

**AGENCY OF EDUCATION  
Barre, Vermont**

**TEAM:** School Governance Team

**ITEM:** Will the State Board of Education find that the proposed unified union school district formed by three member districts of the **BENNINGTON-RUTLAND SUPERVISORY UNION (BRSU)** is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts,” and will the State Board therefore vote to approve the attached report (Revised Proposal) of the **Mettawee School District Merger Study Committee** (Study Committee) and assign the new district to the BRSU?

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

- 1. That the State Board of Education finds that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by three member districts of the BRSU is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts” pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and alternatively**
- 2. That the State Board of Education votes to approve the attached report of the Study Committee.**
- 3. That the State Board of Education votes to approve the assignment of the new unified union school district, if formed, to the BRSU for administrative, supervisory, and transitional services pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706h beginning on the date on which the district becomes a legal entity pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706g.**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** 16 V.S.A. § 706c; Act 153 (2010), as amended; Act 156 (2012), as amended; Act 46 (2015), as amended; Act 49 (2017)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

On September 18, 2017, the Pawlet and Rupert School Districts, on their own behalf and on behalf of Union Elementary School District #47, presented a proposal to the State Board of Education to form a unified union school district (Original Proposal).<sup>1</sup> If approved by the State Board and the voters, the new district would have been eligible for tax rate reductions and other transitional assistance as one new unified district under the “Side-by-Side” program created by Act 156 (2012).

The Original Proposal explicitly conditioned creation of a unified district on the retention of a current special exemption under 16 V.S.A. § 827(e)(1). That exemption permits Pawlet and Rupert to designate New York Schools as the public schools for resident students in grades 7-12.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Report and proposed Articles of Agreement at Agenda Item P-4 of the State Board’s September 2017 meeting.

Specifically, Article 1, paragraph 3 and Article 3, paragraph 2 of Original Proposal conditioned formation of the unified district on two specific events:

- (1) If the Legislature amended § 827(e)(1) to grant such authority to the new unified district
- and*
- (2) If the voters authorized the new district to designate the New York school(s).

That is – even if the State Board and the voters approved creation of the district outlined in the Original Proposal, the district would not have come into existence unless both of the two above events also occurred.

As explained in the Original Proposal and discussed at the September State Board meeting, the tuition charged by the two designated New York schools is far lower than the amounts that tuitioning districts pay to public and independent schools in Vermont.<sup>2</sup> The Original Proposal also indicated that the boards of the Pawlet and Rupert School Districts “have adopted a liberal disposition towards [individual requests that tuition be paid to other schools] over the years.” Pursuant to the provisions of § 827, however, the districts cannot pay tuition in an amount that exceeds the tuition charged by the New York schools. Even if the Board agrees to pay tuition to a non-designated school, a Pawlet or Rupert student enrolled in that non-designated school must pay the balance of the tuition – regardless of whether the non-designated school is public or independent – unless the school is able to offer the student financial aid.

The State Board noted that families that have the ability to pay the difference between the tuition in New York and the tuition at another, non-designated school to which their student gains admittance have a greater ability to leverage this option than families with fewer means. This is inequitable, even if it is in compliance with statute.

State Board members indicated that the proposal appeared to be a “referendum on designation” rather than a plan to increase equitable access to educational opportunities or otherwise meet the goals of Act 46. Citing equity concerns, the State Board declined to approve the Original Proposal.

The Study Committee revised its proposal based on the State Board’s comments and now submits its Revised Proposal to the State Board for consideration.

The Revised Proposal is substantially similar to the Original Proposal except that it removes all reference and conditions related to designation in the future. Instead, the Revised Proposal states that the New Unified District would operate one PK-6 school and pay tuition for all students in grades 7-12 beginning on July 1, 2018. In addition, the Revised Proposal acknowledges that taxpayers will likely see increased tuitioning costs due to this proposed change in practice. Finally, it removes the “grandfathering” provision, made irrelevant by the proposal to cease designation and pay tuition for all students in grades 7-12.

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<sup>2</sup> See the table setting out the FY08-FY17 tuition rates in Granville and Salem appended to both the Revised Proposal and the Original Proposal.

As an overview:

- The Study Committee identifies Pawlet, Rupert, and Union District #47 as “necessary” to the proposal pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(1)
- If approved by the State Board, the electorate will vote on November 21, 2017 (November 7 in Original Proposal) whether to approve creation of the New Unified District.
- The New Unified District would be governed by a unified school board of six members, with four members initially allocated to Pawlet and two members to Rupert. Each member would be elected by the voters of the town in which the member resides.
- All future votes on the budget, Board membership, and other public questions would be by Australian ballot.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS:** By enacting Act 46, which incorporated the provisions of Act 153 (2010), the General Assembly declared the intention to move the State toward sustainable models of education governance designed to meet the goals set forth in Section 2 of the Act. It was primarily through the lens of those goals that the Secretary has considered whether the Study Committee’s proposal is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts” pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c.

The Study Committee stated that unification would “generate nominal savings” by moving from three to one school board. It also believed that “a single board [would] allow the district’s leadership to better focus on continuous organizational improvement, and create a better framework to ensure equity of opportunity for all students.” The Committee also believes that merger would enhance oversight of education spending, and increase transparency and accountability by summarizing all education spending in one budget.

The proposal technically meets the requirements of the law. As stated in the Secretary’s recommendation to the Original Proposal, it makes practical sense for a single district to replace three districts – one union elementary school district that operates a single school and two town districts that exist solely to pay tuition for students in Grades 7-12 – particularly when the combined FY2017 ADM of all three districts was 357.95. Similarly, it makes sense for a six-member board to replace the current three boards, which have a combined total of 15 members.

In addition, the Revised Proposal has the potential to increase opportunities for students in grades 7-12 for those whose families do not have the ability to pay the difference between the tuition rate at receiving schools and the tuition rate at the currently designated schools.

We therefore recommend that the State Board approve the Study Committee’s report and proposed articles of agreement.

We note for the record, however, that we are still concerned that the proposed New Unified District would still be a very small district (357.95 ADM) and that staffing at the union elementary school is not changed. The Revised Proposal offers no real opportunity for cost containment – in large part because the proposal does not alter the inherent limitations of scale. We see this proposal as a first step in a journey towards equity and sustainability.

**STAFF AVAILABLE:** Donna Russo-Savage, Principal Assistant, School Governance  
Brad James, Education Finance Manager



<b>Type of Merger</b>	
<b><i>Please refer to the related eligibility worksheets to determine baseline eligibility for each merger type.</i></b>	(column reserved for agency use)
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Accelerated Merger</b> (Act 46, Section 6)	
<b>A Regional Education District (RED) or one of its variations</b> (Act 153 (2010) and Act 156 (2012)) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>RED</b> (Act 153, Secs. 2-3, as amended by Act 156 , Sec. 1 and Act 46, Sec. 16)</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Side by Side Merger</b> (Act 156 , Sec. 15)  Districts involved in the related merger: Taconic and Green Regional School District</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Layered Merger (Union Elementary School District)</b> (Act 156, Sec. 16)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Modified Unified Union School District (MUUSD)</b> (Act 156, Sec. 17, as amended by Act 56 (2013), Sec. 3)</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Conventional Merger – merger into a preferred structure after deadline for an Accelerated Merger</b> (Act 46, Section 7)	

<b>Dates, ADM, and Name</b>	
<b>Date on which the proposal will be submitted to the voters of each district</b> (16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(11)): November 21, 2017	
<b>Date on which the new district, if approved, will begin operating</b> (16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(12)): July 1, 2018	
<b>Combined ADM of all “necessary” districts in the current fiscal year:</b> 338.97	
<b>Proposed name of new district:</b> Mettawee School District	

Please complete the following tables with **brief, specific** statements of how the proposed union school district will comply with the each of the listed items. *Bulleated statements are acceptable.*

<b>The Proposed School District is in the Best Interest of the State, Students, and School Districts – as required by 16 V.S.A. § 706c</b>		
<p><u>Goal #1:</u> The proposed union school district will provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities.</p> <p><i>Act 46, Sec. 2(1)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A single board will be better able to establish a unified vision K-12.</b></li> <li>• <b>This merger would expand options for students in grades 7-12 by eliminating designation of New York schools and by providing school choice.</b></li> </ul>	
<p><u>Goal #2:</u> The proposed union school district will lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards, adopted as rules by the State Board of Education at the direction of the General Assembly.</p> <p><i>Act 46, Sec. 2(2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A single board will be better able to monitor outcomes for all students.</b></li> <li>• <b>A single board K-12 will provide better oversight of the transition from grade 6 to grade 7.</b></li> </ul>	
<p><u>Goal #3:</u> The proposed union school district will maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff.</p> <p><i>Act 46, Sec. 2(3)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A single district will reduce duplicative governance-related activities and allow administration to put a greater focus on instructional leadership.</b></li> </ul>	

<p><u>Goal #4:</u> The proposed union school district will promote transparency and accountability.</p> <p><i>Act 46, Sec. 2(4)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transparency would increase because voters in the region would have a single budget instead of three.</b></li> <li>• <b>Reducing the number of districts from three to one would allow for the creation of stronger accountability systems. Parents and taxpayers would only have one board to approach to address their questions and concerns.</b></li> </ul>	
<p><u>Goal #5:</u> The proposed union school district will deliver education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.</p> <p><i>Act 46, Sec. 2(5)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>This merger would reduce some operational costs such as the costs for financial audits, board member stipends, and transportation coordinator stipends.</b></li> <li>• <b>This merger would maximize the use of merger incentives provided under the law.</b></li> <li>• <b>Enacting school choice in grades 7-12 might make the communities more attractive to new families.</b></li> <li>• <b>This merger will most likely result in increased tuition costs but would also maximize the use of merger incentives</b></li> </ul>	
<p><u>Regional Effects:</u></p> <p>What would be the regional effects of the proposed union school district, including: would the proposed union school district leave one or more other districts geographically isolated?</p> <p><i>Act 46, Section 8(a)(2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>This merger would create a single unified union school district in a regional currently composed of three school districts. This merger would not geographically isolate any district.</b></li> </ul>	

**Articles of Agreement – as required by 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(3) - (10), (13)**

<p>(3) The grades to be operated by the proposed union school district</p> <p>The grades, if any, for which the proposed union school district shall pay tuition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Unified Union School District would operate a school for students in grades PreK-6, the Mettawee Community School.</li> <li>• The Unified Union School District would provide tuition for students in grades 7-12.</li> </ul>	
<p>(4) The cost and general location of any proposed new schools to be constructed</p> <p>The cost and general description of any proposed renovations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new schools would be constructed or renovated because of this merger.</li> </ul>	
<p>(5) A plan for the first year of the proposed union school district's operation for:</p> <p>(A) the transportation of students</p> <p>(B) the assignment of staff</p> <p>(C) curriculum</p> <p>The plan must be consistent with existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and other provisions of law, including 16 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 3 (transition of employees)</p>	<p><b>The Unified Union School District will assume operational control of the Mettawee Community School on July 1, 2018. To ensure a smooth transition to unified operations, the Unified Union School District School Board shall:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine, in accordance with state and federal law, the transportation services to be provided to students in the District;</li> <li>• Develop school district policies;</li> <li>• Assign staff to ensure equitable programming while at the same time preserving continuity and quality of services;</li> <li>• Develop curriculum and related assessment measures necessary to fulfill the Education Quality Standards; and</li> <li>• Prepare for and negotiate collective bargaining agreements consistent with 16 VSA Chapter 53, Subchapter 3 (transition of employees).</li> </ul>	



<p>(6) The indebtedness of the proposed merging districts that the proposed union school district shall assume.</p>	<p><b>The Unified Union School District will assume all debts from the merging districts. Union District #47, with debt of \$13,058, is the only one of these districts with any debt.</b></p>	
<p>(7) The specific pieces of real property owned by the proposed merging districts that the proposed union school district shall acquire, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* their valuation</li> <li>* how the proposed union school district shall pay for them</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Unified Union School District will assume ownership of the Mettawee Community School which has an insured value of \$4,403,585.</b></p> <p><b>No later than June 30, 2018, the forming districts will convey and transfer to the Unified Union School District all their school-related real and personal property for One Dollar.</b></p>	
<p>(8) <i>[repealed 2004 Acts and Resolves No. 130, Sec. 15]</i></p>		
<p>(9) Consistent with the proportional representation requirements of the Equal Protection Clause, the method of apportioning the representation that each proposed member town shall have on the proposed union school board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* no more than 18 members total</li> <li>* each member town is entitled to at least one representative</li> <li>* <i>see also</i> 16 V.S.A. § 706k(c): one or more at-large directors</li> <li>* <i>see also</i> 16 V.S.A. § 707(c): weighted voting</li> </ul>	<p><b>Apportionment of representation on the Unified Union School District School Board shall be consistent with the proportional representation requirements of the Equal Protection Clause. The Board will be composed of six director positions, four from Pawlet and two from Rupert. This ratio of representation equals the approximate ratio of residents of the two towns: as of the last US Census, Pawlet had 1,477 residents and Rupert had 714.</b></p>	

<p>(10) The term of office of directors initially elected, to be arranged so that one-third expire on the day of each annual meeting of the proposed union school district, beginning on the second annual meeting, or as near to that proportion as possible</p>	<p><b>The initial term of office for directors will be as follows:</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Initial Term</th> <th>1 Year</th> <th>2 Year</th> <th>3 Year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Next Election</td> <td>2019</td> <td>2020</td> <td>2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pawlet</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rupert</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Initial Term	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	Next Election	2019	2020	2021	Pawlet	1	1	2	Rupert	1	0	1	
Initial Term	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year															
Next Election	2019	2020	2021															
Pawlet	1	1	2															
Rupert	1	0	1															
<p>(13) Any other matters that the study committee considers pertinent, including whether votes on the union school district budget or public questions shall be by Australian ballot</p> <p><i>(please list each matter separately)</i></p>	<p><b>All questions, including the Union School District budget, will be voted on by Australian ballot. See Article 10.</b></p>																	

DANBY  
DORSET  
MANCHESTER  
MOUNTAIN TOWNS RED  
MT. TABOR  
PAWLET

**BENNINGTON-RUTLAND SUPERVISORY UNION**

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RUPERT  
SUNDERLAND  
TACONIC & GREEN RSD  
UNION DISTRICT #23  
UNION DISTRICT #47  
WINHALL

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TO: Vermont State Board of Education

FROM: Jacquelyne Wilson, BRSU Superintendent

RE: Mettawee School District Merger Resubmission

DATE: October 8, 2017

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On October 5, 2017 the Pawlet-Rupert Merger Study Committee met to discuss the State Board's rejection of their merger proposal on September 20, 2017. Given that the State Board had significant concerns regarding equity, as a result of the practice of designating to New York schools, the Merger Study Committee voted to support paying tuition for all 7-12 secondary students instead of maintaining their decades long commitment to NY designation. This was a difficult conversation, and the vote was 4-3 in favor of making this change. However, there is still very strong support amongst committee members to unify the three districts.

Much of the content of the Merger Study Committee's new submission is similar to the September 20 version but some noticeable differences are highlighted below:

- Worksheet Goal #5 (pg. 4) includes a recognition that the change to school choice will most likely result in increased costs to taxpayers.
- Delivered at a Cost that Parents, Voters, and Taxpayers Value (pg. 8) notifies the voters that they can expect increased tuition costs.
- Student Transportation (pg. 13) states that the Committee believes that transportation costs will most likely increase due to the elimination of designation to New York schools.
- Article 1 (pg. 14) removes designation language.
- Article 3 (pg. 14) removes designation language.
- Article 11 (pg. 18) is now the Operating Date. In the previous submission it was Grandfathering of Tuition Rates which was removed because of the removal of designation.

METTAWEE SCHOOL DISTRICT

# MERGER STUDY REPORT AND ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

PAWLET ▪ RUPERT ▪ UNION DISTRICT #47

October 5, 2017

# Contents

- I. **List of Tables ..... 3**
- II. **Merger Study Committee Members..... 4**
- III. **Executive Summary..... 5**
- IV. **Governance Study Context and Process ..... 6**
  - The Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union and Act 46 ..... 6
  - The Pawlet-Rupert-Wells Merger Study Committee..... 6
  - The Pawlet-Rupert Merger Study Committee ..... 7
- V. **Merger Committee Findings..... 7**
  - Policy Objectives of Act 46 ..... 7
    - Equity in the Quality and Variety of Educational Opportunities ..... 8
    - Achieve or Exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards ..... 8
    - Maximize Operational Efficiencies ..... 8
    - Promote Transparency and Accountability ..... 8
    - Delivered at a Cost that Parents, Voters, and Taxpayers Value..... 8
  - Projected Tax Rate Implications..... 9
  - Assets and Liabilities ..... 12
  - Student Transportation..... 12
  - Geographic Isolation of Other Districts ..... 13
- VI. **Articles of Agreement .....14**
  - Article 1: Necessary and Advisable School Districts..... 14
  - Article 2: Additional Districts Advisable to the Merger ..... 14
  - Article 3: Grades to be Operated by the Union School District..... 14
  - Article 4: New Schools to be Constructed..... 14
  - Article 5: First Year of District Operations ..... 15
  - Article 6: Assumption of Assets, Debt, and Property..... 15
  - Article 7: Transfer of Real Property..... 15
  - Article 8: School Board Configuration ..... 16
  - Article 9: Initial Board Member Terms of Office and Election..... 16
  - Article 10: Vote to Form the Union School District ..... 16
  - Article 11: Operating Date..... 18
  - Article 12: Forming Districts Cease to Exist ..... 18

**VII. Appendices and Data .....19**

Letter of Support from the Chairperson of the Taconic and Green Regional School District Board ..... 19

Selected Town Demographic Data .....20

Enrollment by Grade Level, October 1, 2016.....20

Equalized Pupils by District .....21

Projected Pre-CLA Residential Property Tax Rates.....21

Granville and Salem Tuition Rates\* .....22

## List of Tables

---

Table 1: Pawlet and Rupert Merged Tax Rate Without Incentives..... 9

Table 2: Merged FY19 Tax Rate Comparison with Incentive .....10

Table 3: FY18 Budgeted Tuition Students and Tuition Rates .....10

Table 4: Projected Increases to Merged Tax Rate Without Designation .....11

Table 5: Merged Tax Rate and Income Sensitivity.....11

Table 6: Assets and Liabilities .....12

Table 7: Student Transportation Distances .....12

Table 8: Selected Town Demographic Data .....20

Table 9: Enrollment by Grade Level, October 1, 2016.....20

Table 10: Equalized Pupils by District .....21

Table 11: Projected Pre-CLA Residential Property Tax Rates.....21

Table 12: Granville and Salem Tuition Rates.....22

# Merger Study Committee Members

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Susan Hosley (Pawlet) – Chairperson  
William Meyer (Rupert) - Clerk  
Eugene Ceglowski (Rupert)  
Diane Mach (Pawlet)  
John Malcolm (Pawlet)  
Scott McChesney (Pawlet)  
William Morrissey (Pawlet)

## Committee Support Staff

Jacquelyne Wilson, BRSU Superintendent  
Susan Wilborn, BRSU Business Manager  
Celeste Keel, Administrative Assistant  
Daniel French, Consultant  
Steven Stitzel, Legal Counsel

## Executive Summary

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This proposed merger would merge three school districts into a single, unified union school district. The Pawlet and Rupert Town School Districts previously formed a union school district, Union District #47, to operate the Mettawee Community School and to educate their resident students in grades PreK-6. For students in grades 7-12, the town school districts designated New York schools as per 16 VSA § 827(e)(1). Pawlet designated the Granville Jr./Sr. High School and Rupert designated the Salem Washington Academy Jr./Sr. High School. Through this merger, the Mettawee School District would be established as a unified union school district PreK-12, and the new district would operate the Mettawee Community School for students in grades PreK-6 and pay tuition for its students in grades 7-12. No secondary schools would be designated.

This merger would qualify as a Side-By-Side merger structure with the recently formed Taconic and Green Regional School District. A letter of support from the Chairperson of the Taconic and Green Regional School Board documenting its support of the Side-By-Side structure is included in the appendices of this report. If this merger is approved by the voters in both Pawlet and Rupert, this merger would qualify for the Side-By-Side RED tax incentives provided by the law.

This merger would generate nominal savings through the elimination of redundant administrative activities associated with moving from three school boards to a single school board, but overall education spending would increase due to increased tuition costs at the secondary level. The Committee believes, however, a single district with a single board will allow the district's leadership to better focus on continuous organizational improvement, and create a better framework to ensuring equity of opportunity for all students.

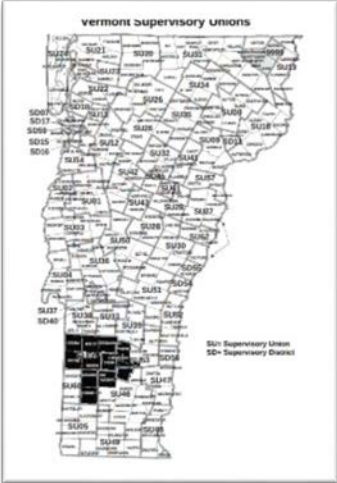


# Governance Study Context and Process

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## The Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union and Act 46

The Pawlet, Rupert and Mettawee districts are part of the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union (BRSU) in southwestern Vermont. As part of the BRSU, these districts participated in regional conversations pertaining



to Act 46 soon after the legislation was enacted in the spring of 2015. These conversations were largely focused on whether BRSU districts would attempt to form a single supervisory district under the Accelerated Merger Option provided by the law. Since there are a variety of enrollment configurations among BRSU districts, it was concluded that a supervisory district model was unlikely to be successful since it would require many districts to change their operating configuration.

One of the more unique operating configurations among BRSU districts is the configuration of the districts included in this proposed merger. Both Pawlet and Rupert have special dispensation under the law to designate high schools in New York due to their geographic proximity to the New York border. They share this operating configuration with one other Vermont school district, the Wells Town School District, but Wells is part of the neighboring Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union. The common governance configuration among Pawlet, Rupert, and Wells led these three districts to form a merger study committee in the winter of 2016 to explore the option of merging these districts along with Union District #47 to form a Regional Education District and to qualify for the related merger tax incentives.

## The Pawlet-Rupert-Wells Merger Study Committee

The Pawlet-Rupert-Wells merger study committee held several public forums to explore its merger options. Early in the process, the issue of maintaining designation with New York high schools was identified as a major issue of concern in all three communities. All three had designated New York high schools, but Wells also had a special relationship with Poultney, its neighboring district to the north. Poultney, like Wells, is a member of the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union.

Wells had received special consideration under Vermont law pertaining to the tuition rate it paid to Poultney. This special relationship with Poultney was not shared by Pawlet and Rupert who over the years had sent relatively few students to Poultney High School. As the merger committee focused on this issue, the Wells members of the committee determined it would be better to merge the districts without designation and therefore giving parents school

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*Unless otherwise directed by an affirmative vote of the school district, when the Wells Board approves parental requests to pay tuition to a nondesignated approved independent or public school, the Board shall pay tuition in an amount not to exceed the base education amount as determined under section 4011 of this title for the fiscal year in which tuition is being paid.*

*16 VSA § 827(e)(2)*

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choice in grades 7-12. A majority of the Committee members did not support this approach, however, so the Committee determined it was not advisable to merge these districts. Wells went on to join a merger study committee with other districts in the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union, and Pawlet and Rupert reconsidered their merger options knowing that they now lacked the fourth district necessary to form a RED.

## **The Pawlet-Rupert Merger Study Committee**

With the demise of the first merger study committee with Wells, the Pawlet and Rupert school boards agreed to put a non-binding article before their voters at the election held in November 2016 to get input on whether to preserve designation or not. The result of the votes in both communities was in favor of maintaining designation. The Pawlet and Rupert school boards then formed a new merger study committee. The Committee held several public meetings in the spring of 2017 and ultimately decided it was advisable to merge these districts while maintaining designation to the New York schools. Since Act 46 allows for the designation of up to three schools, the Committee concluded it would be advantageous for the new district to designate both the Granville, NY and Salem, NY schools.

The merger report with the designation of New York high schools was presented to the State Board of Education on September 20, 2017. The State Board rejected the merger proposal, however, largely because the difference between New York tuition rates and Vermont tuition rates for students wishing to attend schools other than the designated schools created a significant equity issue. Based on this feedback, the Committee revised its merger proposal without the designation of New York secondary schools. Students would have school choice in grades 7-12 under the Committee's final merger proposal.

## **Merger Committee Findings**

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### **Policy Objectives of Act 46**

The Committee concluded this merger would be an effective solution for the region to meet the policy objectives of Act 46. These policy objectives are focused on creating a more sustainable school district governance system to support local decisions that:

1. Provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities;
2. Lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards;
3. Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff;
4. Promote transparency and accountability; and
5. Are delivered at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

### *Equity in the Quality and Variety of Educational Opportunities*

This merger strengthens what has been a very successful educational ecosystem. Through this merger, students will have access to an expanded variety of educational opportunities with school choice in grades 7-12.

This merger supports the continued success of the Mettawee Community School, a school that was founded on a commitment to equity and academic excellence. The merger would streamline the governance of



*Mettawee Community School*

Mettawee and broaden the governance focus of the board to PreK-12.

Like any Vermont district that decides not to operate a school or schools, the new district will have limited oversight of the educational experience for students in grades 7-12. The Committee feels confident, however, that the strong public and independent educational options afforded by regional schools will serve students well.

### *Achieve or Exceed the State's Education Quality Standards*

The Committee believes this merger will support all students with achieving or exceeding Vermont's Education Quality Standards. The merger will enhance the governance of the Mettawee Community School to support a PreK-12 perspective when considering student outcomes. By enacting school choice in grades 7-12, students will have greater flexibility to choose educational settings that match their individual learning aspirations which will no doubt translate into higher achievement levels.

### *Maximize Operational Efficiencies*

This merger will establish one school board with oversight over all the education spending in the region. The new district will only employ staff at the Mettawee Community School. No impact on the staffing structure at the Mettawee Community School is anticipated because of this merger.

### *Promote Transparency and Accountability*

This merger will increase transparency and accountability to voters by summarizing all education spending in one budget instead of three. Tax payers will be able to address their questions about district operations to one board instead of multiple boards.

### *Delivered at a Cost that Parents, Voters, and Taxpayers Value*

The merger will reduce the costs of financial audits and some stipends related to governance activities but increase tuition costs significantly. The move to school choice in grades 7-12 might attract new families to the area, a trend that exists in other school choice districts in the region. This merger, in conjunction with the formation of the Taconic and Green Regional School District, will qualify for the tax rate reduction merger incentives provided by Act 49.

## Projected Tax Rate Implications

The best measure of the financial implications of this merger is the residential education property tax rate. The Committee evaluated several merger scenarios and how those scenarios affected the tax rate. A central variable to this analysis was implementing school choice in grades 7-12. It is difficult to predict how this change would impact enrollment patterns, but the Committee assumed costs would automatically increase since tuition costs for students attending schools other than the current designated schools would increase since these rates would no longer be capped by the New York tuition rate amounts.

The tax rate calculations in this section of the report are projections for comparison basis only. Some of these data were developed at different points of time during the 2016-2017 budget cycle. Some variables, such as the Property Yield Value, were determined by the General Assembly later in the year after these projections were finalized.

The Committee began its financial analysis by looking at the effect on merging the three districts while maintaining designation to New York schools. The projected pre-incentive tax rate for the merged district is shown below in Table 1.

*Table 1: Pawlet and Rupert Merged Tax Rate Without Incentives*

		Mettawee	Pawlet	Rupert	Merged
<b>A</b>	Education Spending	\$2,835,336	\$1,313,318	\$409,328	\$4,557,982
<b>B</b>	Equalized Pupils	174.90	129.05	37.45	341.40
<b>C</b>	Education Spending Per Pupil <b>(a ÷ b)</b>	\$16,211	\$10,177	\$10,930	\$13,351
<b>D</b>	Property Yield	\$10,077	\$10,077	\$10,077	\$10,077
<b>E</b>	Equalized Tax Rate <b>(c ÷ d)</b>	\$1.609	\$1.010	\$1.085	\$1.325
<b>F</b>	Equalized Tax Rates Including Mettawee Share (Pre-CLA)		<b>\$1.310</b>	<b>\$1.372</b>	<b>\$1.325</b>

These tax rates would be reduced by the tax incentives provided by Act 46/49 as part of a side-by-side merger with the Taconic and Green Regional School District. The tax rate incentive in the first year of the merger is \$0.08. The comparisons between the merged tax rate with incentive to the current district tax rates is shown below in Table 2. The FY19 merged tax rate is modeled from FY18 budget figures. These are not true projections for FY19, but meant to show how incentives would be applied with certain assumptions.

Table 2: Merged FY19 Tax Rate Comparison with Incentive

<b>FY19 Merged Tax Rate (Pre-CLA/based on FY18 figures)</b>	<b>\$1.325</b>
Incentive	-0.08
Adjusted for Incentive	\$1.245
<b>Pawlet</b>	
Pawlet FY18 Projected Tax Rate	\$1.31
Tax Rate Variance (Increase/(Decrease) from FY18)	-5%
FY19 Projected Tax Rate with 5% Limitation Applied	\$1.245
<b>Rupert</b>	
Rupert FY18 Projected Tax Rate	1.372
Tax Rate Variance (Increase/(Decrease) from FY18)	-9.3%
FY19 Projected Tax Rate with 5% Limitation Applied	1.303

The Committee then evaluated several tax rate scenarios related to eliminating designation and allowing for school choice. These scenarios were based on the enrollment numbers and costs listed below in Table 3.

Table 3: FY18 Budgeted Tuition Students and Tuition Rates

<b>FY18 Tuition Students Budgeted</b>	<b>Pawlet</b>	<b>Rupert</b>	<b>Merged</b>
Granville	56.00	1.00	57.00
Salem	4.00	25.00	29.00
Other Public/Private Schools	49.00	7.00	56.00
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>109.00</b>	<b>33.00</b>	<b>142.00</b>
Union School State Average	\$15,130	\$15,130	
Tuition Rate (Budgeted)	9,000	8,200	
<b>Variance Between Union School Average and NY Budgeted Rates</b>	<b>\$6,130</b>	<b>\$6,930</b>	

The Committee used these numbers to evaluate the impact of school choice on the merged tax rate. Even with full choice, students would still be able to attend the New York schools so the Committee looked at several different scenarios based on probable changes in enrollment caused by eliminating designation. These enrollment scenarios are described below in Table 4. Eliminating designation was projected to increase the merged tax rate somewhere between 10 cents to 26 cents depending on how many students chose to attend a school other than one of the New York schools.

Table 4: Projected Increases to Merged Tax Rate Without Designation

Additional Costs Assuming No Designation	Pawlet	Rupert	Merged
56 Students Attending Other Public/Private Schools	\$300,370	\$48,510	\$348,880
Increase to the Tax Rate			\$0.101
77.5 Students Attending Other Public/Private School (includes 25% of NY Students)	\$392,320	\$93,555	\$485,875
Increase to the Tax Rate			\$0.141
99 Students Attending Other Public/Private School (includes 50% of NY Students)	\$484,270	\$138,600	\$622,870
Increase to the Tax Rate			\$0.181
142 Students Attending Other Public/Private School (includes 100% of NY Students)	\$668,170	\$228,690	\$896,860
Increase to the Tax Rate			\$0.261

The Committee also reviewed the affordability of eliminating designation by looking at how changes in enrollment patterns might affect the costs of residential education property taxes based on income sensitivity. Table 5 below describes the affordability of eliminating designation on a house site valued at \$250,000 with household incomes of \$50,000, \$75,000, and \$100,000.

Table 5: Merged Tax Rate and Income Sensitivity

	With Designation	Without Designation	25% of current NY Students Attend Other Schools	50% of current NY Students Attend Other Schools	100% of current NY Students Attend Other Schools
Education Spending	\$4,557,982	\$4,906,862	\$5,043,857	\$5,180,852	\$5,454,842
Equalized Pupils	341.40	341.40	341.40	341.40	341.40
Education Spending/Equalized Pupil	\$13,351	\$14,373	\$14,774	\$15,175	\$15,978
Income Yield	\$11,851	\$11,851	\$11,851	\$11,851	\$11,851
Income Percentage Cap	2.25%	2.43%	2.49%	2.56%	2.70%
Projected Merged Equalized Education Tax Rate	\$1.325	\$1.426	\$1.466	\$1.506	\$1.586
Education Taxes on a Property with a Housesite Value of \$250,000	\$3,313	\$3,565	\$3,665	\$3,765	\$3,965
Cap on education taxes for an income of \$50,000	\$1,125	\$1,215	\$1,245	\$1,280	\$1,350
Cap on education taxes for an income of \$75,000	\$1,688	\$1,823	\$1,868	\$1,920	\$2,025
Cap on education taxes for an income of \$100,000	\$2,250	\$2,430	\$2,490	\$2,560	\$2,700

## Assets and Liabilities

All current assets and liabilities of the forming districts would become property of the new district on July 1, 2018. This gives the forming districts several months to determine how to address their assets and reserve fund balances prior to the merger. The Mettawee Community School and its immediate grounds will be sold to the new district for one dollar under a provision that requires the new district to sell the property back to the towns under similar terms if the new district ends up not operating a school at a future date.

All reserve fund balances on June 30, 2018 will be transferred to the new district under the terms specified in the merger Articles of Agreement. The table below summarizes the major assets and liabilities of the districts.

Table 6: Assets and Liabilities

			6/30/17 Balances (Reserves are Estimated)
Mettawee	Asset	Building	\$4,403,585
Mettawee	Asset	Building Maintenance Reserve Fund	\$150,000
Mettawee	Liability	GMP Lighting Loan	\$13,058
Pawlet	Asset	Tax Stabilization Reserves	\$411,783
Rupert	Asset	Tax Stabilization Reserves	\$336,366
Rupert	Asset	Anticipated Fund Balance FY17	\$83,617

Mettawee's GMP Lighting Loan will be paid off by 5/1/2020.

## Student Transportation

Although student transportation would be under the control of the new school board, the Committee considered the impact of merging the districts on student transportation from an equity perspective. The poverty rates among the districts are relatively high as measured by the Free and Reduced Lunch rate at the Mettawee Community School of approximately 50%. The poverty rate, when considered in conjunction with the relatively low population density of the area, means that many students rely on district transportation to attend school and school-related activities. In many cases, students ride the bus 35 to 40 minutes just to arrive at the route transfer points in Rupert Village or at the Mettawee Community School.

Table 7: Student Transportation Distances

	Rupert Village Transfer	Mettawee Transfer
Salem Washington Academy Jr./Sr. High School	11 miles	N/A
Granville Jr./Sr. High School	N/A	11 miles
Long Trail School	8 miles	14 miles
Burr and Burton Academy	15 miles	21 miles
Manchester Elementary/Middle School	14 miles	21 miles

The Committee concluded student transportation costs will likely increase with the elimination of designation to New York schools. The Committee believes it is essential to maintain a commitment to providing all resident students access to student transportation in a merged district to ensure equity of educational opportunity. If student transportation routes are implemented to the Manchester area, many students in the Pawlet area would be on the school bus for well over 60 minutes one way and costs will increase.

### **Geographic Isolation of Other Districts**

The Committee examined its merger options from a regional perspective. The only neighboring district that could be a potential merger partner to these districts is Wells, and that option was explored extensively through a previous merger study committee.

Sandgate is the neighboring district to the south of Rupert in the Battenkill Valley Supervisory Union and is a non-operating district. The Committee believes Sandgate intends to pursue a merger with other non-operating districts in the region. This merger does not geographically isolate Sandgate from its other merger options.

To the east are the Danby and Dorset school districts. These districts have successfully merged as part of the recently formed Taconic and Green Regional School District.



# Articles of Agreement

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The Merger Study Committee recommends the following Articles of Agreement be adopted by each of the necessary school districts for the creation of a Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 unified union school district (operating grades Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6) to be named the Mettawee School District, hereinafter referred to as the “Union School District.”

## **Article 1: Necessary and Advisable School Districts**

The Pawlet Town School District and the Rupert Town School District are necessary districts for the establishment of the Union School District. Union District #47 (Mettawee Community School), formed by the Pawlet and Rupert town school districts, is also necessary to creation of the Union School District but, by statute, the two town districts represent its interests.

If the Union School District is formed, then the districts that voted in favor of merger shall be referred to herein as the “Forming Districts”. The term shall also include Union School District #47 except where it clearly refers solely to the town school districts.

The Union School District shall become effective on the date these Articles are approved by a majority vote of the electorates of both Forming Districts in meetings warned for the adoption of these articles, and said votes become final per 16 V.S.A. 706g.

## **Article 2: Additional Districts Advisable to the Merger**

There are no additional districts being recommended as advisable districts to the merger.

## **Article 3: Grades to be Operated by the Union School District**

Upon being formed, the Union School District will provide Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Six education to all students in the Union School District by operating the Mettawee Community School beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. The Union School District will pay tuition in accordance with the law, which requires tuition to be paid at the state union average, to provide for the education of its students in Grades Seven to Twelve.

## **Article 4: New Schools to be Constructed**

No new school construction is necessary to, or proposed for, the formation of the Union School District.

## **Article 5: First Year of District Operations**

The Union School District will provide for the transportation of students, assignment of staff, curricula, education programs, and student services that, to the extent practicable, are consistent with the contracts, policies and practices that were in existence during the year immediately preceding the first year of the Union School District's operation.

The Union School District Board of Directors will comply with 16 VSA Chapter 53, Subchapter 3, regarding the recognition of the representatives of employees of the respective forming districts as the representatives of the employees of the Union School District and will commence negotiations pursuant to 16 VSA Chapter 57 for teachers and 21 VSA Chapter 22 for other employees. In the absence of new collective bargaining agreements on July 1, 2018, the Union School District Board will comply with the pre-existing master agreements pursuant to 16 VSA Chapter 53, Subchapter 3. The Union School District shall honor all individual employment contracts that are in place for the forming districts on June 30, 2018, until their respective termination dates.

The Board of School Directors of the Union School District shall make all subsequent decisions relative to the operation of the new district consistent with state and federal laws and these Articles of Agreement.

## **Article 6: Assumption of Assets, Debt, and Property**

All operating surpluses and/or deficits of any of the forming districts shall become the property, and/or the obligation of the Union School District, effective July 1, 2018. Those forming districts with surpluses or remaining reserve funds as of the close of business on June 30, 2018, will transfer all such funds to the Union School District. Reserve funds or like accounts held by school districts prior to June 30, 2018, that have specified conditions of use will be used in accordance with said provisions. All debts or obligations of the forming districts shall be transferred to and assumed by the Union School District.

The debt and funds specified above shall be transferred to the Union School District in accordance with procedures and timelines established by the Union School District Board following its organizational meeting, as further discussed in Article 11.

## **Article 7: Transfer of Real Property**

The transfer of real property will be implemented as described by Article 10.

## Article 8: School Board Configuration

The configuration of the school board will be established as described by Article 10.

## Article 9: Initial Board Member Terms of Office and Election

The term of office for School Directors elected on November 28, 2017 shall be one, two, or three years, respectively, plus the additional months between the date of the Organizational Meeting of the Union School district (16 VSA § 706), when the initial school directors will begin their term of office, and the date of the Union School District's annual meeting in the spring of 2018, as established under 16 VSA § 706. Thereafter, terms of office shall be three (3) years and shall begin and expire on the date of the Union School District's Annual Meeting. The following table establish the dates of the initial terms of office.

Initial Term	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
Next Election	2019	2020	2021
Pawlet	1	1	2
Rupert	1	0	1

## Article 10: Vote to Form the Union School District

The articles to create the Union School District will be submitted to the voters of each forming district identified in Article One on November 21, 2017. The vote will be by Australian ballot and ballots will not be commingled. The form of the article to be submitted to the voters shall be substantially as follows:

Shall the voters of the \_\_\_\_\_ School District vote to form the Mettawee School District ("Union School District") on the following terms:

1. The Pawlet Town School District and the Rupert Town School District are necessary districts for the establishment of the Union School District. Union District #47 (Mettawee Community School), formed by the Pawlet and Rupert town school districts, is also necessary to creation of the Union School District but, by statute, the two town districts represent its interests.
2. The Union School District will operate the Mettawee Community School in Grades Pre-Kindergarten through Six (PreK-6) and pay tuition for students in Grades Seven through Twelve (7-12) to provide for the education of all resident students in the Union School District.
3. The Union School District Board of Directors shall be composed of six (6) directors. Directors shall be nominated from the legal voters of each town and shall be elected by Australian Ballot vote by the voters of each town. Pawlet shall have four (4) directors and Rupert shall have two (2) directors, and directors shall have equal votes.
4. Real Estate and Personal Property
  - a. No later than June 30, 2018, the forming districts will convey to the Union School District, for the sum of One Dollar, and subject to all encumbrances of record, all school-related real

estate and personal property owned by them, including all school-related land, buildings, and contents.

- b. Disposal of Real Estate. Except as provided below for any properties conveyed to the Union School District by Union School District #47, in the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union School District Board of School Directors determines, in its discretion, that any of the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by one or more of the forming districts is or are unnecessary to the continued operation of the Union School District and its educational programs, the Union School District shall convey such real property, for the sum of One Dollar, and subject to all encumbrances of record, the assumption or payment of all outstanding bonds and notes and the repayment of any school construction aid or grants as required by Vermont law, to the town in which it is located.

The conveyance of any school properties to a town shall be conditioned upon the town owning and utilizing the real property for community and public purposes for a minimum of five years. In the event a town elects to sell the real property prior to five years of ownership, the town shall compensate the Union School District for all capital improvements and renovations completed after the formation of the Union School District and prior to the sale to the town. In the event a town elects not to acquire ownership of such real property, the Union School District shall, pursuant to Vermont statutes, sell the property upon such terms and conditions as established by the Union School District Board of School Directors.

In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union School District Board of School Directors determines, in its discretion, that any of the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by Union School District #47 is or are unnecessary to the continued operation of the Union School District and its educational programs, the Union School District shall sell such real property, subject to all encumbrances of record, the assumption or payment of all outstanding bonds and notes and the repayment of any school construction aid or grants as required by Vermont law, upon such terms and conditions as established by the Union School District Board of School Directors.

## 5. Transfer of Funds

- a. Capital Debt. The Union School District shall assume all capital debt of forming districts, including both principal and interest, as may exist at the close of business on June 30, 2018.
- b. Operating Fund Surpluses and Deficits. The Union School District shall assume any and all general operating surpluses and deficits of the forming districts that may exist at the close of business on June 30, 2018. In addition, reserve funds identified for specific purposes will be transferred to the Union School District and will be applied for said purpose unless otherwise determined through appropriate legal procedures.
- c. Specified Funds. The forming districts will transfer to the Union School District any pre-existing school district specific endowments or other restricted accounts that may exist on June 30, 2018. Scholarship funds or like accounts held by school districts prior to June 30, 2018, that have specified conditions of use will be used in accordance with said provisions.

6. Australian Ballot. The Union School District voters shall vote on the budget and other public questions by Australian ballot with polling places provided in each member town. Ballots will be delivered to the Union District Clerk and commingled for counting.

7. The provisions of the Merger Study Report and Articles of Agreement approved by the State Board of Education on \_\_\_\_\_, 2017 which is on file at the offices of the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union, shall govern the Union School District.

### **Article 11: Operating Date**

Upon an affirmative vote of the electorates of each district and upon compliance with 16 VSA § 706g, the Union School District Board shall have and exercise all of the authority which is necessary in order for it to prepare for full educational operations beginning on July 1, 2018. The Union School District Board shall, between the date of its organizational meeting under 16 VSA § 706j and June 30, 2018, undertake planning and related duties necessary to begin operation of the Union School District on July 1, 2018, including preparing for and negotiating contractual agreements, preparing and presenting the budget for fiscal year 2019, preparing for the first Union School District Annual Meeting, and transacting any other lawful business that comes before the Board, provided, however, that the exercise of such authority by the Union School District shall not be construed to limit or alter the authority and/or responsibilities of the forming districts that will remain in existence during the transition period for the purpose of completing any business not given to the Union School District.

### **Article 12: Forming Districts Cease to Exist**

On July 1, 2018, when the Union School District becomes fully operational and begins to provide educational services to students, the forming districts shall cease all educational operations and shall remain in existence for the sole purpose of completing any outstanding business not given to the Union School District under these articles and state law. Such business shall be completed as soon as practicable, but in no event any later than December 31, 2018 when the forming districts shall cease to exist.

## Appendices and Data

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### Letter of Support from the Chairperson of the Taconic and Green Regional School District Board

DANBY  
DORSET  
MANCHESTER  
MOUNTAIN TOWNS RED  
MT. TABOR  
PAWLET

**BENNINGTON-RUTLAND SUPERVISORY UNION**

6378 VT Route 7A  
Sunderland, Vermont 05250-8427  
Phone: 802-362-2452, Fax: 802-362-2455

RUPERT  
SUNDERLAND  
TACONIC & GREEN RSD  
UNION DISTRICT #23  
UNION DISTRICT #47  
WINHALL

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September 8, 2017

Vermont State Board of Education  
Agency of Education  
219 North Main Street, Suite 402  
Barre, VT 05641

Dear State Board of Education,

The Taconic and Green Regional School District Board of Directors voted on September 8, 2017 to engage in a Side-By-Side merger with the proposed Mettawee School District (Pawlet, Rupert, and UD47). These districts have been long time neighbors and members of the Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union and we support continuing our relationship with them.

Sincerely,



Herbert Ogden  
Board Chair  
Taconic and Green Regional School District

## Selected Town Demographic Data

These data come from the most recent US Census information.

Table 8: Selected Town Demographic Data

	Pawlet	Rupert
Total Population	1,477	714
Percent of Population Under 5	5.8%	3.5%
Median Age	43.8	48.5
Total Households	606	309
Family Households	411	70.2
High School or Higher	93.3%	89.2%
BA or Higher	38.8%	27.2%
Median Family Income	\$62,000	\$67,321
Individuals Below Poverty Level	12.3%	3.4%

## Enrollment by Grade Level, October 1, 2016

Table 9: Enrollment by Grade Level, October 1, 2016

Grade	Pawlet	Rupert	Total
Pre-Kindergarten	31	9	40
Kindergarten	14	7	21
Grade 1	13	6	19
Grade 2	23	7	30
Grade 3	13	6	19
Grade 4	20	9	29
Grade 5	20	4	24
Grade 6	19	3	22
Grade 7	12	5	17
Grade 8	24	7	31
Grade 9	17	5	22
Grade 10	22	4	26
Grade 11	15	10	25
Grade 12	24	5	29

## Equalized Pupils by District

The State finalizes these data each year in December.

Table 10: Equalized Pupils by District

	Pawlet (7-12)	Rupert (7-12)	UD #47 (PK-6)
FY 2009	104.67	57.13	181.32
FY 2010	106.51	55.30	175.50
FY 2011	116.55	53.45	168.87
FY 2012	122.11	52.85	158.84
FY 2013	127.33	51.83	158.40
FY 2014	132.12	46.91	160.64
FY 2015	132.89	41.90	157.31
FY 2016	119.99	37.56	174.03
FY 2017	123.98	33.51	176.12
FY 2018	129.05	37.45	174.90

## Projected Pre-CLA Residential Property Tax Rates

These data come from budget projections published each January. Actual tax rates might vary due to changes in the funding formula which are made later in the year by the General Assembly.

Table 11: Projected Pre-CLA Residential Property Tax Rates

	Pawlet (7-12)	Rupert (7-12)	UD #47 (PK-6)
FY 2009	\$0.9384	\$1.1279	\$1.2140
FY 2010	\$0.9381	\$0.8643	\$1.2458
FY 2011	\$0.9378	\$0.8600	\$1.2939
FY 2012	\$0.9313	\$0.9463	\$1.3703
FY 2013	\$0.9761	\$1.0169	\$1.4660
FY 2014	\$1.0285	\$0.9815	\$1.5128
FY 2015	\$1.0100	\$1.0015	\$1.6408
FY 2016	\$1.1542	\$0.9908	\$1.6303
FY 2017	\$1.1820	\$1.0000	\$1.6344
FY 2018	\$1.0361	\$1.0848	\$1.6089



## Granville and Salem Tuition Rates\*

Table 12: Granville and Salem Tuition Rates

	Granville	Salem
FY 2008	\$6,680	\$5,829
FY 2009	\$6,747	\$5,739
FY 2010	\$7,253	\$7,223
FY 2011	\$7,975	\$8,694
FY 2012	\$8,000	\$7,388
FY 2013	\$8,000	\$6,909
FY 2014	\$8,200	\$7,029
FY 2015	\$8,500	\$8,795
FY 2016	\$8,755	\$7,739
FY 2017	\$8,750	\$5,495

\*Actual tuition rates are announced after budgets have been approved. Granville announces its tuition rate in June for the following year and Salem announces its tuition rate in February of the school year. For example, FY18 Tuition rates were announced by Granville in June of 2017 and Rupert will announce its tuition rate in February of 2018.

## Sprague, Suzanne

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**From:** Cori Rail <corirail@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 17, 2017 3:53 PM  
**To:** Sprague, Suzanne  
**Subject:** public comment for Pawlet/Rupert merger proposal

Dear Secretary Holcombe and members of the State Board of Education,

I am writing to voice my support for the Pawlet/Rupert merger proposal. As you know, this merger process has been a difficult and lengthy one for our community. The revised proposal meets the goals of Act 46 and provides expanded opportunities for all of our students while merging our town districts. I hope that the State Board approves this proposal.

Sincerely,

Cori Rail  
1210 Route 149, West Pawlet, Vermont

## Sprague, Suzanne

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**From:** Sarah Post <sarahpost38@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 17, 2017 3:48 PM  
**To:** Sprague, Suzanne  
**Subject:** public comment

Hi, Suzanne--

Please include the following in public comment for agenda item, O2-Bennington-Rutland SU: Pawlet-Rupert for tomorrow's SBE meeting.

As a parent and tax payer living in Pawlet, I fully support our merger committee's proposal recommending the merging of the Pawlet, Rupert, and U.D. #47 districts to form a new school district that will tuition all students in grades 7-12. Tuitioning students gives all families the opportunity for an equitable education, whether they attend Vermont or New York schools.

Thank you,  
Sarah Post