
From: Mary Cullinane <mcullinane@acsdvt.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 4, 2022 11:33 AM
To: Olsen, Oliver <Oliver.Olsen@vermont.gov>; Steve Cash <scash@riptonvt.org>; pburrows <pburrows@acsdvt.org>
Cc: French, Daniel <Daniel.French@vermont.gov>; Samuelson, Jennifer <Jennifer.Samuelson@vermont.gov>
Subject: Re: Update from Ripton & ACSD

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Hi Oliver and Happy New Year,

The ACSD executive committee met with the Ripton Board representatives and they shared their requests for re-entry. We asked clarifying questions and then brought it back to the full Board for a substantive discussion.

As a result, we voted and passed a position statement that highlights the principles where we believe there is common ground:

1. Criteria must be used, demonstrated and shared when closing any school
2. This process must include the opportunity for substantive public participation.

Our Board believes we can achieve these goals without a change in charter and we would welcome Ripton back to ACSD with this understanding. Other requests made by the Ripton Board were not, in our opinion warranted.

We appreciate the example you forwarded as we believe it very much reflects our current circumstances. We are beyond 4 years from unification and we require a super majority of a population- determined Board to close any school.

At this point, we do not believe any further time for discussion is warranted. Our Board is ready to move forward with the significant work ahead and we hope the community of Ripton is part of that journey.

Thank you for your time dedicated to this issue.

Respectfully,
Mary Cullinane

From: Olsen, Oliver <Oliver.Olsen@vermont.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 3, 2022 6:36:25 PM
To: Steve Cash <scash@riptonvt.org>; mcullinane@acsdvt.org <mcullinane@acsdvt.org>; pburrows <pburrows@acsdvt.org>
Cc: French, Daniel <Daniel.French@vermont.gov>; Samuelson, Jennifer <Jennifer.Samuelson@vermont.gov>
Subject: Update from Ripton & ACSD

Dear Steve, Mary, and Peter,

I wanted to check in with you in advance of the State Board of Education's January meeting (January 19th) to ensure that the Ripton and ACSD boards are prepared to provide the State Board with an update on your discussions.

My hope is that Ripton and ACSD will be able to share a substantive update, which should minimally indicate where things are headed, so that we can all start planning for the relevant outcome. At this stage, I see three potential outcomes:

1. Ripton re-joins ACSD
2. Ripton becomes its own Supervisory District
3. Ripton identifies a Supervisory Union willing to accept it

Needless to say, there is a fair amount of work that would need to happen to effect any of these outcomes. As you know, the State Board is keen to see Ripton re-join the ACSD, so to the extent that discussions continue to be productive, but you need more time, my sense is that the State Board would be supportive of giving Ripton and the ACSD additional time. However, the State Board will still need to hear an update in January. If one of the other two outcomes seems more likely, Ripton should be prepared to provide an update on its planning efforts.

At our December meeting, the State Board heard a presentation from the Taconic and Green Regional School district, which recently received an award from the Vermont School Board's Association. This district may be one worth looking into - or even reaching out to - for ideas on how they addressed some of the same issues that you are now confronting, including school closure processes and board composition / governance. The Taconic & Green District has a lot of similarities with ACSD in terms of geographic and population disparities. Their articles of agreement can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bLfTbXgkOBAXddBbgn6psAGQjgmYLRAs/view>

Pages 15 - 17 of the articles of agreement address the issues of school closure and governance, which seem to be points of contention between Ripton and ACSD. It is important to note that the Taconic & Green governance structure was very purposefully developed to create and uphold an ethos of a single board looking out for ALL students in the district (all board members are voted on "at-large"). It is equally notable that the chair of the board happens to live in one of the smallest towns (Mt. Tabor) in the district.

Thanks,

Oliver Olsen

TACONIC AND GREEN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Merger Study Report and
Articles of Agreement
Danby-Dorset-Manchester-Mt. Tabor-Mountain Towns RED-
Sunderland

[Taconic and Green Articles of
Agreement.pdf](#)
drive.google.com

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