

**North Berwick Board of Selectmen Meeting with the Municipalities of  
Berwick, Lebanon and The MSAD60 School Board of Directors for the  
Purpose of Discussing the:  
MSAD60 School Funding Formula  
Minutes of March 19, 2018**

**Present:** North Berwick Board of Selectmen: Chairman Jonathan Hall, Selectman Charles Galemmo, Selectman Wendy Cowan, Selectman Michael Johnson, Jr., Selectman Michael Johnson, Sr., Town Manager: Dwayne Morin  
Berwick Board of Selectmen: Chairman Thomas Wright, Selectman Mark Pendergast, Selectman Edward Ganiere, Selectman Rebecca England, Selectman Joshua Plante, Town Manager Stephen Eldridge  
Lebanon Board of Selectmen: Chairman Richard “Chip” Harlow, Selectman Laura Bragg, Selectman Paul Nadeau, Sr.  
North Berwick School Board Members: Stan Cowan, Rebecca Hopper, Lynn Manley  
Berwick School Board Members: Chairman Dustin Price, Travis Doiron  
Lebanon School Board Members: Nancy Neubert, Joanne Potter, Rebecca Beal  
Superintendent: Steve Connolly, Assistant Superintendent: Sue Austin  
State Representatives: Beth O’Connor, Karen Gerrish, Jennifer Parker

Chairman Jonathan Hall called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. Introductions**

Chairman Hall introduced himself and asked everyone at the table to introduce themselves as well.

**3. Brief Statement by North Berwick Board of Selectman Chair, Jonathan Hall**

Chairman Hall thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He read a brief statement to everyone:

He feels that this is an extremely important issue and an important topic for all of the constituents who elected us and who we now represent. Berwick, Lebanon and North Berwick have a 50 year history of working together as one large community with the goal of offering the best possible education for the children of this District. If our District dissolves, those most negatively impacted will be our children who are the future of our communities. With that being said, we have all come to this meeting with preconceived notions of what is fair and how we view each other. Regardless of these feelings, I implore all of the participants at this meeting to really listen to each other and what we all have to say. The expectation for everyone here tonight is to handle themselves with the utmost civility.

#### **4. Presentation by North Berwick Town Manager, Dwayne Morin, regarding the history of the formation of MSAD60 and the 50 year relationship working together for the benefit of all MSAD60 students**

Chairman Hall stated that they were going to start off the meeting with a presentation by the North Berwick Town Manager, Dwayne Morin on the history of MSAD60 and the current funding formula. This will then be followed with presentation of information from the Town of Berwick, Town of Lebanon, Town of North Berwick, and the MSAD60 School Board of Directors. He stated that this part of the meeting is specifically set aside for presentation and information and not for questions. They will however, immediately following the presentations, with a discussion period between all parties. Chairman Hall stated that they will hopefully end the meeting with a statement of intention from all three towns.

Dwayne Morin stated that a lot of people have asked about the formation of the District. He is a history buff and he also went through the last cost sharing formula discussions. He said that it wasn't a big happy family when it all started. Back in 1966, the State of Maine decided that they wanted to take all of the small school districts that were in the State and create a whole bunch of school districts. In our case, it was North Berwick, Berwick and Lebanon and there were a bunch of meetings leading up to the June 18, 1966 vote. In the first vote, Lebanon defeated the formation of the District, North Berwick voted to join the District but did not elect the 3 representatives that was required and Berwick voted in the affirmative to join the District. One month later, the Town of Lebanon revoted to join the school District and this time it passed. Two months later, the Town of North Berwick voted to not join the District and it was an overwhelming vote not to do so. They did however, vote to elect the 3 School District Representatives just in case it was voted on in the affirmative.

Following the North Berwick vote, the Board of Education in the State of Maine got together like they do every month. They were creating districts and they actually voted to create SAD60 despite North Berwick voting not to join. The Town of North Berwick sued the State of Maine Department of Education. We filed the lawsuit in December of 1966 and in March of 1967, the Maine Supreme Court sided with the Town of North Berwick and dissolved SAD60. From the time that the Supreme Court made their decision, about a month later, legislation was introduced to the Maine Legislature to create SAD60 again with the P&S Law 67. This was an exception to what, at that time, was the Sinclair Act. At that time, the Sinclair Act stated that towns would share the costs based on State valuation. Our 3 towns decided that we didn't want to do it that way. We wanted to do it by sharing it by pupils and valuation. Legislation was created to give the towns a range basically from 30% to 70% or 70% to 30% to choose. Within that Legislation, it stated that a committee was to be formed by the Town Selectmen and the existing School Board members. It was to be decided by a two-thirds vote, what percentage was going to be used. After the Private and Special Law was enacted on April 14<sup>th</sup>, there was emergency Legislation that took place right away. The Committee got together and by 2/3 vote, they established the formula of 50% pupils and 50% valuation. One month after that, on May 20, 1967, all 3 of the communities voted in the affirmative to establish the District at 50/50.

Dwayne said that another question is why 50/50. In 1999, at the last cost sharing formula discussions, he had an opportunity to meet a lot of people that were involved in the formation of

the cost sharing formula. Unfortunately most of those people have now passed but he had at least gotten North Berwick's perspective on why they pursued 50/50. There were really 2 major issues for North Berwick. The concern was district wide costs. At the time, North Berwick had a high valuation and low student population. Berwick had a higher valuation than North Berwick but had a higher student population. Lebanon had a low valuation and high pupil count. Dwayne said that the percentages today are almost nearly what they were back then. He stated that the age old questions has always been, "How do you marry towns with high valuation, low student population with low valuation, high student population count?". North Berwick was concerned that they would shoulder the majority of the costs even though we had the least amount of students in the District.

One of the other major concerns was regarding debt. One of the questions that they needed to vote on originally was if we were going to share each other's debts. North Berwick voted "no" to share debts. When we started the School District, North Berwick had \$22,000 worth of debt, Berwick had \$95,000 worth of debt and Lebanon had about \$105,000 worth of debt. The concern was that if it was done strictly on valuation, North Berwick would pay about 39% of the costs but only had 10% of the debt. This was a big concern to the residents of North Berwick. They decided to go with 50/50 with the understanding that we might pay higher in the per pupil costs but most probably a little lower mil rate value. Dwayne stated that he was told explicitly by the School Board members that were in existence back in 1967, that the only way that North Berwick was going to join the SAD60 School District is if it was 50/50.

Dwayne stated that back in 1999 at the last discussions, they went to the Department of Education to get numbers from them. They only start their numbers in 1975 so they don't have the actual numbers from 1967 to look at. They do have the numbers from 1975 to present. Back in 1975-1976, Berwick had 955 students, Lebanon had 715 and North Berwick had 666. Today, based on the ED 279 which averages 2 years' worth of school population, Berwick has 1,301 students, Lebanon has 980 students and North Berwick has 666 students. Regarding the valuation in 1975-1976, Berwick had \$20 million in valuation, North Berwick had \$21 million in valuation and Lebanon had \$13 million in valuation. Today, Berwick has \$582 million in valuation, North Berwick has \$588 million in valuation and Lebanon has \$472 million in valuation. The percentages are pretty close. Dwayne stated that even from the inception, North Berwick has always paid a higher per pupil cost than the other 2 communities. When the ED201 form was in place, not only did it include the valuation and population count, but it also included the mean income and a bunch of other factors. The ED201 is the how the State shares out costs. This has been replaced by the ED279. Dwayne stated that, as of today, Berwick pays about \$5,300 per student in local costs, Lebanon pays about \$5,700 in local costs and North Berwick pays about \$8,000 in local costs per students.

Dwayne stated that another question that has come up in our discussions about the formula is, "Do other School Districts do this in the State?". He said that there are 12 School Districts that share their costs. He stated that 9 of those are under the Private and Special Law which are Hampden, Monadnock Valley, Massabesic, Noble, Five Town CSD, Wells/Ogunquit, Mount Desert Island, Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor. Lubec, Eastport and Baileyville actually share their costs only by pupils. Bonney Eagle and Bethel share their costs only by State valuation. These all have Private and Special Laws that determine how they share the costs. There are

about 20 other Districts that share costs in various ways. There is a whole host of different funding formulas throughout the whole State.

Dwayne stated that back in 1999-2002, they started discussing the cost sharing formula. In the summer of 1999, the Town of Lebanon tried to meet secretly with the Town of Berwick. An email was sent to him but it was meant for Mr. McMahon, who was the Town Manager for the Town of Berwick at the time regarding a meeting between the 2 towns. The 2 towns wanted to change the school funding formula to 75% valuation and 25% pupils. At the time, North Berwick was paying \$4,000 per student and Lebanon and Berwick were paying \$2,000 per student. In November, 1999, Berwick held an information meeting with the Town and the State Department of Education. It was a very nasty meeting. In December, 1999, the Town of North Berwick introduced Legislation to change existing law. Previous to 2007, the law read that, in order to change a cost sharing formula, it was a District wide vote that made the determination and not a vote by each Town. Town of North Berwick introduced Legislation to change it and the Legislation was tabled. The one thing that came out of it is that the State created a Cost Sharing Committee. In January, 2000, Berwick Board of Selectmen formally examined options open to them to change the cost sharing funding formula. On March 20, 2000, the North Berwick Board of Selectmen formally examined the option of leaving the District. Dwayne said that all of the discussions that happened at that time, civility was not a norm. It was very contentious and was not a fun time to be around the table. At the time, we were actually building the new High School and there were a lot of concerns within the communities. In April of 2000, North Berwick asked Lebanon and Berwick not to proceed with the funding changes but Berwick and Lebanon decided that they wanted to proceed.

In April of 2000, North Berwick residents overwhelmingly voted to start the process of leaving the SAD60. This hit the Governor's desk. At that time, there had only been 1 school in the State of Maine that had left a School District and the Governor was concerned. He met with all 3 towns at the Blaine House hoping to come to a resolution. It was a very bad meeting and most people left and were very dissatisfied. Governor King asked the then Commissioner of Education, Duke Albanese, to convene a meeting to start talking with the 3 communities. The Commissioner convened 2 meetings and both of those meetings broke down in communication. Nothing happened other than more name calling and no positive progress. On December 15<sup>th</sup>, the Cost Sharing Report authorized by the Legislature was published. Part of this report started to change how cost sharing is to be amended by School Districts. It used to be a district wide vote per the 1301 Law. In December of 2000, there were some changes that were made that allowed for different factors be introduced other than valuation and pupil count as long as all the towns within your District agreed to do that.

In November of 2001, the Town of Lebanon and Town of Berwick went to their School Board and the School Board voted in the affirmative to start the funding formula change. It has now been 2 years since the initial discussions took place. This was facilitated by S. Millette, who was a former Commissioner of Education. They met 6 times during the course of the winter. In January of 2002, the Committee recommended the 55% valuation and 45% pupil count. The Town of North Berwick was going through the process of withdrawing from the District and the withdrawal process was going to cost North Berwick an additional \$90,000. A 55/45 split would cost the Town of North Berwick about \$80,000. It would have cost North Berwick \$90,000 but

it would have cost the Town of Berwick and the Town of Lebanon significantly more than that. Dwayne stated that one thing that was decided at the last mediation meeting was that since it was so contentious, they all agreed to not discuss the cost sharing formula again for at least 10 years. In November of 2002, the 3 communities voted. North Berwick and Lebanon defeated the vote and Berwick voted to accept the formula. Because there was no change in the cost sharing formula, North Berwick stopped the process of withdrawing from SAD60.

In 2001, the State of Maine started looking at the process of looking at Essential Program and Services which is how the State funds schools throughout the State. In 2003, EPS became Law. The reason this is important is because, in 2007, the State of Maine changed the Law as it relates to how School Districts are called. They changed it from SAD's and CSAD's, we are now known as RSU's which means Regional School Units. As part of that law change, they decided how they were going to handle cost sharing formulas and how they were going to be changed. There are 2 sections in Subsection 1481A and they are Sections 2 and 2A. Section 2A is really what applies to SAD60. We are one of nine School Districts that fall under this Law. It states that the only way that the cost sharing formula can be modified if it was created by a Private and Special Law is either as a part of a reorganization into a RSU or as a result of a negotiated mutual agreement between the parties in the cost sharing. All the other School Districts actually fall under Section 2 which states that they follow the 1301 cost sharing formula plan.

In 2009, SAD60 was reorganized as RSU60. As part of that reorganization, we kept the same cost sharing formula that was in existence in accordance with the P&S Law 1967. There is actually an exception within the EPS Law Title 20A Subsection 1568 Section 4 that states that we share our costs based on our Private and Special Law. Dwayne stated that the North Berwick Selectmen had asked him to find out how many schools had withdrawn from Districts in the State of Maine. Since School Districts have been in existence, 39 towns have withdrawn from their Districts. He stated that over the past 5 years, 7 Districts have been dissolved which affected 37 towns.

## **5. Berwick Board of Selectmen presentation on school funding formula**

Chairman Hall asked if any of the Berwick Selectmen would like to offer any information. Tom Wright, Chairman of the Berwick Board of Selectmen stated that he wanted to apologize for any anxiety or distress that this situation has caused anybody. It was not his intention or the intention of the Berwick Board to do so. He said that it started out as just a question and answer fact finding mission. They are not disputing the 50/50 formula and said that they have never questioned that. All of their questions concentrated on one small part of the formula. They wanted to know how the money that comes down from the State is distributed in the School District per pupil cost. In the Fall of 2017, the Berwick Financial Manager and Town Manager were preparing for the upcoming budget season. They looked at the school funding and they seemed to find a discrepancy. From their perspective, it seemed like the State was sending money based per pupil in each town but the School District was taking all of the money and lumping it together and basically dividing it by three. Mr. Wright stated that they do not dispute that Berwick has more students. He said that when the money comes down from the State, approximately \$9 million comes for Berwick, \$2.5 million comes for North Berwick and \$6.9 million comes for Lebanon. They are questioning why they are not getting the full credit for the

students that they have. They reached out to the School Board and School Administration first. It was brought up in an October School Board meeting that Berwick was looking at the formula so everybody on the School Board from all 3 towns knew about it and nobody said anything at that time. They went to the State Department of Education. They gave Berwick information that seemed to conflict with what they had. Berwick Selectmen spoke with their attorney and tried to get the history themselves. They were just trying to get answers to their questions. Mr. Wright stated that Berwick has never said that they want to tear this District apart. They were just asking very specific questions about what was happening.

Mr. Wright stated that the Berwick Town Manager reached out to Lebanon because they seemed to be in the same predicament that they were in. Lebanon agreed to meet with them at one of their meetings. They went and they talked and Mr. Wright said that at the end of that meeting, it was clearly stated that they were going to talk to North Berwick. He said that all of sudden everything just hit the fan. There was talk about Berwick having secret meetings, being underhanded and having no integrity. Mr. Wright said that this really shocked him because all they have been doing is asking questions. They had not made any statements or done anything to move forward with anything. They had talked to their State Representative and the question came up that, if they were to change this, how would they go about doing so. The Representative told them that it would have to go through special Legislation. They had asked what the Legislation would look like and their attorney drew up the formal paperwork that would be presented to the State. He said that they took no action on that.

Mr. Wright stated that he has 3 generations of his family that have been involved in this School District. The last thing he wants to do is endanger it. He said that they never put forward that they were going to actively change this or that they were questioning the 50/50 formula. They were only looking at the one specific part of it. He stated that they still have not received all of the answers so they are still asking questions. They did not come in with any preconceived notions and they haven't made any decisions as a Board. Mr. Wright stated that he cannot speak for the other members of the Board, but it was never the intention to tear this District apart. He stated that they have worked well with the School District in the past and also with their partners in the District. He doesn't see how asking questions and trying to get answers is the crime that it has been put out to be. He can't say what the future may hold. He thinks that school funding is a very important part for all of the State. For the past 7 years, the Administration in Augusta has been attacking public education but cutting it, diluting it and diverting funds from it. Mr. Wright said that this was part of their question as well. He would like to know where the money goes. He said that Selectman Pendergast keeps asking where all the money goes that being taken from the School Districts and they have not received any answers for that either.

Mr. Wright stated again that they have no preconceived notions as to what is going on or what will happen. He has said in the past at a School Board meeting, at a Selectmen meeting and he believes that he emailed the Town Manager of North Berwick stating that this is something that is very important to all of us. Rather than having 25 people meeting, he would suggest that they form a subcommittee with 1 Selectman and 1 School Board member from each town to study this rationally and logically and see what they can not only at this level, but also at the State and Federal levels.

Ed Ganiere, Vice Chairman for the Berwick Board of Selectmen stated that he spoke at Berwick's last official meeting and apologized for attending a meeting that he thought was supposed to be informative more than anything else. He stated that he would like to think that he conducted himself the same way that he would at any other meeting. He said that he didn't know that the meeting was being taped. His intention was to gather information so the perception that he was somehow looking to damage the District, tear it apart or find some other way to put Berwick on top of either Lebanon or North Berwick was not the intent. He has 4 children that have gone or continuing to go through this system. It has been great and he has had no complaints. He stated that this is the most information that he has received other than what Charles Galemme gave them at their last meeting. He appreciated his information because it provided a tremendous amount of insight as to how all of this occurred. He also said that he appreciated Mr. Morin's presentation as well. It gave him a lot more to digest and he believes that what they did was premature and it could have been handled better. He apologized again and hopes that everyone can move forward civilly and in a manner that will bring credit to our constituents.

Joshua Plante, Berwick Selectman, stated that the idea of all 3 towns at the Board level and School Board level forming a subcommittee is actually not a bad idea. He said that within this subcommittee, the discussion needs to be broader than just about the school funding. It should also be about the effects of Town policy on the overall growth of the District and the cost of that growth. There are certainly differences in the Towns as to how we run each other. In particular, one that he looks at in particular is the growth policy. He stated that North Berwick has one but he does not believe that Berwick and Lebanon are in the same ball park in terms of how they formally control that growth. That would be something that would be as equally important to the discussion as just the ability to look at the cost sharing and the effects of State input versus Federal input versus local input. He believes that this should all be on the table, otherwise, we are just looking at half of the issue. In the years since the formation of the District, one town has had steady growth and maintained student population that has been consistent and is easy to trend versus Berwick and Lebanon that have had a lot of growth. Mr. Plante stated that he thinks it needs to be about more than just a cost factor.

## **6. Lebanon Board of Selectmen presentation on school board funding formula**

Richard "Chip" Harlow, Chairman of the Lebanon Board, thanked Dwayne for his presentation. It was very informative. He said that Lebanon has already said their peace to North Berwick at North Berwick's last meeting and will not repeat that. They are here about moving forward. Mr. Harlow said that Lebanon has not come here with preconceived notions on what is fair or what is not fair. He stated that he does not know what is fair. Every single town probably thinks that what is fair is something different. He doesn't think that every town or every person in every town can agree on it. Mr. Harlow said that he doesn't know anything about the cost sharing. He believes that this is way too early. He would like to share 2 thoughts. The first one is regarding the process. All of this started due to a failed process of one town reaching out to another town without the third town being involved. He would argue that a meeting like what they are having with one town in charge and setting the Agenda about cost sharing is probably also a failed process since every single town should be considered an equal. Mr. Harlow distributed some paperwork regarding what the State has as part of 20A that is a process for evaluating the cost

sharing formula. It is set up with facilitators that the Department of Education will pay up to \$7,500 for towns to use. He said that the facilitators are mostly ex-Superintendents so they understand how it works. They are the ones that set the Agenda and run the meeting. Mr. Harlow said that if they had had a process in place, none of this would have happened. He said that if someone would have reached out to the Superintendent and there was a process in place to do this, than that should have been the direction. He did some research and some do it every 10 years. They get the results within 6 months. It just becomes an automatic review.

Mr. Harlow stated that he had not questioned it before. He doesn't know if 50/50 is fair. He looked at towns that are 90% valuation and 10% pupils or 70% pupils and 30% valuation. It is all over the map. They are all different makeups. He does know that a lot of them are a 2/3 super majority which he believes that for a District, it should be. He stated that he doesn't have any ideas for Lebanon but he hears that North Berwick doesn't like that they have the smaller amount of pupils. He said that Berwick has talked about valuations or TIFF Districts. He said that they could go 60% pupils and 40% valuation but you include TIFF's. He said that there are all sorts of different ways that you can slice and dice it. This is hard to do with a huge group. The handout that he gave everyone says that it should be 3 people from each town with 1 being a School Board member and 2 other people that are chosen by the Selectmen. He said that he's not sure if these numbers would work for us but we could always come up with our own system. He was hoping that this is what this meeting was about. He thinks that the growth in the towns is fair game as well as the cost per pupil. He thinks that anything that will affect the cost to our towns is fair game. He doesn't believe that Lebanon should be penalized because they have no Growth Ordinance. He said that they had one but they never hit the number. He said that they have low taxes so maybe that is why people are coming to Lebanon. Every town is different and has their own make up. He believes that it should be more about process and focusing on getting a process in place before they do anything.

Mr. Harlow said that something that was brought up in some of the meetings was regarding legal fees. He said that Lebanon has not spent a dime on legal fees as it relates to anything school related. He heard that the School District is going to pay for North Berwick's legal fees. He said that he heard that money was moved into the legal budget from somewhere else. He is wondering where the legal fees are coming from. He said that if Lebanon decides they want to do something, it will be out of their pocket and not out of the school's. He said that Berwick reached out to their attorney and he does not believe that the School is paying for that. He would just like to get clarification on attorney fees and what is coming out of the School District for this. He is trying to figure out how that is fair and where the money is going.

Mr. Harlow said that he would like them to focus on a process that all of the towns agree on so they can avoid this 18 year repeat of meetings that happened that shouldn't have happened.

## **8. Comments by MSAD60 School Board of Directors**

Steve Connolly wanted to provide clarification regarding the legal fees. He stated that there comes a point in the process that the legal costs that towns are incurring become the responsibility of School Department. This comes later in the process. Mr. Connolly stated that, in their discussions this year with the School Board, they added \$25,000 to the budget. They had

started out with a higher number but based on the cycle that would be needed for this process to move forward through Legislation and so forth, the 2018/2019 budget would add \$25,000. Even if it goes in the wrong direction and has conflicts with people, it looks like the \$25,000 would cover the costs. There have not been any legal fees shifted. They have only added the extra to their legal fees. Mr. Connolly stated that there have been no legal fees paid for any municipality by MSAD60 and they have not incurred any legal costs at this point. He has had just a preliminary conversation with an independent counsel that would not be a conflict of interest for any of the towns. Chairman Hall stated that some of the confusion regarding the legal fees is that the Town of North Berwick and the School District have the same attorneys. When we hired and authorized to pay for some legal services, we had to use somebody different and so did the School District.

Stan Cowan made the comment weeks ago on behalf of North Berwick that he was distressed at the beginning because our Town Manager was not included in the discussions. He also was not happy with the tone of the meeting as we heard it on tape. Somebody from Berwick made a remark to the effect that if we can get a million dollars out of North Berwick, we might get \$3 million. There were a lot of other remarks made as well that were totally inappropriate. He said that it should be very clear as to why so many of us were angry. Mr. Cowan said that he accepts the apologies that were made. It is a very complex issue. He is not in favor of a subcommittee but that is up to the majority of the people here. He said that there are a lot of issues that have been raised. He thinks that there are parties to this thing who are not fully aware of some of the information that has gone around. He is looking at William Stockmeyer's response that states on behalf of MSAD60, the School Board and the Superintendent to Berwick's attorney from Bernstein Shur in reference to a spreadsheet that Berwick had prepared back in September. It states, "The Berwick methodology, if applied, would have reduced Berwick taxes by over \$2 million.". Mr. Cowan can understand their desire to do that. However, it concerns him that there would be an increase in taxes in Lebanon by over \$2,675,000. He has to wonder if this information was shared with everyone involved. He asked if this was discussed with at the meeting that Berwick attended with Lebanon. He stated that as a Board member, their primary concern is the welfare of the students in this District. He has been on the School Board for 6 years and has no agendas. His only agenda is to be as fiscally responsible as we can be and do as much as we possibly can for the benefit of the kids in this District. He said that he is still angry. The meeting should not have happened in the beginning. He also said that he does not recall any discussion at the October School Board meeting regarding this matter. Steve Connolly said that some representatives from Berwick came to his office but the Board had no discussion on the matter. Right from the beginning, our Town Manager should have been involved and we should have all had an opportunity to discuss all of this information that we are now sharing.

Rebecca Hopper said that she doesn't understand the concept that Mr. Wright has regarding about a pot of money being divided up. She has been on the Board for a couple of years and when they create the budget, they don't decide that Berwick will get this much money, North Berwick will get this much and Lebanon will get this much. It is all based on need. They look at what each school needs and things like what is needed for the buses. She thinks there is a misconception on how the money is spent. She told Berwick that if this is the basis of their town being treated unfairly, she doesn't think that it is a valid basis.

Stan Cowan stated that they have Budget workshop Thursday night. He said that this situation is a major distraction in a difficult year. He thinks that a lot of questions could be answered if people attended and listened on the workshop as they try to finalize a budget to present to the towns. When they look at budgeting, they consider the needs throughout the District. He stated that he has worked in public education for 47 years in other Districts. He said that people have come and gone on this Board but they have represented each other's interests and concerns for each town. He personally cares as much for the students of Berwick and Lebanon and the needs of those schools as he does for North Berwick. That has been the attitude of the whole School Board. If they need to put up a new building in one of the towns that is where a considerable amount of our resources would go.

Rebecca Beal stated that this is her first year on the School Board and it is a difficult budget. They are trying to figure out how to get new buses that we need to replace. We can't get the buses that we need on schedule. We can't do the repairs on buildings because we don't have the money. She stated that they have a list and they need to decide which ones are the most urgent on the list. She said that this whole situation has been a distraction. It has nothing to do with how the District runs. She said that if they think they are going to get another \$2 million out of Lebanon they will find that they can't get blood out of a stone. It is not okay to gang up on partners. She would like everyone to be treat each other fairly. The biggest problem that she has noticed is a lack of communication between the Board and the towns and the lack of curiosity with the Selectmen about what actually goes on at the School Board. Knowing what happening, what the priorities are and what is coming up, it just seems like she has been stagnated with trying to get this information to her Board. She doesn't see that Berwick is any more successful and doesn't know if North Berwick is. She thinks that communication is the biggest issue. They don't have a newspaper that serves all 3 towns and it is hard to get information out there.

Dustin Price wanted to reiterate that when you think about the monies that are coming in to the School budget from the State and the numbers from each town, it is lumped up for a reason. He said that if you watch the School Board meetings, you would not be able to tell who was representing which town. They are for every kid and the needs of the District as a whole. He said that when the money comes in, he has never heard the question as to why is Lebanon getting more money and since I am from Berwick, we should get the money. They are for the whole District and he couldn't be prouder of being a part of this Board. Every single working day that they are together they are getting something done for the benefit of everyone.

Mr. Price said that he believes that he has said a few words that have hurt feelings in previous meetings. He said that there has been a taped meeting, whether it was known that it was taped or not. If anyone watched the tape, it was not a fact finding mission. He will continue to beat that dead horse until somebody admits that when you bring in legislation to a meeting and agree to get it through the State House, that is not fact finding. That is plan making and that has been a fallacy that has continued. He can't imagine that it still continues because it is on tape and we all know it is on tape, but it still continues today. That frustrates him very much.

Joanne Potter, stated that a very big cost driver for the School Board is Special Education. They do not keep track of what town a child that comes in that needs special services. It never enters into their discussion. If a child moved into Lebanon that needed significant services, we don't

say that we aren't going to give \$90,000 to that child. It doesn't matter where the child is from. We service all of the children and we have no control over what the Special Education budget is going to be. A child moves into our District, no matter what town it is, they are going to get services. Everyone should keep that in mind as well. We are all a community and a big family. Whatever town you are from, you are going to have to pay part of the cost for that child. Stan Cowan stated that our Special Education costs for next year will rise by over \$600,000 which is just in staffing. He said that they can provide where each of those Special Education kids are from but that doesn't matter to the Board. They distribute those funds according to the needs of the kids in each school. Mr. Cowan also stated that the mill rate change is absolutely unprecedented. It is \$.32 per 1,000 and it will cost this District \$545,000. We are already a million plus up from last year. He will also mention on Thursday, on the urging of a North Berwick Selectman, that they should probably consider suing the State over the \$216,000 that they are not reimbursing us on. This was because we had the Culinary program and the Child Development program were going to move to Sanford Regional School. We paid for those programs up front and the State was going to reimburse us over the years. Now that the programs are going away, there are new statutes in place and the State indicates to us that they are not going to reimburse us. These are just the bare considerations that they are looking at. This doesn't even include any Title 2 monies that we might lose from the Federal Government. He stated that Special Education is a necessary Federal mandate but it is in large part, an unfunded Federal mandate.

## **7. Response by North Berwick Board of Selectmen**

Charles Galemmo, Selectman for North Berwick, stated that the School Board members have said that they don't budget based on town and if you look at the School Budget, there is no Berwick budget, North Berwick budget or Lebanon budget. They don't say things like we are going to make North Berwick's class size 15 students for 1 teacher but we don't like Berwick so we will make them have 30 students to 1 teacher. They set a standard it is the same. The notion that this money gets put in a pot and gets divided up among the 3 towns equally doesn't happen. Berwick gets more money spent on it because Berwick has more students. After all the State money is gone and it doesn't go far enough, they have to raise money through billing the towns. This is where it is divided up through the 50/50 formula. When they do that and look at the adding per student, they need to raise \$6,180 and North Berwick pays over \$8,000, Lebanon pays around \$5,700 and Berwick pays about \$5,300. The way it works out is that North Berwick is subsidizing that shortfall. Mr. Galemmo stated that he thinks that it is premature to discuss what our process should be because what he has not heard is what the problem is. How is Berwick being cheated under this current funding formula? How is Lebanon being cheated? If they are not being cheated then why do we even have to waste time talking about it? Mr. Galemmo stated that they should talk about the things that they can affect. Let's talk about our town planning and how it affects the school. Let's talk about the shortfall we have in State funding. Let's deal with those things. He stated that to have a process to talk about something that is not a problem is pointless.

Wendy Cowan, Selectman for North Berwick stated that she is not at all happy about the process that Berwick followed in this initiative in deliberately excluding our Town Manager, who clearly had the most experience with this topic and with this issue. She thinks that if they had given him

the courtesy of providing you with that information, then perhaps we would not all need to be around this table right now. She stated that they need to understand that, as Selectman, they are significantly unhappy with the discourtesy that Berwick has done to our Town Manager in deliberately excluding him from the discussion and in trying to involve another community in that effort. She does appreciate the apology that Berwick offered but they need to understand that North Berwick is still fairly unhappy at how the situation has evolved. She thinks that they are treading on very dangerous ground on trying to start this process yet again.

## **9. Group discussion among meeting participants**

Chairman Hall stated that they could now have open discussion to ask and answer questions of each other.

Rebecca Hopper asked Berwick if, after hearing what everyone has said about how the budget is done, do they still have the concept that the money should be divided it up in thirds. Thomas Wright stated that they were just asking questions. He apologized before about the process they took. If he could go back in time he would change it. At this point now, they need to move forward. Mr. Wright stated that he has seen the other information that has been passed around about the cost sharing and what the breakdown is. He said that he still has not received a definitive answer yet but he is not personally going to go and push to try and change things. He is still just asking questions. As far as not thinking that they should go forward with this process, the State recommends that we do this every 10 years and we haven't done so. He thinks that this is a good place to start. If the State thinks that these processes should go on, then he thinks that it is something that they should discuss as a Board. As far as the funding formula, Mr. Wright said that when they have these meetings it doesn't have to just pertain to that one item. It can be about all of the funding formulas at the local, State and Federal levels and how it affects all of us. He said that he has a long history with Noble and the last thing he wants to see is tearing the District apart, but he doesn't see the harm in discussing the funding formula. Whether it is concentrating on one specific issue or the broader issue, he thinks that it is a discussion that they need to have.

Charles Galemmo said that this is game day. He asked Mr. Wright specifically what is wrong with the funding formula. How is Berwick being cheated? Mark Pendergast, Selectman for Berwick, said that we need to stop saying that Berwick is being cheated. Mr. Pendergast said that, in his mind, Berwick is not being cheated. Mr. Pendergast addressed Dwayne Morin and said that when one of his fellow Selectman was speaking, he had shook his head. Mr. Pendergast asked why he did that. Mr. Morin stated that Karen Gerrish had asked him a question and he was nodding the answer. Mr. Galemmo wants to know what the issue is with the current funding formula. He said that everyone had heard a lot of stuff and received a lot of information now so what specifically is wrong with the current funding formula that they feel we need to discuss changing it. Mr. Wright said that he doesn't know if there is anything specifically wrong and he is just asking the questions. He said that they just want to better understand it. Again, Mr. Galemmo asked what specifically they wanted answered and what further information did they need.

Stephen Eldridge stated that when the State breaks down per pupil cost and those numbers get thrown around. Berwick gets \$9.9 million, and North Berwick and Lebanon get their share. The question that has been asked and hasn't been answered is why does all that funding get looped together? All the money comes in and the State breaks it out as a per pupil cost. The question is why doesn't each community get credit for that before the money gets grouped together? Mr. Galemmo stated that he thought he had answered it. First of all, it's not the town's money. The towns don't get a check for the State funding and then pass it on to the School. It is the District's money and it is for education. When the District spends that money, it spends based on the pupil needs. Because Berwick has more pupils, it is getting its share of the money. The State is saying that you need a teacher for so many students so that proportionately is going to be the same for every town. The District is spending it to meet the needs that the State is saying that the per pupil needs are. So that money is being credited to Berwick theoretically because Berwick has those students and they need that many teachers and ed techs. He stated that they are getting their money indirectly.

Mark Pendergast asked about how the check comes in. Do they just get a check with just a lump sum and nothing explaining what it is for? Steve Connolly said that they get regular monthly payments from the State and it is not broken down in any way. Mr. Harlow explained what he thinks their question is about. If you take the gross cost and take the 50/50 valuation/pupil split, you have X for each of the 3 towns. What he believes Mr. Pendergast is saying is that their cost should be reduced by the amount of State aid that comes in for each town. They are just saying that shouldn't the amount of State aid that comes in that is proportionate to each student go to each town's bucket to give them the bottom number that the town's then need to raise and appropriate from their people. Mr. Galemmo said that it is but Mr. Harlow said that it is not. He said that what Berwick is saying is that the bulk number is separated by 1/3 for each town. Mr. Galemmo said that what they are suggesting is that instead of basing it on 50/50 valuation/pupil split, they should do it on per pupil. He said that if they want to do that, it would be great for North Berwick because we have the fewest people.

Joanne Potter stated that if you take the cost of what the High School costs are and say that Berwick take this section of the High School and we will charge them so much for their usage of that part of the school. You can't do that. This is why you dump all of the money into one bucket. The same thing goes for buses. Berwick has more kids riding buses and it costs more money to buy buses. Ms. Potter said that she doesn't understand the way Berwick is thinking about this and how they are coming up with their numbers. Mr. Pendergast stated that they are coming up with their numbers based on the other funding formula. Ms. Potter asked if they wanted to do it proportionately. Mr. Pendergast said that he hadn't decided what he wanted to do it on. They are just sitting here and having a conversation. He wants to keep the District together. Chairman Hall told Mr. Pendergast that he was raising his voice and would like him to speak in a civil manner. Mr. Pendergast said that he didn't want to be accused of something that he wasn't saying. Chairman Hall said that he doesn't like when comments are made that they are going to hold things close to their chest away from North Berwick, but those were made. Mr. Pendergast said that they have already talked about that. He asked if North Berwick wanted to say what they thought of Berwick again. He said if they wanted to do that, they could go ahead. He has already apologized. Chairman Hall said that he does not want to do that. He wants to move forward.

Beth O'Connor wants to try and make this clear. She thinks that she understood that what Berwick thought or continues to think is that based on that formula, let's say Berwick gets \$10 million. Lebanon gets \$8 million based on their numbers and North Berwick gets \$6 million based on their numbers. Berwick seems to think that they are not getting enough because the State is awarding them more money because of the number of students. Stephen Eldridge said that the ED279 shows State funds contribution by municipalities. The copy he has shows \$9.5 million, \$7.2 million and \$2.7 million. In the category right before these numbers, it talks about requiring contribution by municipality and it gives a number. The State gives a number of what the contribution should be by municipality. He said that Berwick's question has been why is that number not used? Ms. O'Connor said that the reason that this number is not used is because we have a Private and Special Law which enables all 3 towns to come together and work together. She said that it is like we are a family and we use all of the costs to make the family whole. She stated that something that is very important to think about is does Berwick have more expenses? Yes they have a lot more expenses especially Special Education expenses. Is Lebanon going to need some new schools? Yes they are. She stated that if they divide this all up, what happens is we are all out basically on our own and nobody is better off. She said that we came to this agreement specifically because all of us together are stronger as a whole. Ms. O'Connor stated that Berwick may be paying a little bit more because we have the most students, but if we divide up, it winds up costing Lebanon and Berwick significantly more. It would probably cost North Berwick more but nowhere near as much. She stated that when you go back and look at the original Law that was written to get us all together and to stay at the table, that funding agreement was made so that it was fair to each town. If we are all together, it ends up saving us all money and it allows us to have a better School District by working together. Ms. O'Connor said that Mr. Galemme did a really good job in explaining it. She also said that it does come down to our growth policies as Mr. Plante mentioned. We really need to look at that because our costs are going to continue to go up if we keep putting in apartments and houses with 2 or 3 kids. She stated that there are a lot of things that they all need to look at. She thinks that it is prudent that we sit at these tables together. She also thinks that they should have some information sharing because she would like to review the information that everyone else has.

Thomas Wright had a question regarding the School District being punished for following State regulations and asked Mr. Connolly to explain a little more about that. Mr. Connolly said that there is an incentivized program for regionalization. If you voluntarily agree to participate in a Regional Service Center then your total System Administration loss is about \$43.00 per seat. If you decide not to participate in the Regional Service Center, your loss would be \$123.00 or \$132.00, he didn't remember the exact amount. Mr. Wright asked what he meant by Regional Service Center. Mr. Connolly said that the State's original plan was to have 9 to 12 School Management and Learning Centers (SMLC) but they ended up morphing it into Regional Service Centers (RSC). He said that the RSC people were allowed to talk with other Districts and see who would like to join into some Service Center to provide some kind of service. It could be that you are sharing curriculum materials, professional development resources or transportation. In RSU 21 which is Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Arundel, they have been working on a collaborative for food service. Our Food Service Director here happens to be the Executive Director for that program and it serves 27 communities. We get better buying power out of it. The other thing that they have been looking into is purchasing custodial supplies through the

same RSC. In order to get this off the ground and not face the penalties that we were potentially going to see, we went for something that is very low level and see if we can keep it in play until we see what happens with Legislation. If we don't see a change in that, then we will lose an additional \$91 per student seat next year. It is forced regionalization. Mr. Connolly stated that in our District, the communities cover 135 square miles. We are doing 635,000 miles of busing. There are kids that are spending a little over an hour on the bus to come and go from school. Regionally that is a pretty good size area.

Mr. Connolly stated that, in the past, they have had a number of positions that they have consolidated that broke apart and were put back together with other Districts. Food service, transportation, shop foreman, curriculum coordination, technology director, technology program management, hardware management and a few others have been consolidated. They are constantly trying to consolidate their resources and figure out how to provide the same programs for students and improve the quality of the services while streamlining the costs. To be considered an RSU you have to join an RSC. Dustin Price stated that when they first presented it to us, joining early is going to be an incentive. They said that if we joined we would get X number per kid and if we don't join we will see a penalty for 2 years. We came up with a great idea for the Food Service and decided to join up. Meanwhile, they decided to change it because so many people were joining in that there wasn't enough money to go around. They then told us that we needed to pick our disincentive where we would lose a little bit of money if we joint or lose a lot if we don't. We still joined but we will be taking a hit which is very unfair. Mr. Connolly said that they were already in the application of Phase 1 which was non-binding at the time. They just entered application of Phase 2, which is still non-binding. He stated that he remembered seeing Legislation that is aimed at if any District decided not to participate in RSC's, they will not be penalized this year. Mr. Price said that this is just another example of School budget difficulties where money is stripped away and has to be found someplace else.

Mr. Wright stated that these are the type of issues that the 3 towns working together on would be a good idea. He said that he is not saying that they should just focus on the school funding formula. He is saying that they should meet and discuss everything that is going on with the School District and how we can all work towards that. Mr. Connolly said that he would love to work with Town Representatives to put together pieces to speak at hearings or provide the letters that would go to the hearings and Education Appropriations Committee because they do appreciate the information that does come into them. He said that he feels we have good representation and our School Board has written letters and presented and testified at hearings. We have had a number of our School District personnel testify as well when it comes to the proficiency based education. Mr. Wright said that this goes along with the comment made earlier regarding communication. He said that the Berwick Selectmen didn't know anything about all of this until Mr. Connolly came to one of their meetings and talked about it. Mr. Wright said that he feels it would be a good idea for the 3 towns to get together to discuss these issues.

Charles Galemme stated that they should work on areas of common interest. He thinks that working together, they could make an impact. He said that this meeting was called because of the whole question over the funding formula. He had asked Berwick why they thought it should be changed so he figured he should probably explain why he doesn't think it should be changed.

He stated that if we went to an all valuation formula, it would raise the per pupil cost so high for North Berwick, that it would be cheaper for us to pull out of the District and pay tuition back to the District. The State has limits on what can be charged for tuition. Then the District would be short on money and it would have to raise the money from your towns. Mr. Wright said that Berwick has never said that they want to go to all valuation. They have said that the 50/50 split is fair. Mr. Galemmo said that the bill that they were trying to put into Legislation would have repealed the Special Law that has it at 50/50 and put us into 20A which would have made it all valuation. Mr. Pendergast said that they never went as far as to put it in Legislation.

Chairman Hall asked Berwick, in going forward, is their intention not to put in through Legislation. Mr. Pendergast said that their intention is to do more meetings like this and come up with what's right and what's wrong. He said that no one at the table, including the School Board of any one of our towns had any problems in criticizing us before they even knew the facts. Chairman Hall stated that he personally did not do that. He said that it came from various places, including the Assistant Superintendent and our own town. It was never the intention to break up this District at all. He said that they are just asking questions. Mr. Pendergast said that there have been a lot of questions answered tonight regarding the 50/50 formula. He said that he thought it was 100% valuation. He said that if they had known that beforehand then maybe some of this would have been taken care of.

Selectman Wendy Cowan stated that our Town Manager would have very happily have shared that information with you if you had included him. She also agrees that the 3 towns should meet to try and resolve issues. Mr. Pendergast said that they have already apologized and he doesn't know what else they want him to do. He asked if they were going to move on from here or sit her and keep talking about how bad they were. Ms. Cowan stated that the question is "Where do they go from here?". Mr. Pendergast said that they need to figure out how to get our politicians to get more money to this District, get more people to go to Augusta to get more money for this District and figure out how to give our teachers more money because they deserve it. He stated that they need to improve things by working together. He stated that the School Board should be scrutinized more by the towns. He asked what happened to the million dollars that came into the budget after the budget was passed last year. Mr. Connolly stated that they received a little over \$700,000 back. It was used towards the 11 ½ teaching and educational technician positions that were cut in the budget. The voters voted on a referendum that asked how they would like to handle the money that comes back from the State and they voted to allow the Board to use it. Mr. Pendergast asked Mr. Connolly if they had to check with the towns or School Board about it. Mr. Connolly said that they put the question out to the public and the public decides if they want to have it brought back for discussion or do we authorize the Board to act on the District's best interests.

Mr. Pendergast asked Beth O'Connor where the money was going that the State is not sending to us. Ms. O'Connor said that, last year, they voted and raised an additional \$163 million for education. There are multiple Districts and the money is divided accordingly. She stated that she works very closely with Representative Parker and Representative Gerrish and they do the best that they can to bring money back to this District. She said that we are also in competition with an additional 148 Legislatures who are also fighting for their Districts. She said that it is a fair process as to how the money is split up. Ms. O'Connor said that she would love to be able to

increase the money but it unfortunately doesn't grow on trees. They have other needs as well like funding the waitlist for our disabled individuals, nursing homes closing down all over the State, crumbling bridges and road and a lot of other important things. They have to prioritize their spending just like the School Board and each of the Board of Selectmen have to do.

Jennifer Parker stated that she spoke to some senior Legislators about what was happening in our towns. She is a 1<sup>st</sup> year Representative and she is trying to get an idea of how to help or not help. They told her to stay as far away as possible. She is a parent and has 4 children currently in the Marshwood School system. She said that Steve Connolly is constantly working to stretch dollars. He goes across Districts and works with Marshwood to share Technology and a number of other things. She is incredibly impressed with what Noble is doing. She stated that she was an Ed Tech in their school system for 5 years. It was required that she have a Bachelor's Degree to be able to do that and they paid her less than \$15,000 per year. She agrees with Mr. Pendergast that they are not paying teaches enough and there needs to be more money coming down from the State. The last thing she would like to say is that she thinks it is very important when they are all talking about moving forward is regarding communication. She said that the amount of communication that she has received from our residents specifically asking if their children will be going to Marshwood now or if they will be able to graduate with their class at Noble. She feels strongly that this needs to be spoken about tonight. They need to discuss how they are going to communicate what comes out of this meeting to the families and the students that are currently in our District. She said that she is seeing good things here tonight. She said that she sits on a committee all week long and she feels that good things are actually coming out of this meeting tonight. She would like to see a communication to our families and our students to let them know that we are moving forward. She said that there is a lot that can break down when families are feeling unsafe about the education of their children.

Ms. Parker said that when they are in Augusta fighting for extra dollars, the thing that people need to remember is that we are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wealthiest county in the State. When she is up arguing for extra dollars, she doesn't have a lot of people eager to listen to her when they are representing Jackman. She said that they are there fighting and they have different ideologies and different ways that they feel the money should be spent. She said that Representative Gerrish came to her across the aisle very upset and asked if she would work with her on this. Ms. Parker said she would do whatever they needed to do. She said that they may be different parties but they are speaking and they are recognizing that, ultimately it is our children that we need to protect. She stated that she goes back and forth a lot with Mr. Connolly. She said that the Representatives will not be able to fix this issue for us. This has to be done at a municipal level.

Karen Gerrish wanted to address some of the things that were said. She said that they talked about more money and there were some untruths said earlier regarding the LePage Administration. She has been there 4 years. In her 1<sup>st</sup> budget in 2014, there was an increase of approximately \$80 million for the education funding. As previously said, last year's budget raised an extra \$163 million. To that point, she said that it should make them wonder where the money is going to. She said that she is not a school funding formula expert. She feels that when she hears from the experts that are on the committee, the State's funding formula really needs to

be looked at. She said that, from what she understands, the low receivers are still low receivers and the high receivers like Falmouth and Cape Elizabeth are still going to be taken care of.

Ms. Gerrish said that she has worked the past couple of weeks with Mr. Connolly regarding the \$216,000 CTE funds. She is meeting Wednesday with the Department of Education because she feels strongly that the answer they received is not acceptable and they need to get more information about it. She stated that she speaks with Mr. Connolly a lot particularly on bills. He gets a copy of every single piece of Legislation that is going through the Education Committee.

Wendy Cowan stated that she appreciates the Representatives efforts on our behalf. She said that the bottom line is "What's next?". She stated that for the North Berwick Board, they do not feel that the formula is unfair so for us to go back into it and make a change to it doesn't make a lot of sense for us. When we look at what was implemented years ago and the process involved with that, the 3 communities were pretty clear that they supported that formula. She said that the danger of opening up a can of worms again is that it could lead to consequences that we may all regret. She understands their motivation in doing so and wishes it had been a clearer and fairer process to do so. Her point is that for the Town of North Berwick and all of the information that we have been provided, there is not an unfairness in this formula. For North Berwick to continue to proceed with dismantling that or adjusting it would not be something that they would support at this point in time.

Mr. Harlow stated that Lebanon feels the same way. They have never said that it was fair or unfair. He said that they could take a positive action out of this meeting. Everyone has heard tonight that communication is an issue. The Lebanon Board would be willing to have quarterly meetings with the Superintendent. It doesn't need to be with the School Board but should be with the 3 towns. He said that the School Board has a different function. They should be thinking about the students and the towns shouldn't matter. Having the Select Boards meet regularly is probably a good process because something like this could have been brought up in the multi-town meetings. He would like to recommend that they set up quarterly meetings with the Superintendent, Town Board of Selectmen and Town Managers. Dwayne Morin stated that the last time they did the cost sharing formula discussions, the one thing that came out of it that was positive was that the Towns started having quarterly meetings that turned into biannual meetings. They did it for about 10 or 12 years. The last time North Berwick had invited Berwick and Lebanon and unfortunately nobody came so it kind of stopped. He said that, as towns, we share common interests and problems and being able to talk about those things was always a benefit. He said that having that again would be a positive thing. Stan Cowan stated that the School Board meetings are public and they would always welcome any of the Selectman to them. Dustin Price said that there is no reason that the School Board couldn't absorb a quarterly meeting. He stated that nothing bad has ever come from too much communication. Mr. Cowan said that it is a critical time for public education nationwide. There are things happening at the Federal level that we haven't even touched on tonight. He said that the more communication there is and the more they work together will provide a better understanding of the challenges that we all face.

## **10. Determinations: Each town will indicate their intention regarding the current school funding formula**

Chairman Hall said that he has heard from Lebanon that changing the funding formula is a no go right now and would like to have some quarterly if not biannual meetings. North Berwick is in agreement with this. He asked Berwick what their thoughts were. Mr. Wright stated that he has said that it would be a good idea to have meetings together. He doesn't think that it is necessary for all the School Board and all the Selectmen to meet. He said that a smaller group with representation from each town from both Boards would be sufficient and they can report back to their respective Boards. He thinks this would be much more efficient. He thinks that the more often the better as far as the meetings go because these are things that they need to move forward. Mr. Wright stated that there is a State mandate for the State to fund education at 55%. He doesn't believe that has ever been done. There was a People's Referendum to put money into the Education system that passed overwhelmingly by the people. The Legislature has failed to enact it. This is another issue. Referendums come through and people vote for them but for some reason they get cut off at the State level. He believes that they need to meet and talk more about these things but he doesn't think that this is the size of the group to do it. He thinks a subcommittee would be better.

Mr. Wright stated that, as far as the school funding, they have never talked about positively changing it. They have just been asking questions as to what would happen if they changed it. They have had a lot of information come forward and it will take a while to go through it all. He has other feelers out there to get other information. When he gets that he will gladly share it with all of them. He thinks that continuing meetings is the best thing to do.

Rebecca Beal asked Mr. Wright if he meant to continue meetings to discuss the school funding formula or to continue meetings to improve communications. Mr. Wright said that he meant for both issues. He said not necessarily funding at this level but funding at the State and Federal level.

Chairman Hall said that his family has been in North Berwick since the 1760's. His mother graduated in 1969 which was the first graduating class when this was a District. He graduated in 1998 and played on a State Championship football team. He came back to teach in this community because this community gave him so much. But he cannot, in good conscience, as a Selectman elected by the Town of North Berwick, not go to them if the intention is not to drop the funding formula issue and discuss other options. He stated that North Berwick will be having those discussions tomorrow night at their Selectmen meeting. He said that if the towns want to meet and talk about issues, State and Federal issues and education, he is all for that. However, if they intend to dig into how we are going to take it from one town to another town, we are going to have to take steps. We need an insurance from Berwick that this won't happen and that it won't be a fight for the money between our 3 towns. Instead it should be a fight to make the State spend the 55% that they said they would do. Mr. Wright said that this is what he just said. Mr. Pendergast stated that what North Berwick wanted to hear is that Berwick will not continue the process of going to the Legislature to get the funding formula changed. Chairman Hall said that is what they want to hear. Mr. Pendergast said that they have basically said that in a roundabout way. Rebecca England stated that she is a Selectman on the Berwick Board and

she does not support changing the funding formula. After the presentation that they had tonight and last week, she does understand the question that Mr. Eldridge had but at this point we need to move forward and they will not be pursuing it.

Mr. Pendergast stated that he would like to meet to figure out how to get more money into the District. Wendy Cowan agreed and said that she would like it to be a collaborative process. She said that everyone's input on this only benefits all of us and ultimately the kids.

Superintendent Connolly said that he will set up a meeting towards the end of June with all 3 towns. Nancy Neubert stated that it is 3 months away. If anyone has questions, they should call them. Mr. Wright asked if the meeting was going to be with everyone again. Chairman Hall thinks that the first meeting should be with everyone to discuss issues and not be focused on the funding formula as this meeting was. They can discuss subcommittees at that time. Mr. Connolly said that he would like to talk to people about the things that have impacted us this year.

Mr. Wright asked Mr. Connolly if they had a date for the School Budget vote. He said that May 21<sup>st</sup> will be the Town Meeting at 6:30 and June 12<sup>th</sup> will be the vote.

## **11. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectively Submitted,  
Susan Niehoff, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Charles Glemmo

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.

