



State of Vermont
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State Board of Education

September 3, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL

Homer Sumner, Chair
Helyn Strom-Henriksen, Vice-Chair
Southern Valley Unified Union School District
1 School Street
Wilmington, VT 05363

Re: Withdrawal of Halifax from the Southern Valley Unified Union School District pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 724

Dear Mr. Sumner and Ms. Strom-Henriksen:

Pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 724(c), the Secretary of Education has informed the State Board of Education (State Board) that the school district voters residing in Halifax voted to withdraw from the Southern Valley Unified Union School District (“UUSD”) and that the UUSD voters residing in Readsboro voted to approve the withdrawal.

The UUSD is organized to provide for the PreK – Grade 12 education of students residing in Halifax and Readsboro by operating schools through Grade 8 and paying tuition for students in Grades 9 – 12. The UUSD has chosen to fulfill its obligations to its elementary and middle school students by operating a school both in Halifax and in Readsboro.

In order to approve the request of the voters residing in Halifax to withdraw from the UUSD effective July 1, 2021, Vermont law requires the State Board to determine that the students living in Halifax “will attend a school that is in compliance with the rules adopted by the State Board pertaining to educational programs.” 16 V.S.A. § 724(c).

To make this determination, the State Board requests that Mr. Sumner, as the elected chair of the UUSD, provide evidence to the Board that, beginning on July 1, 2021, the elementary and middle school students in Halifax will “attend a school” that complies with State Board rules. At a minimum, the State Board will need the following information:

1. The grades for which the UUSD operated a school in Halifax during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.
2. The grades for which the UUSD will be operating a school in Halifax during the 2020-2021 school year.
3. The number of UUSD students in each grade, Kindergarten through Grade 8, who resided in Halifax in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.
4. The number of UUSD students in each grade, Kindergarten through Grade 8, who currently reside in Halifax.
5. Whether you anticipate that, when the Halifax School District (“Town District”) is reconstituted, it will continue to provide K – 8 education by operating a school that offers all of those grades – or whether you anticipate that the Town District’s newly elected board will seek voter approval to stop operating some or all grades, K – 8, and begin paying tuition for students in the grade(s) in addition to students in Grades 9 – 12.
6. If you believe it is possible that the Town District will seek voter approval to stop operating some or all grades, K – 8 and instead pay tuition for the grade(s) then:
 - a. Which grade(s) is the Town District likely to stop operating?
 - b. In what school year is it likely that a change from operating to tuitioning would occur?
7. (A) The names of all public and independent schools offering Kindergarten through Grade 8, or some subset of those grades, that are located within a “reasonable” driving distance from students living in Halifax, and (B) for each identified school whether the school has confirmed that it would have adequate capacity to enroll Halifax students on a tuition basis in each grade that the potential receiving school operates.

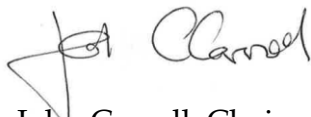
We request that **Mr. Sumner send written responses** to the questions listed above no later than **Friday, September 11 at noon** to the following addresses so that the responses can be shared with all State Board members in advance of its next meeting:

- John.Carroll@vermont.gov
- Suzanne.Sprague@vermont.gov
- Maureen.Gaidys@vermont.gov

In addition, we request that both of you, as elected representatives of the UUSD, be present **virtually** at the State Board's **Wednesday, September 16** meeting, at **1:30 p.m.**, to answer any questions the State Board may have. We will send you a meeting agenda, once finalized, that has the weblink and call-in information to join the MS Teams virtual meeting.

Please contact either Maureen Gaidys or Suzanne Sprague at the e-mail addresses above if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



John Carroll, Chair
Vermont State Board of Education

cc. (electronically)

Tina L. Blais, Clerk
Barbara Ann Komons-Montroll, Superintendent
Patricia Dow, Town Clerk, Town of Halifax
Amber J. Holland, Town Clerk, Town of Readsboro
Daniel M. French, Secretary of Education
Will Senning, Director of Elections and Campaign Finance