

# Committee talks reorganization

By Andrew Dyer  
Staff Writer

The Limestone School Committee met on Monday, Dec. 17 to discuss regionaliza-

tion as well as to adopt three new policies.

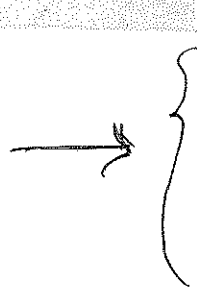
Superintendent Frank McElwain informed the com-

mittee of recent developments, statewide in the school regionalization process, including a possible shift toward more regional control. This proposed shift is currently in its beginning stages of legislation as Rep. Peter Edgecomb of Caribou along with others has submitted a minority report to the RSU bill. The report outlines a plan to allow for up to 20 Union School Associations, USAs. Should a large number of schools choose this option the plan would allow for that number to be increased.

A USA would be based on currently existing school unions such as Union 122. There would be some efficiency adjustments, but would overall follow the same model, with combined administration, and local school committees.

USAs would be required to have a minimum of 1,000 students, and would not have the authority to close schools. Edgecomb feels that the plan would meet the goals of region-

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## School

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alization, while allowing schools to remain independent.

According to McElwain a similar plan was submitted to Susan Gendron, commissioner of education, by Mount Desert Island schools, under the current legislation, which was rejected. MDI school boards had spent approximately six months in collaboration with legislators, citizens, and municipal officials and had expected a positive response.

Under current legislation, section 1478 of the law states, "A regional school unit board may create local school committees and specify their powers and duties." Section 1481 states, "Notwithstanding any provisions of law to the contrary, a

municipality within a regional school unit may raise money and direct the spending of the funds, to a school serving children from kindergarten to no higher than grade 8."

Based on these two sections it was expected the plan would be deemed acceptable under the law.

The proposed legislation may allow for plans such as MDI school board's to exist.

McElwain also noted a problem many districts are currently dealing with, which is matching salaries within Regional School Unions. Staff throughout RSUs would need to be paid equally, which means salaries would have to be brought up to meet the highest paid school, so as not to cut the salaries of any

staff. For some districts this means a loss of millions of dollars according to McElwain. For Limestone area schools this would not cause a significant change however.

McElwain also noted that Limestone School Committee's reorganization plan was accepted by Gendron, along with encouragement to continue moving forward in the process.

The possibility of making information about school reorganization more available to the public was also discussed by the committee.

"I think the public has a right to know what's going on," said Michelle Albert, committee chair.

The committee discussed raising the issue as an agenda item

at an upcoming selectpeople's meeting, or possibly airing an informative discussion on the public access channel following a selectpeople's meeting. The committee resolved to discuss the possibility with Limestone Town Manager Donna Bernier.

The committee also adopted a Maine Family Medical Leave Administrative Procedures policy, a Drug and Alcohol Use by Students policy and a Bomb Threats Policy.

The committee also chose to elect Brad Nadeau, as contact person for the Maine School Management Association. Nadeau's responsibilities will include conveying information from MSMA to the committee, which will be received through e-mail.