

Craftsbury Schools Community (CSCC) Questions and Answers

*We hope the information in this set of Q&A's will answer questions you have about the
Craftsbury Community School Collaborative.
We need your help!*

What is the CSCC?

The CSCC began as a voluntary Citizen Group dedicated to finding a solution to the current impasse over the future of the Craftsbury School System. The Group met several times in 2008 and established a Steering Committee that has continued to meet to discuss a process that would bring the Town together.

The Steering Committee became a sub-committee of the School Board in April of this year.

Why was a Sub-committee established?

The Steering Committee decided to become a sub-committee of the School Board in order to insure a constructive working relationship with the School Board and to make it technically possible to seek foundation funding to employ a consultant if necessary.

What purpose will the Steering Committee serve?

It is hoped that the Steering Committee will design and manage a community-based process that will help us move forward to find workable solutions to our school issues. The process will rely on dialogue and consider all points of view and incorporate as much factual information as can be obtained.

If asked by the School Board and because the situation is fluid and changing, the Steering Committee may make interim recommendations regarding the the structure and future of the Craftsbury school system.

Can a sub-committee of the School Board have an independent perspective and be representative of the diversity of views regarding the future of the Craftsbury School System?

The mandate from the School Board makes it very clear that the Steering Committee is an advisory and independent entity and not in any way constrained by positions taken by the School Board. The Steering Committee and the Stakeholders Group that it will establish are entirely free to formulate recommendations that may differ from positions taken by the School Board.

The Steering Committee Sub-committee is responsible for determining its membership and composition and is committed to the principle of representing the full diversity of

opinions regarding the future of the School.

Who is on the Steering Committee?

The current members of the Steering Committee are: Annie Volmer, Susan Houston, Harry Miller, Steve Moffatt, Stark Biddle, Tina Sweet, Ron Sanville and Perry Thomas.

Do the individual members of Steering Committee have a position on the future of the School?

The Steering Committee believes that citizens must address the future of education in Craftsbury and move beyond the current impasse. The Committee believes that all points of view are legitimate and need to be heard and we believe that a workable consensus can emerge through dialogue.

Why does the Steering Committee include members of the School Board?

There are two reasons. First, it is essential to maintain open and constructive relations with the School Board and this can be best achieved through a system of dual membership. The second reason is that the School Board has access to a great deal of information that will be needed as we discuss alternatives. By having School Board members on the Steering Committee we can insure full access to this information.

Does the Steering Committee have a plan for bringing the Town together?

For the last few months the Steering Committee has been working to design a collaborative process intended to forge consensus. In broad terms, the Steering Committee envisions the creation of a larger voluntary group of “Stakeholders:” that would be carefully constructed to represent the full diversity of views regarding the future of the School. This group should include parents and non-parents, adults and students, and citizens who have lived in the Town for many years as well as those who have moved here more recently. This group would engage in a carefully designed process of dialogue based on models and approaches used by other communities to deal with community issues. The process is likely to take from 6 months to a year. It will involve the collection of a great deal of background information, an analysis of the pros and cons of different approaches and (hopefully) the gradual emergence of a path forward.

How will you set up this Stakeholder Group?

It is important to stress that participation will be open to any individual who has an interest in the future of the School.

The Steering Committee will make an initial attempt to identify those perspectives that should be represented in the discussion and will contact individuals who have demonstrated a prior interest. As noted above, it will be important to include the views of

parents, non parents, Academy alumni; students, newcomers to Town and lifetime residents, to list a few.

How large will the Stakeholder Group be?

Experience from similar small-town situations indicates that the Stakeholder Group should be comprised of roughly 25 to 35 members or “stakeholders” if it is to accurately reflect the full range of views and community interests. However, anyone interested is urged to become involved. The group size will not be limited.

What special resources will the Stakeholder Group need in order to do its work?

Members of the Steering Committee have had very positive experience using outside advisors to help a community resolve a difficult issue. These are individuals that are experts in what is called *large group process*. They have training in how to design and manage a process for getting different constituencies to talk with each other and move toward a workable consensus. They are objective outsiders and do not have an interest in the content of the outcome but rather in bringing people together to reach a solution.

Haven't we already used a consultant?

It is true that we used a consultant (The Proux Report) in an attempt to “take the temperature of the Town” regarding the future of the School. This Report provided important information about differences in the Town and stressed the difficulty of finding consensus.

The type of expert guidance that would be used to help with the CSCC process would be completely different and would be focused on helping us work together to identify solutions.

One of the first things an advisor would do is to help us identify areas of agreement and then move forward into more difficult issues where there is disagreement.

How do we hope to pay for this?

The previous Steering Committee has submitted an application to the Vermont Community Foundation. In addition the Steering Committee has spoken to local groups that might be willing to provide modest assistance. Private donations could also be sought.

What if we can't find the money to hire a consultant?

There are valuable books and guides that can be obtained in pamphlet form and/or on the internet that provide assistance. In addition, members of the Steering Committee have had direct experience in community efforts of this nature and can provide their expertise. Citizens who are interested are encouraged to review the web site

everydaydemocracy.org.

What is the time frame?

It is our intention to establish the Stakeholder Group immediately after Labor Day. The Group will probably meet roughly twice a month. A report with interim recommendations should be given to the School Board for publication prior to the 2010 Town meeting.

All of this sounds like an exhausting and monumental task. Is it really necessary? Will it work?

None of us can give a 100% assurance that this approach will be successful and that the Town will be able to come together around a solution to our school problems. However, there is convincing evidence that a collaborative process based on open dialogue is more likely to succeed than any other approach.