

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**BARTLETT SCHOOL BOARD/JACKSON SCHOOL BOARD**  
**Josiah Bartlett Elementary School Community Room**  
**May 5, 2015**

1. **Call to Order:** The May 5<sup>th</sup> joint Boards meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Present were: Vicki Harlow, Nancy Kelemen, Scott Grant, Andrew Light, Gary Cini, Genn Anzaldi, Dan Mahood, Jessica DellaValla, Jerry Dougherty, Dr. Carl Nelson, Joe Voci and Gayle Dembowski. There were six members of staff/public present.
2. **Approve Minutes (10-20-14) – Motion made by Mr. Grant, seconded by Ms. Kelemen, to approve the Minutes of the Joint Bartlett/Jackson Boards meeting of Oct. 20, 2014 as circulated. Motion carried with 5 affirmative votes and 5 abstentions (Kelemen, Anzaldi, Mahood, Cini and DellaValla).**
3. **Presentation of by Joe Voci:**

Mr. Voci stated that when Peter and Emily Benson came to discuss a preschool experience we took off on that. Tonight we want to give a short presentation giving feelings why we should do this and then ask for a “green light” from the Board to say go ahead and come back with a budget in October.

Mr. Voci said 25 years ago both Bartlett and Jackson realized the importance of full day Kindergarten - everybody cannot say that is not important and a valuable experience. The educational experts have the responsibility for all of our children ages three through high school, that gives all of our children an even playing field. He said we have a lot of children coming in for Kindergarten who have had no preschool. He noted the State of Vermont signed into law that every community has to have in their budget a preschool experience for all 3 & 4 year olds; the State of Maine just received a grant to provide this for their children.

Mr. Voci said by having a preschool the children are totally acclimated by the time they get to Kindergarten. He noted Bartlett is about 50% free and reduced lunch participation, so 50% are at or below the poverty level. He said we need young families to move in; children are wired to learn at age 3. The projected enrollment in 2120 will be about 110 kids – he questioned “what can we do to change this?”

Mr. Voci said we have an opportunity now to have that experience for all of our kids in both of our communities, we need to take control of that; also starting a toddler program right next door. At the end we would be looking for the Board to support this and acknowledge why it is important, educationally and as a community, to step up and do this. He stated the financial stuff is never really the question.

4. **Joint Program Discussion** - Ms. Dembowski provided hand outs and a letter from DOE who she said has now also decided to address early learning throughout the State. She listed NH Dept. of Education Early Learning Goals and Action Steps: Prioritize early learning as a key strategy to support college and career readiness and learning; Ensure better connections with preschool providers and families prior to school entry; Improve access to full day, full week kindergarten; Support prekindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to meet the unique needs of young children while implementing standards-based instruction.

Ms. Dembowski said looking at early learning research, the first three to five years is the critical time for learning. This public preschool can provide a preschool experience for all children equally. She made reference to the NH Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Task Force, noting part of the work of the task force is to look at early learning. She said by implementing preschool we can have our preschoolers ready to approach the NH Kindergarten Readiness Standards. Ms. Dembowski noted one of the benefits of having a preschool where Special Education children can be integrated is they would be in their own school rather than tuitioned out to private day care. Gail Yalenezian, Preschool Coordinator, noted they are part of the public school program so she sees many benefits in moving forward with this model.

Mr. Voci pointed out that Bartlett pays nearly \$30,000 for all of our preschoolers, providing services outside here, but he feels positive about the fact that they are our kids – we are going to do it - they are out of the building, there is travel money involved. We feel strongly we should be doing that and building those relationships. Ms. DellaValla said we do not have a public preschool, but the \$30,000 funds the services. Mr. Voci said if we had our own, they would be here.

Mr. Grant said talking about coded people, we are looking at two years of preschool – would it be a half day program? Mr. Voci said with a preschool experience, if we are talking about an even playing field, it is free and they would come for the day. Mr. Grant said when we sign off on the kids they are coded and need special help, how do you find out? Ms. Yalenezian said it come from a variety of sources - once we are in referral, we move through the process. Mr. Grant said the key word is opportunity – it would not be State mandated – they would not have to come to preschool.

Ms. Anzaldi questioned whether there is anything that speaks to the earlier you catch students needs, it lowers our cost overall and can mainstream the child much sooner. Mr. Voci said we have the space (3 classrooms in the K-wing), we are already paying for heat, lights, custodians, etc. - if we get the green light, we will research other questions such as transportation. He said we are willing to put the time in, we want to do this, we will do the work. We are looking at a teacher, insurance, and a full time assistant.

Ms. Kelemen questioned when they started to research this how they worked it - was it a 5-day program? Mr. Voci said he does not know – we would have to have that conversation. He stated both Boards and communities have to strap on their seat belts, but if we do not build it, they are not going to come – he believes young families can come in here and have the experience. He acknowledged that some years we might have only 5 or 6 kids we are spending that money on. He stated both communities have excellent reputations in school, but he knows of people who have said they wish they could do this. Ann Auger said she turns people away because they cannot afford preschool. Ms. DellaValla advised that the Lilliputian School has a scholarship program.

Ms. Anzaldi said she is completely in favor of it, but would suggest, based on the economics of the area, that it would be more beneficial to everyone in the area if we could offer the full day. Mr. Voci agreed. Mr. Dougherty said what this initiative would do, would be to consolidate resources - it is a beginning of the process of consolidating the resources. He questioned whether we are talking about Jackson & Bartlett students utilizing this facility. Mr. Voci stated yes.

Dr. Nelson suggested approving it and going forward. Ms. Harlow said she is reluctant, as a representative of the taxpayers, to marry into something until she sees the numbers. Mr. Grant said he agrees, but hopes they would look at the out-of-district thing – that is how you can turn this into a profit. He questioned whether they would consider tuitioning kids that were not in Bartlett or Jackson. Mr. Voci said he does not know yet. Mr. Grant suggested transportation is going to be a big thing. Ms. Dembowski said research shows a lot of southern areas have integrated preschool – all based to serve those special education students. One has the children get on the school bus with their siblings – equipped with seatbelts and accommodations for car seats.

Ms. DellaValla questioned how the process works. Mr. Voci said it is Pam Stimpson, Gayle Dembowski, Gail Yalenezian and Ann Auger. He suggested if a School Board member from each Board would be willing to sit with them, that would be a big step, and possibly some parents. Emily Benson offered to serve on the committee.

Ms. Harlow asked if anyone is opposed – there were no objections raised. The consensus was to go forward and target the October meeting.

5. **Any Other Business:** None.
6. **Next Meeting – October 19, 2015 in Jackson.**
7. **Adjourn: Motion by Mr. Grant, second by Ms. DellaValla, that the meeting be adjourned at 6:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Gail T. Currier, Recording Secretary