RSU 38 Maranacook Area Schools

Plan-to-Plan Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Location	Office of the Superintendent, 45 Millard Harrison Drive, Readfield
Members	Wendy Brotherlin (RSU 38 Board, Manchester), Eric Dyer (Readfield Town Manager), Dan Holman (RSU 38 Board, Mount Vernon), Theresa Kerchner (Wayne Local School Committee), Diane MacGregor (RSU 38 Technology Director), Jill Plourd (President, Maranacook Area Schools Staff Association)
Facilitator/ Finance Director	Karen G. Smith, Ed.D., RSU 38 Superintendent; Mandy Fitzgerald, RSU 38 Finance Director

Committee Charge

This committee's task is to surface RSU 38's preferences and priorities for a strategic planning consultant and to recommend criteria, scope, and structure for the consultant-selection process. Final consultant selection will occur through the process set out in Board Policy DJ.

Summary of Discussion

Purpose and timing

The committee discussed the purpose of strategic planning for RSU 38 and why the district is undertaking this work now, reviewing the district's planning history for context. RSU 38 was formed in 2009 (Reorganization Plan, 7.1.09), and its first strategic plan as a district was the RSU 38 Maranacook Area Schools Strategic Plan 2012-2017. The most recent plan covered 2019–2024 (RSU 38 5-Year Strategic Plan); that process began two superintendents ago and was finalized under the previous superintendent, after which the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted implementation. The previous superintendent began the initial phases of a new strategic planning effort in March 2023 and held a couple of meetings, but the work was then paused. With the prior plan now expired and that subsequent effort never completed, the committee affirmed that RSU 38 is overdue for a renewed, community-grounded strategic plan, and that the present moment—under new district leadership and informed by the district's recent demographic and enrollment analysis—is the right time to begin the work in earnest.

Consultant involvement, evaluation themes, and consultant assessments

The committee discussed how involved a consultant should be in the work ahead, using its four priorities as the lens: community-centered, in-person engagement across all four member towns; neutral, independent facilitation; mixed-methods data analysis that includes Maine school finance, with the committee expressing a clear interest in an independent, outside perspective on the district's enrollment history and demographics to complement the analyses RSU 38 has already produced in-house; and familiarity with rural Maine and small schools. Aggregated results from the Consultant Evaluation Rubric reinforced these themes, with members placing the greatest weight on neutral facilitation and authentic in-person community engagement, followed closely by rigorous mixed-methods data analysis and demonstrated experience in rural Maine.

Reviewing the three firms as a market reference rather than for selection, the committee reached the following determinations:

- MSSA Leadership Coaching Services offers strong, neutral facilitation but is lighter on the quantitative data analysis and structured multi-year follow-up the committee values;
- NESDEC brings strong demographic and facilities analysis—aligning well with the committee's interest in an outside perspective on enrollment and demographics—but leans heavily virtual and splits its work across two proposals, which sits in tension with the in-person engagement priority; and
- Great Schools Partnership offers a strong community-engagement architecture and clear key performance indicators. Still, it weights its data analysis toward community and performance data rather than the demographic, enrollment, and finance analyses the committee seeks, with in-person scope and cost varying significantly by tier. The committee agreed that its ideal consultant pairs neutral facilitation and deep in-person community engagement with genuine quantitative capacity—including an outside read on enrollment and demographics—and fluency in rural Maine, and that these qualities should anchor the selection criteria.

Decisions and Action Items

The committee documented its preferences, priorities, and criteria to inform the consultant-selection process and agreed on the following:

- Identified MSSA, NESDEC, and Great Schools Partnership (GSP) as potential partners that meet the committee's preliminary requirements based on the rubric.
- The district will follow up with these three consultants to request additional information and/or clarification responsive to the committee's recommendations. The request will be sent out, with responses expected back by the June 11 meeting.
- Given the tight turnaround, the committee determined that the June 1 meeting will likely need to be canceled because the requested information will not be available by then. The June 11 meeting will serve as the next working session.

Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the purpose and scope of RSU 38's strategic planning work.
- Documented committee preferences for the level of consultant involvement.
- Initial list of evaluation criteria and scope elements to inform the selection process.
- Confirmed next steps for consultant follow-up ahead of the June 11 meeting.

Minutes prepared by: *Karen G. Smith*
Date: *5.28.26*