

LAMOILLE NORTH SUPERVISORY UNION  
ACT 46 STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES  
GTMCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

Committee members present: Pierre Laflamme, Jeff Bickford, Bill Sander, Laura Miller, Ken McPherson, David Whitcomb, Peter Ingvoldstad, Becky Penberthy, Matt Mitchell, Dan Regan, Kristi Wrigley, Angie Evans  
Others: Edith Beatty, Marilyn Frederick, Michelle Aumand, Steve Sanborn, Thad Tallman, Jodi Tallman, Andrew Martin

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

1. *Call to Order and Approval of Agenda*

P. Ingvoldstad called the meeting to order at 5:59.

**MOTION: B. Sander moved to approve the agenda with the following revisions: move Model Presentation with Decision Criteria right after approval of the consent agenda, with Pros and Cons of Unification Activity after that and Discussion of Articles of Agreement after that. J. Bickford seconded and the motion was passed.**

2. *Approval of Consent Agenda Items (Board Committee Minutes 9-16-15)*

**MOTION: B. Sander moved to approve the consent agenda, D. Whitcomb seconded, and the motion was passed.**

3. *Model Presentation with Decision Criteria*

S. Sanborn said K. McPherson said at the last meeting that he would like to see decision points we could look at, so S. Sanborn he came up with 8 points that he thinks are very important to consider:

- Timeline (What is possible. We have to keep that foremost in our mind.)
- Model identification (There are 5 models we can consider.)
- Impact on student learning
- Impact on equity
- Fiscal impact
- Administrative efficiencies
- Legal clarity (We have to make sure any recommendations we make in the articles of agreement are within the legal guidelines of Act 46 or Chapter 11.)
- Community engagement

He would welcome suggested additions to the criteria. K. McPherson said he thinks we need to discuss the relative importance of improvements in quality vs. reduction in cost and ways of proving that to the community. How do we convince the community our decision making process considered all the right inputs and came to a supportable decision?

S. Sanborn summarized K. McPherson's addition as the relationship between fiscal and other considerations. K. McPherson said yes. How important are fiscal issues vs. outcome

issues? If we can save \$10K and it makes schools this much better, how do you rank those impacts? What are the tradeoffs between finances and outcomes? S. Sanborn said he will add that to an updated version of the decision criteria.

There are 5 different possible models under Act 46.

The first is the preferred model. This can be accelerated or conventional. The electorate would have to vote by July 1, 2016 to be eligible for the accelerated incentives. For a conventional transition we would have another year to act. The new district would operate all grades PreK-12. Under the accelerated option we would get 5 years of tax incentives. Another piece that is important is that if we use the conventional option we may not get the full 8 cent-6 cent-4 cent-2 cent tax reduction because under the conventional model our tax rate can't move upwards or downwards by more than 5%. We would keep any small schools grants. We would get a transition grant of \$150K. We would keep the 3.5% hold-harmless protection for declining enrollment, which otherwise will be eliminated in FY2021. We will be exempt from the requirement to repay a portion of state construction aid upon sale of a school building.

B. Penberthy said her understanding is that if a school is geographically isolated it can keep its small schools grant no matter what happens with consolidation. How can we find out if our schools that have it will be able to keep it?

S. Sanborn said that will be the decision of the State Board of Education. In the past, the state designated which schools were geographically isolated. M. Frederick said Waterville was on that list. Eden was on it, but with a question related to Lowell, which is 9 miles away. B. Penberthy she had asked Bernie Juskiewicz and he thought we would retain our small schools grants, but she wants more assurance. S. Sanborn said he has heard they are going to be very stringent with that designation.

K. McPherson asked, if we decide to merge and it fails to pass do we automatically default to the conventional version? S. Sanborn said if we tried to go the accelerated route and the vote failed we couldn't get another vote in by the deadline. We could still do the same model but with the conventional option.

M. Mitchell asked how much money we are talking about with the small schools grants. M. Frederick said Waterville's is roughly \$71K and Eden's is roughly \$18K.

S. Sanborn said the next possible model is the RED. We wouldn't qualify for that model because all our high school students go to our union high school.

The third model is the side by side. If there were 2 districts in this SU that had total school choice K-12 and the rest of the schools in the SU had elementary schools with their students all going to a union high school, we could create side by side districts. The towns that had school choice could merge together into a single district and the rest of the districts that sent their students to the union high school could become a second district.

We would have two districts and supervisory union. Where all districts in an SU send their students to a union high school, that model won't work.

The fourth model is a modified unified union school district. That is something that could become very important to this SU if we went out to vote and one community decided to vote no. Then with that scenario all the other communities would form a district. The community that voted no would be a second district and we would still have an SU. That model just happened in Chittenden East. The benefits of that are the same as for the preferred model.

K. McPherson asked, if one town opts out do we still have to make it over 900 students?

S. Sanborn said yes.

S. Sanborn said the town or towns that vote no don't receive any of the transition benefits. In 2018 they could be reassigned by the secretary to the new union or somewhere else.

M. Mitchell said it sounds like if one of the bigger towns votes no and we drop below the 900 then we're left to pull in other towns or the towns are left to join other districts.

S. Sanborn said the existing structure would remain. We could either try again or wait for the Secretary of Education to come and say what needs to happen.

B. Sander asked if students from a town that voted no would still go to this high school.

S. Sanborn said yes.

L. Miller asked if there are any districts in our SU that could put the kibosh on consolidation by voting no. B. Sander said there are about 1800 students in the SU and about 600 from Cambridge. E. Beatty said there are about 1900 in the SU. P. Ingvaldstad said it doesn't sound like one town voting no would do it, but two voting no would be a problem.

S. Sanborn said the last model is the alternative model. In that model, the SU would remain the same and we would go to the State Board of Education and show them that we are meeting all the requirements of Act 46. There is no financial assistance and no incentives. We would have to be able to meet the letter of the law in Act 46, Act 153, and Act 156.

D. Whitcomb asked S. Sanborn to explain what Morrisville just did with bringing Elmore in. S. Sanborn said all they have done up to this point is merge two school districts. The third district in LSSU is saying they don't want a merger. That doesn't meet any of the requirements in Act 46. D. Whitcomb asked, so what's it going to do for them? S. Sanborn said maybe Morrisville and Elmore see that as a good option to serve their kids better. The merger might result in financial efficiency. He hasn't looked at their study. Community members might think it looks good. D. Whitcomb said he wants information on what is happening in Morrisville. He would like S. Sanborn to come back with

information. P. Ingvaldstad said D. Whitcomb's question was answered. They aren't getting anything under Act 46. They are combining Elmore and Morrystown and Stowe remains as is. S. Sanborn said he will find out how the state sees it. K. McPherson said Elmore only had about 30 kids. Paying a teacher for them was getting very expensive. This was going to happen without Act 46.

**4. *Pros and Cons of Unification Activity***

S. Sanborn asked everyone to take turns offering one pro or con of consolidation until the ideas are exhausted. If someone wants to second another person's idea, a check mark can be added to that idea. P. Ingvaldstad suggested that all present, including members of the public, be invited to participate.

P. Laflamme had a con – perception of diminished local control.

D. Regan had a pro. It encourages stable leadership. The SU has been plagued by a revolving door in the superintendent's office. One reason for that might be the large number of board meetings. S. Sanborn added that when M. Frederick leaves there are not a lot of business managers around to replace her. A more streamlined district has a better opportunity to hire someone than a district that has to do 9 budgets.

B. Sander said he agrees with D. Regan up to a point, but there are other ways around it. The superintendent doesn't have to come to all board meetings. He offered a con. He thinks we lose a lot by not having school boards for individual schools. A school board member who is doing his/her job gets to know a lot about that individual school. If the board is responsible for more schools board members are not going to have that knowledge and be able to keep on top of what is going on. There will be a loss of contributions of school board members.

B. Penberthy had a pro – seamless K-12 district-wide curriculum.

M. Frederick had a pro – savings in audit costs. We could spend an 8<sup>th</sup> of the current cost.

L. Miller had a con – possible loss of transparency. It is harder to know what is going on in 9 different schools. Just at her one school, she sometimes feels shut out from asking questions and being able to say what she has a right to know as a school board member.

J. Bickford had a pro – potential to ensure consistency of quality instruction across the district.

D. Whitcomb had a con – dictatorship from Montpelier.

A. Evans had a con – wasted buildings we have spent money to build.

K. McPherson had a pro – opportunity to develop centers of excellence or magnet schools.

K. Wrigley had a pro – opportunity to use our resources creatively to meet emerging educational needs.

M. Mitchell had a pro – teacher collaboration and mobility. A teacher who was at one school a long time and wanted to teach in a different part of the district would be able to change schools.

D. Griffiths had a pro. Boards often make decisions now based on principal recommendations, but each board only hears its own principal's point of view. Board members could make more informed decisions if they were able to get input from all the principals, with their different ideas and perspectives.

Jodi Tallman said she agrees with P. Laflamme. She is looking at what happens to local control. It sounds like if we don't do anything the state will do it anyway, so there is not a lot of decision making there.

Thad Tallman had a con. He said he works in a school and he doesn't see any seamless K-12 curriculum or seamless curriculum at the middle school and high school. He thinks it will be a lot more of a challenge than people think.

P. Laflamme had a pro. In theory, it could save taxpayers money.

D. Regan had a pro. It could lift the quality of school board members. The positions will be more responsible and should be more desirable, so there will be more competitive elections.

B. Penberthy said she is not sure if this is a con. A question a lot of people have is about the Hyde Park building. P. Ingvoldstad said the question is about sharing of capital cost, how the cost is divided and what the true impact will be.

M. Frederick had a pro – greater efficiencies in central office by not having so many variables.

L. Miller said the pro previously mentioned about teachers being able to move from school to school can also be seen as a con. If teachers have the option to move they may not be as invested in their school. If they have a disagreement with the principal they could move to another school instead of working it out.

J. Bickford had a con. There is just not sufficient data to know for sure the impact on students or towns.

D. Whitcomb had a con. Act 46 is only a people pleaser to allow the state to take over the whole thing – and they will do so within 5 years.

K. McPherson said in addition to pros and cons there are unresolved issues. One is cost. There is equal probability that this will increase costs of schools.

S. Sanborn said this committee can make recommendations but then if communities vote to consolidate there will be a whole new school board. This committee doesn't have control over that board. P. Ingvaldstad said the articles of agreement may constrain them. S. Sanborn said they may also be constrained by the way the warrant for the vote is crafted.

K. Wrigley had a con. This feels like "Here we go again." What will happen in 2 years? The folks in Montpelier may change things 2 years from now.

M. Mitchell had a con. This year the Eden school board and principal met all students and parents as they arrived on the first day of school. We may not have something like that with a bigger board. But hopefully there would be school advisory groups, something we have talked about.

D. Griffiths had a pro – the possibility of school choice for families.

T. Tallman had a pro – sourcing equipment and supplies between different buildings vs. making purchases.

P. Ingvaldstad said this could be a pro but could go either way: consolidating busing. Will owning all our buses be a savings? (Or having a single contract with a bus company, added S. Sanborn.)

P. Laflamme had a con. There are some plausible scenarios where some schools are deemed advisable but not necessary for consolidation. Some schools already feel like they don't have enough say. He doesn't see that getting better if they are all in one district. S. Sanborn said a district that votes no may feel disenfranchised if it is alone next to a big new district.

P. Ingvaldstad said a possible pro is community. We could make it so each community in the consolidated district had an equal number of votes on the board so each town feels they have a say.

D. Regan said one pro is that if we don't consolidate we will pay for other people's consolidation.

B. Sander said, regarding the pro of teachers being able to transfer, that is a management decision. A con is that a teacher might be reassigned to a school farther from where they live.

B. Penberthy said a pro is that we could have a maintenance team shared among districts that would allow us to save money by not having to hire outside services.

L. Miller had a pro. If the consolidated district decides to close the Hyde Park school and put the kids in other buildings, that would lead to savings because we wouldn't have to

pay for their building. But Hyde Park would think that was a con. D. Regan said it is not a given that everyone else would have to pay for Hyde Park's building.

J. Bickford had a pro. He thinks the reality is that centralized control is where education is heading. Being consolidated and streamlined makes simpler the task of being compliant with centralized standards.

D. Whitcomb had a con. He sees superintendent and business manager salaries going up because bigger is not cheaper.

A. Evans had a con. Students may have to move, coming out of the comfort zone of the only school they have known.

K. McPherson had a pro. The move to centralized administration could be justification for improvements in management systems that could streamline the way school operate, the way Y2K encouraged organizations to buy new systems.

D. Griffiths had a pro. Consolidation could somewhat protect schools against having an ineffective principal and expand the influence of effective principals. It would be easier for the board to compare principals and identify poor performance and it would be easier for the good ideas of highly effective principals to be adopted in other schools.

T. Tallman said he is not sure if this is a pro or a con. He keeps hearing that under consolidation we would have one budget instead of nine, but the buildings will still be separate. Won't budgets still have to be based on each building? S. Sanborn said during budget development different buildings' budgets would be developed separately, but then the amounts would all be added together and voters would vote on just one budget. M. Frederick said that is right. There would still be some site-based budgeting but there would be other budget components that could be melded. For instance, there might be one maintenance budget.

P. Ingvoldstad had a con related to budgeting. We are almost there with unification of contract salaries, but there are still different salaries. How do we deal with that? S. Sanborn said that could be a pro or a con.

B. Sander said unification of contracts is a possible pro but it could also be done without consolidation. We have finally achieved a joint master agreement but there are inequities in it. A unified school district might speed up the process of removing the inequities but we could get there without consolidation as well.

B. Penberthy had a pro. There is competition among towns and elementary schools. Her hope is that consolidation would lessen the competition and bring students together differently before middle school. Kids from different towns now compete against each other at the spelling bee and in soccer and basketball. She hopes we can mix it up if we consolidate.

M. Frederick had a pro. We would realize savings by having a single treasurer.

L. Miller had a pro. We could have shared specialists. There could be a curriculum or literacy coach shared throughout the district, going to all the schools.

J. Bickford said about 5 or 6 pros have been mentioned related to sharing resources and strategies. He would add a check mark to all of those.

D. Whitcomb had a con. Unions will be made stronger and politicians will get more money from the NEA.

K. McPherson had a con. He thinks the problem of different tax rates and different levels of assessment will be a major one, even as we decide on consolidation. Is one town going to have to pay more than the next town for the same education? Is one town going to have to pay more or less than another town? There is a lot of financial resolution needed.

M. Mitchell had a pro – shared services. Recently Eden students went to ECHO and picked up Cambridge students on the same bus so students were integrated on a shared trip. There could be more of that with consolidation.

D. Griffiths had a pro – better coordination of sports programs. They are now run in different ways – for instance, Johnson’s is run by the town recreation department, while Hyde Park’s is run by the school – and they provide different opportunities. For instance, Johnson doesn’t have girls’ soccer teams. If the districts were working together they could coordinate the programs to provide more opportunities for all students. J. Tallman asked who the kids would play against if they were all in one district. D. Griffiths suggested there could be multiple teams that would play against each other but each team would not have to be associated with a single town. Maybe one of the teams would be based in Johnson, but it could include kids from other towns.

P. Ingvoldstad had a pro. Now there is not continuity of guidance. No one follows kids as they move to 7<sup>th</sup> grade or to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. With consolidation there could be continuity of guidance between the schools.

D. Regan had a con. It will be hard for citizens and board members to move from “my” to “our” when it comes to caring for kids.

B. Sander had a possible con or at least a concern. There could be increased equity with consolidation. For instance, Cambridge’s gifted and talented program could become a district-wide program. Or it could disappear altogether. We have to make sure equity doesn’t become the lowest common denominator.

B. Penberthy had a pro. Eden, Belvidere, and Waterville would retain their small schools grants.

M. Frederick had an issue that in a way is a con – common paymaster issues. Right now we have staff who work in two different districts, but because the districts have two different federal ID's there are no overtime issues. That would go away with consolidation. There is the potential that some people would not be hired in a second district because it would put them in an overtime situation.

L. Miller had a pro. If the bus coordinator were a district-wide position, that would probably save us money.

J. Bickford said he would like to add a checkmark to continuity of guidance.

M. Mitchell said he would also like to checkmark continuity of guidance.

P. Ingvaldstad said several people have talked about loss of local control. One issue is that Eden now allows alcohol at events that use the school building. He would say a possible pro is that in the articles of agreement we could say that doing away with any program in an individual school would require a vote of 75% of the board and/or the community. D. Whitcomb said we could do that only if the legislature and the Secretary of Education allow it.

B. Penberthy said she would like to add a checkmark by continuity of guidance.

M. Frederick had a pro – consistency of nursing, media, and tech staff. The other day people in central office were trying to figure out who heads nursing SU-wide.

D. Whitcomb had a con. Eden was sold to the taxpayers as a community building. To have the legislature take it away from them and limit what they can do with it is asinine.

K. Wrigley had a con. CES decided not to allow alcohol in the building. With consolidation if they had to assume that risk for other districts that feels like a con.

S. Sanborn handed out stickers and asked committee members each to put a sticker next to the most important pro and the most important con.

P. Ingvaldstad suggested that he, P. Laflamme, S. Sanborn, and E. Beatty consolidate the pros and cons into categories and questions that come from each statement. They can send the list out to committee members to check. L. Miller suggested that S. Sanborn might be able to research some of the questions that come out of that and come back with answers. Committee members agreed with P. Ingvaldstad's suggestion and agreed it would be okay for S. Sanborn to try to answer as many of the questions as possible.

K. McPherson said he would ask that S. Sanborn try to come up with quantitative answers as much as possible. It would be good to quantify any benefits or costs. Saving 10% of information systems costs, for instance, wouldn't save much money because it is a small part of the budget. It would be helpful to know the amount of savings to be expected.

S. Sanborn said he won't have answers to all the questions by the next meeting.

P. Ingvaldstad said he would like to make sure all the questions are on the table. If anyone has questions that come up, send them to him, E. Beatty, or S. Sanborn.

L. Miller asked if it is okay to share minutes of committee meetings with her board. P. Ingvaldstad said, "Please do." He suggested that committee members start educating people in the community and asking questions of them.

E. Beatty said the LNSU website now has a page with Act 46 information. M. Aumand said it has agendas and minutes and any attachments that were sent out to committee members, as well as a list of committee members and their email addresses. If people want other things on there they should let her know.

B. Penberthy asked if P. Ingvaldstad could write a letter to the local papers notifying the communities of the committee's work, inviting them to meetings and telling them about the Act 46 page on the LNSU website. P. Ingvaldstad asked if people agree that he should write a first draft of a letter for newspapers, Front Porch Forum, etc. No one disagreed.

B. Sander asked if anything under Act 46 impacts the tech center and how schools send to it. S. Sanborn said not to his knowledge. B. Sander said the new board would control the tech center. He isn't sure all the sending schools would take kindly to that.

K. McPherson asked who responses should be sent to after P. Ingvaldstad sends out the list he and others compile based on tonight's input. S. Sanborn said he thinks responses to that would be the beginning of the discussion for the next meeting. E. Beatty said M. Aumand will be the one to send out the email and people should respond just to her, not to the whole list, so as not to conduct a meeting illegally. B. Sander said as long as we are not conducting business by email he thinks we can inform each other. What is the problem with replying to all as long as we are not conducting business? D. Whitcomb said that is not true. New legislation was passed in July 2014. We can talk about what will be on the agenda, etc. but if people are asking questions and getting answers that is conducting a meeting. We need to stay away from that.

B. Penberthy brought up her suggestion from last time that all committee members have district email addresses. M. Aumand said she got everyone a district email address, but people have to log onto a specific server to see emails sent to that address. She would have to train everyone on how to access their email. B. Penberthy said if people use their personal email she recommends creating a folder for Act 46 committee emails. Someone could make a public records request and it would make it easier to pull those emails if they were in a separate folder.

D. Regan said K. McPherson requested some fairly precise evidence about impacts of moving in one direction or another. Some of the dimensions don't admit to such precise

evidence, particularly the impact on student learning. There is some uncertainty about the effects on learning. It would be nice if we could invite someone in to fill in the blanks. P. Ingvaldstad said we will be doing that.

5. ***Discussion of Articles of Agreement***

S. Sanborn distributed draft articles of agreement developed by another district. He said they provide a template to look at. He asked committee members not to share them with others because they include the name of the other district.

S. Sanborn reviewed the articles. Article 1 names the districts involved. We will need to determine which districts within the SU would be necessary and which would be advisable for consolidation. We can say all are necessary or all are advisable or we can make decisions as we go along about which should be in each category. When Essex Town and Essex Junction considered consolidation, Essex Town and Essex Junction were necessary but Westford was advisable.

K. McPherson asked about the implications of those decisions. S. Sanborn said if we say a town is necessary that town has to vote yes. If it is advisable that town can vote no and that wouldn't block consolidation. K. McPherson asked if we can say something like any combination of towns that generates more than 1000 students. S. Sanborn said he thinks so but everything in the articles of agreement will have to be reviewed by a lawyer.

L. Miller asked, so we could say it was all or nothing or we could specify any combination? S. Sanborn said yes.

E. Beatty asked, to go the accelerated route, it would have to be all, wouldn't it? S. Sanborn said every town that was deemed necessary would have to vote yes. Towns wouldn't all have to be necessary.

P. Ingvaldstad said he wonders why we wouldn't say every town is advisable, because then in the second year if some towns voted no we would have a lot of the work done. S. Sanborn said the committee might think it should be all or nothing. He said Essex Town/Essex Junction are doing an accelerated merger. They had 2 necessary towns and one advisable.

L. Miller asked, if a town that is advisable votes no, would the other towns still be able to do a merger? S. Sanborn said they would not be able to do an accelerated merger in that case.

Article 2 talks about what type of education the new district is going to provide and any services that have to be grandfathered.

Article 3 is about contract agreements. The new district will need a new contract with the union.

Article 4 speaks to buildings. It says no new school buildings are necessary and no school closings are anticipated.

The articles were all developed by the state. We can have more than 18 articles, but we have to have at least 18.

B. Sander said he likes the sentence stating, "Closing a school facility after July 1, 2017 takes a unanimous vote of the Union District's Board of Directors." Will that state accept that? S. Sanborn said he doesn't know. These articles of agreement haven't yet been before a lawyer or the state.

Article 5 is about transportation. The district has to have common transportation.

Article 6 is about common curriculum for the entire new district.

Article 7 is about what happens to deficits and surpluses of any of the combining districts.

Article 8 is very technical. We will need legal help with it. It is about property transfers. It describes what happens to the existing buildings when the current districts are dissolved to create the new union. If buildings are no longer needed the process to get them back to the towns is described.

M. Mitchell asked if this means that Eden Central School will now potentially become the property of the union district. S. Sanborn said yes.

D. Whitcomb said someone in Eden suggested that the school board sell the ECS building and land to the Eden selectboard and then educate Eden kids in that building and let the state go to hell. S. Sanborn said Stowe wanted to do that when Act 60 came in. There are examples around the state, like Lyndonville and Mendon. None of them would work under Act 46.

Article 9 is about board representation. It says representation will be proportional to population. There can't be more than 18 members on the new board. Every town has to have at least one voting member.

D. Regan said he doesn't want the committee to think we are completely limited to a proportional system of representation. His understanding is that a hybrid system is possible where there is proportionality but also the possibility of several at-large members. The district described in this draft won't consider at-large members until the 2020 census. He thinks a certain number of at-large members might be worth considering. S. Sanborn said he doesn't think we can do that in the first vote, but he can check.

Article 10 describes how terms will be distributed so all board members' terms are not up at once.

Article 11 is about the vote. If the committee decides to go out to vote, voters will not only be voting on a warrant. They also have to vote on a new school board on the same day. It will be confusing for people to do that when they haven't determined whether there will be a new district yet, but by law it must be done on the same day. All communities have to vote on the same day at the same time.

D. Whitcomb asked why the vote on the new school board has to be on the same day as the vote on consolidation. This has been a real problem in Essex. S. Sanborn agreed. It is hard for voters to understand. It is not part of Act 46. It is part of the older act on creation of a unified district.

B. Sander said some towns in our SU don't require those who want to be on the school board to file ahead of time. They don't elect them by ballot. He understands that changing that would require a vote at a prior meeting. Does this supersede? S. Sanborn said this does supersede. Everything related to consolidation has to be done by Australian ballot.

S. Sanborn said if we don't meet the deadline for the accelerated merger we could decide to vote next October and still be ready to start July 1, 2017.

K. McPherson asked if S. Sanborn has a date for the vote. Several people said we would aim for town meeting. P. Ingvaldstad said we can do it up until April 15, but it is better to do it on town meeting day. S. Sanborn said April 15 would be the latest possible date because there is a 45-day call back period.

Article 12 says when work will start in the new district. For a year the new unified district board will be working while each local board is still working. The new unified board would only deal with the unified union. It could not in any way influence the decisions of local school boards. On July 1, 2017, the local districts will no longer exist. They have about 3 months after that to be audited and take care of their financial affairs.

L. Miller asked someone can be on both the old and new boards. S. Sanborn said yes.

Article 13 is about budgets. The new district will create budgets just like the local district would.

Article 14 talks about the other districts ceasing to exist when the new district becomes fully operational on July 1, 2017. What has been the SU no longer exists as of that date but has until January 31 to finish its work.

Article 15 is about a cost-benefit analysis that has to be done.

Article 16 refers to information about school choice, school configurations and school enrollment.

Article 17 discusses how soon a new board could change attendance boundaries within the district.

Article 18 says the new board needs to operate with the same opportunities for public input the smaller boards had.

The work of this committee is to answer the questions posed by each of the articles.

5. ***Proposed Public Input Meetings***

P. Ingvaldstad asked to hear from each board after its next meeting when a public input meeting could be held on the same night as a board meeting before the middle of November. If we are going to do the accelerated plan we will need to have input from the whole community similar to the input provided here tonight and then we need to go back to the community to talk about how we see ourselves moving forward with all the different issues and what we see as solutions so a vote can be on the agenda for town meeting day. He said he could include in the letter he will write an invitation to come to one of the public meetings and give input.

K. Wrigley asked if we will have guidance about what the presentations should look like so they will be uniform among towns. P. Ingvaldstad said yes, this committee will decide what the meetings should be like. His thought is that they would be similar to what we did here tonight. We want to know what the issues are so we can start working on resolving them.

K. McPherson said one of the information sheets S. Sanborn gave out, about public communications, says we cannot hold a forum because of Open Meeting Law. That doesn't seem right to him. S. Sanborn said he did not write that. VSBA put it out. It is his understanding that you can have a forum but it must be run in accordance with Open Meeting Law. B. Sander said we would just warn it like any special meeting. S. Sanborn said we don't need to have a quorum of the committee at public meetings because there will be no action taken.

K. McPherson said we may want to get a better sense of priorities from the public than just having each person put a single dot next to one issue. P. Ingvaldstad said we may want to leave out the pro and con piece, too.

B. Penberthy said Waterville's meeting can be on November 12. M. Mitchell said Eden's can be November 5. D. Whitcomb said holding a public information meeting has to be a decision of the board in a legal meeting. B. Penberthy said she will propose to her board to have one on November 12.

6. ***Check In Activity (Committee Success)***

S. Sanborn said he thinks the pro and con activity served as a check in.

7. ***Public Comment***

T. Tallman said he appreciates that P. Ingvaldstad is trying to follow the agenda, but he knows there are questions people would like to ask and he is hampering them. He would appreciate it if people could ask any questions they still have.

K. McPherson asked if there is a place he can get copies of all the budgets. M. Frederick said the LNSU website has them under Finance.

8. *Next Agenda*

E. Beatty said at the next two committee meetings we will hear presentations that she thinks will address some of people's questions. There will be one focused more on finance and one more on teaching and learning. She would recommend that public forums be scheduled after those meetings so the committee would already have had some dialog about major questions the community will ask. Those meetings will be on October 13 and October 27.

P. Ingvoldstad said the next agenda will have discussion about how to structure the public forums and also presentations about the effects of consolidation.

M. Mitchell asked how long it takes to write the articles of agreement. When should we start? S. Sanborn said he would recommend that he come up with a first draft similar to the one we looked at tonight. But we need a little more direction first. Then after we have the draft we can sit down and go through it article by article. At the same time we started that we would also have an attorney look through the draft. At the second meeting working on the articles we would have the attorney there to help us make some decisions. Probably it would take 3 meetings to prepare the articles. P. Ingvoldstad asked if it would be possible to do the first draft in outline form. It would be easier for him to follow that way.

L. Miller said as a taxpayer she thinks we should understand what will happen with our school property if a union is formed. She heard Belvidere has about 19 acres. Will the union own that? Does the gym go with CES or is that a community building? The townspeople should know exactly what they are giving up. S. Sanborn said that is one of the most challenging pieces the community will look at. What if there is a community playing field owned by the town but used by the school? That is another piece of the question. We have to be clear about ownership. L. Miller asked if it will say in the articles of agreement what kind of property will be included. S. Sanborn said yes.

B. Penberthy asked if S. Sanborn is available to come to individual board meetings in each town to talk about Act 46. She thinks that would be helpful. E. Beatty said that can happen.

T. Tallman asked if there are other districts that are further along so we can see what struggles they are having. S. Sanborn said Essex Town and Essex Junction are going to vote November 1 or 2. He is working with Addison-Rutland, which is about 3 weeks ahead of us. They are comparable. There are 12 districts around the state that are moving forward. His understanding is that most of them are a little behind us now. He tries to get as much information as he can about what other districts are doing. T. Tallman said he thinks it might help the public to see the struggles of others.

P. Ingvaldstad asked if committee members have any problem with him having their phone numbers. M. Aumand said she has most people's phone numbers. She will reach out to each person and they can let her know which number they want her to have, if any.

9. *Adjourn*

**MOTION: B. Sander moved to adjourn at 8:05, B. Penberthy seconded, and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*

UNAPPROVED