

DRAFT

TOWN OF STRATTON VERMONT  
STRATTON SCHOOLBOARD  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2019  
STRATTON TOWN OFFICE

The Stratton School Board held a merging discussion at the Stratton Town Office on Tuesday, October 22, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 6:07pm.

**ATTENDING:**

Chairman-	Tom Montemagni
Vice Chair-	Allison Young
Secretary-	Lorraine M. Weeks Newell
Superintendent-	Bill Anton

Abbe Haber	Stacie Chiodi	Ross Powers	Robert LaHue
Alyson Peterson	Candie Bernard	Marissa Powers	Tim Taylor
Carol Huber	Kristine Koeppel	Peter Ahlfeld	
Melissa Walker	Jessica De'Aera	Betsy LaHue	

**MERGING DISCUSSION:**

Bill Anton presented his findings (see attached). General discussion of merging and taxes occurred.

Highlights from the meeting:

Pros of Merging:

- o There is an unknown tax impact. While it might be negative, there could potentially be a positive outcome.
- o As the current districts stand, all high schools would be available to Stratton students.

Cons of Merging

- o Merging is a multi-year process and would not be an available option for the immediate future.
- o The tax impact to truly unknown.
- o Since Act 46, no other districts have attempted merging; there is no footprint to follow.
- o Stratton would only have one vote in a unified school district, where all other towns have multiple votes.
- o In order for a merge to occur, all parties to the merge must agree. Please see attached sheet on who Stratton can merge with and what towns are to be considered with that merge. (This means that ALL the towns currently merged into any given district would need to vote unanimously to let Stratton in.)
- o Merging is a much more permanent option. It would be challenging to "unmerge" if the situation became unfavorable.
- o It would be very costly and time consuming to determine if a merge would be favorable.
- o Over 90% of elementary students would need to change schools in 2 out of the 3 options presented.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

A regular monthly school board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 5, 2019 at 6pm.

Minutes prepared by: Allison S. Young

**What are the laws, options, and processes for merging?**

The statute that governs the process: 16 V.S.A. § 721. Subsection (a) is the process if initiated by the town school district; subsection (b) is nearly the same but for when initiated by the existing UUSD.

In very general terms, the process outlined by § 721(a) is as follows:

1. The Stratton Board would conduct a “preliminary study” of the potential benefits and disadvantages of joining the UUSD and, if the Board wishes to proceed, then it would present the proposal to the State Board for consideration. *(Your Study Committee Work has done this)*
2. The State Board would consider the Stratton Board’s proposal and then vote whether to approve it.
3. The Stratton voters would vote whether to ask the UUSD to admit the Stratton as a full member – i.e., for the UUSD to assume responsibility for the PK-12 education of students living in Stratton (in whatever way the UUSD educates its students currently – operating all grades; tuitioning all grades; or operating some grades and tuitioning the rest). The Stratton clerk would certify the results of the vote and send it to the UUSD clerk and the Secretary of Education.
4. Within two years of a positive Stratton vote, the UUSD voters could vote whether to assume responsibility for the education of students living in Stratton. The UUSD clerk would certify the results of any vote and send it to the Secretary of Education. Note that § 721(a) does not require the UUSD to warn this vote.
5. If both votes are in the affirmative, then the Secretary of Education would designate Stratton as a member of the UUSD for all grades, PK-12, and certify this to the Secretary of State.
6. The Secretary of State would record the certification and file it with the UUSD and Stratton clerks.

There is no need to amend the original voter-approved articles of agreement, but there may be issues that they will want to discuss and agree to (although there may not be anything that needs to be negotiated because, e.g., Stratton probably doesn’t have any property to transfer to the UUSD).

**Who might we merge with?**

<u>Green and Taconic (BRSU)</u>	<u>River Valleys (WCSU)</u>	<u>Winhall</u>
<u>(BRSU)</u>		
Choice IntraDistrict K-8 Choice 9-12	Wardsboro or Dover K-6 Choice 7-12	Full Choice BBA Sending

BBA Sending

BBA Sending

**Considerations under Merger Options**

Green & Taconic

K-8 Intradistrict choice only  
(3/34 in current G & T Elem)

9-12 options stay same

River Valleys

K-6 Intradistrict choice only  
(5/34 in current RV Elem)

7-12 options stay same

Winhall

Same current choice

**What would our voting options look like?**

Population proportional.

Estimates:	Green & Taconic;	1 vote of 14 member board
	Winhall;	1 vote of 4 or 5
	River Valleys;	1 vote of 7

**Bussing?**

Just like Stratton does now, each Board makes unique decisions about Transportation. Transportation is not required by law, each board decides what it will support.