

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 two member districts of the **RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION (RSWSU)** 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 of the RCSU/RSWSU Act 46 Study Committee to create the **WELLS SPRINGS UNIFIED UNION DISTRICT?**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- 1. That the State Board of Education finds that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by two member districts of the RSWSU is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts” pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b).**
- 2. That the State Board of Education votes to approve the attached report of the RCSU/RSWSU Study Committee to create the Wells Springs Unified Union School District.**
- 3. That the State Board of Education votes to approve the temporary assignment of the new school district, if approved, to the RSWSU for the purpose of receiving administrative and other transitional assistance. Assignment would be for the interim period beginning on the date on which the unified union school district becomes a legal entity pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706g and ending on July 1, 2018, and would not modify the governing structure of the existing systems.**

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A. § 706c; Act 46 of 2015; Act 153 of 2010, Secs. 2-4, as amended; Act 156 (2012), Sec. 15

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The RCSU/RSWSU Act 46 Study Committee was formed by all three school districts in the RCSU (the Proctor School District; the Rutland Town School District; and the West Rutland School District) and by three of the four school districts in the RSWSU (the Middletown Springs School District; the Poultney School District; and the Wells School District). The fourth district in the RSWSU (the Ira School District) participated informally.

The seven town school districts in the RCSU and RSWSU represent five distinct models of education governance:

- PK-12 operating (Poultney, Proctor, and West Rutland)
- PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning (Rutland Town)
- Pk-6 operating / 7-12 tuitioning (Middletown Springs)
- PK-6 operating / 7-12 designating (Wells)
- PK-12 tuitioning (Ira)

The combined average daily membership of all districts within the RCSU and RSWSU was 1,817.12 in FY2016.

The Study Committee, with the participation of the Ira School District, has presented a comprehensive proposal to merge the two supervisory unions and seven districts into a single supervisory union with four districts as follows: two new unified union school districts and two districts that would not change their current structure (the Rutland Town School District and the Ira School District).

If both of the Study Committee's proposals to create new unified union school districts are approved by the State Board and by the voters before July 1, 2017, then both of the new unified union school districts would be eligible for incentives and protections under Act 153, Secs. 2-5 pursuant to Act 156, Sec. 15 (as "side-by-side" mergers).

WELLS SPRINGS UNIFIED UNION DISTRICT

This Recommendation to the State Board concerns the Study Committee's proposal to create a new unified union school district (New Unified District) to be known as the Wells Springs Unified Union District. The New Unified District would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools through Grade 6 and by paying tuition for Grades 7-12.

The Study Committee identifies the following school districts as "necessary" to the proposal pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(1): Middletown Springs and Wells.

The Study Committee does not identify any school districts as "advisable" to the proposal pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 701b(b)(2).

In FY2016, the combined average daily membership (ADM) of the two districts was 273.70.

The New Unified District would be governed by a seven-member school board. Three Members would be allocated to Middletown Springs and three to Wells. The seventh member could reside in either town. All members would be elected by the voters of the entire New Unified District.

For the first year of operation, students would attend elementary school in their town of residence unless the Unified Board granted a parental request to enroll the student in a different district-operated school. The Unified Board could adjust school attendance lines and school configurations throughout the District beginning on July 1, 2019.

A currently operating school building could be closed only upon a unanimous vote of the Unified Board and approval by the voters of the town in which the building is located.

If a school building is closed and would no longer be used for public education purposes, then the town in which the school building is located would have the right of first refusal and could purchase the property for \$1.00, provided that the town agreed to use the property for public and community purposes for a minimum of five years. The proposal includes provisions addressing use for these purposes for fewer than five years.

All votes on the budget and Board membership would be by Australian ballot.

Amendment of the Articles of Agreement would require a two-thirds vote of the Unified Board; provided however that amendment of the article concerning the closure of schools would require a unanimous vote of the Board and approval of the Unified District voters.

The electorate of each potentially merging district will vote on March 7, 2017 whether to approve creation of the New Unified District. If the voters in both of the districts vote in favor of the proposal prior to July 1, 2017, and if the Quarry Valley Unified Union District is similarly approved, then the New Unified District will begin full operation as a unified union school district on July 1, 2018.

* * *

The RCSU/RSWSU Study Committee presents the proposal to form the Wells Springs Unified Union School District as part of a comprehensive proposal “to leave no districts isolated and also to give the new Supervisory Union sufficient student numbers to be efficient and effective.”

Although it would be premature for the State Board to act upon the self-study reports of the Rutland Town and Ira districts at this time, both studies are components of the Study Committee’s comprehensive proposal. The two self-study documents are appended to the document entitled “A Comprehensive Report.”

Similarly, although the two new unified union school districts (Quarry Valley and Wells Springs) would become members of a single supervisory union if the voters approve both proposals, it is premature for the State Board to determine the precise boundaries of that new supervisory union at this time.

The Study Committee’s appendices examine a number of factors, including relative investment per equalized pupil, historic enrollment patterns, and student-to-

administrator and student-to-teacher ratios over time. Appendix C details the efforts of both districts to work with other districts in the region. The appendices also include current and projected financial data for Middletown Springs, Wells, and other districts.

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.

EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS:

The Study Committee identified a range of potential educational benefits of merger, including:

1. Potential establishment of intra-district school choice
2. Opportunity to share teachers and resources, to conduct joint field trips and joint learning projects, and to combine students for, e.g., band or athletic teams
3. Reassignment and sharing of teachers to address student needs, changing demographics, and staff expertise
4. Expansion of tuitioning options for students residing in Wells (who currently enroll in a New York school designated by the district or receive tuition assistance to attend a Vermont public or approved independent school)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Study Committee identified potential immediate cost reductions related to the consolidation of the RCSU and RSWSU into a single supervisory union, including savings related to the elimination of one superintendent position, building rental and utilities, financial audits, and other expenses. It also anticipated that there would be cost savings by increased buying and contracting power through the economies of scale and flexibility of staff assignments. *See also* Act 153, as amended, for cost implications to the State.

See the Appendices for a more detailed discussion of educational and fiscal elements of the proposal and *see* the Committee’s Worksheet for an overview of those elements in the proposal that address the goals identified by Act 46, Section 2.

The Study Committee’s proposal is aligned with the goals of the General Assembly as set forth in Act 46 of 2015 and with the policy underlying the union school district formation statutes as articulated in 16 V.S.A. § 701.

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

Executive Summary

Wells Springs Unified Union School District

On August 24, 2011, board members for all of the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union districts (Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, Tinmouth (until 2014), and Wells) met for the first time to discuss Act 153. The committee met every other or third month until May 2015. In January of 2012, the Act 153 Committee put together Act 153 Talking Points which highlighted findings and recommendations for improved learning opportunities, containing costs, and increasing efficiencies in operations. A list of strategies to meet these target areas was established for all of the districts. The committee even considered forming a Regional Education District in 2014 and 2015.

In the spring of 2015, all of the RSWSU member district board members met with Harry Frank of the Vermont School Boards Association to define the priorities for the school districts as they considered their options and the implementation of Act 46. In August 2015, the RSWSU Board accepted a proposal by SES Study Team, a New York Education Consulting Firm, to conduct a comprehensive study, which was shared with the four communities in January 2016. The report provided the communities governance and reorganization options that would enhance educational opportunities for students, while reducing costs to the taxpayers. An analysis of the data collected showed trends in the communities in terms of demographics as well as school data.

RSWSU Boards discussed merger possibilities; however, each has a different structure (Ira – non-operating PreK-12; Middletown Springs – PreK-6 with 7-12 tuition; Poultney – PreK-12, and Wells – PreK-6 with designation to Granville, New York or tuition up to the base education rate for those not choosing the designated school). There were no natural partners within the RSWSU. As a result, each district began to meet with superintendents and/or school boards outside the RSWSU with like structures.

The Middletown Springs Board reached out to seven school districts within the region on a number of occasions. Two Middletown Springs board members attended school board meetings or study committee meetings for a number of these other districts. They also attended the Rutland Central Supervisory Union Study Committee meetings once Poultney School District became a member of that study group. All other PreK-6 with 7-12 choice districts in the region were involved in some type of formal study group.

At the same time, the Wells School District Board decided to join with Pawlet and Rupert in a formal study which included the Mettawee School District to create a Regional Education District for PreK-6 with designation to Salem, New York; Granville, New York; and Poultney (VT) High School. The meetings were actively attended by parents and community members as

the discussions regarding designation with a limited tuition amount payment for those not attending the designated schools to full choice (paying tuition, as determined by law) became more intense. The study committee votes were often split (some members voting in favor of a motion and others not approving). In early September 2016 the committee voted 5 to 4 to pursue full choice. At that point, the Middletown Springs School Board requested to join the Wells, Pawlet, Rupert Study committee but they were informed they would have to be informal members and could not sit at the table for the discussions. At the next meeting, some committee members voiced their discontent with the direction to pursue choice and after discussion the study committee disbanded as there was not agreement by all the members that choice was the best decision for all.

Following this action, the Middletown Springs Board and the Wells School Board voted to form a study committee for the purpose of merging into a PreK-6 district with choice (paying tuition) for 7-12. The newly formed committee then asked to join the RCSU-RWSU study committee as formal members, which was accepted. The RCSU-RWSU Study Committee has worked most collaboratively and included all who wished to be part of the committee. Formal members held the votes, but informal members were welcomed to be participating members in the meetings. All members of the committee worked tirelessly to make win-win decisions in the best interest of the students and the school districts.

The Wells School District and the Middletown Springs School District Board members have worked together for years as partners within the RSWSU, trust levels are high and study committee members understood the values and concerns as they established the Articles of Agreement. The proposed merger would include the school districts of Wells and Middletown Springs in the newly formed Wells Springs Unified Union School District that would serve 274 students in a PreK-6 grade system (operating schools) with 7-12 paying tuition. The district would operate two school buildings.

Each of the districts is necessary in the newly formed district. The Wells Springs Unified Union School District will comply with the statutory requirements. Both districts already have the same Collective Bargaining Agreement, however, would begin FY2018 negotiations as the newly formed Wells Springs Unified Union School District.

Under the proposal, on July 1, 2018, Middletown Springs Elementary School and Wells Village School would be conveyed to the Wells Springs Unified Union School District. There is no plan to close either of the facilities for the first four years, however, should that be the plan of the Wells Springs Unified Union Board at some point, a unanimous vote of the Board and a majority approval of the electorate would be necessary. At that point, the building would be conveyed to the town for one dollar for the purpose of community use. Should the towns decide to sell the property within five years of acquiring such, then the provisions for construction aid repayment and school improvement costs are outlined in the Articles of Agreement.

Governance of the newly formed Wells Springs Unified Union School Board would be considered a hybrid model. The Board make up would include three members from the Wells community, three members from the Middletown Springs community and one member voted as an at large member. Each member of the Board would serve three years with the exception of the at large member which would be a one year seat. All voters vote on all candidates even though a certain number is allocated to both towns.

The Wells Springs Unified Union District Board would determine attendance boundaries. The supervisory union would make transportation decisions in accordance with the law. School choice will be at the parents/students discretion for all students in grades 7 -12 to any public high school or approved independent school with tuition payment according to Vermont Statute.

Voters in Middletown Springs and Wells will be asked to approve the newly formed district on March 7, 2017 with the expectation that the newly formed district, if approved, will be operational on July 1, 2018.

The proposed merger will expand opportunities for both school districts at the PreK-6 levels by sharing of resources. Faculty meetings and professional learning community will have greater diversity and information to enable discussions around student achievement, improving outcomes, attainment of standards, and personalization for students. Opportunities for enrichment, language, and STEM may be possibilities not previously available. Faculty diversity may assist in analyzing strategies to help more students achieve proficiency in state and local assessments, as some school districts seem to have been more successful in this area. Having a larger population in grade levels will allow reporting to the communities, where small enrollment numbers in grade levels have prevented this reporting in the past.

Secondary choice for all students 7-12 in Middletown Springs has allowed parents and students to choose schools that best meet the individual needs. Some families have sent their children to different secondary students in the region depending on their child's needs, opportunities, and/or aspirations. The proposed merger will continue to provide the greatest opportunities for these students. Expanding full secondary choice for 7-12 Wells students will expanded opportunities to all families by the town paying the tuition to public secondary schools and the statutory tuition amount to approved independent schools.

Currently there is an inequity as Wells designates Granville High School (New York) which is highly subsidized by the State of New York. In addition, Wells has a special provision in the law (Title 16, section 827) that allows Wells to pay the base education amount above the base education rate to other schools of choice. Wells parents are responsible for paying the remaining tuition amount to Vermont public schools and approved independent schools. For many families, sending their children to other schools is not an option financially. This creates inequities for Wells students. As a result of the proposed merger and 7-12 choice, parents would have the ability to send their children to schools that best meet their needs. Wells parents and students

have spoken at recent community forums and Act 46 meetings in favor of opportunities to send their children to schools that best meet their student needs.

Formation of the newly unified school district including more students will stabilize the tax rate over time, allow the district to pool resources, and function more efficiently. There would be greater flexibility to share faculty and staff, as well as, provide increased expertise to work with various student populations.

The study committee unanimously recommends approval of the proposed merger as it provides greater opportunities while providing efficiencies for all students. The Wells Springs Unified Union School District will be responsible for the education of all of its students Pre-K-12.

Type of Merger	
<i>Please refer to the related eligibility worksheets to determine baseline eligibility for each merger type.</i>	(column reserved for agency use)
<input type="checkbox"/> Accelerated Merger (Act 46, Section 6)	
A Regional Education District (RED) or one of its variations (Act 153 (2010) and Act 156 (2012)) <input type="checkbox"/> RED (Act 153, Secs. 2-3, as amended by Act 156, Sec. 1 and Act 46, Sec. 16) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Side by Side Merger (Act 156, Sec. 15) Districts involved in the related merger: <input type="checkbox"/> Layered Merger (Union Elementary School District) (Act 156, Sec. 16) <input type="checkbox"/> Modified Unified Union School District (MUUSD) (Act 156, Sec. 17, as amended by Act 56 (2013), Sec. 3)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conventional Merger – merger into a preferred structure after deadline for an Accelerated Merger (Act 46, Section 7)	

Dates, ADM, and Name	
Date on which the proposal will be submitted to the voters of each district (16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(11)): March 7, 2017	
Date on which the new district, if approved, will begin operating (16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(12)): July 1, 2018	
Combined ADM of all “necessary” districts in the current fiscal year: 273	
Proposed name of new district: Wells Springs Unified Union 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. Bulleeted statements are acceptable.

The Proposed School District is in the Best Interest of the State, Students, and School Districts – as required by 16 V.S.A. § 706c		
<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"> • One vision, one mission, one strategic plan for continuous improvement, one curriculum, one assessment plan • Single School Board to expand education for all students in the PK-12 system • Added opportunities may include language, enrichment, shared field trips and arts programs • Enhanced extracurricular programs and expanded activities/athletic programs • Shared special education programs for low incidence student needs 	
<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>	<p>The SU’s received feedback in five critical areas from the education quality review site based review in October 2016. Consequently, we pledge to continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality enabling all students to achieve or exceed the Education Quality Standards. • Ensure continuous improvement in student performance, instruction and leadership to enable students to attain rigorous standards in high-quality programs through Expanded high quality instruction and assessment through comprehensive curriculum, instruction and assessment program in a standards and proficiency based learning environment . • Ensure educational services are provided in accordance with state and federal entitlements and nondiscrimination requirements through system wide student services and human resource management. • Allow students to demonstrate proficiency by presenting multiple types of evidence via teacher or student designed assessments, portfolios, performances, exhibitions and projects PK-6. • Our coordinated curriculum will ensure proficiency in all subject areas and transferable skills including the use of technology. Awe will strive to assist all students to meet these requirements. • Special education services will be provided ensuring standards are met with modifications and accommodations per individualized education plans. • Continuation of school choice at high school and initiation of district-wide school choice PK-6. • Expanded internet service using E-Rate in support of student, faculty and community access to learning and communication 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership requirements for superintendent, principal and highly qualified staff shall continue. • Needs based professional development as well as mentoring new teachers and coaching experienced teachers shall be enacted. • Administrators and teachers shall be evaluated. • Tiered systems of support shall be continued in support of student needs and participate in multi-disciplinary teams. • Maintain school facilities, provide access to digital and print instructional materials and provide safe and positive learning environment which we will strive to have learning environments where students are safe and love learning. • All students shall continue to participate in state and local comprehensive assessment system and publish reports annually. • Develop SU and district coordinated individualized improvement plan reflecting needs of individual schools. 	
<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. <i>Act 46, Sec. 2(3)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase financial efficiencies due to unified technology and various delivery systems, cooperative bulk purchasing, and personnel savings due to merger of two SU's to one • Share support staff and SU teacher master agreements which streamlines human resource administration, creating more efficiencies • Combined enrollment will support reasonable class sizes; improving and expanding curriculum and extracurricular programs • Facility and construction management will be coordinated at the Supervisory union level. • Negotiations, contracting, bidding and resource management shall be centralized at the supervisory union. • Virtual learning and professional development opportunities will be enhanced and expanded. 	
<p><u>Goal #4:</u> The proposed union school district will promote transparency and accountability. <i>Act 46, Sec. 2(4)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote transparency and accountability • Policy discussion, continuous improvement updates, program planning and budget development shall be conducted openly in warned board meetings. • School audits, proposed and approved budgets shall be posted online and available to the public. • Board policies, procedures, strategic plans, curriculum information and assessment results shall be posted on the website. 	

<p><u>Goal #5:</u> The proposed union school district will deliver education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value. <i>Act 46, Sec. 2(5)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both schools will retain their small schools grants which provide greater opportunities for programming for students. • Savings from SU merger and other efficiencies will result in approximately \$325,000 in savings. • Tax incentives will reduce the tax rate for the newly formed district. • Larger bulk and cooperative purchasing options including instructional materials, fuel and maintenance services will eventually result in savings. 	
<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? <i>Act 46, Section 8(a)(2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The newly formed district will combine two PK-6 regional districts with 7-12 choice into one district of nearly 300 students. • Other PK-16 with choice or designation districts in Southwest Vermont were invited to discussions and potential merger partnerships but chose not to participate. • Therefore there are no other PreK-6 districts with 7-12 choice in either SU. Middletown Springs reached out to every possible district in the region and all chose .not to participate. 	
<p>Articles of Agreement – as required by 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(3) - (10), (13)</p>		
<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>	<p>The Study Committee recommends that the following Articles of Agreement be adopted by each necessary school district for the creation of a Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6 district to be named Wells Springs Unified Union District, hereinafter referred to as the "Unified Union District".</p> <p>Article 2</p> <p>The new Union School District will provide for the education of all PK-12 students, by operating PK-6 and paying tuition 7-12.</p>	

<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>	<p>Article 1</p> <p>The Town School Districts of Middletown Springs and Wells are necessary for the establishment of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District. The above referenced school districts are hereinafter referred to as the “forming districts”. There are no additional school districts being recommended at this time.</p> <p>If both the forming districts vote to approve the merger, the Wells Springs Unified Union School District will commence full educational operations and services on July 1, 2018 under the provisions Act 46, and join with the Quarry Valley Unified Union School District in a side-by-side structure within the same supervisory union, providing that votes approving this article shall not become effective until the voters of the Quarry Valley Unified Union School District (Poultney, Proctor and West Rutland) vote to approve the formation of a unified district.</p> <p>Article 4</p> <p>No new school buildings are necessary to, or proposed for the formation of, the Union School District. The Union School District School Board will assume ownership and operate existing school facilities commencing July 1, 2018. No school closings are anticipated or proposed on July 1, 2018. Closing a school facility after July 1, 2018 takes a unanimous vote of the Union District School Board and a positive vote of the community in which the school is located.</p>	
<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</p>	<p>Article 3</p> <p>The Union School District School Board 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, 2017, the School Board will comply with the pre-existing master agreements pursuant to 16 VSA Chapter 53, subchapter 3. The School Board shall honor all individual employment contracts that are in place for the forming school districts on June 30, 2018 until their respective termination dates.</p> <p>Article 5</p> <p>The Supervisory Union School Board shall determine, in accordance with state and federal law, the transportation services to be provided to students in the Union School District.</p>	

<p>bargaining agreements, and other provisions of law, including 16 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 3 (transition of employees)</p>	<p>Article 6</p> <p>The forming districts of the Union School District recognize the benefits to be gained from establishing a supervisory union-wide curricula as well as their obligation to do so, and to otherwise standardize their operations on or before July 1, 2018.</p>	
<p>(6) The indebtedness of the proposed merging districts that the proposed union school district shall assume.</p>	<p>Article 7</p> <p>Any and all operating deficits and/or surpluses of any of the combining/forming districts shall become the property, and/or the obligation of the new Union School District, effective July 1, 2018. Those member districts with surpluses or remaining reserve funds at of the close of business on June 30, 2018, will transfer all such funds to the new Union School District. Any encumbered funds voted by the electorate of the school district will be used in accordance of said provisions.</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"> * their valuation * how the proposed union school district shall pay for them 	<p>Article 8</p> <p>No later than June 30, 2018, the forming districts will convey to the Union School District all of their school-related real and personal property, for One Dollar, and the Union School District will assume all capital debt associated therewith. The Union School District recognizes the long term financial investments and community relationships that each town has with its school building(s). The Union School District will encourage appropriate use of the building by the students and community according to the policies and procedures of the Union School District as overseen by the principal.</p> <p>In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union School District School Board unanimously determines, in its discretion and subject to Article 4, 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.</p> <p>The conveyance of any of the above school properties 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</p>	

	<p>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 School Board.</p>							
<p>(8) [repealed 2004 Acts and Resolves No. 130, Sec. 15]</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"> * no more than 18 members total * each member town is entitled to at least one representative * see also 16 V.S.A. § 706k(c): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> one or more at-large directors * see also 16 V.S.A. § 707(c): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weighted voting 	<p>Article 9</p> <p>The forming town district's representation on the Union School District School Board will be determined as an at-large hybrid model. Membership on the Union School District Board is apportioned to each town. Apportionment does not have to be proportional to the town's population. All voters in both member towns vote on the same slate of candidates. The ballot is categorized to represent each town's apportioned seats on the Union School District School Board. At no time will a town/village corresponding to a pre-existing member school district have less than one board member with a total weighted vote of one on the board of school directors.</p> <p>The at-large hybrid model that determines board membership will remain in place for the first three years of the new unified union. At any time after this the Unified Union School Board shall evaluate and consider the advisability of implementing a town-by-town proportional model.</p> <p>The initial membership on the seven (7) member Union School District School Board will be as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="588 1039 1008 1153"> <tr> <td>Middletown Springs</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wells</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>At-Large</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>	Middletown Springs	3	Wells	3	At-Large	1	
Middletown Springs	3							
Wells	3							
At-Large	1							

(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

Article 10

The Union School District School Board will be elected for three-year terms except for those initially elected at the time of the formation of the Regional Education District. In the initial Union School District election, board member terms of office will be as follows:

Distribution of Initial One-Year, Two-Year and Three-Year Terms:

Town/District	1 Year Term 2017-2018	2 Year Term 2017-2019	3 Year Term 2017-2020
Middletown Springs	1	1	1
Wells	1	1	1
At-large	1		

Pursuant to the provisions of 16 VSA §706j(b), elected school directors shall be sworn in and assume the duties of their office. The term of office for School Directors elected at the March 7, 2017 election shall be one, two, or three years respectively, minus the months between the date of the Organizational Meeting of the Union School District (16 VSA §706j), 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 §706j. Thereafter, all terms of office shall begin and expire on the date of the Union School District’s annual meeting and will be three year terms.

(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

Article 17

During the first year of operation all students will remain in the schools they currently attend unless a parent requests a school change and the board agrees to it. After July 1, 2019, parents can continue to request a school change with the board’s approval and the school board will have the authority to adjust school attendance boundary lines and school configurations within the Union School District.

<p>Australian ballot</p> <p><i>(please list each matter separately)</i></p>	<p>Article 18 The Union School District School Board shall provide opportunity for local input on policy and budget development. Structures to support and encourage public participation within the Union School District will be established by the Union School District School Board on or before June 30, 2018.</p> <p>Article 19 These Articles may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those board members voting at a Wells Springs Unified Union School District Board meeting, except for Article 4 concerning school closing, which requires a unanimous vote of all board members. Article 4 concerning school closing shall also be set forth as a separate subsection of the warning for the vote on establishment of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District.</p> <p>If the Board votes unanimously to amend Article 4, the amendment shall be submitted to an annual or special meeting. The amendment shall be effective only if approved by a majority of the electorate voting at that meeting. The votes shall be counted and reported by towns, but shall be mingled and approval of the amendment shall require a majority of those voting.</p>	
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Articles of Agreement
WELLS SPRINGS UNIFIED UNION DISTRICT

Serving the schools of the communities of
Middletown Springs and Wells

The Study Committee recommends that the following Articles of Agreement be adopted by each necessary school district for the creation of a pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 unified union school district to be named Wells Springs Unified Union School District, hereinafter referred to as the "Union School District".

Article 1

The Town School Districts of Middletown Springs and Wells are necessary for the establishment of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District. The above referenced school districts are hereinafter referred to as the "forming districts". There are no additional school districts being recommended at this time.

If both the forming districts vote to approve the merger, the Wells Springs Unified Union School District will commence full educational operations and services on July 1, 2018 under the provisions of 16 VSA chapter 11; provided, however that the votes approving creation of the Unified Union District shall not become effective unless and until the voters of the Poultney, Proctor, and West Rutland School Districts vote to approve formation of the Quarry Valley Unified Union District, enabling the two unified union school districts to form a "Side-by-Side" structure within the same supervisory union.

Article 2

The new Union School District will provide for the education of all PK-12 students, by operating PK-6 and paying tuition 7-12.

Article 3

The Union School District School Board 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, 2017, the School Board will comply with the pre-existing master agreements pursuant to 16 VSA Chapter 53, subchapter 3. The School Board shall honor all individual employment contracts that are in place for the forming school districts on June 30, 2018 until their respective termination dates.

Article 4

No new school buildings are necessary to, or proposed for the formation of, the Union School District. The Union School District School Board will assume ownership and operate existing

school facilities commencing July 1, 2018. No school closings are anticipated or proposed on July 1, 2018. Closing a school facility after July 1, 2018 takes a unanimous vote of the Union District School Board and a positive vote of the community in which the school is located.

Article 5

The Supervisory Union School Board shall determine, in accordance with state and federal law, the transportation services to be provided to students in the Union School District.

Article 6

The forming districts of the Union School District recognize the benefits to be gained from establishing a supervisory union-wide curricula as well as their obligation to do so, and to otherwise standardize their operations on or before July 1, 2018.

Article 7

Any and all operating deficits and/or surpluses of any of the combining/forming districts shall become the property, and/or the obligation of the new Union School District, effective July 1, 2018. Those member districts with surpluses or remaining reserve funds at of the close of business on June 30, 2018, will transfer all such funds to the new Union School District. Any encumbered funds voted by the electorate of the school district will be used in accordance of said provisions.

Article 8

No later than June 30, 2018, the forming districts will convey to the Union School District all of their school-related real and personal property, for One Dollar, and the Union School District will assume all capital debt associated therewith. The Union School District recognizes the long term financial investments and community relationships that each town has with its school building(s). The Union School District will encourage appropriate use of the building by the students and community according to the policies and procedures of the Union School District as overseen by the principal.

In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union School District School Board unanimously determines, in its discretion and subject to Article 4, 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 of the above school properties 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 School Board.

Article 9

The forming town district’s representation on the Union School District School Board will be determined as an at-large hybrid model. Membership on the Union School District Board is apportioned to each town. Apportionment does not have to be proportional to the town’s population. All voters in both member towns vote on the same slate of candidates. The ballot is categorized to represent each town’s apportioned seats on the Union School District School Board. At no time will a town/village corresponding to a pre-existing member school district have less than one board member with a total weighted vote of one on the board of school directors.

The at-large hybrid model that determines board membership will remain in place for the first three years of the new unified union. At any time after this the Unified Union School Board shall evaluate and consider the advisability of implementing a town-by-town proportional model.

The initial membership on the seven (7) member Union School District School Board will be as follows:

Middletown Springs	3
Wells	3
At-Large	1

Article 10

The Union School District School Board will be elected for three-year terms except for those initially elected at the time of the formation of the Regional Education District. In the initial Union School District election, board member terms of office will be as follows:

Distribution of Initial One-Year, Two-Year and Three-Year Terms:

Town/District	1 Year Term 2017-2018	2 Year Term 2017-2019	3 Year Term 2017-2020
Middletown Springs	1	1	1
Wells	1	1	1
At-large	1		

Pursuant to the provisions of 16 VSA §706j(b), elected school directors shall be sworn in and assume the duties of their office. The term of office for School Directors elected at the March 7, 2017 election shall be one, two, or three years respectively, minus the months between

the date of the Organizational Meeting of the Union School District (16 VSA §706j), 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 §706j. Thereafter, all terms of office shall begin and expire on the date of the Union School District's annual meeting and will be three year terms.

Article 11

The proposal forming this Union School District will be presented to the voters of each forming school district on March 7, 2017. The candidates for the new Union School District School Board will be elected on the same date, as required by law. Nominations for the office of union school director representing any district/town shall be made by filing with the clerk of that school district/town proposed as a member of the union, a statement of nomination signed by at least 30 voters in that district or one percent of the legal voters in the district, whichever is less, and accepted in writing by the nominee. A statement shall be filed not less than 30 nor more than 40 days prior to the date of the vote.

Article 12

Upon an affirmative vote of the electorates of the school districts, and upon compliance with 16 VSA §706g, the Union School District 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 shall, between the date of its organizational meeting under 16 VSA §706j and June 30, 2018, develop school district policies, adopt curriculum, educational programs, assessment measures and reporting procedures in order to fulfill the Education Quality Standards (State Board Rule 2000), prepare for and negotiate contractual agreements, set the school calendar for Fiscal Year 2019, prepare and present the budget for Fiscal Year 2019, prepare for Union School District Annual Meeting and transact 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 School Districts of Middletown Springs and Wells.

The Union School District shall commence full educational operations on July 1, 2018.

Article 13

The Union School District School Board shall propose annual budgets in accordance with 16 VSA Chapter 11.

The annual budget vote shall be conducted by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 VSA Chapter 55. Election of Directors will also be conducted by Australian ballot.

Article 14

On July 1, 2018, when the Union School District becomes fully operational and begins to provide educational services to the students, the Middletown Springs and Wells School 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.

Article 15

Cost-Benefit Analysis (*See Appendix A*).

Article 16

Information on tuitioning for 7-12 students, school configurations and school enrollment plan (*See Appendix B*).

Article 17

During the first year of operation all students will remain in the schools they currently attend unless a parent requests a school change and the board agrees to it. After July 1, 2019, parents can continue to request a school change with the board's approval and the school board will have the authority to adjust school attendance boundary lines and school configurations within the Union School District.

Article 18

The Union School District School Board shall provide opportunity for local input on policy and budget development. Structures to support and encourage public participation within the Union School District will be established by the Union School District School Board on or before June 30, 2018.

Article 19

These Articles may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those board members voting at a Wells Springs Unified Union School District Board meeting, except for Article 4 concerning school closing, which requires a unanimous vote of all board members. Article 4 concerning school closing shall also be set forth as a separate subsection of the warning for the vote on establishment of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District.

If the Board votes unanimously to amend Article 4, the amendment shall be submitted to an annual or special meeting. The amendment shall be effective only if approved by a majority of the electorate voting at that meeting. The votes shall be counted and reported by towns, but shall be co-mingled and approval of the amendment shall require a majority of those voting.

*Appendix A: Cost Benefit Analysis & Narrative
Wells Springs Unified Union District
(Wells & Middletown Springs)*

Creating a Unified Union District between Wells and Middletown Springs could create efficiencies in the following areas:

Quality and Opportunity; Achievement of High Standards

The creation of a Wells Springs Unified Union District will result in one mission, one vision and one strategic plan for continual improvement based on the attainment of the educational quality standards and the expected outcomes based on standards and values. Moreover, a Unified Union District will provide a single School Board the opportunity to design a continuum of educational programs and experiences by operating schools for all students in an integrated PreK-6 program, then providing a broad base of educational opportunities meeting individual student needs by tuitioning students attending grades 7 -12. The Board will be collectively responsible for all students' education in grades PreK-12.

Opportunities with increased scale enable the new district to retain and possibly expand a variety of educational programs and learning pathways. Each school and community has unique resources and assets which may provide an opportunity for added programs within a larger system. More students allows for them to have opportunities to work with others at the same grade level and to have flexibility in class structure.

One PreK-12 Unified Union District may allow students to transfer from one elementary school to another school within the regional district without having to pay tuition, and may allow the opportunity to stay at their current school assignment if families move between the towns of Wells and Middletown Springs. Under the current structure, students are not able to do so without paying tuition.

The goal is for our learners to experience increased opportunities in a unified district. On the early end of the educational continuum, PreK student services, partnerships and family relationships can be better coordinated within a unified union school district. A single structure allows for more teachers at each grade level, the opportunity to share teachers and resources, and the possibility for joint field trips and other special programs. It also increases the potential to increase experiences such as a larger band, joint learning projects, and educational adventures.

We will be able to expand shared Special Education programs for elementary students and will have more flexibility within the larger school district. For example, currently the addition or decrease of one or two students may throw off the ability to balance the needed services, but under a larger unified union district having the flexibility of more special educators and service providers will allow better flow between programs/buildings provides greater opportunities and possibilities.

The Wells Springs Unified Union District will enable elementary school students greater access to a vast array of extracurricular choices, such as Vermont and National History Day

competitions, STEM activities, Robotics, instrumental lessons, and additional athletic programs that may not currently exist in their schools.

Finally by forming a Wells Springs Unified Union District, the professional learning community (PLC) of school leaders and teachers will become more diverse, allowing for a greater, richer exchange and sharing of resources, ideas and success. The ability to co-plan and share lessons may spark interest and foster greater expertise in content and instructional strategies and practices. The collaborative efforts of high performing PLCs produce high performing learners.

All students will have access to a rich array of high-quality learning opportunities in the Wells Springs Unified Union School District. Elementary school students will benefit from increased stability, shared resources and faculty, combined programs like field trips and athletic teams, and potential program expansion. Tuitioning 7-12 students continues to provide parents the ability to choose the appropriate secondary program to meet the needs of their child(ren). Some families find it best to send their children to different secondary schools, so they can best align their child's needs with the programs and opportunities the schools have to offer.

Transparency and Accountability

The same financial accounting system is currently used to track both revenue and expenditure reporting for both districts. All will have a voice in the education of all students, PreK-12 in Wells and Middletown Springs. The Wells Springs Unified Union District Board structure provides for representation from each community, ensuring that a broad spectrum of perspectives is represented in the governance of education systems. The Middletown Springs and Wells Schools have a long history of providing rich opportunities which yield strong, positive student outcomes for all students who attend our schools.

The proposed (NEW) Supervisory Union board will be comprised of 10 members including 3 representatives from the Quarry Valley Unified Union District Board, 3 representatives from the Rutland Town School District Board, 3 representatives from the Wells Springs Unified Union District Board, and one (1) representative from the Ira Board (non-operating). This promotes effective and efficient operations of the proposed supervisory union and ensures that all continue to have a voice in supervisory union operations.

Curriculum, instruction and assessment for students in the elementary grades will be aligned in the NEW SU through cooperative work between and among the professionals, which is already underway. This will be facilitated through grade level and department level meetings, joint faculty meetings, professional development, and in-service training.

Students

All students who attend school in Wells and Middletown Springs have supportive learning environments with: 1) students at the heart of our mission; 2) an inclusive and diverse student body; and 3) great academic outcomes, for example students who earn the Presidential Academic Awards, students who participate in academic competitions at all levels, students who are engaged in personal learning and community based learning, and 4) innovative and research-based programs and practices, such as: - technology Integration, student-led conferences - Young Writers' Project - Student Leadership opportunities at all grade levels – Personalized Learning Plan - Math and Literacy Intervention- and Enrichment Programs.

In addition, the array of extracurricular options can be expanded with the additional students. Expanded before school programs, after school programs, and summer programs may be instituted in the schools.

Teacher Quality

We have great teachers. In the Wells Springs Unified Union District, all teachers will be highly qualified. Our district teachers are highly involved in professional development activities and taking graduate courses. They are leaders, mentors to new teachers, serve on school level and supervisory union level teams. 67% of Middletown Springs and 63% of Wells teachers have their Master's Degree or higher post-secondary education. Class sizes are reconfigured when needed to meet the needs of the classes.

In a unified district structure, all teachers will be employed by the Wells Springs Unified Union School District, allowing the superintendent flexibility to adjust staffing assignments based on student needs, changing demographic realities and staff expertise. Teachers could be reassigned to where the needs are across the schools within the unified district; since both elementary schools are within reasonable distance. Currently, reassignments are limited to the district of hire, unless hired at the supervisory union or on a shared FTE basis. Such an arrangement takes more administrative time to create, implement, coordinate and oversee.

Part-time employees could find increased employment opportunities within the Unified Union District, which will improve recruitment and retention efforts. We are not expecting to close schools or to reduce instructional staff under the Unified Union District (the primary efficiency savings will be in central office administration and further service consolidation), but the Unified Union District will provide greater opportunity to equalize class sizes across the system for specific grade levels as needed.

Non-teacher Staffing

The Wells Springs Unified Union District will allow for greater flexibility in the allocation of non-teaching positions. Personnel can be reassigned where the greatest needs are across all schools within the Wells Springs Unified Union District. Currently reassignments are limited to the district of hire (unless done through a shared service agreement). Efficiencies will result in central office staffing reductions after the transition period, which will provide seamless leadership for staff, students and families, and will eliminate redundancies in a variety of ways, including: researching implementing new laws, staying current with new regulations and best practices, and other legal requirements.

Technology

Within the Wells Springs Unified Union District there will be one technology IT Department to update and maintain resources across the system. The same teacher will serve as the technology integration specialist for the unified union district so that teachers will receive the same training and information, while the students will continue to use technology as a tool for learning. Communications will be improved with a single web page platform/structure across the unified union district and a unified email/chat/document sharing platform will be used by all.

There will be fewer vendors and increased buying power for software applications and technology hardware. Likewise, similar hardware leads to repair efficiencies where like parts can be stocked or knowledge in certain model repair can be streamlined.

There will be only one E-rate application (to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access at remarkable discounts) instead of two, and a single supervisory union will manage resources that could be redirected to provide greater access to customized and personalized learning opportunities for students, for example, through personal mobile devices. Specialties of Information Technology staff (e.g. - Supervision, Network Administration, Technicians, Technology Integration, and Application Specialists) can be applied to every building, where these human resources before were scarce or simply unavailable.

One system will allow for greater efficiencies and greater focus can be given to 21st Century personalized learning environments with more technology tools, knowledgeable staff, and enhanced training opportunities, which will result in more professional development/in-house training for teachers, while enhancing student learning.

Student Data Collection and Reporting

Currently class sizes are small resulting in the inability to share grade level data. Larger classes would increase the ability to share data and to discuss improvement strategies. A single PreK-12 student data system would allow for richer empirical data, improvement in strategic planning, improved instruction, specialized interventions, and personalization. A single PreK-12 reporting system would improve discussions at Board levels, increase parental involvement and communication about student progress, as well as promote transparency and accountability. A single district will reduce redundancies with state reporting requirements. A single Unified Union District would allow educators to monitor growth and progress for PreK-12 learners and provide early intervention when needed. The student achievement data tracking systems will be enhanced, to ensure that all students will achieve at high levels as defined in the State's Education Quality Standards. Our districts can currently track PreK-12 student achievement data in each district, but student data is FERPA protected in each district and cannot be shared. The Unified Union District will be able to disaggregate data, allowing for informed decision-making around programming, progress monitoring and professional development needs.

Student Services

For purposes of special education and student support services, becoming a single school district increases the flexibility to allocate resources and design programs. Examples include the ability to develop autism and developmentally delayed programming PreK-12, and for Extended Year Services (summer programming) to include larger groups of students together. (Currently, each school district runs parallel special education programs.)

Students will also benefit from continuity of staff between schools, improving the implementation of programs and curriculum which align with the Education Quality Standards. Continuity of intervention systems and programs may be realized without the barriers of boundaries in operating a merger PreK-6 system. Under one Local Educational Agency (LEA) there will be greater continuity of procedures, process, program, service providers, teachers and staff. For example, through the collective expertise of our teachers, common curriculum will be implemented in alignment with proficiencies and localized outcome expectations and utilizing

our technology tools. Eliminating designation will provide more options for 7-12 students wanting or needing opportunities that may not currently be available to them.

Common professional development will enhance the PreK-12 system by building increased expertise and specialization. Efficiencies will be gained through system-wide programming specializing in specific populations. This is particularly beneficial to low-incidence populations, since we do not have the scale to develop this kind of programming with small stand-alone populations.

Financially, there will be a decreased impact to the budget as a percentage of the whole as students with highly specialized needs (and the inherent costs associated with providing for those students) move in and out of the system.

Financial Accounting and Budgeting

In a Unified Union District, budgets and tax rates will be combined: one budget and tax rate which will reflect increased efficiencies and student opportunities. It reduces the number of State, Federal, and IRS reports and intergovernmental accounting transactions. A single district reduces the number of independent audits, reducing labor and audit expenses. It also lowers the possibility of exceeding the excess spending tax penalty threshold. The formation of the single Unified Union District will streamline accounting systems, and increase transparency and accountability of programs and services within the single budget.

Improved Utilization of Buildings and Sport Facilities

Both Middletown Springs Elementary School and Wells Village School have historical sections of their buildings as well as newer additions. Having a shared facilities manager who has oversight and expertise would improve efficiencies by catching needed repairs when problems begin, allow for projects to be done as part of a larger venture with potential savings, and having one person providing the supervision of maintenance, repairs, and custodial services. This would provide for more flexibility and shared services.

The facility use request process would be less complicated for community members and organizations: through a centralized application process, community members would complete one application with more options (school facilities and grounds) within the unified union district to choose from.

Centralized Contracting and Administration

A larger school district will allow for increased purchasing power and a stronger negotiating position through economies of scale.

In addition, state and federal reporting will be consolidated providing additional efficiencies and savings. There is currently a great deal of duplication of effort with individual districts.

Transportation

The Wells Springs Unified Union Board will have the authority to determine, in accordance with state and federal law, the transportation services to be provided to students in the Wells Springs

Unified Union District. A single district has a greater economy of scale, and more efficient routing of buses could be provided, such as shared transportation for students.

Food Service

Merging two small food services into one will provide some economies of scale (for example, one menu, better purchasing power, one person to do the state reporting and billing). Some savings might be realized by preparing foods in one location, while heating and serving may be done in a different location.

Enrichment

The current enrichment program (STEM and other activities) offered in one district can be expanded to all Wells Springs Unified Union students. Programs that have been offered in one or the other school (National History Day competition, Odyssey of the Mind, Instrumental music lessons, Smokey House, and more) can be expanded so that students can participate in any of the activities.

Supports for Healthy Students

Outstanding food services system, nutrition supports for students, on-site counseling services, Tooth Tutor, strong community partnerships and programs for students, such as After school and Summer Programs - the Fire Departments and the Vermont State Police, PreK programs within our schools, the Modern Woodmen, Friends of Education, and many more...

Parent and Community Support and Involvement

Parents support our students with -- Open House, Back to School events, PTO and Community Dinners, movie nights, and carnival pie sales, Community Service Projects, Friends of Education activities, the ski and skate programs, and so many more.

Choice as an Indicator of Quality

The school districts of Middletown Springs and Wells have provided secondary choice for their 7-12 students. Middletown Springs has provided for full choice for all its 7-12 students and pays tuition to both Vermont public high schools and approved independent schools as required by Title 16 section 824. Wells has, in past years, designated Granville (New York) High School but also pays tuition up to the Base Education Amount for students who chose a Vermont public High School or an approved independent school as required for Wells in Title 16 section 827. Wells parents were required to pay the amount of the tuition to the receiving school in the amount over the base education rate.

The newly formed Wells Springs Unified Union School will expand opportunities for their secondary students by allowing all 7-12 students choice under Title 16 section 824. As a result, all students will be able to attend the schools that best meet their individual needs without parents having the burden of paying the additional amount over the base education rate. This will expand opportunities for students to attend schools that may provide classes, programs, clubs, athletics, band, and more that may enhance career opportunities. Students would also be able to choose the learning environment (small school, large school, supportive programs) that

best meet their learning style. Students spoke clearly about having a school that best matched their needs and learning styles at community forums.

Our schools have a history of strong academic success, excellent parent involvement, community service by students and strong support from their respective communities. In the newly formed Wells Springs Unified Union District, school choice PreK-12 will be expanded as all students would also have access to attend any school in the unified school district in grades PreK-6 after the first year regardless of the town in which they reside, subject to the enrollment and class size policy of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District. For students in grades 7-12, all would have the option to attend any Vermont public school with the tuition paid completely. This may also be the case for out of state secondary public schools such as Granville, NY. In addition, students may also attend any approved independent school with the Unified Union School District paying at the average union high school tuition rate as stated in Title 16 section 824.

As the benefits of the historical partnerships with neighboring schools illustrate in many areas from professional development, to support services, technology, technical assistance, and administrative services, part of each school's continued quality is reliant upon outside supports. Within a larger district and with the operating guidelines as outlined herein, each school may continue to access these contributions to quality in a cost effective manner. Additionally, the proposed structures expand the pool of students eligible to attend each school, increasing the likelihood that the school will remain cost effective on a per pupil basis. And lastly, the continued operation of the schools may continue to be advantaged by the stability of a larger operational structure, which is less susceptible to the impacts of fluctuations in enrollments, costs, and tax rate variation.

The 2016-2017 secondary enrollments for Middletown Springs and Wells are as follows with the school districts they are attending:

7-12 Enrollment	Wells	Middletown Springs
Granville High School; NY	29	0
Poultney High School	25	5
Mill River Union High School	0	28
West Rutland High School	0	2
Long Trail School	3	13
Burr & Burton Academy	1	5
Carrabassett, Maine	2	0
Fair Haven Union High School	0	2
LiHigh School	0	1
Total	60	56

Efficiencies, Flexibility and Taxpayer Value

Efficiencies can be increased and the sharing of resources across schools will be facilitated with much more flexibility. Merging Middletown Springs and Wells in a side by side model with Poultney, Proctor, and West Rutland allows the new merged Wells Springs Unified Union District to maintain the receipt of their small schools grants providing resources that would have to be reduced without those allocations. Having more students and more teachers provides multiple ways to configure the classrooms, resulting in the possibility of eliminating multi-aged classrooms or having larger student numbers per classroom. In addition, if the plan to merge the Rutland Central Supervisory Union school districts with those of Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union, some cost savings can be achieved by reducing some central office administrators and the need for as much workspace.

While tax rates are calculated based upon per pupil spending, school budgets for districts that operate schools and tuition some grades are limited in the extent to which they can responsibly increase or decrease budgets on a per student basis. When comparing the budgets of our PreK-6 operating schools, there is a common misconception that each student costs a certain amount to educate for a year, and the savings or increased costs could be calculated by simply adding or decreasing the educational spending amount per student. However, operating school district budgets work differently, they work more like a household budget might. In a classroom of 15 children, one or several students can be absorbed assuming there are instructional materials for all and one of the added students does not come with significant educational or emotional needs. Many of the costs are fixed or semi-fixed such as the salary and benefits of a teacher. Reductions in some budget areas may be accomplished by combining classes. When enrollment declines and expenditures cannot be decreased to match, spending per pupil increases. Similarly, increases in expenditures are driven by increases in student needs and enrollments beyond certain thresholds. A large combined enrollment may balance this creating greater stability. If the district has the capacity to welcome more students within the current financial and operating structures, the total cost per student will go down. This is an important strategy for increasing efficiency. In Vermont's education funding formula, costs per student drive homestead tax rates, so increased efficiency translates to lower homestead property tax rates.

The following illustration demonstrates how changes in enrollment in operating schools affect spending per pupil and costs. In the illustration below, the major expenses for the Sample Vermont School, which has 5 classrooms, are generally consistent, and an increase or decrease in pupils that does not change the number of classrooms needed, translates only to minor increases or decreases for things like books and supplies. With no changes in expenditures, decreases in enrollment yield increases in spending per pupil. With no changes in expenditures, increases in enrollment lower spending per pupil. (See Enrollment in Operating Schools - Spending and per Pupil Costs on the following page).

Enrollment in Operating Schools

Spending and per Pupil Costs Sample Vermont School
 Sample Vermont School - A
 50 Students
 \$500,000 Budget
 \$10,000 per student

Class 1 10 Students	Class 2 10 Students	Class 3 10 Students	Class 4 10 Students	Class 5 10 Students
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Sample Vermont School - B
 Increased enrollment
 55 students
 \$505,000
 \$9,181 per student

Class 1 11 Students	Class 2 11 Students	Class 3 11 Students	Class 4 11 Students	Class 5 11 Students
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Sample Vermont School - C
 Decreased Enrollment
 45 Students
 \$495,000 Budget
 \$11,000 per student

Class 1 9 Students	Class 2 9 Students	Class 3 9 Students	Class 4 9 Students	Class 5 9 Students
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Tax Rates

Middletown Springs and Wells have been considering issues of sustainability of the current education delivery structure for many years. Without formation of the Unified Union District, increases in Education Spending per Equalized Pupil were projected to continue to climb. (Education Spending per Equalized Pupils or ES/EP figures are a good proxy for homestead tax rates, as this figure is a major factor in tax rates, ES/EPs are based upon local decisions and circumstances, and the formula for calculating ES/EP has been consistent over time.) Increases in ES/EP can be attributed to varying combinations of increases in expenditures, decreases in revenue and decreases in numbers of equalized pupils. These variables have a more pronounced effect in smaller organizations as compared to larger ones. The translation of ES/EP to local homestead tax rates, in all cases, is further compounded by other education funding formula variables, such as statewide rates and the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA). As we look to the future, past trends suggest the steep inclines will continue unless action is taken to address the factors contributing to the increases. Factors which can be influenced through the proposed change in governance are primarily related to expenditures and enrollment.

Include attachment regarding conveyance of the MTS leach fields. Include clarification about ownership of land in Wells that is now owned by MWA.

Wells Springs Unified Union School District Articles of Agreement

Appendix B: School District Summary Data

	Wells	Middletown Springs
Grades Served:	PK-12 district responsibility PK-6 within Wells Springs 7-12 - choice	PK-12 district responsibility PK-6 within Wells Springs 7-12 - choice
FY 16 ADM:	154.24	119.46
FY 16 Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil (ES/EP):	\$13,537	\$17,285
FY 16 Student to Teacher Ratio:	7.0 : 1	8.9 : 1
FY 16 Student to Administrator Ratio:	83 : 1	73 : 1
FY 15 ADM:	146.88	124.63
FY 15 Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil (ES/EP):	\$13,072	\$16,007
FY 15 Student to Teacher Ratio:	7.74 : 1	8.81 : 1
FY 15 Student to Administrator Ratio:	94 : 1	74 : 1
FY 14 ADM:	128.85	124.40
FY 14 Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil (ES/EP):	\$12,907	\$15,100
FY 14 Student to Teacher Ratio:	7.7 : 1	10.6 : 1
FY 14 Student to Administrator Ratio:	76 : 1	76 : 1

FY16 Small Schools Grant	\$79,965	\$90,087
District Population (2010 census)	1,137	732

School Choice

For the first year the Wells Springs Unified Union District is fully operational and providing educational services, PreK-6 students will attend school in their town of residence. After the first year, the Board of School Directors may adjust student enrollment based upon individual student circumstances and needs of the Union School District.

After July 1, 2019, the Board of School Directors will have the authority to adjust school attendance boundary lines and school configurations within the Unified Union School District. The Board of School Directors shall adopt a school policy providing a process for parents or guardians to request that their child attend the other elementary school within the Unified Union School District.

School Configuration

The current Pre K - 6 school configuration in these districts is as follows:

Middletown Springs School District PreK-6	67 students
Wells School District PreK-6	85 students

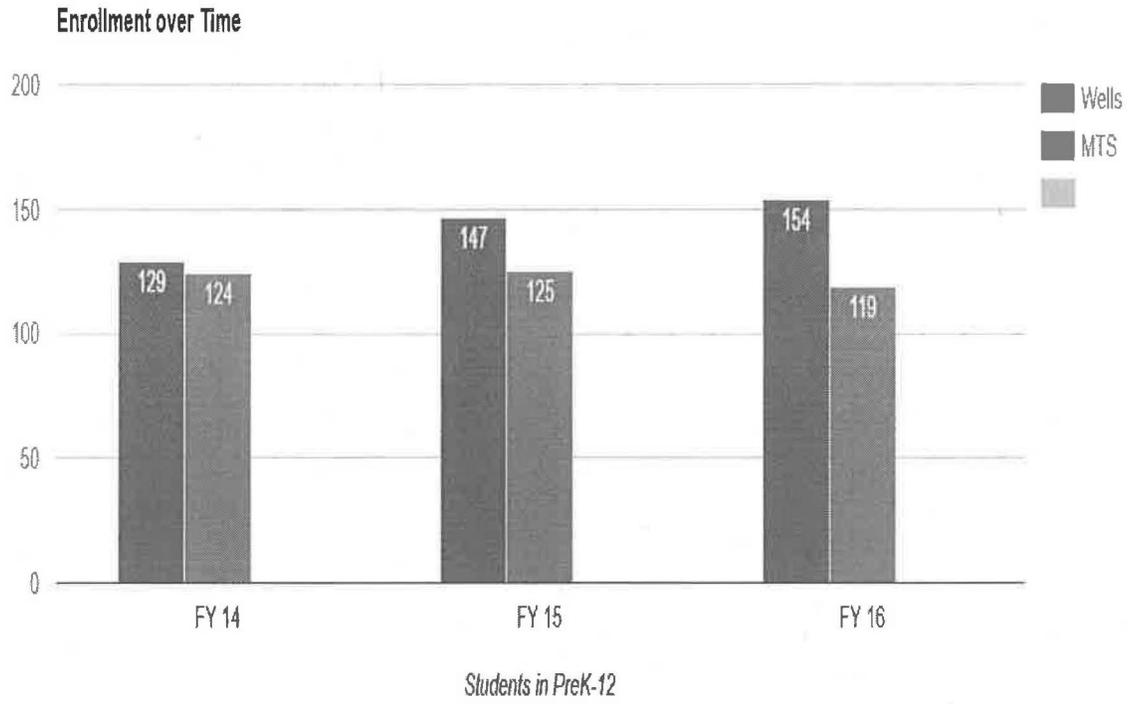
The current number of secondary students (7-12) who are tuitioned to public schools or approved independent schools from each of the districts is as follows:

Middletown Springs School District 7-12 tuitioned students	52 students
Wells School District 7-12 tuitioned students	-69 students

Total PreK-12 students in the combined districts is 273 students

School Closure:

The Unified Union School District does not anticipate closing any school and expects to operate existing PreK-6 facilities commencing July 1, 2018. Closing a school facility after July 1, 2018 will require a unanimous vote of the Union District School Board and a positive vote of the community where the school is located.



Please note when reviewing chart data:

- Middletown Springs (MTS) has included PreKindergarten students since 2004 for both three year olds and four year olds.
- Wells added PreKindergarten for four year olds in 2014.
- Wells added PreKindergarten for three year olds in 2015.

Appendix C: Act 153, Act 156, Act 46 History

Wells Springs Unified Union District

(Wells & Middletown Springs)

Efforts to Work with other like Districts:

The Middletown Springs School Board participated in Act 153, Act 156, and H361 meetings for several years before the legislature passed Act 46. Board members from each Board met every month or two, generally before the RSWSU Board meetings to discuss possible efficiencies and possible ways the Boards could comply. Since that time both Middletown Springs and Wells have been actively involved in identifying ways in which they could meet the requirements of Act 46.

In March 2013, the citizens of both Middletown Springs and Wells voted to support the Board of School Directors appropriating \$2,000 each in a fund along with the Boards of Poultney and Tinmouth (member school district at the time). The fund was for the purpose of studying Act 153/156. Board members from each Board continued to meet periodically to discuss potential mergers, collaborations, and efficiencies.

Tinmouth petitioned the State Board of Education and was approved in February 2014 to join the Rutland South Supervisory Union. Tinmouth was a natural partner to Middletown Springs sharing resources, special events, field trips, and more. Tinmouth Elementary School was about 8 miles from Middletown Springs Elementary School.

On February 23, 2015, School Board members of Middletown Springs and Wells participated in a discussion with all RSWSU School Board members led by Harry Franks of the Vermont School Boards Association in determining the priorities of the school district looking forward to the implementation of Act 46. Student opportunities, governance, and cost effectiveness were discussed that evening.

In April 2015, the Ira School Board agreed to contribute \$2000 toward the cost of an informal study to consider all options for each of the school districts of the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union. The RSWSU sent a letter to the Vermont Department of Education, requesting information on obtaining a \$5,000 grant for an informal study. It was later learned that grant money would not be available until July.

On June 2, 2015, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 46: an Act related to making amendments to education funding, spending, and governance.

In June 2015, the school boards of Wells and Middletown Springs were guided through a prioritization matrix by Kathy Letendre of the Institute for Quality Advancement. The results of the matrix for both Wells and Middletown Springs were shared and discussed with other Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union Boards.

On July 9 and 1-, 2015, the superintendent of RSWSU met with the superintendents of Rutland Central SU and Battenkill Valley SU to discuss possible merger options, since each had PreK-12 schools and BVSU had a non-operating district.

The Rutland South Executive Board (chairs) met with the Middletown Springs Board to discuss the possibility of Middletown Springs joining the proposed new Mill River Unified District and giving up 7-12 choice for its students. That meeting happened July 16, 2015 followed by a letter from the RSSU Chair, George Ambrose, inviting the Middletown Springs Board to join their merger.

Later in July 2015, the RSWSU School Board published a request for proposals for a governance study for the member districts of the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union (Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney and Wells). The proposal asked bidders to answer the question: "Are there governance/reorganization options that would enhance educational opportunities for all students for similar or reduced costs to taxpayers?"

The RSWSU superintendent sent a letter through a variety of media sources to residents of all four districts informing them of the new legislation and the need for their involvement and input as school districts were facing a variety of challenges. Three other community letters would follow in months to come updating the public regarding what was happening with each school district in terms of studies, upcoming forums to seek community involvement and to assist in helping the communities understand the complicated legislation and implications. These were published October 2015, April 2016 and August 2016.

On August 21, 2015 a Board Member from each of four RSWSU districts including the Chairs from Middletown Springs and Wells were among those from the RSWSU who met with the Secretary of Education and representatives from the Agency of Education, Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Superintendents Association and the Vermont Principals' Association to discuss concerns and options related to the implementation of Act 46 as it impacted RSWSU school districts. It would be challenging for RSWSU as the member districts were comprised of a PreK-12 (Poultney), a PreK-6 district with 7-12 choice (Middletown Springs), a PreK-6 district with both New York designation and the ability to pay the base education amount for parents choosing other schools (Wells), and a non-operating district (Ira).

On August 24, 2015, at a meeting of the RSWSU school board, members accepted the proposal of SES Study Team to initiate a study of RSWSU governance and reorganization options. The

contract price was \$12,000 utilizing the anticipated \$5000 Act 46 study grant plus an additional expense of \$1,750 per school district (sinking funds for this purpose).

From October 5-7, 2015 the SES Study Team visited the schools of RSWSU to collect data and interview teachers and staff. On October 6, 2015 the SES Study Team met with the school boards where they explained the process of their study and worked with the boards to determine priorities and expectations. Over the period of a month or more, the SES Study Team collected data from administrators to inform their study results.

In October 2015 at the VSA/VSBA conference, the RSWSU/Middletown Springs Board Chair and Superintendent attended sessions about the implications of Act 46. There were opportunities to discuss potential options for merging districts and how various members were thinking about the implications of implementing the new law.

On November 5, 2015, the Superintendent discussed with the Battenkill Valley Superintendent potential partnerships within the supervisory unions. Although distance would have been problematic, both BVSU and RSWSU had small enrollment numbers that could benefit from an insurgence of programs and opportunities for students. Board members from both supervisory unions met at the Dorset library to discuss potential partnerships.

On January 5, 2016 the final report of the SES Study Team was provided to all of the School Boards in the RSWSU. The report was a comprehensive document providing data about the district capacity, potential savings, possible patterns, and partnerships. The Report, "Governance Study for the Member Districts of The RSWSU: Are there governance/reorganization options that would enhance educational opportunities for all students at similar or reduced costs to taxpayers?" included 48 pages of data and analysis. There were also four appendices that included much data as well: A – Demographic Profiles of the School District Communities; B – Profiles of the Current Elementary and Secondary Programs of the SU; C- Enrollment projections for each of the Four School Districts; and D- Pupil Capacity Analysis of the Current School Building.

On January 14, 2016 the RSWSU held a public forum where the findings of the SES Study were presented to the four communities. The audience filled both large bleacher sections of Poultney High School gymnasium, as well as a number of chairs on the floor. The reports were printed for all attending and are published on the RSWSU website.

In January 2016 the Wells Board was interested in joining in a study with Pawlet and Rupert, both PreK-6 operating districts who designate New York high schools. In February 2016, Wells decided to become a formal member with Rupert and Pawlet in a Regional Educational District (RED) for operating PreK-6 with high school designation. At that time, the Middletown Springs Board sent letters to Rutland Town and to Wells asking them if they would meet to become

study partners in an Act 46 merger. In addition, the Middletown Springs Board Chair was approached by the Mt. Holly Board Chair to have a meeting to discuss Act 46 possibilities.

In March of 2016 the Mt. Holly Board Chair and Principal attended the Middletown Springs board meeting where potential merger possibilities were discussed. Being that Mt. Holly is part of a union high school, this made it challenging for the two districts to merge. Middletown Springs decided to participate in the Rutland Central districts and Poultney study committee as an informal member. At that time, Wells selected their formal study committee members to represent them in their merger study with Pawlet and Rupert.

The Middletown Springs Board invited surrounding PreK-6 districts with choice or designation to join them in an Act 46 discussion scheduled for May 26, 2016. The Rutland Town Board Chair, superintendent, and another member along with the Wells Board Chair attended the meeting. A variety of Act 46 Topics were voiced during the session. Financial implications and tax rates were shared with all parties.

In June 2016 the Wells School Board decided to join in an informal study with Middletown Springs. Wells continued to be a formal member in the Pawlet, Rupert and Wells Study and possibly Mettawee study. The members of the Wells study committee met with those of Pawlet and Rupert for 10 meetings under the guidance of Dan French, consultant. They met on April 12, May 25, June 20, July 13 and 28, and August 8 and 22. The study committee was given information to assist them in making decisions about the potential merger, the implications of the law, and sample articles of agreement. Every meeting was well attended by a number of parents who wanted choice for their students. Choice versus designation was the major element that the study committee needed to come to consensus. However, the amount to be paid by the towns for parents who chose to send their children to other schools besides the designated New York schools became a stumbling block that could not be moved. Meetings were often challenging and votes were always split.

A community forum for Pawlet, Rupert and Wells was held at Mettawee Community School on September 1st. The gymnasium was filled with residents from the three communities' and the residents favored either destination or choice. Both had major financial implications. As well, opportunities for students were the major topics.

At the next meeting held on September 7th, the committee voted for choice in a split vote 5-4 in front of a large audience. Since the committee had voted to pursue 7-12 choice, Middletown Springs sent a letter asking to become a formal member of the study committee. At the next meeting on September 19th, the committee decided that Middletown Springs could be an informal member of their study committee but could not sit at the table to give input or share perspectives. Some committee members were unhappy with the results of the former vote and

shared financial information about their calculations of the effects of choice 7-12. The committee was again divided and the committee determined they could not continue to work towards mutual agreement and merger. The committee was disbanded that night.

Subsequently, the Middletown Springs Board determined that they would join Wells in a Prek-12 district where their elementary school students would attend school in their communities and they would have 7-12 choice as an enrollment option for their secondary students.

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Ira

Middletown Springs

Poultney

Wells

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February 29, 2016

Board Chair Sue Burke
Wells School District

Dear Board Chair Burke,

The Middletown Springs Board of School Directors or members of our Board have attended meetings where Wells has discussed Act 46 with Boards from outside Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union. You have also attended Middletown Springs meetings where other school districts have met with us to discuss possible educational opportunities for our students and potential merger possibilities.

Members of the Middletown Springs Board who were in attendance at the last Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union meeting on February 22nd were surprised to learn that Wells School Board did not know that Middletown Springs would have been most interested in a joint merger study with our neighboring school district and partner in the supervisory union. Had the Middletown Springs Board known that Wells was seriously interested in a PreK-6 district with complete choice for 7-12, we would have already been engaged in a joint formal study with Wells.

We understand that you will formally be joining a study with Pawlet and Rupert and possibly creating a RED with Mettawee as well. Should the study committee or the Town of Wells not see the greatest benefit for the Wells School District and you wish to consider a PreK-6 with complete choice, then the Middletown Springs Board would gladly enter with Wells in a study. The two school districts share many commonalities and could create an environment where we provide greater opportunities for our students.

Should your status change, please let us know.

Our best,

Clarence K. Haynes,
Middletown Springs Board Chair

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Ira Middletown Springs Poultney Wells

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February 29, 2016

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Fax: (802) 287-2284

Rutland Town Board Chair Linette Gallipo
Superintendent Debra Taylor
Rutland Central Supervisory Union
16 Evelyn Street
Rutland, Vermont 05701

Dear Board Chair Gallipo and Superintendent Taylor,

The Middletown Springs Board of School Directors is currently investigating the best path for the Middletown Springs community to take with regards to the requirements of Act 46. The results of an impartial study of our supervisory union (Rutland Southwest) and each of our member districts (Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, and Wells) identify options for each Board to consider in light of the recent legislation. The largest challenge is that the RSWSU has four differing school systems (a Pre-K -12, a PreK-6 with complete choice, a PreK-6 with designation and limited choice funding, and a non-operating district). Middletown Springs operates a PreK-6 elementary school and has 7-12 choice sending about one half of the secondary students to Mill River and the remaining half to six different public and independent schools.

Like Rutland Town, the community of Middletown Springs values school choice for its secondary students and their families and wishes to maintain school choice as is allowed in Act 46. The Board appreciated you coming to meet with us and would like to continue our dialogue about a possible merger if that were possible. We know that Rutland Town's structure and ours make it challenging to have merger conversations, however, we would like to continue to discuss possibilities and options.

The Middletown Springs Board understands that your Boards will continue the existing study or reorganize into a new study to form a newly created district or supervisory union that may compose of a K-12 district including Proctor, West Rutland, and Poultney. We also know that Ira has requested that you consider including them as a possible stand alone district. If Middletown Springs and Rutland Town not be able to come to some kind of merger agreement and Middletown Springs is not able to find a suitable partner, we would like to be considered a "stand alone" member of a newly formed supervisory union.

We believe that students in Middletown Springs are provided with many educational opportunities. We are committed to providing choice to increase those opportunities as our students enter their secondary experiences. Our goal is to comply with the law by creating new structures giving our students continued educational opportunities and excellence, while doing so in the most cost efficient manner.

Thank you for considering our requests. With warm regards,

Clarence K. Haynes
Board Chair, Middletown Springs & Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Ira

Middletown Springs

Poultney

Wells

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February 29, 2016

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Board Chair David Venter
Superintendent Bruce Williams
Mt. Holly School District
Two Rivers Supervisory Union
609 Vermont Route 103
Ludlow, Vermont 05149

Dear Board Chair Venter and Superintendent Williams,

The Middletown Springs Board of School Directors is currently investigating the best path for the Middletown Springs community to take with regards to the requirements of Act 46. The results of an impartial study of our supervisory union (Rutland Southwest) and each of our member districts (Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, and Wells) identify options for each Board to consider in light of the recent legislation. The largest challenge is that the RSWSU has four differing school systems (a Pre-K -12, a PreK-6 with complete choice, a PreK-6 with designation and limited choice funding, and a non-operating district). Middletown Springs operates a PreK-6 elementary school and has 7-12 choice sending about one half of the secondary students to Mill River and the remaining half to six different public and independent schools.

The community of Middletown Springs values school choice for its secondary students and their families and wishes to maintain school choice as is allowed in Act 46. The Board has conducted a community forum to discuss available opportunities for students. The Middletown Springs Board or some of its members have met with other Boards to discuss potential merger options and have another meeting scheduled.

Since Mt Holly is not far from Middletown Springs and the Middletown Springs Board continues to look at all options, we would like to ask the Mt Holly Board or some of its members and Superintendent Williams to join us on March 10th at 7:00 at Middletown Springs Elementary School to discuss possible merger opportunities. This is our regular Board meeting night, so the time could be adjusted to meet your needs.

We believe that students in Middletown Springs are provided with many educational opportunities. We are committed to providing choice to increase those opportunities as our students enter their secondary experiences. Our goal is to comply with the law by creating new structures, that will give our students continued educational opportunities and excellence, while doing so in the most cost efficient manner.

Thank you for considering our requests. With warm regards,

Clarence K. Haynes
Board Chair, Middletown Springs & Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

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April 14, 2016

Board Chair Sue Burke
Wells School District
Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union
Poultney, Vermont 05764

Dear Sue,

We wish to thank you for the opportunity to work together and for all past discussions with Wells board members. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss any possible Act 46 merger options with your school district.

The Middletown Springs Board of School Directors is reaching out to the Wells School Board again regarding options for merging our school districts. We know that you are currently involved in a merger study with Pawlet and Rupert. We are currently still seeking another PreK-6 district that would consider secondary choice to merge with or at least engage in a merger study with us.

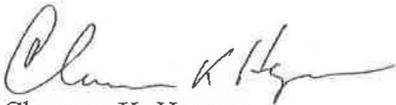
Should the merger study not produce the results Wells desires, please know that the Middletown Springs School Board would very much like to engage in a merger study with the Wells School District. Please contact us should you find yourselves in this situation.

The Middletown Springs School Board would like to have an informal study including Sunderland, Mt. Tabor, Danby, Wells, Mt. Holly, Pawlet and Rupert School Districts to discuss a Pre-K -6 District with secondary choice, which we now have; and which could create great learning opportunities for our students while sharing resources.

Please join us to discuss this important matter on May 26, 2016 at 6:30 PM at Middletown Springs Elementary School's gymnasium. Please let us know whether or not your board is interested and will be attending by contacting Superintendent Joan Paustian (802) 287-5286.

Thank you for considering our requests.

Sincerely,



Clarence K. Haynes
Board Chair, Middletown Springs School District

✓ cc: Joan Paustian, RSWSU Superintendent

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Ira

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August 1, 2016

Wells School Board Members
Wells School District
Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union
Poultney, Vermont 05764

Dear Wells Board Chair and Board Members,

The Middletown Springs Board does know that you are currently involved in a K-6 merger study with Pawlet and Rupert. We are aware that your study is making progress, however we would appreciate learning how the merger study is working from a Wells perspective. Please consider attending a Middletown Springs Board meeting to discuss your progress, to hear the progress of other school districts invited (PreK-6 districts), and to share your concerns as the educational governance landscape of Vermont changes.

Middletown Springs is still seeking another PreK-6 district that would consider secondary choice to merge with or at least engage in a merger study as a partner.

Should your current merger study not produce the results Wells desires, please know that the Middletown Springs School Board would very much like to engage in a merger study with the Wells School District. Please contact us should you find yourselves in this situation.

The Middletown Springs School Board would like to have an informal study including Sunderland, Mt. Tabor, Danby, Wells, Mt. Holly, Pawlet and Rupert School Districts to discuss a Pre-K-6 District with secondary choice that would meet the guidelines of Act 46 and which could create great learning opportunities for our students.

We invite you to attend a meeting in the Middletown Springs Elementary School library on Thursday, August 18, 2016 at 6:30 PM. We anticipate members from several Boards will attend to discuss these important decisions that will affect the way we oversee our school districts.

Thank you for considering our requests.

Sincerely,

Joan Paustian, Ed.D
RSWSU Superintendent

cc: Clarence K. Haynes, MSD Board Chair

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Ira

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August 1, 2016

Sunderland School Board Members
Superintendent Jackie Wilson
Sunderland School District
Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union
Sunderland, Vermont 05250-8427

Dear Sunderland Board Chair, Board Members, and Superintendent Wilson,

The Middletown Springs Board does know that you are currently involved in a K-8 merger study with Manchester, Dorset, Danby, Mt. Tabor, and the Mountain Towns RED. We are aware that your study is making progress, however we would appreciate learning how the merger study is working from a Sunderland perspective. Please consider attending a Middletown Springs Board meeting to discuss your progress, to hear the progress of other school districts invited (PreK-6 districts), and to share your concerns as the educational governance landscape of Vermont changes.

Middletown Springs is still seeking another PreK-6 district that would consider secondary choice to merge with or at least engage in a merger study as a partner.

Should your current merger study not produce the results Sunderland desires, please know that the Middletown Springs School Board would very much like to engage in a merger study with the Sunderland School District. Please contact us should you find yourselves in this situation.

The Middletown Springs School Board would like to have an informal study including Sunderland, Mt. Tabor, Danby, Wells, Mt. Holly, Pawlet and Rupert School Districts to discuss a Pre-K-6 District with secondary choice that would meet the guidelines of Act 46 and which could create great learning opportunities for our students.

You are invited to attend a meeting in the Middletown Springs Elementary School library on Thursday, August 18, 2016 at 6:30 PM. We anticipate members from several Boards will attend to discuss these important decisions that will affect the way we oversee our school districts.

Thank you for considering our requests.

Sincerely,

Joan Paustian Ed D
RSWSU Superintendent

Cc: Clarence K. Haynes, Board Chair, Middletown Springs School District

RUTLAND SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Ira

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August 1, 2016

Danby School Board Members
Superintendent Jackie Wilson
Danby School District
Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union
Sunderland, Vermont 05250-8427

Dear Danby Board Chair, Board Members, and Superintendent Wilson,

The Middletown Springs Board does know that you are currently involved in a K-8 merger study with Manchester, Dorset, Sunderland, Mt. Tabor, and the Mountain Towns RED. We are aware that your study is making progress, however we would appreciate learning how the merger study is working from a Danby perspective. Please consider attending a Middletown Springs Board meeting to discuss your progress, to hear the progress of other school districts invited (PreK-6 districts), and to share your concerns as the educational governance landscape of Vermont changes.

Middletown Springs is still seeking another PreK-6 district that would consider secondary choice to merge with or at least engage in a merger study as a partner.

Should your current merger study not produce the results Danby desires, please know that the Middletown Springs School Board would very much like to engage in a merger study with the Danby School District. Please contact us should you find yourselves in this situation.

The Middletown Springs School Board would like to have an informal study including Sunderland, Mt. Tabor, Danby, Wells, Mt. Holly, Pawlet and Rupert School Districts to discuss a Pre-K-6 District with secondary choice that would meet the guidelines of Act 46 and which could create great learning opportunities for our students.

We invite you to attend a meeting in the Middletown Springs Elementary School library on Thursday, August 18, 2016 at 6:30 PM. We anticipate members from several Boards will attend to discuss these important decisions that will affect the way we oversee our school districts.

Thank you for considering our requests.

Sincerely,

Joan Paustian Ed D
RSWSU Superintendent

Cc: Clarence K. Haynes, Board Chair, Middletown Springs School District

ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #1

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Wells</u>	<u>Pawlet</u>	<u>Rupert</u>	<u>Mettaawee</u>	<u>Mt. Tabor</u>	<u>Danby</u>	<u>Currier Memorial</u>	<u>Sunderland</u>	<u>Mt. Holly</u>	<u>Mt. Holly Portion of Black River</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$2,103,100	\$1,881,086	\$1,355,079	\$355,566	\$2,710,834	\$175,560	\$2,021,102	\$1,430,444	\$1,899,530	\$1,266,806	\$1,280,930
FY16 Equalized Pupils	121.67	138.96	119.99	37.56	174.03	18.56	119.26	98.35	140.95	72.82	76.94
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$17,285	\$13,537	\$11,293	\$9,467	\$15,577	\$9,459	\$16,947	\$14,544	\$13,477	\$17,396	\$16,649
FY16 ADM	119.46	154.24	257.91	84	0	26.6	202.05	0	150.75	162.37	0
Population	732	1137	1438	700	0	256	1287	0	951	1222	0
Population%	9%	15%	19%	9%	0%	3%	17%	0%	12%	16%	0%
FY16 Tax rate	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.18	\$0.99	\$1.63	\$0.99	\$1.77	\$1.52	\$1.41	\$1.82	\$1.74
Non Union %	100%	100%	47.33%	48.12%	N/A	64.48%	57.51%	N/A	100.00%	48.63%	N/A
Union %	0%	0%	52.67%	51.88%	N/A	35.52%	42.49%	N/A	0.00%	51.37%	N/A
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.32	N/A	\$1.18	\$1.67	N/A	\$1.41	\$1.78	N/A

Merged Education Spending	\$16,480,036.02
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Merged Equalized Pupils	1119.09
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Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$14,726.32
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Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.54
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Change In Tax rate post merger	(\$0.27)	\$0.12	\$0.12	\$0.22	N/A	\$0.36	(\$0.13)	N/A	\$0.13	(\$0.24)	N/A
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Middletown Springs

What do most of the invited schools have in common:

Wells, Danby, Mt. Tabor, Currier, Pawlet, Rupert, Mettawee, Mt. Holly

Currently:

- These school districts receive small schools grant (in jeopardy)
- They operate in supervisory unions with bigger schools with larger budgets/more faculty & staff
- Operating districts currently have equal representation on the SU Board
- Often have multi-age classrooms
- Have itinerant teachers (part-time teachers shared with other school districts) – often short tenure
- Some have a teaching principal (wears many hats)

Possible future possibilities with merging:

- Merge in a K-6 district with choice 7-12
- Could create more opportunities for students by expanding programs offered in one school to others (shared staff)
- Would have more equal representation by Board members – proportional to size (all smaller districts)
 - Would not be merged with larger districts that might not be sympathetic to small schools needs
 - Understand the dynamics of small schools and the role they play in small communities
 -
- Retain small schools grant
- Shared understanding of the positive benefits and the concerns/liabilities of small schools
- Share resources & expertise
- Grade levels (multi levels) could work together to more opportunities for students and shared expertise

Dear Residents,

Your input will be needed and valued as the School Boards of Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, Wells, and the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union look at the recently passed Vermont Legislation called Act 46. The intent of the law is to create more learning opportunities for our students and at the same time providing more cost efficiencies.

Vermont's student population has dropped from 103,000 students in 1997 to 78,300, yet there remains a static level of staff and an increase in student needs (emotional and nutritional). There is a general belief that given the 13 differing school district governance structures, there is a lack of flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources. In order to increase flexibility and the sharing of resources, legislation over the past few years have moved a number of functions to the supervisory union (finance, busing, special education teachers and services).

Now the legislators have looked at school governance as a way to consolidate, create more opportunities for all students, increase flexibility, decreasing costs, and lower taxes by changing the governance structures. Currently, Rutland Southwest has four differing governance structures for our schools: Poultney School District is a PreK-12 district (all students attend Poultney Elementary, Poultney High School, and preschool in Poultney); Middletown Springs School District is a PreK-6 district with choice for 7-12 (all PreK and elementary students attend Middletown Springs Elementary School and parents have choice for 7-12 [any Vermont public high school or an approved independent school – currently 6 different schools]); Wells School District is a PreK-6 district, designation and choice to a dollar limit (all PreK – 6 students attend Wells Village School, while Granville High School in NY is the designated high school, parents may also send their students to a public or approved private school and the town will fund tuition to the school up to the state based education amount [parents are responsible for the remainder]); and Ira has choice PreK-12 (parents sending their children to 7 differing elementary schools and 5 secondary schools).

Act 46 requires all districts to look to create a single school district responsible for all resident students with one education structure (a PreK-12, a PreK-6 or 8 with secondary choice, or choice for all). As you can see, there are some huge challenges for our school districts. Most challenging of all is the fact that we only have 750 students in RSWSU and the new law requires 900 students for a new structure as shown above. If one of these structures is not feasible, then the districts can consider an alternative supervisory union structure where all the school districts consider themselves all responsible for the education of all students, maximizing economics, efficiencies, and is flexible. A challenge for RSWSU is that this model requires 1,100 students. Should either of these options occur by July 1 of 2017, the towns involved in a merger or other type of governance change, will receive tax incentives for 4 years. Districts not making changes by July 2019 will be reassigned by the Secretary of Education.

All of the school districts and the RSWSU have requested a \$5,000 grant from the Agency of Education to hire a consultant to conduct a study of all possible options for each district and for the supervisory union. In addition, each of the Towns has \$2,000 to use for the study. Two of the districts (Middletown Springs and Wells) have already worked with an independent consultant to create a prioritization matrix, so that they may use weighted factors when looking at the options presented by the consultant.

The School Boards are planning to hold community forums in the fall. The intent of these forums is twofold: an opportunity for the boards to provide the information that is known to their communities, as well as to inform the communities of what is unknown at this time. It is also an opportunity for the community members, teachers, and business leaders to provide input. These forums will be facilitated and will give each person the ability to share thoughts, ideas, and concerns regarding these very important issues. It is critical to get your input, since communities votes are required before any governance change can occur. The study results are expected to be completed in mid-November. At the same time as the study is occurring, meetings with superintendents and Boards from other supervisory union are happening to look at possibilities and to promote communications.

Should you have questions, please contact one of your Board members or feel free to call me. Our goal is to provide the best education for our students, while doing so in an economically prudent manner. We are all committed to serving our communities and therefore need your help through this challenging process.

At your service,

Dr. Joan Paustian
Superintendent of Schools

October 5, 2015

Dear Residents of Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, and Wells,

We wanted to follow-up on a letter posted in July on Act 46 on the respective town's Front Porch Forum site, other publications/media sources, and the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union website. Here are a few of the highlights as we know them now:

- Act 46 requires that the RSWSU school districts consider and approve larger school districts governed by one Board with one budget. Board representation would be proportionate to student membership.
- Act 46 requires that school districts select a preferred governance structure that creates the same system for all schools (e.g. All Pre-K 12 schools, all choice schools, or all K-6 schools with a designated high school). The student population must be a minimum of 900.
- If a preferred governance structure is not possible, then alternative structures may be chosen (e.g. 2 PreK-12 districts, 2 K-6 districts with secondary choice, and 2 choice districts). The student population must be at least 1,100 students.
- Another option would be to join an existing structure (another existing school district) to create one new district.
- Any new school structure must be operational by July 1, 2017.
- Act 46 comes with tax reduction incentives for those who create and get voter approval for new approved structures. There are penalties for districts who fail to create a new structure (penalties such as losing small school's grant for example). These districts must write a plan that will show how the district will improve student outcomes and lower taxes for their residents.
- It is not an option for RSWSU school districts to remain as four different organizational structures. If no changes occur by July 1 of 2019, the Secretary of Education can make recommendations to the Vermont State Board of Education for changes to SUs or school districts that have not made changes in organizational structure.

Discussions have occurred between various supervisory union boards and between individual school district boards from various supervisory unions to discuss possible merger options. There have been a number of superintendent meetings to look at options. Talks have happened or are planned between RSWSU (and/or its member school districts) and members of Addison Rutland SU, Rutland South SU, Rutland Central SU, Battenkill Valley SU, and between Bennington Rutland SU districts or supervisory unions. We will continue to have ongoing discussion.

As a supervisory union, the RSWSU Board voted to hire a group to do a study for each school district and the supervisory union to help clarify what Act 46 can or may mean to our schools. Some of the questions we have been asked are: What does the merger mean for my school? Will

we lose school choice? What will a merger have on our budget and taxes? Will my school have to close? What will happen to the Small Schools Grant?

In August 2015, the RSWSU Board commissioned Dr. Paul Seversky and Mr. Doug Exley of the SES Study Team, LLC to help answer the question: Are there governance/reorganization options that would enhance educational opportunities for all students at similar or reduced costs to taxpayers? Board members from all four districts along with key central office administrators will meet with the consulting team on October 6th at 6:30 at Poultney High School to create a document to help guide the focus of the study. This workshop will outline the priorities, values, questions, and objectives the board members believe the Program Delivery Options Study should address. The outline tool will be a valuable baseline resource /blueprint for preparing the study. The workshop is a public meeting, however, will not be a forum for dialogue with the public.

The study team will also spend three days in the schools and the supervisory union gathering data. The Study Team will look at various kinds of data that may support the consideration of different ways to deliver programs to their students. The consultants will meet with each building principal, other staff members, and visit each school, as well as visit Ira. Much data has already been gathered

Each School Board is planning to have a community forum. Poultney is tentatively planning to hold their meeting on Tuesday, October 20th and Middletown Springs is tentatively planning to have their community meeting on Thursday, October 29th. Ira and Wells have not selected dates as of this printing. The Community Forums will provide an opportunity for Boards to share information with their community members and to gather input from community members /parents. The Community Forums will be well noticed.

As we get information from the state or the study, we will keep you informed. Look for information in the local newspapers, in the school bulletins, on Front Porch Forum, PEGTV, WVNR, or attend the monthly meetings. If you are unsure as to when and where the Boards meet, please call your school or the RSWSU office.

Serving you,

Mrs. Patricia Davenport, Poultney Board Vice Chair

Dr. Paul Severly, SES Study Team

Dr. Joan Paustian, RSWSU Superintendent

Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union
Act 46 Updates
Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, & Wells

The four school districts of Ira, Middletown Springs, Poultney, and Wells have been working diligently to meet all of the requirements of Act 46. This has been a challenge for this supervisory union since all of the four school districts have a different organizational structure meaning that each district must look for partners outside of our boundaries. District Board members have attended meetings with a number of school districts from seven other supervisory unions in a geographic region that extends more than 50 miles in any direction in order to find one or more like partners that would be able to merge with one or more of our districts to meet the goals of act 46: a sustainable model of governance that improves opportunities for students and has greater economic efficiencies.

The largest challenge is that there are some supervisory unions that have all or the majority of their school districts all having the same (like Addison Central SU – all K-6 schools all feeding into Middlebury Union Middle and then High School) or similar structures (like Rutland South SU – 4 K-6 schools with three feeding into Mill River Union High School). Merging was easier for these districts as they have already established protocols for working together, so they just needed to change their governance model. This has been much more of a struggle for the RSWSU school districts.

In addition, Act 46 brings with it tax incentives for having approved merger votes by June 30, 2017. Some of our districts are striving to meet this deadline. Act 46 does have a tax penalty for those districts who have not attempted to find suitable partners. Some of our districts are involved in a formal study, which means they are voting members and are included in the development of the Articles of Agreement if a merger is planned. The Articles of Agreement are required to be approved by the Vermont State Board of Education and also by a positive vote by each community involved in the formal study by June 30, 2017. The merger must be operational before July 1, 2019. A Board can only belong to one formal study. Some boards are involved informally in a study and can have multiple informal studies happening simultaneously. That means they can sit at the table and give input, but they are not a voting member in the decision making process. Below is the current status of each of the school districts are at this time.

Poultney – The Poultney School District has voted to join the formal merger study in Rutland Central Supervisory Union. Poultney, a PreK-12 district, will be included in a formal study with West Rutland and Proctor, who are also PreK-12 districts. The study will include an analysis of the districts educational programs including courses offered and extra-curricular programs; a complete financial analysis of all aspects of the districts; facilities; assets and liabilities; and whatever else the study committee would see critical to making a decision. A formal study committee has been formed. It includes Rutland Town with 5 members, Proctor with 3 members, West Rutland with 3 members, and Poultney with 4 members. A study committee membership is made up of a proportionate number based on the equalized pupil count of the districts included in the formal study. **The next meeting for the Act 46 Study Committee will be held on Thursday, April 28, 2017 at Poultney High School at 6:00 pm in the library.**

Wells – The Wells School District has voted to enter a formal study with Pawlet and Rupert, all K-6 districts who designate New York school districts for secondary (7-12) grades. The group met on March 12th to organize their study and define their tasks. The make-up of the study committee includes 4 members from Pawlet, 3 members from Wells, and 2 members from Rupert. This committee will also need to look at expanding educational opportunities, cost effectiveness, facilities, assets and liabilities, and all aspects of their governance and educational systems. Only the Vermont State Board of Education can determine which supervisory union this new merged district would be a member of, the committee could make a suggestion as to their preference.

In addition, this committee will need to seek updated legislation in order for the newly formed district to be able to designate any New York school district. The next meeting will be scheduled for a date in May.

a – The Ira School District has PreK-12 choice and the community gave guidance that they wish to maintain their non-operating school district. The Ira Board has investigated joining Granville, Hancock, and Pittsfield, Vt Districts; as well as meeting with Winhall, Stratton, Sandgate, and North Bennington. Most of these districts are in or about to form a formal study group. The challenge for Ira is that the closest town is 38 miles from Ira and it appears from a quick financial analysis that merging with either of these two groups would increase Ira's tax rate. Ira may also join the Rutland Central SU as an informal study member to investigate a stand-alone district. This would require a plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education by November 2017 (requesting a stand-alone district). The **Ira Board** will be holding another community forum on Wednesday, April 27 at the old Ira Town Hall at 7:15 to gather input and to make a decision as to the path they will take.

Middletown Springs - Members of the Middletown Springs School District have met with Wells, Danby, Mt. Tabor, Currier, Sunderland, Mt. Holly, and Rutland Town School Districts. The district operates a PreK-6 school and has 7-12 choice, which is valued by the community. The Board has sent letters to other Boards inviting them to join Middletown Springs in a merged district. Just last week, the Board sent another letter inviting the above schools and included Pawlet and Rupert to a meeting. They wish to find a district to merge with so that they also would be eligible for the tax incentives of Act 46 and not risk the penalty of losing their small schools grant. They have invited the other **PreK-6 districts to a meeting on May 26 at 6:30 at Middletown Springs**. If Middletown Springs is not able to find a partner, then they will have no choice but to request a stand-alone district and write a plan to the Vermont State Board of Education by November of 2017.

All of the RSWSU school districts have engaged in much time and effort to meet the requirements of Act 46. Each is working hard in an attempt to achieve the goals outlined in the law, to gain the tax incentives provided by the legislation, and not be impacted by the potential penalties while considering what is best for the students and communities. Each of our Boards appreciates community input and support as they navigate this very complex process. Our goal is always keeping foremost in our minds what is best for our students and for our communities.

Joan Paustian Ed.D
Superintendent

Update on the Future for Poultney, Middletown Springs, Wells, and Ira School Districts

Act 46, passed in the spring of 2015, requires school districts to merge with other school districts of like configuration (ex. PreK-12 school districts must merge with other PreK-12 districts). This has been challenging for Poultney, Middletown Springs, Wells, and Ira, since each school district has a different configuration. As a result, each of the four districts has had to take a different path.

Poultney, Wells, and Middletown Springs community members will be asked to vote in March 2017 to support new school districts. Study committee members from each of these towns have been engaged in thoughtful discussions working to arrive at mutually agreeable decisions regarding how new districts will be organized, how educational opportunities for students will be expanded, how assets and liabilities will be handled, how the new governing Board will be comprised with new partners and more. Act 46 is extremely complex causing many questions that are yet to be answered by the Agency of Education.

Below, you will find a brief outline of what is happening for each of the four study committees representing each school district in their current merger situations. *I urge you to attend the upcoming the Community Forum for your town in order to learn about the options for your district and to provide the study committee members with feedback which will help determine what may be the future of your school district.*

The Poultney Study Committee is in a formal study with West Rutland and Proctor to establish a new PreK-12 district, which is currently being called the Quarry Valley School District. The committee has written their Articles of Agreement, are reviewing a host of financial information, expanded opportunities for students, and a sustainable governance system for the new district. For the foreseen future, all of the schools would continue to operate. The Proctor, West Rutland, & Poultney Study Group is planning to host Community Forums in all three towns in the near future to provide information, answer questions, and hear your input.

The Wells Study Committee is engaged in a formal study with Pawlet and Rupert, which would create a Regional Educational District to include the Mettawee School. Each district currently educates students in PreK-6 and designates a New York high school. The Study Committee is currently wrestling with designation versus choice, since many Wells students attend Poultney High School and a number of parents from the community want choice. The three school districts cap what they pay for students attending other schools at different rates. The Wells, Rupert, Pawlet Study Committee will hold a Community Forum on Thursday, September 1, 2016 at the Mettawee School at 6:30. Come learn more about what is happening and to provide your input about various aspects being discussed including choice versus designation.

The Middletown Springs School District has attempted to merge with seven other PreK-6 districts that have secondary choice. Each of the seven districts is currently involved in a formal Act 46 study and therefore not able to consider merging with Middletown Springs at this time. Without merging, Middletown Springs faces financial consequences. Middletown Springs

is in an informal study with Rutland Town. The challenge for both Middletown Springs and Rutland Town school districts is that Middletown Springs is a PreK-6 with choice for 7-12 and the Rutland Town is a PreK-8 with choice for 9-12. Rutland Town is a formal member of the Study Committee that includes Poultney, West Rutland, and Proctor; while Middletown Springs remains an informal member at this time. Middletown Springs is also in an informal study with Wells, however, cannot take any action while Wells is a formal member with Pawlet and Rupert. The Middletown Springs Board must make a decision soon as to their path since the timing of Act 46 is closing in quickly. The Middletown Springs School Board will hold a Community Forum on September 8th (Thursday) at 7:00 pm at Middletown Springs Elementary School to give their community more information about options for Middletown Springs and to discuss the implications for Middletown Springs, as well to gain input from community members as to their thoughts about student opportunities and tax implications.

The Ira School Board is writing a self-study, in which they will ask the State Board of Education permission to remain as they currently are structured. Ira has found other possible merger partners that are no less than 38 miles away; this would be challenging to oversee students who have special needs from such a distance. Additionally, merging with other non-operating districts that are north and south of Ira would add to the cost of educating Ira children that attend 12 different schools. The risk Ira faces is that the State Board of Education may not agree because of their size, and assign them to one of two mergers of non-operating districts underway including Hancock and Granville to the north or Winhall, Stratton, Sandgate and Searsburg to the south.

All three of Rutland Central Supervisory Union schools and three of the four Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union Schools are working together in an Act 46 Study Committee on either a formal or informal basis. It is likely that if the proposed mergers are approved by the voters, the schools districts will join together to create a new merged supervisory union. This would require approval of the Vermont State Board of Education.

Please come to the Community Forum for your community to:

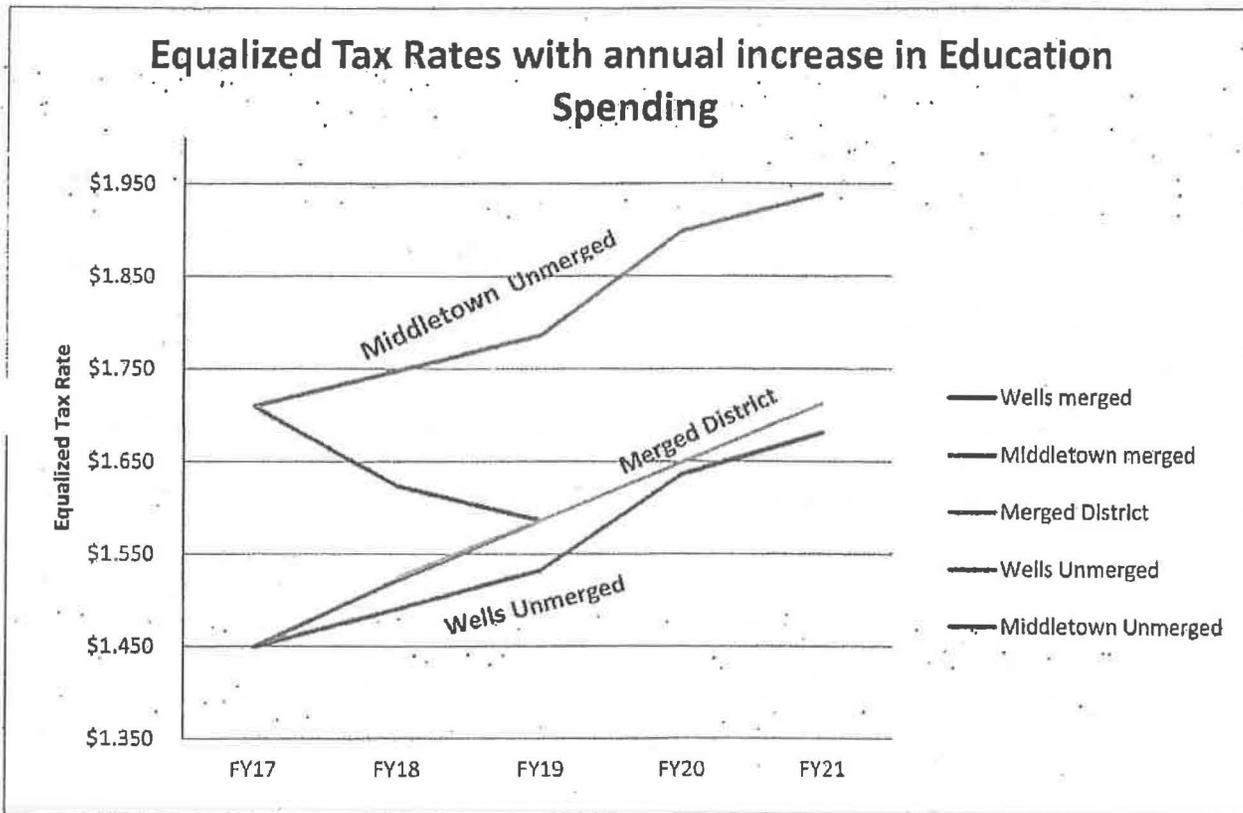
- Learn about the law and the options available to your school district
- Have your questions answered
- Give the Study Committee members and Board members your input

Act 46 gives the Study Committees the power to propose decisions about your school district which you must approve by voting (planned for town meeting). Please attend the community forum for your school districts to make certain that you have the facts and that your committee/board members have your input.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Joan Paustian, RSWSU Superintendent

Merged District Tax Rates - Middletown & Wells (choice)

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Wells merged	\$ 1.449	\$ 1.522	\$ 1.587	\$ 1.649	\$ 1.712
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$ 1.587	\$ 1.649	\$ 1.712
Merged District		\$ 1.525	\$ 1.587	\$ 1.649	\$ 1.712
Wells Unmerged	\$ 1.449	\$ 1.491	\$ 1.533	\$ 1.636	\$ 1.681
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$ 1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938



Key Statistics of Danby, Mt Tabor, Middletown Springs and Sunderland
For Purposes of Merger Discussion

2-Mar-16
Compiled by Gordon Woodrow
Sources: US Census, VT AOE, Local

	Danby		Middletown Springs		Mt Tabor		Sunderland	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Demographics (US Census)								
Total population	1292	1311	737	731	255	271	956	934
18 and over	962	1024	620	606	208	231	753	795
median age	37.2	44.6	46.9	49.5	41.9	45.7	45.3	48.9
poverty under age 18	14.7%	7.4%	6.8%	9.6%	13.0%	47.5%	1.7%	1.5%
housing units	684	745	441	432	127	131	527	557
median house value	223800	194000	213300	260,600	221400	170800	217100	231900
% occupied	80.0%	74.0%	75.7%	76.9%	73.2%	78.1%	72.3%	72.7%
In school age 3 and up	337	328	108	108	46	28	183	136

	Currier		M. Springs		Sunderland	
	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
Education data (AOE)						
Enrollment						
PreK	^	19	14	11	^	12
K-6	108	86	61	61	62	82
Total	108	105	75	72	62	94

^data not available

	Danby		M. Springs		Mt Tabor		Sunderland	
	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
7-12 tuitioned ADM	102	111	50	52	12	12	72	56

	Currier		M. Springs		Sunderland	
	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
Student to teacher ratio	11.6%	9.8%	10.3%	10.7%	7.3%	12.4%

	Currier	M. Springs	Sunderland
Distance Between Schools			
Distance from nearest school (miles)	17	17	22
Distance from farthest school (miles)	22	33	33

	Danby		M. Springs		Mt Tabor		Sunderland	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Financial data (AOE)								
Total expenditures (unduplicated)	\$ 663,491	\$ 256,035	\$1,072,699	\$1,551,227	\$134,389	\$230,040	\$1,631,803	\$1,918,415
PreK-12 expenses	\$ 168,474	\$ 256,035	\$915,288	\$1,304,504	\$4,426	\$31,285	\$808,521	\$1,054,966
Tuition to other schools	\$ 1,003,909	\$ 996,210	\$696,844	\$855,689	\$116,608	\$179,300	\$731,877	\$598,473
Per Pupil expenditures	\$ 13,559	\$ 16,824	\$14,224	\$17,919	\$13,559	\$16,824	\$16,521	\$14,511

Danby/ Mt Tabor figures are for Currier

	FY09	FY 13	FY09	FY 13	FY09	FY 13	FY09	FY 13
Tax Rate (CLA adjusted)	\$ 1.18	\$ 1.11	\$1.32	\$1.64	\$0.97	\$1.10	\$1.62	\$1.20

Assets, Debt and Capital Projects

Assets

Currier

Middletown Springs

Sunderland

\$ 106,000.00	Small School and Forest Service Grant
\$ 49,900.00	SPED Block Grant
\$ 11,342.00	Early Ed Block Grant
\$ 217,777.00	Impact Aid

Debts

\$ - No debt or bonds currently

Capital Projects

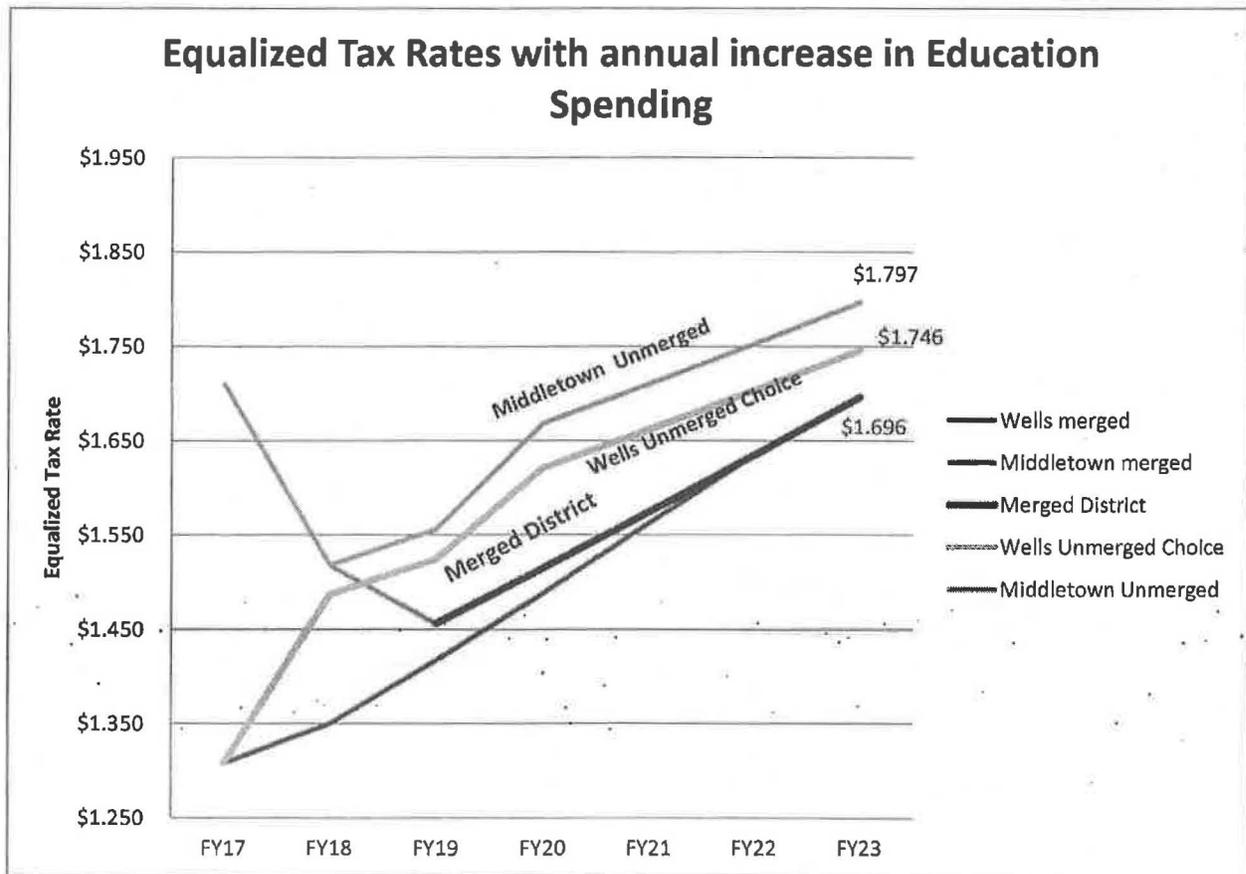
\$ 150,000.00 Parking lot paving

Middletown - Wells

Updated Financial Model
Based on FY18 preliminary budget & FY19 Merger

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate w/ Increases in Education Spending

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Wells merged	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.350	\$1.418	\$ 1.488	\$ 1.563	\$ 1.635	\$ 1.696
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.518	\$1.457	\$ 1.515	\$ 1.575	\$ 1.635	\$ 1.696
Merged District			\$1.457	\$ 1.515	\$ 1.575	\$ 1.635	\$ 1.696
Wells Unmerged Choice	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.488	\$1.525	\$ 1.621	\$ 1.662	\$ 1.703	\$ 1.746
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.518	\$1.556	\$ 1.668	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.753	\$ 1.797

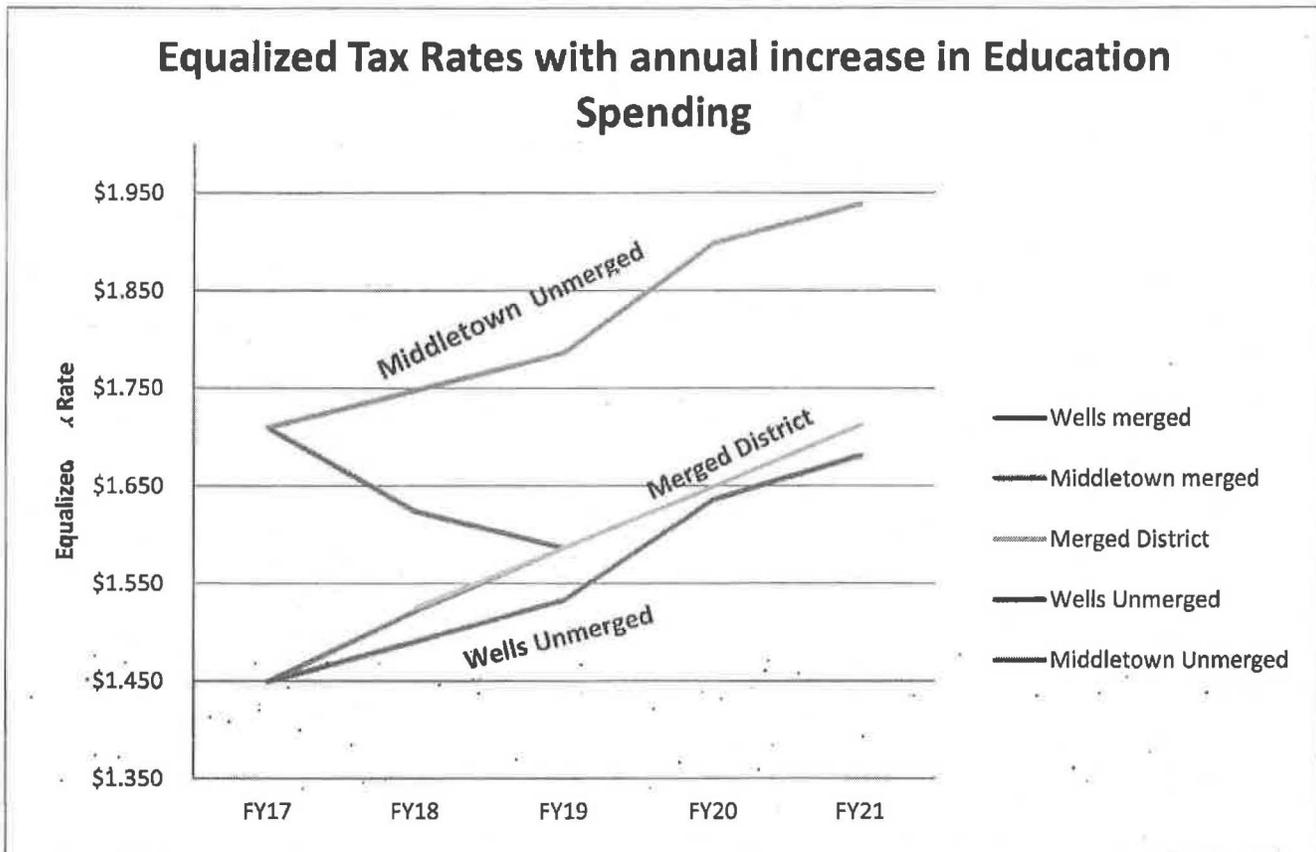


Assumptions:

1. All options assume 2.5% annual increase in Educational Spending from FY19 - FY23
2. All options assume State yield will remain at \$9701 from FY18 - FY23
3. All options assume Equalized pupils remain at FY17 level from FY18 - FY23
4. FY18 Educational Spending based on FY18 Budget 1st Draft
5. Unmerged options take into account loss of Small Schools Grant of \$85,000 per school in FY20
6. Increase in expense due to Choice is included

Merged District Tax Rates - Middletown & Wells (choice)

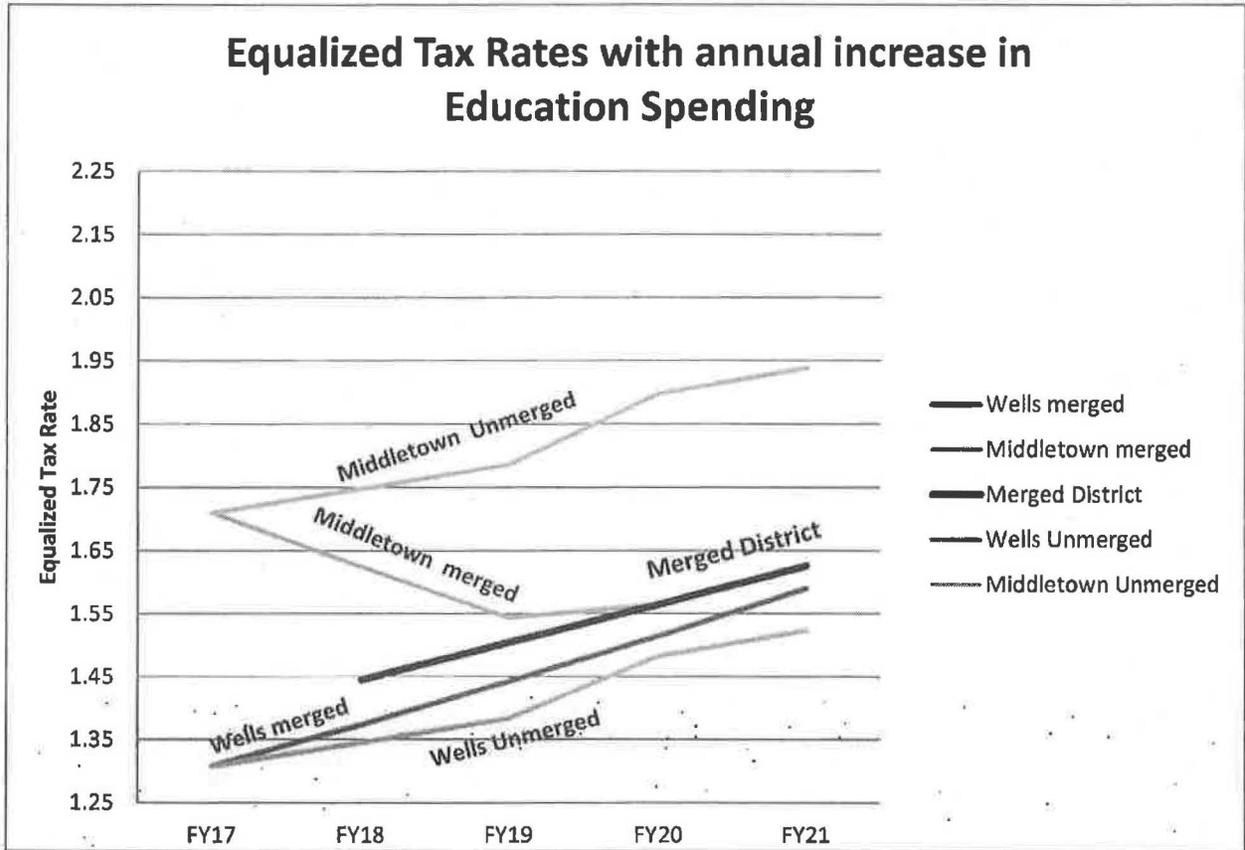
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Wells merged	\$ 1.449	\$ 1.522	\$ 1.587	\$ 1.649	\$ 1.712
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$ 1.587	\$ 1.649	\$ 1.712
Merged District		\$ 1.525	\$ 1.587	\$ 1.649	\$ 1.712
Wells Unmerged	\$ 1.449	\$ 1.491	\$ 1.533	\$ 1.636	\$ 1.681
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$ 1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938



Middletown - Wells (designation)

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate w/ Increases in Education Spending

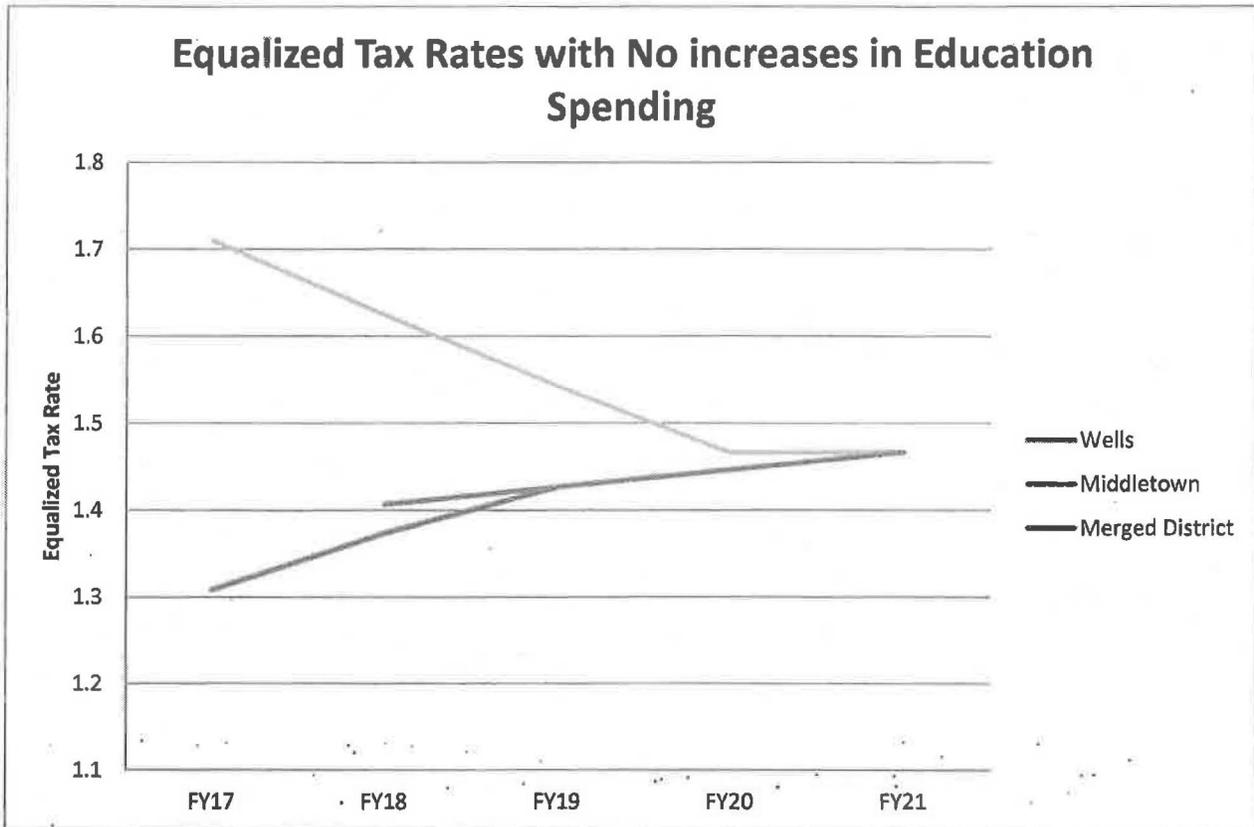
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Wells merged	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.374	\$1.442	\$ 1.515	\$ 1.590
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$1.543	\$ 1.564	\$ 1.626
Merged District		\$ 1.445	\$1.504	\$ 1.564	\$ 1.626
Wells Unmerged	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.346	\$1.384	\$ 1.483	\$ 1.523
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938



Middletown - Wells (designation)

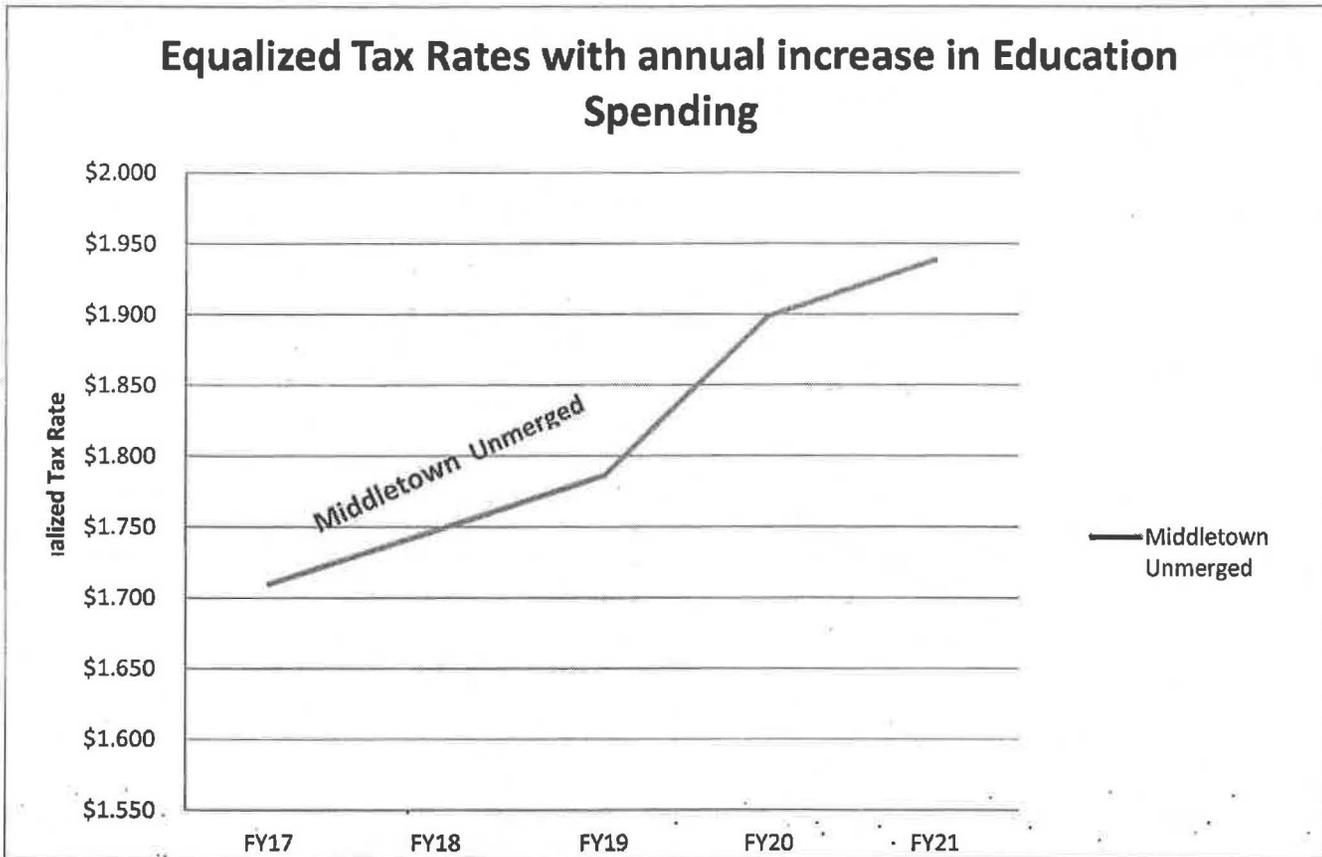
Merqed District Equalized Tax Rate - No Increases in Education Spending

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Wells	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.374	\$ 1.427	\$ 1.447	\$ 1.467
Middletown	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$ 1.543	\$ 1.466	\$ 1.467
Merged District		\$ 1.407	\$ 1.427	\$ 1.447	\$ 1.467



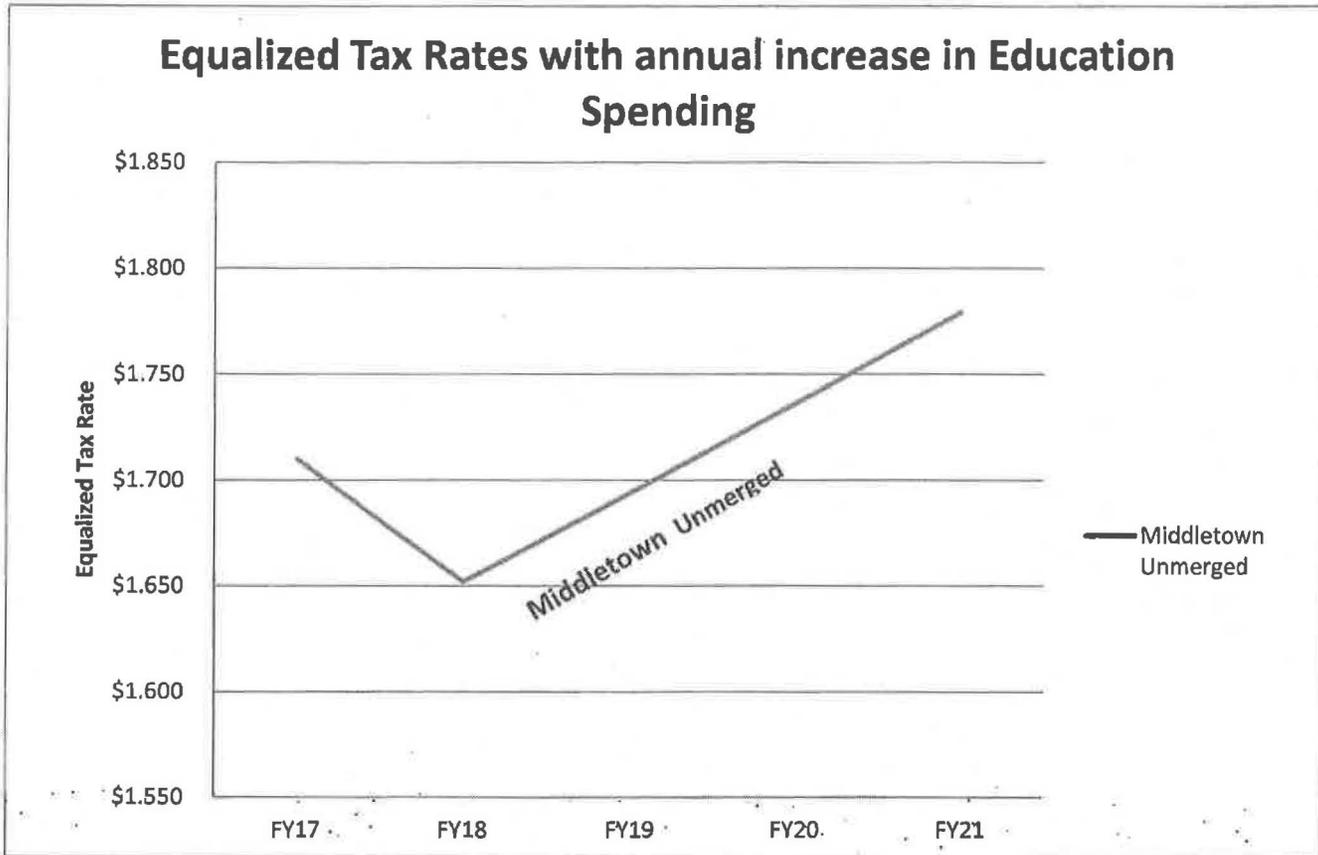
No Merger Middletown

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$ 1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938



No Merger Middletown - Close School in FY18 (Full Choice PreK-12)

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.652	\$ 1.694	\$ 1.736	\$ 1.779

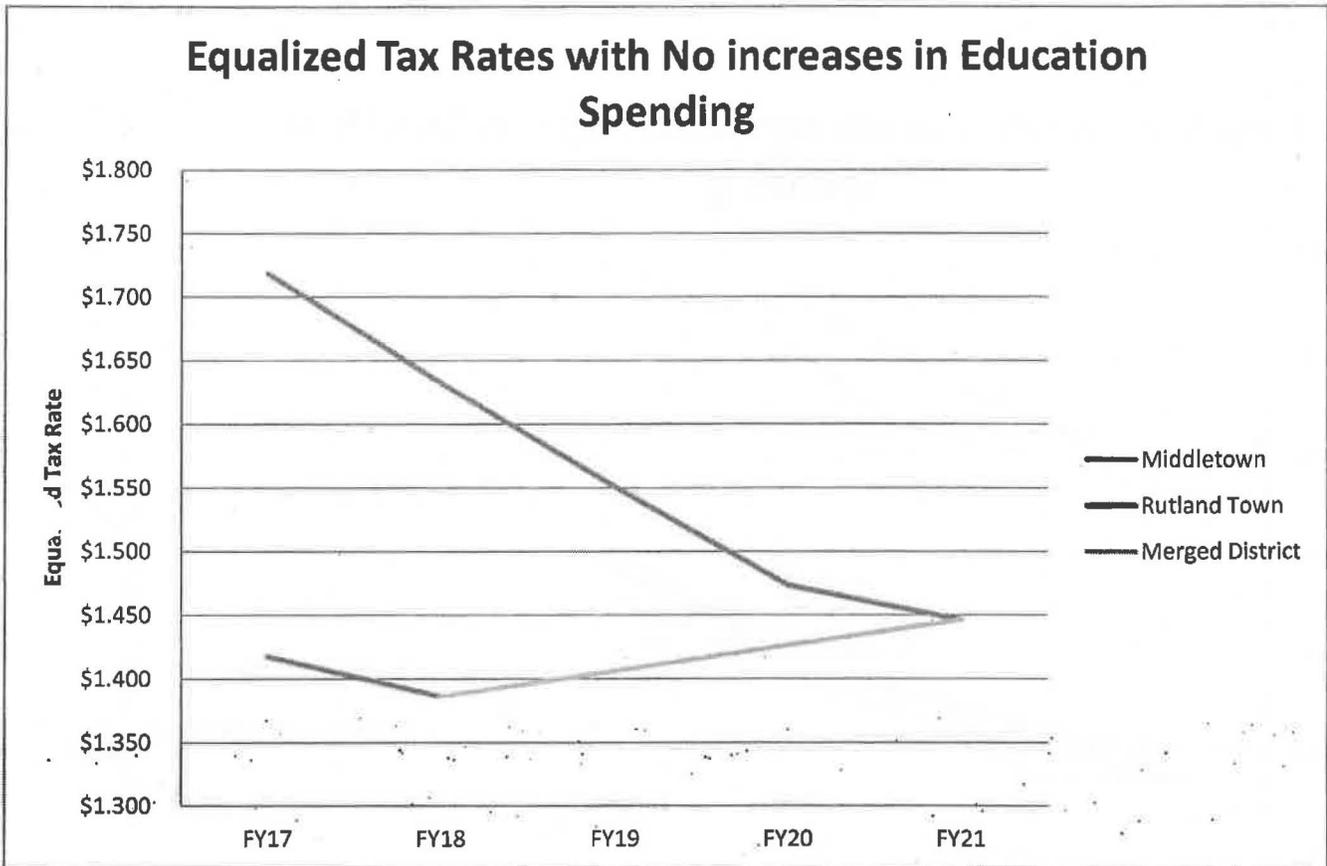


Middletown - Rutland Town

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate - No Increases in Education

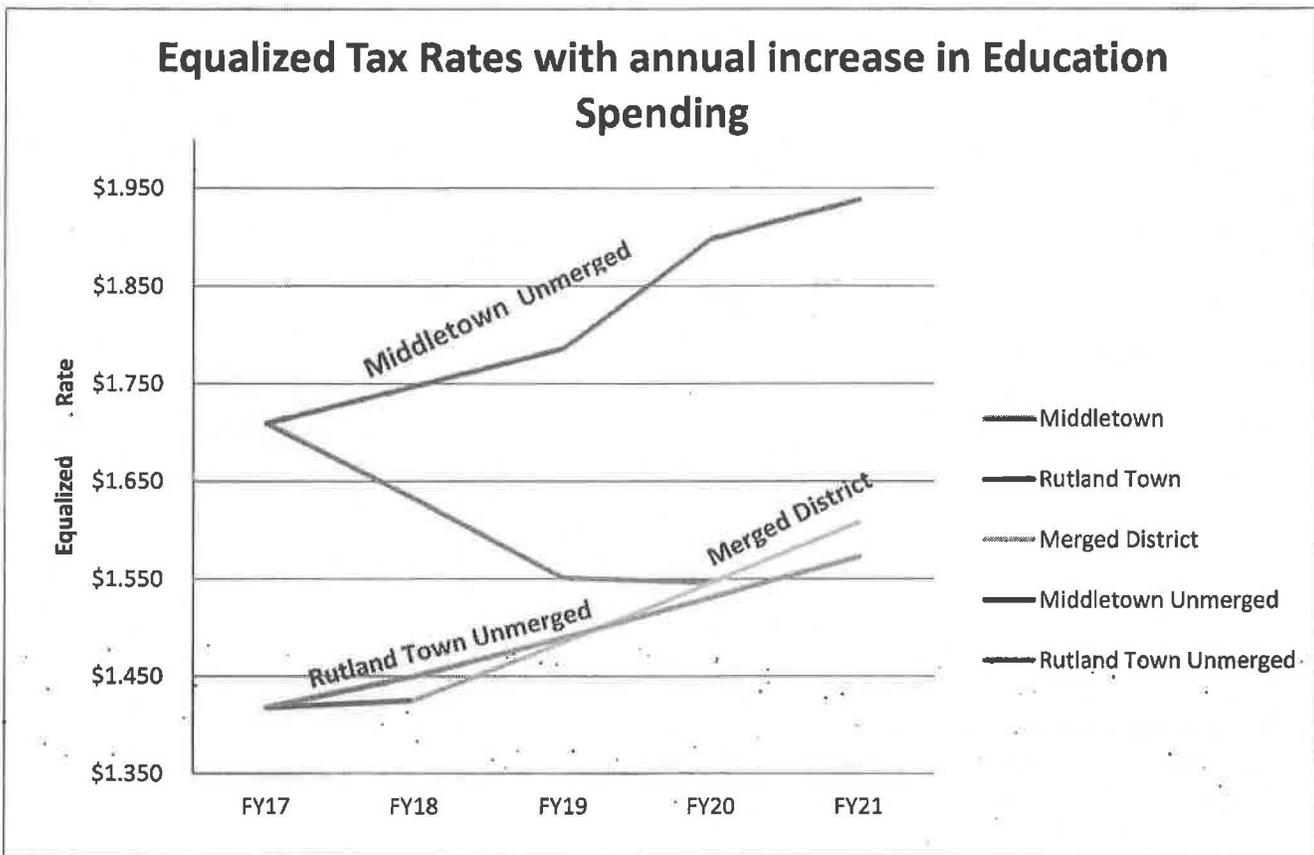
Spending

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Middletown	\$ 1.718	\$ 1.632	\$ 1.551	\$ 1.473	\$ 1.446
Rutland Town	\$ 1.418	\$ 1.386	\$ 1.406	\$ 1.426	\$ 1.446
Merged District		\$ 1.386	\$ 1.406	\$ 1.426	\$ 1.446



Merged District Tax Rates - Middletown & Rutland Town

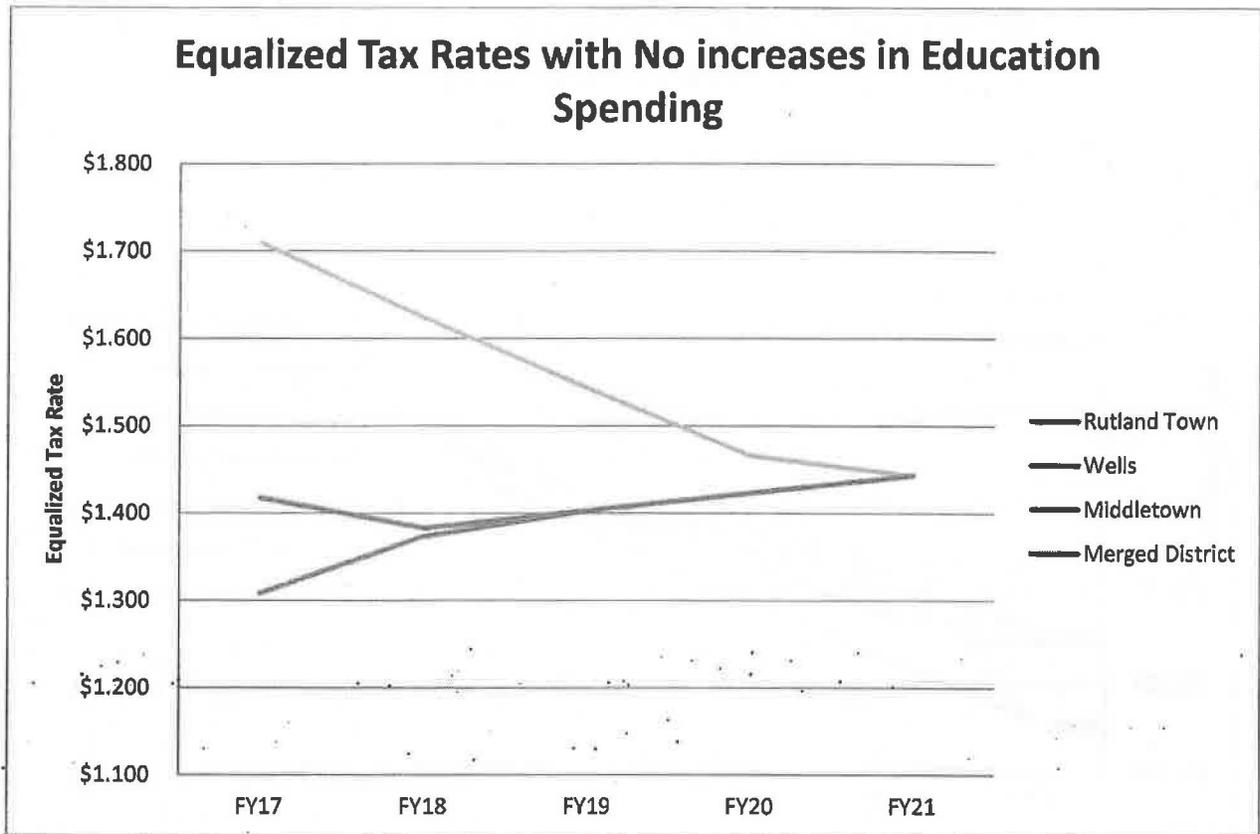
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Middletown	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.632	\$ 1.551	\$ 1.546	\$ 1.608
Rutland Town	\$ 1.418	\$ 1.425	\$ 1.485	\$ 1.546	\$ 1.608
Merged District		\$ 1.425	\$ 1.485	\$ 1.546	\$ 1.608
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$ 1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938
Rutland Town Unmerged	\$ 1.418	\$ 1.450	\$ 1.490	\$ 1.531	\$ 1.573



Middletown - Rutland Town - Wells (Choice)

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate - No Increases in Education Spending

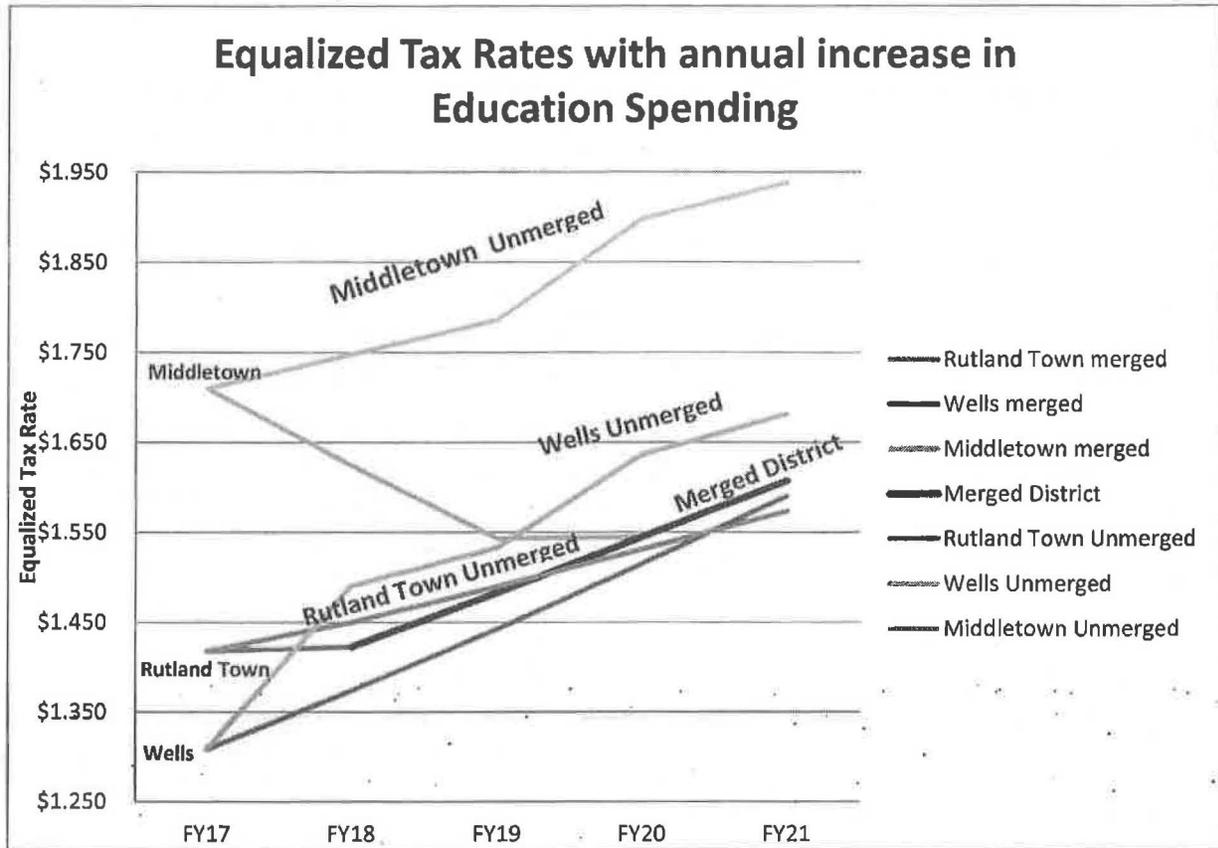
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Rutland Town	\$ 1.418	\$ 1.383	\$ 1.403	\$ 1.423	\$ 1.443
Wells	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.374	\$ 1.403	\$ 1.423	\$ 1.443
Middletown	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$ 1.543	\$ 1.466	\$ 1.443
Merged District		\$ 1.383	\$ 1.403	\$ 1.423	\$ 1.443



Middletown - Rutland Town - Wells (Choice)

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate w/ Increases in Education Spending

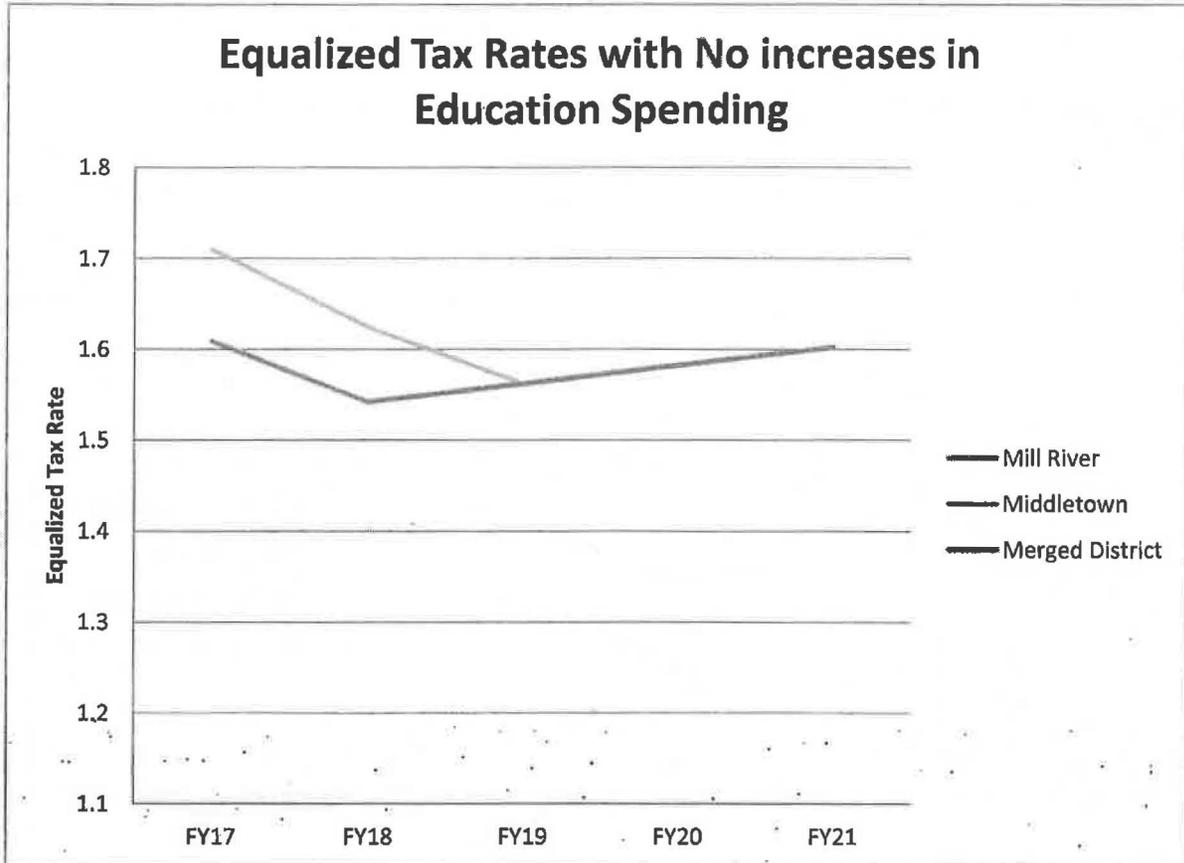
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Rutland Town merged	\$ 1.418	\$ 1.423	\$1.483	\$ 1.544	\$ 1.607
Wells merged	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.374	\$1.442	\$ 1.515	\$ 1.590
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$1.543	\$ 1.544	\$ 1.607
Merged District		\$ 1.423	\$1.483	\$ 1.544	\$ 1.607
Rutland Town Unmerged	\$ 1.418	\$ 1.450	\$1.490	\$ 1.531	\$ 1.573
Wells Unmerged	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.491	\$1.533	\$ 1.636	\$ 1.681
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938



Middletown - Mill River

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate - No Increases in Education Spending

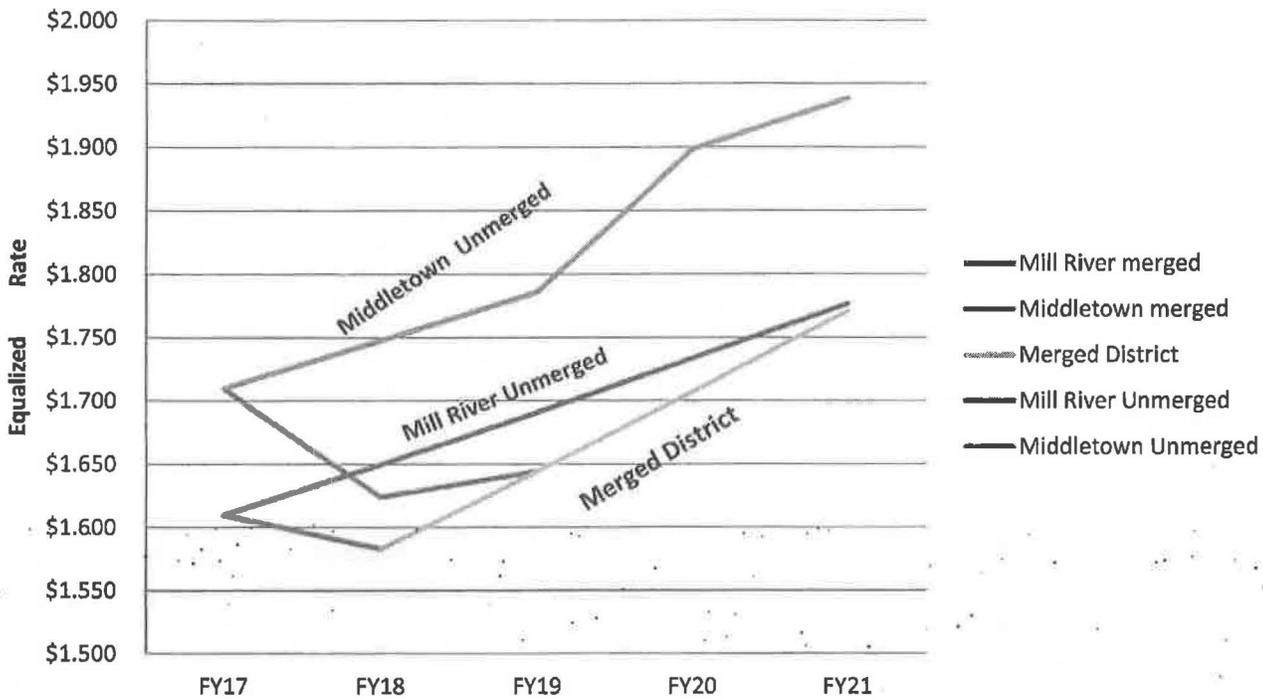
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Mill River	\$ 1.610	\$ 1.542	\$ 1.562	\$ 1.582	\$ 1.602
Middletown	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$ 1.562	\$ 1.582	\$ 1.602
Merged District		\$ 1.542	\$ 1.562	\$ 1.582	\$ 1.602



Merged District Tax Rates - Middletown & Mill River

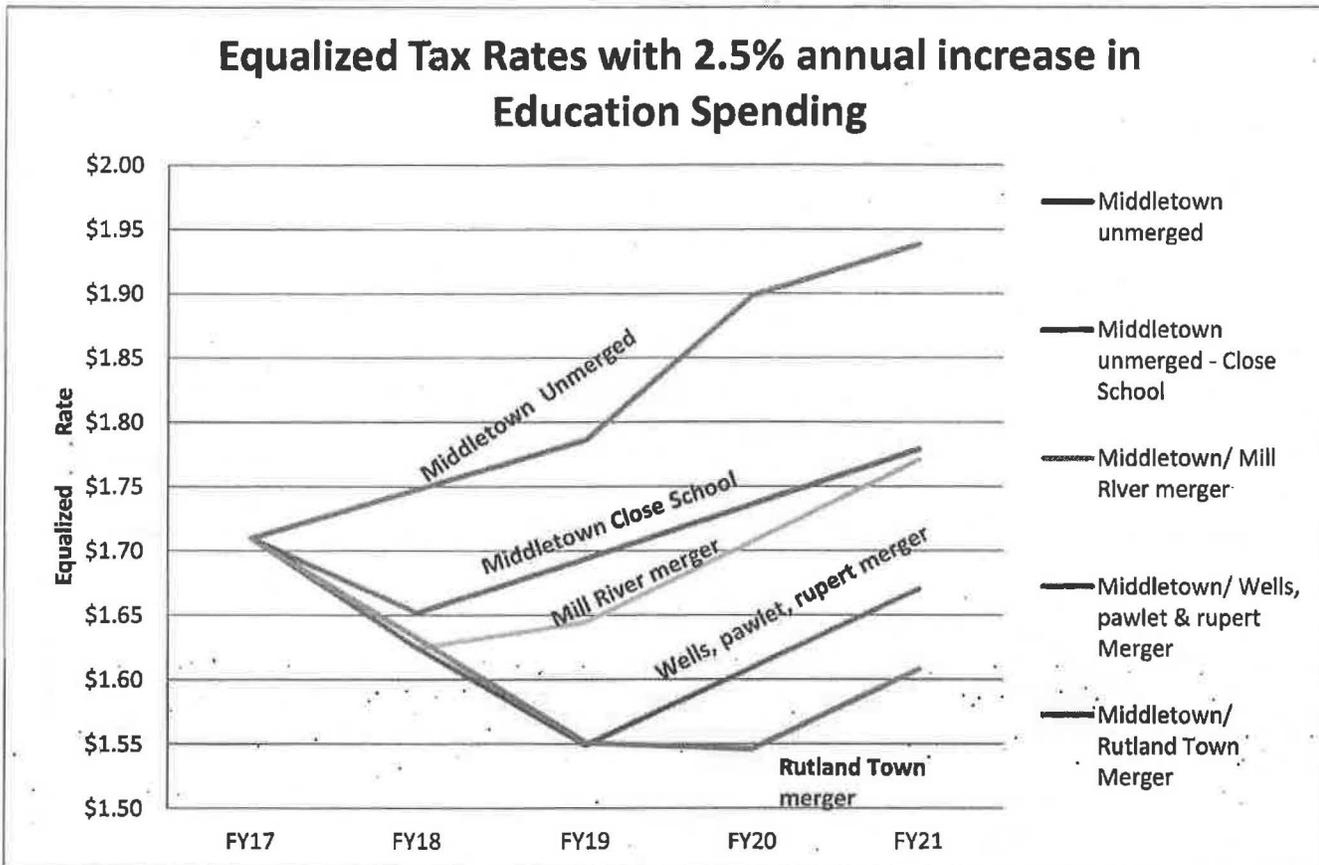
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Mill River merged	\$ 1.610	\$ 1.583	\$1.645	\$ 1.707	\$ 1.771
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.624	\$1.645	\$ 1.707	\$ 1.771
Merged District		\$ 1.583	\$1.645	\$ 1.707	\$ 1.771
Mill River Unmerged	\$ 1.610	\$ 1.650	\$1.691	\$ 1.733	\$ 1.777
Middletown Unmerged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.748	\$1.786	\$ 1.898	\$ 1.938

Equalized Tax Rates with annual increase in Education Spending



Middletown Springs - Merger Options

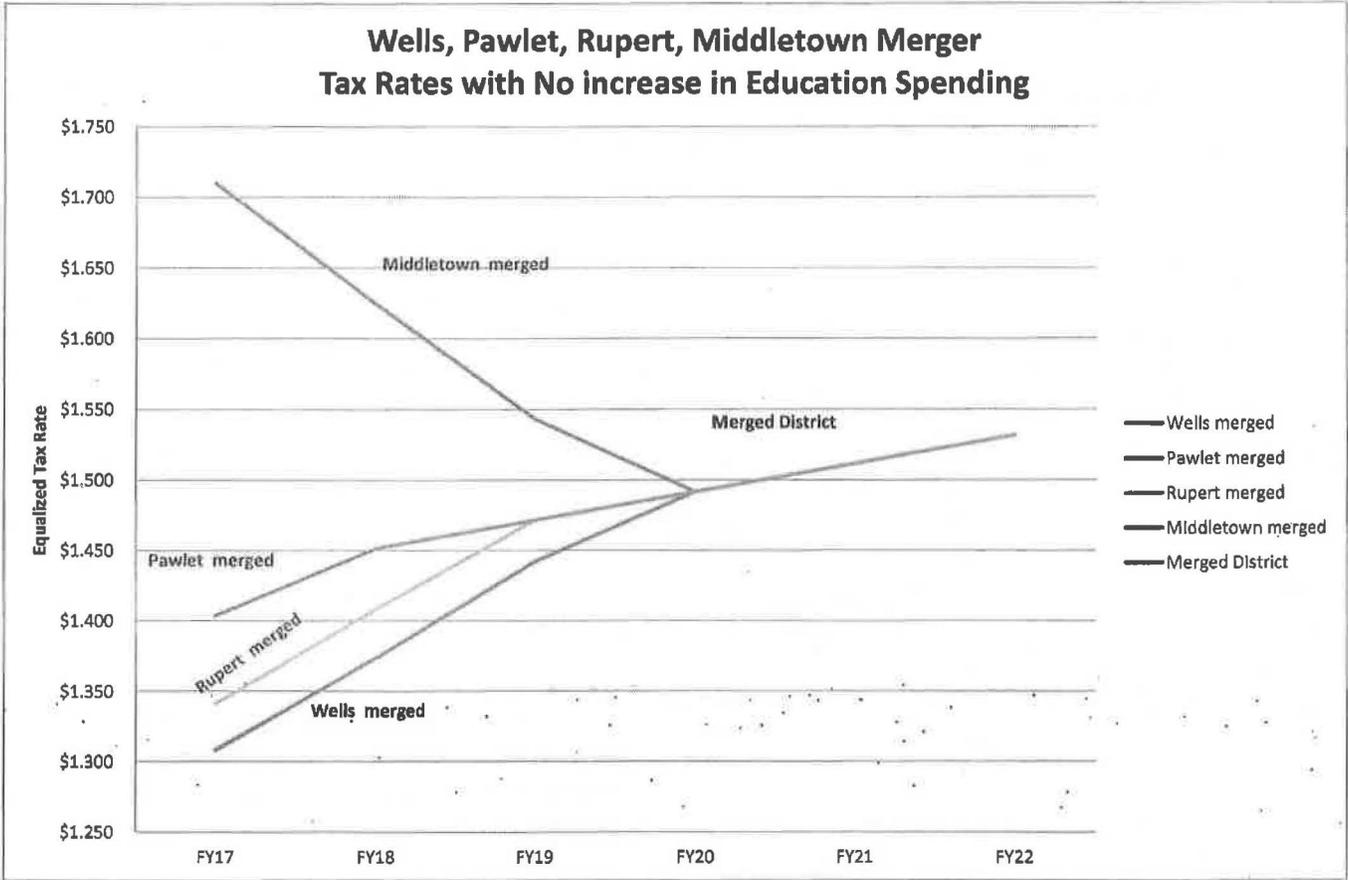
	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Middletown unmerged	\$ 1.71	\$ 1.75	\$ 1.79	\$ 1.90	\$ 1.94
Middletown unmerged - Close School	\$ 1.71	\$ 1.65	\$ 1.69	\$ 1.74	\$ 1.78
Middletown/ Mill River merger	\$ 1.71	\$ 1.62	\$ 1.64	\$ 1.71	\$ 1.77
Middletown/ Wells, pawlet & rupert Merger	\$ 1.71	\$ 1.62	\$ 1.55	\$ 1.61	\$ 1.67
Middletown/ Rutland Town Merger	\$ 1.71	\$ 1.63	\$ 1.55	\$ 1.55	\$ 1.61



Wells- Middletown - Pawlet - Rupert
Choice

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate - No Increases in Education Spending

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Wells merged	\$ 1.308	\$ 1.373	\$ 1.442	\$ 1.492	\$ 1.492	\$ 1.532
Pawlet merged	\$ 1.404	\$ 1.452	\$ 1.472	\$ 1.492	\$ 1.512	\$ 1.532
Rupert merged	\$ 1.341	\$ 1.408	\$ 1.472	\$ 1.492	\$ 1.512	\$ 1.532
Middletown merged	\$ 1.710	\$ 1.625	\$ 1.543	\$ 1.492	\$ 1.512	\$ 1.532
Merged District		\$ 1.452	\$ 1.472	\$ 1.492	\$ 1.512	\$ 1.532



Wells- Middletown - Pawlet - Rupert
Choice

Merged District Equalized Tax Rate w/ Increases in Education Spending

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Wells merged	\$1.308	\$1.373	\$1.442	\$1.514	\$1.590	\$1.733
Pawlet merged	\$1.404	\$1.474	\$1.548	\$1.609	\$1.671	\$1.733
Rupert merged	\$1.341	\$1.408	\$1.479	\$1.552	\$1.630	\$1.733
Middletown merged	\$1.710	\$1.625	\$1.549	\$1.609	\$1.671	\$1.733
Merged District		\$1.490	\$1.549	\$1.609	\$1.671	\$1.733
Wells Unmerged	\$1.308	\$1.485	\$1.522	\$1.620	\$1.860	\$1.702
Pawlet unmerged	\$1.404	\$1.557	\$1.596	\$1.636	\$1.677	\$1.719
Rupert unmerged	\$1.341	\$1.490	\$1.528	\$1.566	\$1.605	\$1.645
Middletown Unmerged	\$1.710	\$1.753	\$1.797	\$1.916	\$1.964	\$2.013



ACT 46 Financial Data

FY17 Financial Data

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Wells</u>
FY17 Education Spending	\$1,987,210	\$1,903,095
FY17 Equalized Pupils	119.8	149.95
FY17 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$16,588	\$12,692
FY16 ADM	119.46	154.24
Population	732	1137
Population%	39%	61%
FY17 Equalized Tax rate	\$1.71	\$1.31
Merged Education Spending	\$3,890,305.00	
Merged Equalized Pupils	269.75	
Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$14,421.89	
Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.49	

Change In Tax rate post merger

(\$0.22)

\$0.18

ACT 46 Financial Data

FY17 Financial Data

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Rutland Town</u>
FY17 Education Spending	\$1,987,210	\$7,221,344
FY17 Equalized Pupils	119.8	527.56
FY17 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$16,588	\$13,688
FY16 ADM	119.46	510.9
Population	732	4019
Population%	15%	85%
FY17 Equalized Tax rate	\$1.71	\$1.41
<hr/>		
Merged Education Spending	\$9,208,554.00	
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Merged Equalized Pupils	647.36	
<hr/>		
Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$14,224.78	
<hr/>		
Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.47	
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Change In Tax rate post merger

	(\$0.24)	\$0.06
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ACT 46 Financial Data

FY17 Financial Data

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Wells</u>	<u>Rutland Town</u>
FY17 Education Spending	\$1,987,210	\$1,903,095	\$7,221,344
FY17 Equalized Pupils	119.8	149.95	527.56
FY17 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$16,588	\$12,692	\$13,688
FY16 ADM	119.46	154.24	510.9
Population	732	1137	4019
Population%	12%	19%	68%
FY17 Equalized Tax rate	\$1.71	\$1.31	\$1.41
Merged Education Spending		\$11,111,649.00	
Merged Equalized Pupils		797.31	
Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils		\$13,936.42	
Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives		\$1.44	

Change In Tax rate post merger

(\$0.27)	\$0.13	\$0.03
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* Wells Spending per pupil is currently lower due to tuition cap in current legislation, this cap will be removed no matter who they merge with and cause their education spending to increase by approx. \$1500 per pupil unless they can get new legislation passed.

ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #6

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Wells</u>	<u>Pawlet</u>	<u>Rupert</u>	<u>Mettaawee</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$2,103,100	\$1,881,086	\$1,355,079	\$355,566	\$2,710,834
FY16 Equalized Pupils	121.67	138.96	119.99	37.56	174.03
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$17,285	\$13,537	\$11,293	\$9,467	\$15,577
FY16 ADM	119.46	154.24	257.91	84	0
Population	732	1137	1438	700	0
Population%	18%	28%	36%	17%	0%
FY16 Tax rate	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.18	\$0.99	\$1.63
Non Union %	100%	100%	47.33%	48.12%	N/A
Union %	0%	0%	52.67%	51.88%	N/A
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town (pre CLA)	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.32	N/A

Merged Education Spending **\$8,405,665.58**

Merged Equalized Pupils **592.21**

Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils **\$14,193.72**

Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives **\$1.49**

Change In Tax rate post merger	(\$0.32)	\$0.07	\$0.07	\$0.16	N/A
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ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #4

	<u>Wells</u>	<u>Pawlet</u>	<u>Rupert</u>	<u>Mettaawee</u>	<u>Sunderland</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$1,881,086	\$1,355,079	\$355,566	\$2,710,834	\$1,899,530
FY16 Equalized Pupils	138.96	119.99	37.56	174.03	140.95
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$13,537	\$11,293	\$9,467	\$15,577	\$13,477
FY16 ADM	154.24	257.91	84	0	150.75
Population	1137	1438	700	0	951
Population%	27%	34%	17%	0%	23%
FY16 Tax rate	\$1.42	\$1.18	\$0.99	\$1.63	\$1.41
Non Union %	100%	47.33%	48.12%	N/A	100.00%
Union %	0%	52.67%	51.88%	N/A	0.00%
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town (pre CLA)	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.32	N/A	\$1.41

Merged Education Spending	\$8,202,095.15
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Merged Equalized Pupils	611.49
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Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$13,413.29
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Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.40
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Change In Tax rate post merger	(\$0.01)	(\$0.01)	\$0.08	N/A	(\$0.01)
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ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #3

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Mt. Tabor</u>	<u>Danby</u>	<u>Currier Memorial</u>	<u>Mt. Holly</u>	<u>Mt. Holly Portion of Black River</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$2,103,100	\$175,560	\$2,021,102	\$1,430,444	\$1,266,806	\$1,280,930
FY16 Equalized Pupils	121.67	18.56	119.26	98.35	72.82	76.94
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$17,285	\$9,459	\$16,947	\$14,544	\$17,396	\$16,649
FY16 ADM	119.46	26.6	202.05	0	162.37	0
Population	732	256	1287	0	1222	0
Population%	21%	7%	37%	0%	35%	0%
FY16 Tax rate	\$1.81	\$0.99	\$1.77	\$1.52	\$1.82	\$1.74
Non Union %	100%	64.48%	57.51%	N/A	48.63%	N/A
Union %	0%	35.52%	42.49%	N/A	51.37%	N/A
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town (pre CLA)	\$1.81	\$1.18	\$1.67	N/A	\$1.78	N/A

Merged Education Spending	\$8,277,940.87					
Merged Equalized Pupils	507.60					
Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$16,308.09					
Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.71					

Change In Tax rate post merger	(\$0.10)	\$0.53	\$0.04	N/A	(\$0.07)	N/A
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ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #5

	<u>Mt. Tabor</u>	<u>Danby</u>	<u>Carrier Memorial</u>	<u>Sunderland</u>	<u>Mt. Holly</u>	<u>Mt. Holly Portion of Black River</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$175,560	\$2,021,102	\$1,430,444	\$1,899,530	\$1,266,806	\$1,280,930
FY16 Equalized Pupils	18.56	119.26	98.35	140.95	72.82	76.94
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$9,459	\$16,947	\$14,544	\$13,477	\$17,396	\$16,649
FY16 ADM	26.6	202.05	0	150.75	162.37	0
Population	256	1287	0	951	1222	0
Population%	7%	35%	0%	26%	33%	0%
FY16 Tax rate	\$0.99	\$1.77	\$1.52	\$1.41	\$1.82	\$1.74
Non Union %	64.48%	57.51%	N/A	100.00%	48.63%	N/A
Union %	35.52%	42.49%	N/A	0.00%	51.37%	N/A
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town (pre CLA)	\$1.18	\$1.67	N/A	\$1.41	\$1.78	N/A

Merged Education Spending	\$8,074,370.44
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Merged Equalized Pupils	526.88
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Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$15,324.95
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Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.60
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Change In Tax rate post merger	\$0.42	(\$0.06)	N/A	\$0.19	(\$0.18)	N/A
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ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #2

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Wells</u>	<u>Pawlet</u>	<u>Rupert</u>	<u>Mettaawee</u>	<u>Mt. Tabor</u>	<u>Danby</u>	<u>Currier Memorial</u>	<u>Sunderland</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$2,103,100	\$1,881,086	\$1,355,079	\$355,566	\$2,710,834	\$175,560	\$2,021,102	\$1,430,444	\$1,899,530
FY16 Equalized Pupils	121.67	138.96	119.99	37.56	174.03	18.56	119.26	98.35	140.95
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$17,285	\$13,537	\$11,293	\$9,467	\$15,577	\$9,459	\$16,947	\$14,544	\$13,477
FY16 ADM	119.46	154.24	257.91	84	0	26.6	202.05	0	150.75
Population	732	1137	1438	700	0	256	1287	0	951
Population%	11%	17%	22%	11%	0%	4%	20%	0%	15%
FY16 Tax rate	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.18	\$0.99	\$1.63	\$0.99	\$1.77	\$1.52	\$1.41
Non Union %	100%	100%	47.33%	48.12%	N/A	64.48%	57.51%	N/A	100.00%
Union %	0%	0%	52.67%	51.88%	N/A	35.52%	42.49%	N/A	0.00%
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town (pre CLA)	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.32	N/A	\$1.18	\$1.67	N/A	\$1.41

Merged Education Spending	\$13,932,300.44
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Merged Equalized Pupils	969.33
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Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$14,373.12
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Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.50
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Change In Tax rate post merger	(\$0.30)	\$0.09	\$0.09	\$0.18	N/A	\$0.33	(\$0.16)	N/A	\$0.09
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ACT 46 Financial Data

FY16 Financial Data - #1

	<u>Middletown</u>	<u>Wells</u>	<u>Pawlet</u>	<u>Rupert</u>	<u>Mettaawee</u>	<u>Mt. Tabor</u>	<u>Danby</u>	<u>Currier Memorial</u>	<u>Sunderland</u>	<u>Mt. Holly</u>	<u>Mt. Holly Portion of Black River</u>
FY16 Education Spending	\$2,103,100	\$1,881,086	\$1,355,079	\$355,566	\$2,710,834	\$175,560	\$2,021,102	\$1,430,444	\$1,899,530	\$1,266,806	\$1,280,930
FY16 Equalized Pupils	121.67	138.96	119.99	37.56	174.03	18.56	119.26	98.35	140.95	72.82	76.94
FY16 Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$17,285	\$13,537	\$11,293	\$9,467	\$15,577	\$9,459	\$16,947	\$14,544	\$13,477	\$17,396	\$16,649
FY16 ADM	119.46	154.24	257.91	84	0	26.6	202.05	0	150.75	162.37	0
Population	732	1137	1438	700	0	256	1287	0	951	1222	0
Population%	9%	15%	19%	9%	0%	3%	17%	0%	12%	16%	0%
FY16 Tax rate	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.18	\$0.99	\$1.63	\$0.99	\$1.77	\$1.52	\$1.41	\$1.82	\$1.74
Non Union %	100%	100%	47.33%	48.12%	N/A	64.48%	57.51%	N/A	100.00%	48.63%	N/A
Union %	0%	0%	52.67%	51.88%	N/A	35.52%	42.49%	N/A	0.00%	51.37%	N/A
FY16 Equalized Tax Rate for Town (pre CLA)	\$1.81	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.32	N/A	\$1.18	\$1.67	N/A	\$1.41	\$1.78	N/A
Merged Education Spending	\$16,480,036.02										
Merged Equalized Pupils	1119.09										
Merged Spending per Equalized Pupils	\$14,726.32										
Merged Equalized Tax rate w/o incentives	\$1.54										
Change In Tax rate post merger	(\$0.27)	\$0.12	\$0.12	\$0.22	N/A	\$0.36	(\$0.13)	N/A	\$0.13	(\$0.24)	N/A

January 9, 2017

Christopher B. Leopold
leopold@wrightjoneslaw.com

Debra Taylor, Superintendent
Rutland Central Supervisory Union
16 Evelyn Street
Rutland, VT 05701

Joan Paustian, Superintendent
Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union
168 York Street
Rutland, VT 05764

Re: Proposed Wells Springs Unified School District Board Membership

Dear Debra and Joan:

I am writing regarding the proposal by the Rutland Central Supervisory Union / Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union Act 46 Study Committee (“Study Committee”) on behalf of the school districts of Middletown Springs and Wells to form a unified union school district. Specifically, you have asked us to review the proposed board membership of the Wells Springs Unified Union School District (“Wells Springs” or “Unified School District”) and the requirements of the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution.

Members of the Act 46 Study Committee formed under 16 VSA §706, have drafted Articles of Agreement for the formation of the Unified School District pursuant to the provisions of Act 46. Article 8 of the Articles of Agreement establishes the number of board members from each town in the proposed unified union. The proposed board of school directors follows the statutory requirement that each proposed member district in a unified union be afforded at least one representative. State statute provides the proposed board may not exceed 18 members, each member district shall be entitled to at least one representative, and representation shall be proportional to population. 16 VSA 706b(9). The composition of the initial seven-member school board is as follows: Middletown Springs – 3 members, Wells – 3 members, and one at large member. The representation model utilizes what is commonly characterized as an at large “hybrid model.”

The at large “hybrid model” proposed by the Study Committee in Article 9 has been implemented by union and unified union school districts in Vermont since 1975. This model was sanctioned and approved by the federal court in *Barnes v. Mount Anthony Union High School District*, 418 F.Supp. 845 (D. Vt. 1975). The *Barnes* Court held that when all school directors to be elected at large the entire school districts electorate adherence to strict proportionality is not required. The at large “hybrid model” provides a recognized mechanism to ensure that a resident from each town is elected to the Board provides equal representation on the Board from board members from each community and, in the Wells Springs model, includes an at large director who may reside in either town.

Debra Taylor, Superintendent
Joan Paustian, Superintendent
January 9, 2017
Page 2

School board representatives are specifically tied to the management of local affairs. In order to further the State's goal of unifying school districts, conversations need to occur between districts with established relationships. Often this will mean a grouping of districts with a wide variation in population that does not lend itself well to precise mathematics. In an effort to maintain the political subdivision of the member school district representation and continue to allow for progress towards unification, it is reasonable to conclude that mathematical exactness must be set aside. This is consistent with the Court's continued flexibility afforded to municipal government schemes.

The U.S. Supreme Court has accepted at large voting systems as constitutional. *Dallas County, Alabama v. F.D. Reese*, 421 U.S. 477 (1975). Also see *Dusch v. Davis*, 387 U.S. 112 (1967). Although the Supreme Court decisions accepting disproportionality where representatives are elected "at large" do not specifically involve school districts (the *Dusch* and *Dallas County, Alabama* cases referenced above), these principles were applied to a school district board in *Baker v. Regional High School District No. 5*, 432 F. Supp. 535 (D. Conn., 1977). In that case, the U.S. District Court of the District of Connecticut, following the Supreme Court decisions in *Dusch* and *Dallas County, Alabama*, held that a plan for at large election of all nine school board members by the qualified electors of the district, with the requirement that three representatives come from each town, was not unconstitutional, even though one town contained 55 percent of the population of the district. In the Wells Springs proposal, the addition of an at large board member who may be a resident of either town creates an additional layer of enhanced representation on the Board of School Directors.

Several State Attorneys General have also reached the conclusion that where the "at large" method of election is used, proportionality is not required – even where there is a designated number of representatives from each of the member districts. See *Delaware Attorney General Opinion No. 87-104*, 1987 W.L. 2245344 (Del. A.G., 1987) and *Washington State Attorney General Opinion No. 6*, 1990 W.L. 505772 (Wash. A.G., 1990).

Based upon the above, it is our determination that there is a reasonable legal basis for a court to conclude that the proposed board representation model satisfies the requirements of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Christopher B. Leopold

c: Donna Russo-Savage, Agency of Education

449-4, 8648