

Enosburg/Richford Section 9 Proposal State Board of Education Submission 7/18/18

1. If you do not agree with the Secretary's recommendations regarding your district(s) as set out in the proposed statewide plan:

a) Why is the Secretary's proposal not "possible" per Act 46, Section 10?

Clearly anything is possible; however, we do not feel that the merger is the most practicable or beneficial.

b) Why is the Secretary's proposal not "practicable" per Act 46, Section 10?

As stated in our plan, Richford currently holds zero (0) debt after having paid off a large bond, while Enosburg carries more than \$2 million in debt due to a renovation project. Due to the substantial differences in debt this will increase the taxes for Richford voters, which undermines the tenet of cost savings. The Section 9 proposal submitted, as you have read, creates many opportunities to meet the goals of Act 46, while not burdening either community with increased debt and taxes.

Both of our districts are already two of the lowest spending districts in the state. We have gone to great lengths to maintain efficiency which will continue to be met with our plan.

c) Why is the proposal you presented the "best" way to meet the Act 46 goals per Act 46, Sections 8(b) and 10? The Section 9 plan that was presented was the result of 2 failed merger votes. The Section 9 plan works to achieve all the goals of Act 46 while not creating animosity within towns by a forcible merger. We have worked hard to eliminate barriers between once fiercely rival schools. With this forced merger and potential associated animosity, there is a great risk to creating new barriers. New barriers will make meeting the goals established in Act 46 even more challenging.

The Section 9 proposal speaks to the creation of the Enosburg-Richford School Council (ERSC) designed to help further meet the goals of Act 46. In short, the proposal addresses how we can meet these goals while not creating a rift in our communities.

A2. What did the Secretary's analysis and recommendations omit or misunderstand about your proposal? Why should the State Board find that information compelling?

After reading the state's plan in regards to our district, we also looked at recommendations for other districts. We found, the Secretary's recommendation was to leave the Stowe and Elmore/Morristown districts as it currently is due to the "distinct" differences and challenges with collaborative work. It was stated that the Secretary trusts that collaborative work will continue. The Enosburgh and Richford districts have had great success at collaborating, we wish to have the State Board give us the same level of trust, respect and opportunity to continue our collaborative work while maintaining separate districts.

In the State plan, it discounts the threat of school closure in the Enosburg/Richford district because of the articles of agreement had included extensive protections. Those articles were voted down and there is no guarantee they would be adopted again by both towns, or that there would be the same level of protections in new articles of agreement. If the new entity is not able to agree upon Articles, we are certain the "Default Articles" from the AOE will not include the same levels of protection against school closure or reconfiguration. This could put the Richford Junior Senior High School at higher risk of closure and would create an even greater equity barrier for the students living in poverty in Richford. Without any means of public transit, in this northern most and most geographically isolated community, students and families would lose out on the opportunity to participate in experiences in the school community outside of the school day. Sports, drama, after school programming, and parent participation in school events would all be greatly diminished for the neediest of our students and families.