

## KIMBALL UNION ACADEMY STUDY COMMITTEE

The charge of this committee is to meet with representatives of the Kimball Union Academy (KUA) administration and maintain an ongoing review of the relationship between the academy and the town, and to report its findings at annual town meeting. There are no absolute, correct answers in predicting future Plainfield student enrollment at KUA. The committee has provided the voters of Plainfield the best information it can on the Plainfield/KUA relationship so that voters can make their own decision on this complex issue. The committee is in full agreement that a strong, positive relationship between the town and the academy is in both entities' best interest; and that more local students attending the private school is more desirable than fewer students. Based on its work this year, the committee is unanimous in its feeling that the optional exemption should not be reduced below the 80% level approved in 2011. This year's committee held eight meetings between May 2011 and January 2012.

### **Summary of the Committee's Findings:**

The committee discussed many topics including: increasing the awareness of KUA as an affordable educational alternative for the students of Plainfield families, KUA lighting its crosswalks on Main Street, examination of various alternatives to the current tax exemption, opportunities for Plainfield elementary students to participate (after normal school hours) in KUA classrooms and being introduced to various subjects by KUA teachers. Additionally, the committee invited Police Chief, Paul Roberts for a report on the relationship of town police and the KUA community. Michael Schafer, Head of School, attended a meeting to update the committee regarding present projects and future plans of KUA.

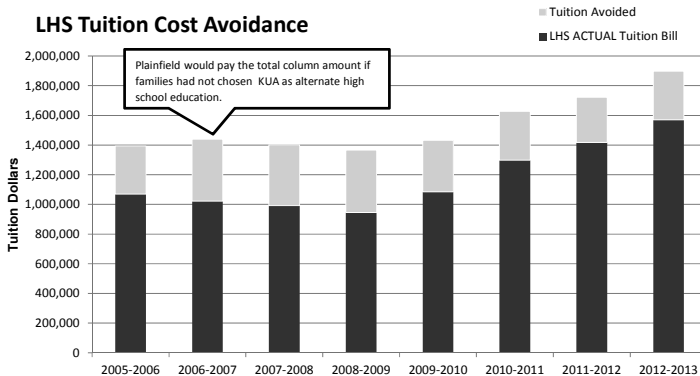
Based on all that your committee was able to learn and discuss, the committee supports the granting of no less than an 80% tax exemption this year. ***The percentage of this exemption may vary in future years if the declining enrollment at the elementary school results in a corresponding reduction in the number of Plainfield students enrolling at KUA. If this trend continues, the need to discuss the merits of a partial exemption will receive close examination by the committee each successive year.***

Your committee finds it is prudent to continue to encourage Plainfield students to consider KUA as an option. Historically, having compiled data in past town reports, Plainfield's relationship with KUA results in a *lower tax rate* for Plainfield residents than the rate would be if this relationship did not exist. (See the following column chart.)

Since Kimball Union installs, pays for and maintains the streetlights on Main Street, they have, at the town's request, increased the brightness of the lighting at the crosswalks. This request was made for safety reasons. The Energy Committee, KUA Study Committee, Highway Department and the Police Department participated in the decision to request that KUA enhance Main Street's lighting.

**KUA Tax Abatement 2011 and Financial Aid** After accounting for some assessing changes in 2011, KUA dormitory, dining hall and kitchen properties were valued at \$7,123,375. RSA72:23 provides for a \$150,000 tax exemption on these properties. Additionally, the voters of Plainfield approved an 80% optional exemption for these properties (80% equates to a \$5,580,300 abatement) resulting in \$133,090 in forgiven taxes. The realities of declining elementary school enrollment, rising property taxes, and the increased value of the exemption will continue to require your committee to annually evaluate the percentage for any proposed optional exemption.

- During the 20011/12 academic year, KUA provided \$270,200 in financial aid to Plainfield students attending KUA. **This aid exceeded the tax abatement last year by \$113,300.**
- In 2011, KUA adopted an exclusively need-based distribution policy. Instead of all families receiving at-least minimum financial aid, qualifying families with demonstrated need received aid.
- While recognizing that KUA has no obligation to return the tax abatement money to the community, your committee supports the continuation of a need-based distribution of local financial aid provided by the academy.
- **KUA remains Plainfield’s largest employer** More than 30 KUA employees, making up some 29 Plainfield off-campus households, own homes and pay Plainfield property taxes.
- 1. **KUA is the Town’s largest taxpayer.** In 2011 KUA paid \$88,977 in local property taxes.
- **Plainfield Students**
  - Twenty-three (23) Plainfield students (exclusive of students of faculty families) currently attend the academy (see “Tuition:” below)
  - Six (6) Plainfield seniors will graduate KUA in the coming spring
  - Three to seven (3-7) Plainfield eighth graders are expected to begin attending KUA for the 2012-2013 school year
- **Tuitions: Kimball Union Academy (KUA) and Lebanon High School (LHS)**
  - KUA day-student tuition will be \$29,925 for the next (2012-2013) academic year
  - LHS tuition for Plainfield students this year is \$13,600 per student.
  - The 2011-2012 PES tuition budget would have been \$312,800 higher if the 23 Plainfield students had not chosen KUA as an alternative education to LHS.
  - The Plainfield School Board anticipates 103 Plainfield students attending LHS next school year. That is \$1,400,800 designated in the school’s budget for tuition.
    - Since 1998, the average LHS tuition cost avoided has been \$303,000 per year (see chart below)
    - Plainfield does not pay any portion of the KUA tuition for local students.
  - The KUA administration has again, in an effort to alleviate uncertainty, agreed to guarantee that at least three (3) local students from the eighth grade will attend the academy. If not, the academy will reimburse the school district the cost of the difference in the LHS per-student tuition.



**2. How does the Town of Plainfield benefit from Kimball Union Academy?**

- Access to the following facilities : skating rink, cross-country ski trails, tennis courts, free admission for Plainfield residents to most KUA plays and concerts, athletic fields and track, meeting rooms with advanced approval, soccer fields where our elementary school holds its annual soccer tournament under the lights on a Sunday (the only time the field lights are used on a Sunday), church and PES School Board retreats, softball field, graduation, gymnasiums
- Annual Energy Expo sponsored by towns of Plainfield and Cornish
- Annual PES Seventh Grade Auction
- Annual Seniors’ luncheon in KUA Dining Hall
- Annual Wild Game Dinner in KUA Dining Hall
- Day care/kindergarten open to local residents as well as KUA faculty families
- Emergency Management Site for disaster recovery
- Fire Brigade where KUA students and faculty participate with town’s volunteer firefighters
- Plainfield Elementary School (PES) benefits from lower electric rates because KUA includes our school’s usage in their negotiations for lower electric rates

**Residents are encouraged to visit the town’s web site and follow the “KUA Invites You link” for an up to date listing of events and happenings open to the public.**

Access times and directions to KUA facilities for Plainfield residents are available on the KUA website [www.kua.org](http://www.kua.org)

**• How does Kimball Union Academy Benefit from the Town of Plainfield?**

- The Plainfield Community has a history of solid support for Kimball Union Academy and its educational mission. This support is evidenced by the annual vote granting an optional tax abatement or exemption.
- Plainfield community members work on joint projects with the academy.

- Plainfield Elementary School as an excellent education option for children of faculty.
  - Fifteen (15) KUA faculty-children (living on campus) and attend PES.
- Plainfield Elementary School as an academic source for some of KUA's most well-rounded students.
- Full-time municipal staffed building with supported Planning and Zoning offices helps to facilitate efficient local approvals for KUA's various campus projects.
- Full-time Police Department to assist with student and staff issues.
- Access to two local fire departments, with six, in-town firefighting vehicles.
- Plainfield's strong commitment to conservation and set-aside land projects. A vast public trail network provides ample outdoor recreational opportunities for KUA students and faculty.
- Plainfield's continued commitment to rural zoning maintains the rural agricultural-based environment that is touted in KUA's marketing.

- **Streetlights**

At the request of the town's Select Board, your committee discussed the night-time safety of the crosswalks on Main Street. The Select Board has received numerous concerns from residents about the limited visibility when students are crossing the roadway during night-time conditions. Kimball Union has agreed to enhance the streetlights along Main Street. Kimball Union assumed the responsibility for these lights some years ago as part of a campus-wide lighting project approved by the Plainfield Planning Board.

- **Meriden Post Office**

The USPS has recommended closure of over 3,500 rural post offices throughout the nation. We are extremely fortunate that KUA has now renewed the lease for the Meriden Post Office, which should guarantee the post office stays in Meriden for the next five years, with an option to renew for an additional five years.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Yacavone-Chair, Shelley Andrews, Eric Brann, Betsy Duany, Myra Ferguson-PES School Board, Jim Gray-KUA, Steve Halleran-Town Administrator, Robyn Hadlock, Rob Hewett, Joe Williams-KUA.

Plainfield KUA Committee 2011/12

## **ENERGY COMMITTEE- 2011**

A highlight of 2011 was the Upper Valley Energy Expo, produced by the Town of Plainfield Energy Committee. On Saturday, January 29, 2011 our Elementary School was a scene of high energy and interest as our second expo got underway.

The focus of the day for most participants was the schedule of workshops on a range of subjects, from biofuels to weatherization. Lee Lynd, a Plainfield resident, Professor of Engineering at Dartmouth's Thayer School and a founder of the Mascoma Corporation, gave a keynote address to an enthusiastic crowd outlining his perspectives on the necessary transition to sustainable energy.

Other speakers included Mike Higgins and Allan Ferguson of the Plainfield School Facilities Committee, who described the dramatic energy-saving changes to some of the school classrooms; Bob Walker of SERG who provided a popular "Button Up"