

Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools

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Our schools are caring, creative, and equitable communities that empower all children to build on their talents and passions to grow into engaged citizens and life-long learners.

September 1, 2022

TO: State Board of Education

CC: Montpelier Roxbury School Board of Directors, Dan French - Secretary of Education

To Whom It May Concern:

On September 1, 2022, I, in my capacity as Superintendent for the Montpelier-Roxbury School District, received a request from Vermont State Board of Education Chair Oliver Olsen asking for a written statement regarding Montpelier Roxbury's (MRPS) response to the Lincoln Board Chair's recent inquiry regarding the Lincoln School District join our School District.

To be clear from the onset of this communication, MRPS is in no position nor has any desire to become a Supervisory Union or add Lincoln into our School District.

MRPS was quite surprised in receiving Lincoln's inquiry. We assume the only reason they included our School District in their search is because Roxbury Village School is also a small school and part of our District. A quick Google search will tell anyone that the Lincoln School is an hour away from our Central Office in Montpelier. The geography in that hour commute alone makes one question the suggestion that this would be a viable merger. There would be no fathomable way to provide equitable services for students at such a distance or provide ample support and supervision needed for an educational institution to run well. In addition, the main road to Lincoln closes in the winter making it impossible to reach the school from Montpelier in less than two hours.

When Montpelier and Roxbury merged in 2018, it did so as a School District, not a Supervisory Union. As such, we have one school board with members from both towns. This was a conscious decision. Montpelier has never been a Supervisory Union and has no intention in the future of becoming one.

The human resources in the MRPS Business Office consists of one business manager, one accounts payable person, and one payroll clerk—all of whom are new to their positions this school year. In addition to the superintendent, we have one Director of Curriculum and Technology, Director of Student Services, and Facilities Manager. In other words, our Central Office human

resources are incredibly limited and stretched with just our four schools and one District. The financial, curricular, facilities, and special education needs of a completely different entity is not within our current capacity. The involuntary creation of a new supervisory union would be at the detriment to the support we currently are able to provide for our school District.

MRPS was one of the first Districts to move all of our finances to eFinance. Despite the intense effort required to make this switch and the fallibility in the software, we do not have plans to switch to a different software. To our knowledge, Lincoln does not use eFinance. This is a significant challenge in addition to the many others outlined.

In the next three years, the financial viability of our current programming and facilities will be a focus of significant interest in light of impending pressures. With the passage of Act 127, MRPS will need to contend with a diminishing tax capacity. As such, the MRPS School Board will need to make difficult financial decisions related to our District make up and efforts at equitable services for all of our schools and students. In the FY23 budget season, it was estimated that the per pupil expenditure to educate a student in Roxbury Village School (enrollment = 40 students) is 26% more than it is to educate a student at Union Elementary School (enrollment = 350). The MRPS School Board will need to consider this reality, the financial viability, and our ability to ensure an equitable and excellent education for the students of Roxbury Village School.

MRPS wishes the Lincoln School well in their search for a partner that makes sense for the students they serve. Creating an unnecessary and unwanted supervisory union with Montpelier Roxbury School District is not that place. It would not only be a detriment to the students of Lincoln because of an inability to supervise or maintain an equitable education, but would also negatively impact the students of MRPS and our tax paying body by stretching already limited resources further.

Sincerely,



Jim Murphy

MRPS Board Chair



Libby Bonesteel

MRPS Superintendent