

KIMBALL UNION ACADEMY STUDY COMMITTEE

The charge of this committee is “to meet with representatives of the KUA administration and maintain an ongoing review of the relationship between the academy and the town, including any agreement pursuant to RSA 72:23, and to report its findings at next March's annual town meeting.” Recognizing the current difficult economic times the committee felt it was more important than ever to keep in mind the previously stated goal of “working as a collective community to maximize all of our local resources to enhance opportunities for all and at the same time reduce or control property tax increases.” Kimball Union continues to be the town’s tenth largest taxpayer and our community’s largest employer.

Based on our work this year, your committee reports the following:

Local Students: Exclusive of students of KUA faculty, there are currently 35 students from Plainfield attending the Academy. A total of 8 seniors will graduate in the coming spring and 6 to 8 new students from Plainfield are expected to apply to the Academy for the 2009/10 year. Another 10 local students, whose parents are faculty at KUA, attend Kimball Union.

In the 2008/09 academic year, day student tuition was \$27,500. The property tax funded tuition at Lebanon High, the town’s designated high school for Plainfield students, was \$10,890.

Based on the Academy’s dormitory, dining hall and kitchen assets valued for tax purposes at \$7,131,998, the discretionary exemption granted for 2008 had a value \$156,900. This will become the amount of the available Plainfield Grant for the 2008/9 academic year. For the 2007/8 year Kimball Union provided to local students \$135,250 in “Plainfield Grant Assistance.” In addition, the school informed the committee that another \$70,000 in financial aid from the school was awarded to local students. The Plainfield Grant assistance ranged from a minimum distribution of \$1,300/student to a maximum of \$9,600.

Due to the overall positive state of the town/school relationship, the committee, again this year, supports the approval of the KUA tax exemption

The committee also continues to support a need-based distribution of the Plainfield Grant. In 2008 the allocation formula remained 70% based on demonstrated financial need with the other 30% being divided evenly among the non-faculty Plainfield students attending the school. New for 2009 the minimum distribution will be increased to \$1,500 for every Plainfield student, regardless of need, the remaining Plainfield Grant funds will then be distributed to local students based on financial need.

Your Committee strongly recommends that community members wishing to assist local students in attending Kimball Union donate monies to the Putnam Scholarship Fund. With a significant increase in its endowment, this fund could be a valuable resource in making KUA an option for our hometown students.

Facility Access: The school’s active website provides up to date current information on open facilities times and upcoming events, www.kua.org. KUA continues to welcome Plainfield residents to the school’s facilities and events. The skating rink, cross-country ski trails, tennis courts, athletic fields and track remain some of the most heavily used facilities. Local attendance at theater productions and music recitals also remains strong.

The Plainfield School soccer team won this year’s Plainfield Elementary School soccer tournament held annually under the lights on the KUA artificial turf field. This is annual town event is the only Sunday use of the field lights that is permitted.

Kimball Union worked with the Planning Board to modify the original approval for the lighted turf field and the school completed the necessary landscape work for the field. This seems to have resulted in an approval that is better understood and able to be adhered to by the school. As agreed, the field lights are not used two days each week with Sunday always being one of the days and the other day selected by the school on an annual basis. Currently, Monday is the other day when the lights are not used.

KUA hosted the holiday luncheon for Plainfield Seniors again this year. This event is one of the most well attended senior socials during the year and features a holiday meal from the school’s dining hall coupled with musical performances from KUA students. This day represent yet another example of the strong community good that is possible when the town and school work collaboratively on a project.

The committee was supportive of the KUA public forum on January 11th 2009 which was held by the school to discuss with the Meriden Community some of its campus challenges and possible solutions. The committee feels that continuing these meetings as plans become more defined will be a key part of maintaining a positive relationship with Meriden Village residents who interact with the campus on a daily basis. Not enough information is available yet to take definite well informed positions on any the various projects discussed, such as the relocation of Penniman and Frost houses to the west side of main street to be converted into girl dormitories or the establishment of athletic field parking area near the Hall farm. However, at this meeting there seemed to be broad support for the work that KUA has done to minimize and concentrate student crossings of Main Street at well-defined locations. Likewise, relocating the post office to school land near the Route 120 intersection seemed well received by residents attending the forum.

Finally, the Committee along with the entire Meriden Village offers a welcome home to Gardiner and Kay MacLeay, who through a partnership with Kimball Union were able to this summer move into a new Main Street home.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Bartles, Susan Plummer, Douglas Cogan, Gordon Defoe, Stephen Halleran, Rachel Tilney and Jim Gray Kimball Union Academy Study Committee