

## Special Meeting: Act 46

CTO: 7:10

In Attendance: C. Haynes, M. Morgan, J. Carr, S. Haley, C Smid, R. Chesnut-Tangerman, J. Paustian, Rep. Sharpe, R. Beal

Public present: open forum of community members and outside residents

### 1. Presentation by Rep. Sharpe

- a. Why we have Act 46
- b. Explanation of non-homestead and homestead tax rates and other state revenues that feed into the education fund
- c. changes in student numbers as compared to student to teacher ratios
- d. changes in demographics
- e. explanation of why tax bills increase by 10% when school budget only increased by 1%, such as loss of students, loss of federal funding (SPED or title 1), change in CLA because of changes in home values not reflected on the grand list.
- f. Current set-up of SUs is very busy and confusing with a lot of overlapping responsibilities. So Act 46 aims to simplify this by:
  - Providing substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities
  - Lead students to meet or exceed standards. Phases out phantom students, small school grants will go away unless merger is complete. There is a temporary cost control mechanism to moderate spending growth, which the 2% cap. There is an allowance for more growth in low spending districts.
- g. Why merge? When there are more schools under one umbrella, there are more opportunities for shifts in teachers and students to provide continued equitable opportunities. Sustainable and scalable so that kids have limitless educational opportunities. Mergers can be handled in number of ways, some with more cost savings than others.
- h. Moving ahead: like communities seem to make sense to join, such as Middletown, Wells, Tinmouth, Pawlet, Rupert, Danby, Mt. Tabor, which are all running k-6 schools, with 7-12 choice.
- i. Discussion: How many towns would need to join together to get to 900 students? More than 4 towns or 1200 students.

Where will the actual money be saved? Will schools be closed?

2 schools have already closed (Concord and Guildhall). We will see more schools closed especially if nothing is done. Some schools have been revitalized by joining a larger unified district, as happened in Bolton. We will be better able to save our schools

within a larger school district. Most savings are gained through administrative savings. Larger school districts also save substantially through savings solely based on business practices, such as audit savings.

Does bigger actually mean savings when Burlington district is actually above average in costs per pupil and they are one of the largest districts? You gain savings up to 1700 but then that changes once we pass that threshold.

Why now are the numbers given in Act 46, not mandatory? Memo was just put out that they are not mandatory and more important is the consolidation of at least 4 smaller districts.

Compared to the very confusing schematic of current school districts, what would a flow chart for a new consolidated district look like? Start erasing the lines that don't make sense, then you are going to get to a much simpler school structure. We will no longer have so much overlap of responsibilities.

What is the projection of cost savings, 1%, 10%? VASBO testified that it would save 30 million in business practices. Broader bill says more like 50 million when we go beyond the business office.

How is the ratio of teachers to students going to be effected? Will there be a reduction in forto ce? There will be a tremendous number of teachers that will be retiring and aging out. Teachers are now paying more into the retirement fund which will allow spouses to be eligible for benefits and that 5 year period is now up and all those teachers will be retiring.

8:00--Break-out session, out of town residents will move into the conference room to continue discussion with Rep. Sharpe. Middletown residents will be broken up into 5 groups to participate in small group discussions. Discussion groups adjourned at about 8:30 to report results to the whole group. Meeting was adjourned at 9:00