we also have a long history with Windham. We were a school union with Windham back in the 60s and 70s.

Mr Eastman – I think that institutional history is very important.

Chair Olsen – There may be many people that have this fear because they don't understand, they don't know we've done this before. It's not our first time out of the block. There is some history there that a lot of people may not know if they've only been in town since we have been in the RSU, they don't necessarily know what the setup was prior to that.

Mr Bruno – Can I ask you a question? You've seen these withdrawals and towns have withdrawn. Has anyone really failed at withdrawal? After they withdraw, has it fallen apart for them?

Mr Eastman – We did some research when we were working with Sebago they asked, "Can we talk to some other school districts who've withdrawn and hear of their experience?" And so we gave them some names and they did the contacts and got letters and so forth. I think that the sense of it was that they were really pleased with their experience. And a lot of these cases where they were going to lose their school. I think there were a few that were concerned that it was going to cost them more money, and it did. There was some feedback from the town on those issues. I don't think they that they regretted it, they regretted that it was costing them more. In other cases it didn't cost them more, they saved. They had control of their program and their school and they couldn't go to the table and be outvoted. And that was one of the pluses for them.

Mr Stockford – I can't think of any situations where there has been "buyer's remorse".

Mr Eastman – I think we're at 26 or 28 across the state.

Mr Bruno – I think local control is important to a lot of people. I think the last time that's one of the things we heard the most. There are six Windham people and three Raymond people on the RSU committee. Doesn't matter what Raymond says.

Mr Eastman – It probably does matter, but the perception is that you can't ever win a vote. Even if you convince a couple of Windham people, you're still not going to win. That is a concern to some.

Chair Olsen – It actually swings two ways because if you get down to something like the budget that requires... Even if all of Raymond were to vote no you still wouldn't carry because Windham has the population. It hasn't been a big issue. When you look at the numbers it's still a predominant number of towns that did it. But the realization is that if all Raymond said, "No." we could still have it turn against us because Windham has the number.

Mr Eastman – What we've dealt with in some communities is what I call the death by a thousand slices, where you may have a school and all of a sudden it is a K-6 and then it becomes a K-4. You aren't closing the schools, so this the statutes regarding school closure don't come into play. Limestone as a good example of this, Caribou, Limestone, Stockholm. In that RSU Caribou voted to close Limestone High School in April for the next September. Admitted a very small school. They basically had no recourse.

Mr Stockford – Because all the grades were in one location. It wasn't considered a school closure.

Mr Bruno – Declining populations?

Mrs Sadak – But when you lose a school in a town you lose a lot. People have said they don't care if they have to pay more if they have a say over their child's education and have a say in the community with their schools. They want their kids to have everything everybody does. I get that they're willing to pay more for it.

Mr Eastman – I don't get that sense of closing them little by little being an issue here.

Mrs Sadak – We had to fight it one year, it was on the table. Closing JSMS (*Jordan Small Middle School*) in 2010 or 2011. They were going to look into closing Manchester School and Jordan Small. It got nasty at these meetings and we fought to keep it open.

Mr Bruno – The strange thing is that me and Teresa and I think Rolf were part of the formation of the RSU back in 2006 thru 2008, and were a part of the withdrawal committee in 2015. Here we are again. So there's a lot of knowledge of what was talked about.

Mr Eastman – So, Katie is the only breath of fresh air here.

Chair Olsen – If I am hearing correctly, what we want to do is schedule a meeting and prior to that we need to think through it. Where our concerns are as far as what your positions and whatnot on the separation agreement. Mark and Dan can start doing some work around there and then after that we need to look at what committees we need to set up so we fill in some more there.

Mr Bruno – So you are saying the next meeting we've got to come with our ideas and the 12 ideas of what we see are issues.

Chair Olsen – Yes.

Mr Bruno – So individually we each come up with our own and see how much overlap there is.

Chair Olsen – And that would be an executive session meeting.

Mrs Sadak – And we will post that as an executive session meeting, so people will not show up.

Chair Olsen – From there the next step would be to start having some workshops to capture or to start bringing in what do we want this to look like.

Mrs Sadak – I think we should in the meanwhile get the word out for taking on applications.

Chair Olsen – If people want to send an email in regards having an interest in doing it, they can send it to me at rolf.olsen@raymondmaine.org

Marshall Bullock – Last time around you had a form you sent out to interested parties that asked for their name where they live and any skills they brought to the table and that is how people got on those subcommittees last year. Chris Howe in his presentation stated we could separate Raymond and Windham on an ED289. I wonder if we could ask that question officially get Raymond separated with an ED289 so we could take a look at what the numbers would possibly be.

Mr Eastman – Once you took that vote we can request it.

Mrs Leveille – He said it be around February that those are typically available from the department.

Mrs Sadak – Yeah, but they do those last Paula did warn me about that last time. They do all the other schools and then the ones that are separating they are at the end.

Mr Bullock – As long as we can get that request out.

Chair Olsen – We're into that time of year that gets real funky on schedule.

Mr Bruno – Can we do it like the night before Thanksgiving?

Chair Olsen – No. We do have a Select Board meeting on the 11th.

Mrs Leveille – School Board meets every other Wednesday. I'm on vacation one week and I'm traveling the next.

Chair Olsen – So our choice is to look into January instead. Clearly, we don't want to go too long between meetings.

Mrs Sadak – I want to keep the momentum going.

Chair Olsen – Monday, December 3rd at 6:00pm. That will be executive session.

Mr Eastman – It will probably be a couple of hours. Do you want to see a template of some issues you might want to think about?

Mrs Sadak – I want to see anything that you're willing to give us to be honest.

Mr Stockford – I brought copies of the DOE's required elements of a withdrawal agreement. Disclaimer on this document is there are some things in here that aren't actually included in the withdrawal agreement. They are things to think about. For example, they talked about development of the budget. Well you don't have to develop a budget as part of a withdrawal agreement. You're going to be asked in connection with the approval of the withdrawal what are the financial implications.

Chair Olsen – From a logic standpoint when you go to vote to fund a school people are going to want to know the budget. Obviously, you can't have a final budget because the school board that gets created will develop its own budget.

Mr Eastman – Yes, it is very difficult as the one who does that. It's very difficult especially if you're looking a couple of years down the road. There are so many variables that you have to think about.

Chair Olsen – Mark is going to send us Breaking Ground and we will be thinking about what we want to discuss next meeting.

Mrs Sadak – Do we want to post this (the document Mr Stockford handed out) to our website?

10) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:51pm by Mrs Sadak. Seconded by Mr Bruno.

Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan L Look, Town Clerk