

Coordinator Report October 25, 2019

We had an eventful past couple of weeks. The School Committee to action adverse to the Town and District. We got slammed with a storm that resulted in internet, phone, electricity, and roadways being out of service. Jim asked that an item be on the agenda to authorize thank you letters to the many who helped us recover from the storm. Some residents may want to tell us how we can improve for next time.

Our WCS energy measures are waiting on resolution of a controls issue and for air and water system balancing. The plans for WCS were handed to the consultant and this work should be completed. I discussed projects for the next GC Competitive round and learned a bit about public building ventilation. On the basement cleanout project that referral back to the committee wasn't really helpful. I am the root of the problem and I'll work with the janitor to begin to relieve the situation. Soon he will be repainting the dining hall floor.

My newsletter piece is attached. Our Horace Mann II Charter redesign hit a snag at the school committee. Should we talk to Greenfield about becoming a HM as part of the city district? Susan H would be in a weird place. My gut reaction is that this HMII proposal to Pioneer is pearls before swine; and we can further engage Pioneer but like we would a cheating spouse where we know we are probably headed for a divorce. That leads me to think we should explore a formal partnership between Warwick and the Commonwealth Virtual School.

I believe some paving got done despite the storm. Folks would appreciate some center or side-line striping / painting. I want to talk about our mechanism for allocation of highway costs so that accountant doesn't regard or efforts to apply excess highway operating funds to snow and ice cost as other than transfers.

FRC OG has agreed to look into expanding the shared accounting program. They currently use different software. I have advocated they open a VADAR window for affected towns. A meeting of about six town admins is being organized. For may part I said tell me when and I'll be there.

I shared a broadband installer's timesheet so you can see what we are buying for \$18 per hour with no benefits. Broadband installer base is \$25. That is what we paid Terry, Les, Ray and we pay John slightly more. Beginning pay of \$16 was for trainees. I have three who are at \$18 and have added to their skill set and ability. \$21 / hour as a next way point is appropriate for these tech / installers

Our state senator and representative both are supporting a bill that impacts forestry practices on state public lands, half of Warwick ending cutting / forest management. I think Warwick should oppose this bill.

It is 10 am Friday October 25, 2019 and we have about 85% of broadband restored. Heading up the mountain to find a component that is damaged and broadcasting and otherwise impairing the network. Attached is my newsletter submission. I titled it, “are too special”.

Warwick’s Elementary School. By David Young, Town Coordinator

The School Committee by vote chose not to support our school redesign proposal to be submitted to the state. I am writing to advise elementary parents and the rest of us of our next steps. The vote last night was about the school committee not supporting the Horace Mann II public charter proposal for Warwick. This was not a vote to close Warwick school. If we can see the best in the opposition, there was a concern about the need for more time.

The bulk of the proposal writing is finished. We plan to have a series of face-to-face opportunities to explain to parents and the community what we are proposing and provide more information on how to get involved. Our proposal for Warwick and Warwick’s future is quite realistic, financially sustainable, and creates a model rural school for Warwick and the state. Stay with us—and let us hear from you.

We have received a tentative budget for the 2020-2021 school year, and we will work to assure our school is not closed next year while we continue to answer all the questions and concerns with facts. This plan created by the Selectboard and 25 others from our community for Warwick Elementary school redesigned within the Pioneer Valley Regional School District. The proposal is hundreds of pages of cogent impressive work. It is available for anyone to read (copies are in the elementary school office, library, and town hall).

The meeting started off answering questions about how the budget would work, questions and factual answers. The meeting at times devolved into a lecture about why Warwick should behave like Leyden and just let its school close. A Leyden selectboard member met SC members entering and urged them to vote down our proposal. During the meeting a Leyden school committee member argued at length that it wasn’t fair for Warwick to have an extra year to plan for continuing its school because Leyden didn’t have a year to plan an alternative.

Diane Noble (Warwick finance committee) and Sue Hollins (our consultant) answered the concerns about the school budget. Diana explained the sustainable financial model. Susan explained that after studying district budgets it was true that it cost more per student in Warwick to operate the school building than it cost to operate buildings in other schools, on a per student basis. She explained that the Town of Warwick was going to plan to assume the facility and grounds operating costs, creating savings for the regional district. Seemingly, this “costs-more” budget concern would be off the table.

And then to assure the Warwick students’ school education program cost no more than elementary students in Northfield and Bernardston, the new model uses the average per pupil expense to fund Warwick students (budgeting Warwick each year using a fair and

consistent amount equal to what is spent at the other elementary schools). And that would end the other argument about Warwick costing too much.

Even with the “costs too much” argument put aside, only two school committee members from other towns agreed to support submitting our proposal at this time. Leyden kept arguing it wasn’t fair and Warwick should consider district students.

The Selectboard is committed to keeping the Warwick school open and we hope you will learn about our proposal. We welcome your continued support for our effort to keep Warwick’s highly rated school in Warwick. We have two colleges that want to work with our school—to develop our 25 acres into an environmental science lab space and to expand our use of the community in learning about citizenship. We have a great rural school now—and we have a terrific plan to give our children an even richer education. Another year then? We can make that work. On the other hand, there was a discouraging lack of interest by most of the School Committee in Warwick parents and children altogether; and for this our town officials will never abandon concern for what is best for Warwick parents and children, and for the town.

Doc Pruyne spoke to the broader issue of how small towns are harmed economically when their vibrant community school is closed. To this, a Leyden school committee member who had already told us that we of Warwick are not special, argued that this wasn’t true and didn’t want to read any research about it either. Many thanks to all the contributors and to Tom Wyatt and Adam Holloway especially for their leadership; and to all the folks working until past midnight night after night to perfect the proposal.