

Mill River Union School District
RUTLAND SOUTH STUDY COMMITTEE
64 Grange Hall Road
N. Clarendon, VT 05759

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On December 15, 2015 the Vermont State Board of Education approved our consolidation plan, which includes the Articles of Incorporation.

If you have questions or comments please contact a study committee member listed below.

George Ambrose, Chair (Clarendon; Mill River Board)	gambrose@rssu.org	Phone 438-9997
Tammy Heffernan (Wallingford; Mill River Board Chair)	theffernan@rssu.org	Phone 779-0457
Adrienne Raymond (Shrewsbury Chair)	araymond@rssu.org	Phone 492-3578
Ken Fredette (Wallingford Chair)	kfredette@rssu.org	Phone 446-3108
Grant Reynolds (Tinmouth Chair)	greynolds@rssu.org	Phone 446-3457
John McKenna (Clarendon Chair)	jmckenna@rssu.org	Phone 438-2393

Or email to studycommittee@RSSU.org

Important JANUARY information about your school and Act 46 school board consolidation.

If the citizens vote to form a new larger district a new name will be needed. Please consider suggesting one and emailing it to studycommittee@RSSU.org. The new consolidated board members will review all suggestions and pick one.

Public information forums will be held as follows:

Clarendon Jan. 13, 2016 @ 6:30pm, Grange Community Center
Tinmouth Jan. 20, 2016 @ 7:00pm, Community Center
Clarendon Jan. 27, 2016 @ 6:30pm, Clarendon Elementary School
Shrewsbury Feb. 4, 2016 @ 6:30pm, Shrewsbury Mountain School
Wallingford Feb. 9, 2016 @ 6:30pm, Wallingford Elementary School
Wallingford Feb. 23, 2016 @ 6:30pm, Wallingford Elementary School

Dear Community Members,

On Dec. 15th, the RSSU Act 46 Study Committee's consolidation report and proposed Articles of Incorporation were approved by the Vermont State Board of Education (BOE). The approval allows the Study Committee to bring our proposal to the voters in our four towns for a vote on March 1st. Our previous informational letters, as well as the proposed Articles of Incorporation, can be found on the www.rssu.org website for your review.

On March 1st, Town Meeting Day, in addition to the ballots you regularly receive, you will be handed a ballot with the two articles asking whether to consolidate the Clarendon, Shrewsbury, Wallingford, Tinmouth, and Mill River Union Districts into a single unified district and, if consolidated, who will serve as Directors representing your town on the new district board.

Voting "Yes" on the consolidation question means:

- We will have one single board with representation based on population: Tinmouth-1, Shrewsbury-2, Wallingford-4, and Clarendon-4.
- Day to day operation of our schools will not change. They will continue to provide a high quality, 21st century education for our students.
- All kids will continue going to their town's elementary school, and then to Mill River High School.
- All of our children will be eligible to participate in the elementary school choice program and the existing statewide, 9-12 public high school choice program.
- All five schools will have a school-based advisory committee that will provide feedback to the new, larger board on issues and concerns that are important to their school and town. The membership of these committees is expected to include parents, townspeople, the principal, a member of the board from that town, and any others concerned with the operation of the school.
- There will be a single homestead tax rate that reflects the costs of educating all of the pre-k through 12 grade students in our four towns, including Mill River High School. These tax rates will differ the first few years because the legislature limited both increases and decreases to 5% annually from your current 15/16 tax rate. Town tax rates will still be adjusted by your town's CLA.
- Consolidation will minimize fluctuating tax rates that result from year-to-year changes in a town's student population. The new district will have 815 students; a change of 10-15 students will have a much smaller effect on the larger district than on our current smaller districts.
- The new district will keep \$167,296 in small school grants that Tinmouth and Shrewsbury currently receive. Additionally, we will receive \$150,000 to help with the organizational costs of the new district and we will receive decreasing annual tax breaks for four years starting with 8 cents.

A "No" vote means:

- It will not mean that consolidation goes away. Act 46 mandates consolidation by 2018 or the State BOE has the authority to consolidate us with whichever district they choose in 2019.
- A "no" vote means giving up our choice on how we consolidate.
- With the Articles of Incorporation that will be voted upon on Town Meeting Day, there are significant protections for each of our schools and towns against an unwanted school closure. This will most likely not be the case if we are joined to another district by the State BOE.

This consolidation vote is a positive step for our district. All members of the Study Committee either have, or have had in the past, children or grandchildren attending our schools. We are taxpayers in our towns. We all support this consolidation effort. We think consolidation now, by our own design, is our best choice. Our next letter will include answers to questions that are asked at the community forums that have been scheduled for January and February. Please come to one or more, ask your questions and we will answer them.

Thank you, The Act 46 Study Committee
George Ambrose, Chair- Clarendon; Tammy Heffernan- Wallingford; Adrienne Raymond- Shrewsbury; John McKenna- Clarendon; Ken Fredette- Wallingford; Grant Reynolds- Tinmouth