

BRANDON TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
JANUARY 18, 2016

Moderator Skip Davis called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Present were Brandon Town School District Directors Lisa Kenyon, Debra Boyce, Mike Lufkin, Erin Gallivan, Devon Fuller, Act 46 Study Committee Members, Harriet Wyman, Seth Hopkins, Peter Werner, Principal Judi Pulsifer, Clerk Susan Gage and 21 registered voters. Also present were Superintendent, Jeanne Collins from the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union.

Moderator asked for a motion to dispense of the reading of the entire warning. Wayne Rausenberger made a motion, seconded by Dick Kirby. Motion was approved.

Moderator asked for a motion to open discussion of Article I. Motion by Wayne Rausenberger, seconded by Seth Hopkins to address Article I. Motion was approved.

Moderator read Article I.

Article I:

To discuss the Act 46 Study Committee Report and the articles set forth below.

William Claessens asked how much the consolidation will cost the taxpayers in Brandon? Mr. Claessens stated that it appears this Act will create a property tax increase for taxpayers in the Town of Brandon.

Motion was made by Steve Carr and seconded by Doug Bailey to allow Jeanne Collins, RNESU Superintendent to speak. Jeanne Collins stated that we currently pay for two budgets, Neshobe and Otter Valley. Under the unified union there will be one tax rate for all six towns, adjusted by our town's CLA. The projections at this point indicate that Brandon will not see an increase in property tax in the first year, but that is due to an offset from the state. This offset will decrease over the next four years. Act 46 study committee member Seth Hopkins concurred stating that after mashing the budgets, making the proration for the Town of Brandon based on student numbers, applying our CLA and applying the state credit of .08, the rate for the first year will not be any more than it would have been without consolidating. The credit for the first year will offset any increases. This credit will decrease over the next four years.

Brandon Town School District Director Lisa Kenyon offered a presentation on Act 46 and how it would be manifested in our district. She also presented background on Act 46 and the Act 46 study committee. Seth Hopkins explained the side by side approach, having two separate districts, the OV Unified Union and the Barstow Unified Union. Because Mendon and Chittenden want to preserve school choice, they are required to form a separate union (Barstow).

Brandon Town School District Director Devon Fuller stated that the Rutland Northeast SU has already done the consolidation that other towns in the state have not yet done. Brandon has been fortunate to have benefited from this consolidation over the last several years.

Doug Bailey asked whether there would be any benefit to children in this new scenario. Act 46 study committee member and Neshobe teacher Harriet Wyman answered that she feels there are benefits for the children in a consolidated district, such as moving some children to smaller or larger school environments where they may thrive better. Brandon Town School District Director Deb Boyce added that it also creates opportunities for students by bringing programs to the smaller schools that are now offered in the larger schools. Jeanne Collins also brought up the fact that there are not counselors in the smaller towns, or librarians and these professionals can now be shared throughout the district. She stated that consolidation will create more equitable education throughout the district, which is helpful as all of our students enter OVUHS. Ms. Wyman added that teachers can also benefit, as it will allow paring of experienced teachers with less experienced teachers and allow teachers to move between schools without losing accrued benefits and time.

Mary Lou Webster asked whether we will see a consolidation of supervisory unions. Jeanne Collins answered that VT currently has 60 supervisory unions. She does foresee fewer supervisory unions in the long term. Brandon Town School District Director Erin Gallivan countered that she does not see a future reduction in the Supervisory Unions throughout the state.

Wayne Rausenberger stated his concern that people are not fully informed, and that many are under the impression that they will be seeing a .08 reduction in their tax bills. He believes the message is confusing, and that the adoption of Act 46 has been rushed. He is not in support.

Devon Fuller clarified that this Act will improve the education for the children in our area, and that this is the focus and intent of this vote.

Mr. Rausenberger does not believe the money will be there in year 2, 3, and 4. He believes we have a gun to our head and that this was not well thought out in Montpelier by our legislators.

Seth Hopkins stated that it is likely that Act 46 will see some continual change in the future as details are fine-tuned. He thinks we should look at this as though we are establishing a new school district, and feels that the plan offered in tomorrow's election would be the approach that would be taken if we were creating a new district on our own.

Bruce Jenson asked for clarification on the .08 credit and whether we will see a .08 savings on our property tax bills. Deb Boyce spoke about benefit to the children. Seth Hopkins clarified that our costs per pupil would be increasing, but the state decrease of .08 would keep our rate the same for this current year.

Doug Bailey spoke about attending one of the other Act 46 meetings. He applauds the committee for their work.

Motion was made to recess by Doug Bailey and seconded by Richard Baker. Meeting was recessed at 8:11 pm.

Susan Gage, Clerk

Lisa Kenyon, Brandon Town School Board Chair