

To: School System Viability Committee
From: John Friedl, Chair
Subject: Questions Received As of April 12, 2017
Date: April 12, 2017

The following working groups have been established to address questions submitted to the SSVSC for investigation. Some of the questions have already been answered in the course of our research. Others have not yet been addressed, but will be considered as the remaining subcommittees begin their work. Additional questions received on the Town web site will be added to this list.

List of SSVSC Subcommittees

Budget and Financial
Buildings
Demographics and Enrollment
Quality and Improvement
Legal

Questions and Issues to be addressed

Sources: W = town web site
A = ad hoc group report
C = SSVSC committee members
T = Town Council
O = Other

Budget and Financial

- Review and present proposed budget for school district and pro forma projections for 5, 10 and 15 years from now (W,A,C)
- How will the phase-out of the Hall Tax affect the Town of Signal Mountain's ability (willingness?) to contribute to the operation of the schools? (C)
- SM residents are currently paying additional taxes (at the rate of \$.15/\$100 assessed property value?) to pay off the bond that financed the SMMHS construction. If this is the case (need to verify?), when the bond is paid off can this tax be continued and the proceeds used to satisfy the town's funding requirement, or is there a sunset provision in the tax? (W,A)

- How will Walden and unincorporated area residents contribute to the cost of operation of the school district? (W,A)
- How will the SM Town Council oversee funding of the school district? (W)
- How will bus service be managed and paid for? Will students from Walden and unincorporated HC have to pay for bus service? (W)
- How will insurance for schools and buses be negotiated and paid for? (W)
- Will Walden and unincorporated HC residents have to pay fees to use recreational and athletic facilities built by the Town of Signal Mountain for the school district? (W)
- Will a separate SM school district receive all state and federal funds for students who are zoned for Hamilton County (i.e., Walden and unincorporated HC)? (W)
- Will benefit costs be higher for a smaller school district than for HCDE? (W)
- Ultimately, who will be responsible to cover all costs of the school district? (W)
- How much purchasing is bulk buying for 43,000 students in HCDE and how would that number change when purchasing power is based on a population of 2400? (W)
- How much funding is required to support the IB program? What increase is the program expected to have in the future and is this included in budget projections? (W)
- What programs and activities are paid for with parent contributions and/or MEF funds, and in what amounts? (C)
- What are possible areas of in-kind contributions by Town of SM? (C)
- Can Town guarantee no new tax to fund schools? (C)
- Can we get a breakdown of the cost of HCDE Superintendent's office/central office expenses? (C)

- What will be the consequence of diverting \$320,000 in additional expenditures from SM budget? (C)
- What is the current tuition for students enrolled in SM schools who live in Sequatchie County? Would this change if a new school district were formed? (A)
- What is the current salary for school nurses assigned to SM schools? For psychologists? (A)
- What is the annual substitute teacher expense for each SM school? (A)
- What is the percent salary rate HCDE uses for life insurance expenditures? Is this a standard rate throughout the state or is it set by each district? (A)
- Are there other fringes and benefits expenditures that apply to employee salary expenses, in addition to social security, state retirement, life insurance, medicare tax, and health insurance? (A)
- What are the annual custodial expenses for each SM school? (A)
- What are the annual maintenance and repair expenses for each SM school? (A)
- What are the annual utility expenses for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual building and liability insurance expense for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost of instructional supplies for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost of textbooks for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost of dataline and telephone communications for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost of hardware and software licenses for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost of equipment for each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost of disposal fees for each SM school? (A)

- What would the trustee commission expense be for SM schools?
(A)
- What is the annual cost of contract services for each SM school, including College Access, plant operations, child care, field trips, etc.? (A)
- What is the annual cost of Exceptional Education contracts with private agencies for each SM school? Which agencies currently service SM zoned students? Which agencies are available to SM students? (A)
- What is the cost for all other non-salary expenses that are under \$500,000 total for HCDE that were not captured in the previous categories above for each SM school? (E.g., legal fees, copier costs, gasoline, testing, equipment, vehicle repair, etc.) (A)
- What is the HCDE per employee health insurance expenditure? How much has this changed over the past five years? (A)
- How do the health benefits for HCDE health insurance plan differ from the Tennessee State Insurance plan for educators?
(A)
- How much does each employee pay for their portion of the HCDE total health insurance premium, for single, married, and married with children options? (A)
- When Hamilton County distributed capital funds for Hamilton County school projects before the city and county split in the 1990s, did Chattanooga receive a portion of the total capital funds allocated to the county schools? If so, how did this work and what portion of the funds were allocated to Chattanooga district schools? (A)
- How much is collected each year in school fees and how are these funds used? (A)
- How much is collected from coupon book sales and how are these funds used? (A)

Buildings

- What is the maximum student capacity of each of the three SM Schools? What is the square footage of each school? (A,C,W)
- What is the amount of deferred maintenance for each of the three SM schools? (C,W)
- What are the capital needs of each SM school over the next 10 years, and what would they cost? How would those costs be funded? (C,A)
- Thrasher Elementary School is in dire need of replacement. Will there immediately be a bond issue to build a new elementary school and how will it be paid for? (W)
- Does the town have property available to build a new school? (W)
- If a new school were needed, how would Walden and unincorporated HC residents contribute to the cost? (C,W)
- Is there presently vacant space available for central office staff? (C)

Demographics and Enrollment

- What is the current enrollment for each SM school, and of those students enrolled, how many reside in SM, Walden, unincorporated HC, and Sequatchie County? (A,C)
- How many students in SM schools reside in Chattanooga, and how many of these are hardship or NCLB students? (A)
- What is the projected school-age population of SM, Walden and the unincorporated area of the mountain 10 years from now? 15 years from now? (C,W)
- What is the current and projected enrollment of students who receive special education programs/services or IEPs? Will there be any changes to the services currently provided to those students? (C)
- How will Walden and the unincorporated area of the mountain be guaranteed enrollment in the new school district? (T,W,C)
- Would students who live in the Town of SM be able to attend HC charter schools or magnet schools? Same question for students who live in Walden or unincorporated HC? Is this an automatic right, or does it depend on HCDE approval? (C,W)
- The town currently has about 500 building permits applied for as of 2017. (verify?) If half of those have one child, would we expect to need another school? And what about building permits in Walden and HC? (W)
- If school enrollment exceeds capacity, how would this affect residents of Walden and unincorporated HC? Sequatchie County? (C,W)
- How would a separate school district impact residents of Sequatchie County who currently send their children to Signal Mountain schools? (W)
- How many special ed ADMs for each option are presently enrolled at each SM school? (A)
- Which special ed options are currently serviced in the SM schools and which options require services not currently provided by SM schools? (A)
- How many at risk ADMs are at each SM school? (A)

- How many ELL ADMs are at each SM school? (A)
- How many Career Technical ADMs are at each SM school? (A)
- How many vocational ADMs are at each SM school? (A)
- How many ELL translators are assigned to each SM school? (A)
- How many special ed buses service each SM school? (A)
- How many special ed bus assistants currently service each SM school? (A)
- What is the annual cost per bus for a special ed bus on SM? (A)
- How many special needs students residing in the town of SM attend schools or programs off the mountain, and which programs/schools do they attend? (A)
- How many total special needs students who are zoned for SM schools but not residing in the town of SM attend off the mountain programs? (A)
- What private special ed agencies provide services for students residing in the town of SM (e.g., Orange Grove, Siskin, etc.)? How many for students who are zoned for SM schools but not residing in the town of SM? (A)
- Does HC currently bus special needs students to off campus facilities? If so, what are the annual costs for these buses? (A)
- How many special needs students from the town of SM attend summer programs off the mountain and which programs do they attend? How many who are zoned for SM schools but not residing within the town of SM? (A)
- What is the cost per student to provide special ed summer school programming? (A)
- What is the per student cost associated with contracting with private agencies to provide special ed services? (A)
- What is the number and cost of special ed nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists assigned to SM schools

and how many students do they serve? How many days per week are these services currently provided? (A)

- How many students currently residing in the town of SM attend magnet schools? How many currently residing in other areas zoned for SM schools? (A)

- How many students residing in the town of SM attend vocational or other non-SM schools that are non-magnet schools? How many currently residing in other areas zoned for SM schools? (A)

- What are HCDE's out of district magnet and vocational school policies? (A)

Quality and Improvement

- How do we operationally define and measure improved education for our children? (C)
- What do SM parents want in terms of educational opportunities for their children, and will a separate school district be better able to provide these things? (C,W)
- What evidence supports the claim that local control leads to better student outcomes? (C,A)
- What exactly are SM schools not getting from HCDE that they would be getting from a separate school district (with specific examples or actual incidents)? (W)
- What long term effects would separation have on HC schools and how might those effects impact residents of Signal Mountain indirectly? (W)
- Would the committee look at data driven research in the area of providing a model of inclusive education for all students? The separate classrooms (CDC, MH, DCC) would not be necessary. Inclusive education is aligned with federal law and least restrictive environment. (W)
- What areas of instructional personnel and expense, service and support would the principals and/or teachers like to see improved? (A,C)

Legal

- Can in-kind contributions be used to satisfy state requirement for contributions by a municipal school district (equal to \$.15/\$100 of assessed property value)? (C)
- Could MACC programming and library funding be considered student programming under the general purpose school budget? If so, could the value of those services be counted toward the required \$385,000 contribution by the town? (A)
- Can the town include in its calculation of the required \$385,000 contribution to the school system any tuition collected from non-residents? Would this tuition be paid to the Town or to the school system? (C,A)
- Would a separate SM school district receive a pro-rata share of Hamilton County's capital educational allocation? Is this guaranteed or dependent on the HC County Commission? (C)
- Can MACC programs be considered part of arts education under the school budget (and therefore a Town contribution)? (C)
- SM residents are currently paying additional taxes (at the rate of \$.15/\$100 assessed property value?) to pay off the bond that financed the SMMHS construction. If this is the case (need to verify?), when the bond is paid off can this tax be continued and the proceeds used to satisfy the town's funding requirement, or is there a sunset provision in the tax? (W,A)
- How will current HCDE teachers salary, pension and seniority be transferred to a new school district? Will they lose benefits? (W)
- Will teachers be unionized? (W)
- Would students who live in the Town of SM be able to attend HC charter schools? Same question for students who live in Walden or unincorporated HC? Is this an automatic right, or does it depend on HCDE approval? (W)
- How would families in Walden and unincorporated HC be represented on the new school board? (W)
- How would the property taxes of Walden and unincorporated HC residents change if there were an independent school district?

Would county taxes still have a school component? Would those residents pay tuition in addition to their county taxes? (W)

- What are the possibilities of proposing and passing state legislation to allow a geographic area larger than a single municipality to form an independent school district? (C,W)

- If the SM school district developed a contract with Walden and with residents of unincorporated HC, would the contribution of those areas to the budget of the school district be based on a percentage of assessed property value, similar to the formula used for the Town of SM? (A,C)

Miscellaneous

- If the schools in Shelby County that separated from the county school district had it to do over again, what, if anything, would they do differently? (C)
- How will school zoning in Walden and unincorporated Hamilton County affect property values? (W)
- How will disciplinary actions for non-SM zoned students be different than for students residing in the town of SM? (W)
- What is the timeline for establishing a separate school district, if the decision is made to proceed? (W)
- Will there be a conversation with teachers and administrators at SM schools about the pros and cons of establishing a separate school district? (W)
- House Bill 610, if passed, will effectively start the school voucher system to be used by children ages 5-17 and starts the defunding process of public schools. In addition, the bill will eliminate the Elementary and Education Act of 1965, which is the nation's educational law. How will this affect the future of SM schools? (W)
- How will the congestion at SMMHS and Nolan be addressed? (W)
- Will there be any changes to busing, transportation, and school start time? (W)
- It is not guaranteed that the new school would be able to transfer the IB certification from the current SMMHS. How much would a new certification cost? What are the annual IB fees and training costs? What would happen if there was a delay in recertification and the IB program was suspended for a period of time? (W)
- Would any of the half-time positions currently funded by MEF be expanded to full-time? (A)
- If a new school district is formed, will teachers, staff and administrators be required to reapply for their positions? (A,W)