

UNDERSTANDING BARRE TOWN ARTICLE 1 & ACT 46

Please vote on January 31, 2017

1. Article 1 would merge governance, not schools - One School Board would govern both PK-8 Elementary/Middle Schools and the Union High School

The New Unified District, which would be known as the Barre Unified Union School District, would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools for each grade. The proposal would unify all existing school districts and the supervisory union into a single supervisory district responsible for operating two elementary/middle schools, one secondary school, and the regional career technical center. It would replace the current governing bodies with one unified union school board.

[Secretary of Education's report to the Vermont State Board of Education (October 18, 2016)]

2. INCENTIVES-Saving you money on your taxes!

The State of Vermont will reduce Barre Town and Barre City Tax Payers' tax rates by as much as 8 cents the first year, 6 cents the second year, 4 cents the third year and 2 cents the fourth year and will provide a \$150,000 transition grant. The tax rate reduction alone would result in over \$4,000,000 in savings over a 5-year period for all tax payers, including those on fixed incomes.

3. Barre Town would have a majority on the new school board

The New Unified District would be governed by a nine member school board. Eight board members would be nominated by and from among the electorate of the individual towns, with the number to be nominated by a single town being closely proportional to the fraction the town population bears to the total population of the New Unified District (initially four from the City and four from the Town). Election of these eight board members would be by the electorate of the town to which the board seat was apportioned. The ninth member would fill a fully at-large seat on the board.

[Secretary of Education's report to the Vermont State Board of Education (October 18, 2016)]

Guy Isabelle from Barre Town was elected to the 3-year at large school director seat on November 8, so Barre Town would have a 5-4 majority on the new school board for at least the first three years.

4. There are no plans or hidden agenda to merge schools or change school structure.

A currently operating school building could not be closed during the first four years of the New Unified District's existence. Any proposal by the board to restructure the current schools into one elementary school and one middle school could not be considered during the first five years.

[Secretary of Education's report to the Vermont State Board of Education (October 18, 2016)]

Any plan to change the structure of the schools, if that ever happened, would involve considerable public debate with input from voters.

5. Barre Town students to and Barre City students would continue to attend school where they reside.

During the New Unified District's first five years of operation, the school board could not adjust school attendance boundary lines except on an individual basis with parental consent. After the initial five years, the board could adjust school attendance lines upon approval by at least two-thirds of its members. The proposal contemplates the potential for intra-district choice and the creation of magnet schools.

[Secretary of Education's report to the Vermont State Board of Education (October 18, 2016)]

The articles as written give the board flexibility in the future to make adjustments, but this would require a minimum of six board members voting to do this.

6. The unaudited fund balances shown in the final report are currently available to off-set tax rates and to use for planned capital projects.

The Barre Town School Board is planning to spend down the majority of the fund balances before the end of the current fiscal year (before the funds are merged). Utilizing the capital improvement fund (formerly known as the roof fund) the plans are to repave the parking lot and the back playground, upgrade the failing air conditioning units on the roof, and complete a generator project. The majority of the general fund balance is being used to reduce the tax rate in FY18.

Numbers as of January 10, 2017:

<u>School District</u>	<u>Barre Town</u>	<u>Barre City</u>
Expense Budget Increase (%)	4.99%	5.04%
Expense Budget Increase (\$)	\$557,934	\$671,519
General/Tax Funds & Assets used as Revenue for FY18 Budget	(\$500,000)	(\$250,000)
Anticipated General/Tax Funds remaining 6/30/2016 (unaudited)	\$364,000	\$58,000
Capital Improvement Fund balance 6/30/2016 (unaudited)	\$338,000	\$159,000
Anticipated Capital Improvement Fund balance 6/30/2017 (unaudited)	\$13,000	\$109,000
Transfer to Capital Improvement Fund	\$25,000	\$50,000
Anticipated total fund balances 6/30/2017 (unaudited)	\$427,000	\$217,000

7. The new board has the flexibility to adjust the articles of agreement

Final Report. The provisions of the final report proposed to the State Board of Education for approval on the 18th day of October, 2016, which is on file in the town clerk's office, shall govern the Barre Unified Union School District. Upon approval of the Barre Unified Union School District, Article 1 of the final report, including all subsections, can only be changed by a majority vote of the Barre Unified Union School District. Articles 2 through

15 of the final report can be changed by a majority vote of the School Board of the Barre Unified Union School District.

[Article 1 Ballot Warning (to be voted on January 31, 2017 by the Barre Town voters)]

The new board, with its majority of Barre Town members, will be able to modify the articles to specify how fund balances are spent and allocated.

8. The Secretary of Education and Vermont State Board of Education have already indicated that they believe Barre would benefit by operating as a single unified district

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education finds that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by all member districts of the BSU, which will be its own supervisory district, is "in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts" pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS: By enacting Act 46, which incorporated the provisions of Act 153 (2010), the General Assembly declared the intention to move the State toward sustainable models of education governance designed to meet the goals set forth in Section 2 of the Act. It was primarily through the lens of those goals that the Secretary has considered whether the BSU Study Committee's proposal is "in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts" pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c.

[Secretary of Education's report to the Vermont State Board of Education (October 18, 2016)]

9. There are no plans to substantially change Act 46 and prevent the inevitable merger into a single district

- **Barre Town and the Barre Supervisory Union do not meet the requirements for an Alternative Structure under Act 46.**
- **Neither the Governor-elect nor our legislators have given any indication that the components of Act 46 that would require a merger will go away.**
- **In 2018, the Secretary of Education and the Vermont Board of Education will create and publish a statewide plan of merged districts meeting the required guidelines of Act 46.**
- **An estimated \$2.4 million in tax incentives stands to be lost by Barre Town, and they will end up merging with Barre City anyway.**

10. Property values in Barre Town would not decrease with a merger into a single district
There is absolutely no evidence to support this unfounded rumor that has been spread.

11. All districts are currently struggling to fill school director seats

As of January 10, 2017 the Barre Town School Board will have two open seats in March with no indication that anyone is planning to run for them, the Spaulding High School Board will have one (Barre City) open seat, and the Barre City School Board will have one open seat.

GET THE FACTS AND VOTE FOR YES!

The facts about what Article 1/Act 46 really means:

- ✓ Article 1 **does not** merge the schools; nor is it the Article's intention. Its sole purpose is to create a single board and provide economies of scale and **COST SAVINGS** where appropriate. **Students will continue to attend the school where they reside.**
- ✓ The Legislature has put incentives in place **NOW** for consolidation. **FAILURE** to vote yes would likely result in the **LOSS** of a potential \$4 million in property **TAX SAVINGS** and a \$150,000 transitional **one time grant**.
- ✓ Property values **will not be** affected by the merger. Barre Town and Barre City are still separate entities.
- ✓ Existing surpluses and Capital improvement funds are relatively similar in number. Although it will require final board approval, discussions are to use these funds as originally intended **by each community**.
- ✓ Barre Town will have a **majority** on the newly elected School Board.



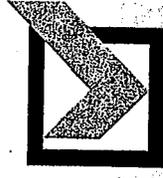
GET THE FACTS
VOTE YES!

VOTE YES!
JANUARY 31, 2017

Paid for by Partners for Barre Area Schools

Attention Barre Town Residents:

Do You Really Know what



ACT 46 means? vote NO!

ACT 46 AT A GLANCE:

- ACT 46 articles of agreement will hold elementary schools status quo for 5 years. The board may then designate use of schools as they see fit... **SO YES THEY COULD MERGE SCHOOLS, ETC.**
- Property values will be affected if schools are merged.
- It will no longer matter which town you reside in, as all expenses will be shared.
- Priority for maintenance will go to facilities in most need, while other buildings will have to wait.
- Existing surpluses and capital improvement funds will be shared equally amongst all schools, regardless of which taxpayers built it. Barre Town currently has near \$800,000.
- The state incentives are short lived and will decrease yearly, before going away.
- No guarantee of cost savings, State Board of Education "ACT 46 will not save money."
- Barre City has approved an increase in their budget of \$750,000... **A YES vote means you agree to share this increase.**

Paid for by citizens for an informed decision. 802-476-9107

Vote No - Act 46 Revote

DOTTYE RICKS, DERDAERIN@RISEUP.NET, DIANE LANE

DISCUSSION

Vote NO on January 31, 2017 in the special election!

Barre Town Taxpayers already voted NOT to consolidate schools, 2100 to 1600. Yet Barre Town residents are being forced to pay to revote the initiative. Apparently we did not know what we were voting for.

A "NO" vote:

- Maintains Local Control – Barre Town not Barre City voters will run Barre Town Schools!
- Maintains Local Control – Barre Town Assets remain with Barre Town!
- Maintains School Quality!
- Keeps Barre Town Tax dollars in Barre Town Schools!
- Maintains a Reasonable Tax increase NOT a huge one to cover Barre City budget increases!
- Maintains Local Fiscal Responsibility instead of funding bailouts!
- Maintains Tax Transparency – You can see where your school tax dollars go

Barre Town schools already meet the requirements of Act 46 –

- Small schools were consolidated years ago and each school individually already meets enrollment requirements.
- The supervisory union already shares curriculum and services.
- Barre City and Barre Town Schools already demonstrate quality – either at or above the state average. Yet when combined at Spaulding High School, quality measures fall. Do we want to regress to the mean or maintain quality standards?

A low voter turnout can result in losing this issue.

GO TO THE POLLS OR VOTE AN EARLY BALLOT!
and VOTE NO on January 31, 2017, Act 46 revote.

EMAIL AUTHOR | REPLY TO FORUM

Act 46 Revote

DOTTYE RICKS, BRADDERIN@RISEUP.NET, DIANE LANE

DISCUSSION

I encourage all Barre Town voters to vote NO on Act 46. Be wary of people that tell you that voting yes for Act 46 will lower your taxes. There is no evidence nor guarantees that it will. Subsidies come out of our pockets as they are funded through our taxes from the general fund. So instead of taking that money and applying it to improve quality in schools that are already consolidated - such as ours - the state is spending thousands of dollars to force further consolidations throughout the state that not only will NOT reduce taxes in the future but will reduce quality and equity.

As to taxes, the facts are that Barre City's budget is up by three quarters of a million dollars and if Act 46 passes, Barre Town voters take on that indebtedness. Barre Town's assets will also become the partial property of Barre City. On a mega board there will be less input options to board members and two-thirds less representation and Barre City school board members get to decide what to do with Barre Town assets.

Until the state seeks true education funding reform by removing it from property taxes, our taxes will continue to rise. Accept it and/or join me in pushing for funding reform. In the meantime, how do you want to see those taxes spent? On a local school over which you have direct input through your elected board members or on another school which your children do not attend.

A yes vote will dilute your control of your local school, raise your taxes and send them to another school. Is this what we really want?

EMAIL AUTHOR REPLY TO FORUM

Act 46 Re-Vote in Barre Town

J. GUY ISABELLE, MSDADDY105@AOL.COM, HILLOREST LANE

CALENDAR

Event: Jan 31, 2017, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM

When I ran for the House in Barre Town, a couple of years ago, the number one issue that I was confronted with by my Barre Town neighbors was what are you going to do about property taxes?? That was also the overwhelming chorus heard around the state. The legislature's response was to pass Act 46. As a 46-year member of the local school board I understand all the advantages a possible re-vote on Tuesday, January 31, 2017, will have for our Barre Town residents.

Ms. Ricks broadcasted herself as an advocate for democracy but fails to acknowledge the fact that a revote is part of the democratic process. Why is the democratic process being denied? In fact I will respectfully disagree that the voters in Barre Town were well informed about what they were voting on. Since the vote I have talked to many people who did not understand what they were voting on. They were listening to false propaganda led by people who should know better.

Here are the facts as I have read them and have been told to me by people who are not emotionally involved.

The current supervisory union governance configuration DOES NOT meet the requirements of Act 46. We have been told that we WILL NOT be allowed to maintain our current board structure and WE WILL BE FORCED TO MERGE DISTRICTS (without tax incentives) if we do not choose to do it ourselves.

- Our schools are run by an administration hired by a board that is voted on by citizens of Barre. This will not change.
- Barre Town's assets are firmly planted in Barre Town and are not being plucked up and moved.
- The idea that quality would decrease and not increase by merging boards is a scare tactic. In fact I see the quality increasing. Good schools draw people.
- Barre Town tax dollars would still fund Barre Town schools.
- Barre Town's budget increase is nearly equivalent to Barre City's.
- There are no "funding balloons", and a no vote would only result in Barre Town losing tax incentives that all other communities are receiving. This would be a poor business decision.

Tax transparency would be maintained, just like it is for the current Spaulding Unified HS District.

The projected tax savings over five years is over \$600 for a home in Barre Town. I happen to believe that there are more savings to be had. This may be a change for those who can afford to own island properties but tell that to the person who just got a .003% in their Social Security. Act 46 is not going away. Barre Town will be forced to do something. A positive vote controls your destiny. A no vote puts the decision in the hands of someone who is not a resident of Barre Town. Which do you want?

EMAIL AUTHOR REPLY TO FORUM

Act 46 Re-Vote Information

KRISTEN MARTIN, KVVALSANGIACOMG@GMAIL.COM, PHELPS RD

DISCUSSION

The Barre Town re-vote for Act 46/Article 1 is scheduled for January 31, 2017. Please follow this link to educate yourself prior to voting. Thanks!
<http://dsupr.org/forums/index.php?act=46>

EMAIL AUTHOR REPLY TO FORUM

Act 46 Re-Vote

JEFF BLOW, JEEBLOW70@YAHOO.COM, HIGHLAND CROFTS

DISCUSSION

No disrespect intended, but the issue goes much deeper than that.

Do you want Barre Town to determine how are tax \$ is spent ? Or are you ok with people from a different community spending Barre Town tax \$. ?

I pay taxes in Barre Town and i want my tax \$ spent by Barre Town, in Barre Town. Dont be fooled by the prospect of huge tax savings because it wont happen.

Join me and VOTE NO on Act 46. Jan 31 at Barre Town school.

Jeff Blow

EMAIL AUTHOR REPLY TO FORUM

Vote No to Article 1, Barre Town School Merger Jan. 31

TERRY REIL, H4DDIE11@GMAIL.COM, HIGH STREET

DISCUSSION

Just start reading the volumes of reports, meeting minutes, and news articles from other communities and you'll find plenty to be concerned about regarding ACT 46 and merging our schools. Read the note below from the Barre Town Final Report. Vote NO on January 31st to Article 1 Barre Town School Merger.

From the Barre Town Merger Committee Final Report, page 25:

"Final Note: It is worth repeating that the model used to forecast these results was created for purposes of comparative illustrations, and under no circumstances should be relied upon to forecast future actual tax rates resulting if and when a merger occurs or does not occur. It is also worth noting, that actual operational savings due to unification could be reinvested by the new unified union board to improve the level of educational opportunity in Barre without having to raise additional resources, changing the actual tax savings projected over the next six years."

<http://www.campaignforvermont.org/impacts-of-act-46>

<http://www.vermontbiz.com/news/december/kinsley-states-board-education-declares-victory-own-25-yard-line>

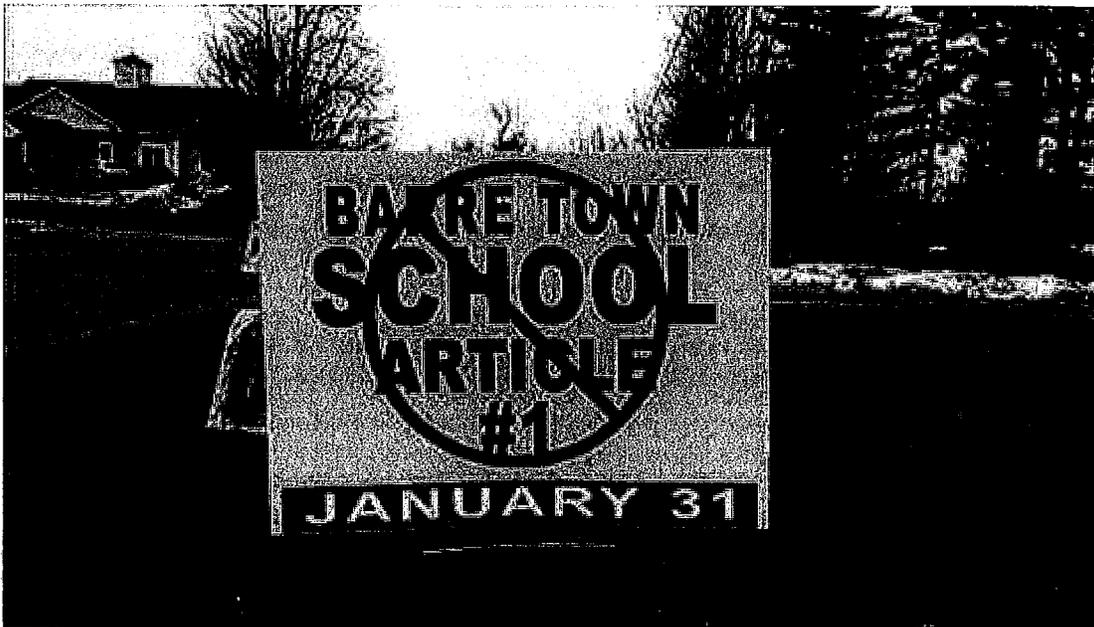
EMAIL AUTHOR REPLY TO FORUM



Mike Graves

19 hrs · Barre · 🌐

My taxes are high enough without agreeing to pay to subsidize Barre City Schools as well! NO THANKS but I certainly appreciate the offer! 🙏. I also understand why Barre Town voters overwhelmingly rejected the merger the first time and why Barre City voters overwhelmingly approved the merger the first time! Vote NO! Revote is on 1-31 but stop by the Barre Town Offices anytime this week and fill out an absentee ballot it's quick and easy! I was in and out in less than 5 minutes!



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💬 Comment

🔗 Share

🔄 22



Mike Graves

1 hr · Barre · 🌐

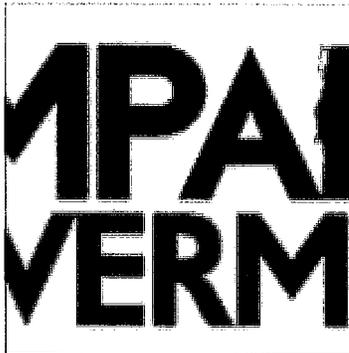
<http://www.campaignforvermont.org/impacts-of-act-46>

Great read about Act 46 and it's detrimental impact on VT schools! Brought to you by the folks in Montpelier who gave us common core! Here are a few quotes I pulled from the article...

"Act 46 further separates parents and taxpayers from guiding their students' education as originally anticipated in Vermont's constitution."

"Conclusion: Act 46 is a destructive and detrimental piece of legislation founded upon the false premise that consolidation will yield more cost effective educational outcomes for students. In fact, Act 46 is structured to induce additional spending, increase property taxes, undermine local parent and taxpayer involvement in their school district..."

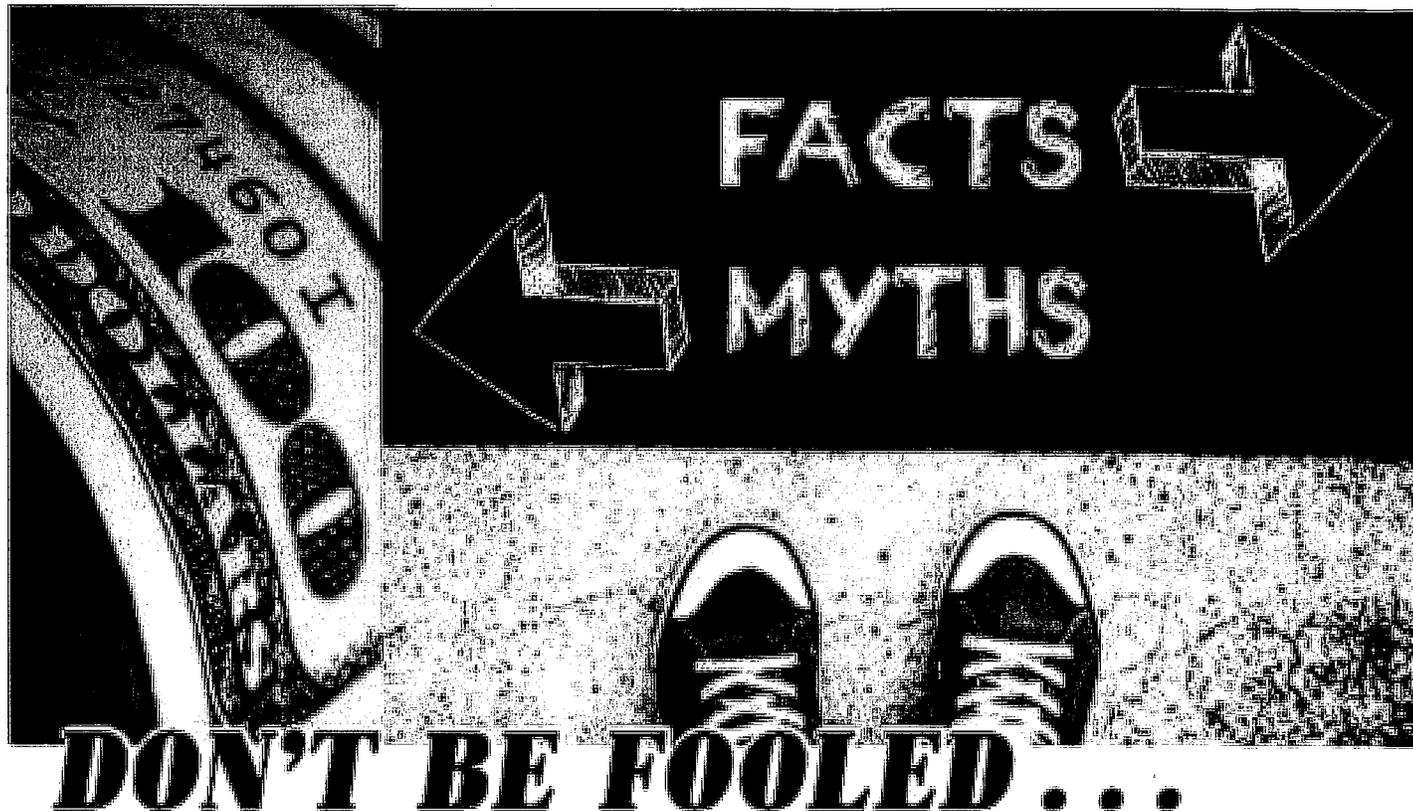
Come February and March, state education administrators, and state law makers will come to the realization that Act 46 is detrimental to Vermont's educational infrastructure, parents and taxpayers and overall not well received. Alternative options were presented to the Legislature but these fell by the wayside as so much else has at the State House in recent years.



The Impacts of Act 46

Reconnecting middle class Vermonters with their government.

CAMPAIGNFORVERMONT.ORG



DON'T BE FOOLED...

ACT 46 INTENT: The original intent of Act 46 was to bring smaller schools together to save money, not larger schools like Barre Town and Barre City. Don't Be Fooled, the only real savings identified in any detail is the \$100,000 that could be saved by having one school board instead of 4 school boards. ALL of the rest of the numbers are based on best guesses. When we are talking about a combined school budget of approx. \$40,000,000.00 would you want to work with best guesses and lose control of your school all at the same time? Barre Town, Barre City and the consolidated SHS are already one of the 10 largest school districts in the state and we are the lowest cost per pupil in the state. It's unlikely the state will force Barre Town or Barre City to do anything. True North Reports, Campaign for Vermont, State Board of Education "has admitted that Act 46 isn't going to save any money." Vote No.

EDUCATION: Barre Town ALREADY aligns with everything in the Committee Report. We currently share a curriculum director, ELA, and math specialists to ensure that both schools are on the same path toward Spaulding High School. Below are rankings of Barre Town, Barre City and the consolidated SHS. Are you willing to sacrifice a reduction of education in our community? The new School Board CAN merge schools. There is nothing in the Committee Report stating this won't happen, in fact it can happen after 3 years. Our Barre Town hired staff can also be told they are going to Barre City to teach or administrate. Vote No.

Barre Town School

- Currently ranks 66th out of 174 Vermont Elementary schools
- Average Student Score of 60.6
- Student/Teacher Ratio 10.7

Barre City School

- Currently ranks 139th out of 174 Vermont Elementary schools
- Average Student Score of 30
- Student/Teacher Ratio 9.0

The Consolidated Spaulding High School

- Currently ranks 43rd out of 50 Vermont High schools
- Average Student score of 29.8
- Student/Teacher Ratio 8.3

Vote No on Act 46 (If You Have Any Doubts at All)

ANTHONY BUSHWAY, ANBRADONCHARTERS@GMAIL.COM, WINDY WOOD ROAD

Act 46 has many, many, details.

I have been trying to get all the facts, for quite sometime now. It has been a slow process for me, with lots of questions and concerns I seek answers to.

I urge fellow Barre Town residents, to vote NO on act 46, if you are still unsure and or have questions.

If it is voted down again, as it was on the original ballot, it will come up again next year.

In that time, folks like myself who are still on the fence will have an opportunity to vote on it again, as I am sure it will continue to come up. Or at least a different version of it.

Your vote counts!

Make sure you are comfortable with your decision, when you mark your ballot.

Thank you for taking the time to read this post!

Anthony Bushway
Barre Town resident

My Rationale for "No" Vote on Act 46

KIM WHITCOMB, KWHITVT@GMAIL.COM, MILL ST

I am writing to explain my rationale for voting "NO" on Article I regarding a proposed Act 46 merger of Barre Town and Barre City schools.

First, I would like to thank those who worked on the committee to explore the proposed merger. I can tell from reading the full report that you spent a significant amount of time and effort to research and assess the proposed merger. I appreciate your efforts. I understand that you were confused when the Barre Town voters rejected the proposed merger. I will attempt to explain why I personally voted "NO" the first time and will vote "NO" again on January 31st.

- I was not uneducated and uninformed when I voted in November. Before any vote, I make sure to do my research. I resent the implication made by some in the media that I was too stupid to vote the way you feel I should have voted. I also very much resent the additional cost you have added for the town taxpayers so that you could hold this revote.

- School budget approval – this was the single biggest issue for me. In 10 years, the town has not defeated a school budget. The same cannot be said for the city. In 2014, just one of the recent years that the city defeated its school budget, it took four tries to pass the school budget. I do not want the schools and our children held hostage while voters repeatedly defeat the budget. I realize that enough town "YES" votes could override city "NO" votes, like they do with the Spaulding budget, but do we really want to subject ourselves to this uncertainty each year?

- I am not voting for Article I because there is no guarantee of what will happen after the first few years:

- 1) Barre Town has a majority of members on the proposed school board for the first three years, then that could change
- 2) The proposed school board (which we already elected) could change the articles of agreement as they wish – not great if the town doesn't have a majority after the first three years
- 3) School buildings can't be closed for the first four years, then that could change
- 4) Total consolidation (single elementary school and single middle school) could not be considered for at least five years, then that could change

- As stated in the report, "The model was created for purposes of comparative illustrations, and under no circumstances should be relied upon to forecast future actual tax rates resulting, if and when a merger occurs or does not occur. The model does not account for, nor is it intended to account for, policy decisions, management decisions and/or changes in any factor reflected in the model, now or over time."

In light of the \$70 million budget deficit this year at the state level, I have zero confidence that we will ever see the estimated tax savings. Our legislature frequently rewrites previous legislation. What guarantee do we have that they will not make "policy decisions" in Montpelier that impact the merged school district and erase any tax savings? None.

- Finally, I am willing to wait until the state makes us consolidate if it comes to that. Let them force us. It just gives us more time to eliminate some of the uncertainty. I would urge all voters to research whether or not their elected officials voted for this intrusive piece of legislation that takes power away from local communities. If you are against it, do your homework and see who voted for Act 46. The information is readily available online. What you find may inform your vote the next time they come up for reelection.

I urge you to vote "NO" on Article I of Act 46 on January 31st.

Vote No to Article 1, Barre Town School Merger Jan. 31

TERRY REIL, HADDIE11@GMAIL.COM, HIGH STREET

From a Jan 23rd article in VTDIGGER by Mark Johnson.

Our new Governor and the guy that helped write Act 46 acknowledge it has problems and is falling short. Does this give you the confidence that approving this merger is the right thing to do? Vote NO on Article 1 on Jan 31st.

"There have been problems with Act 46, Baruth acknowledged..." "Gov. Phil Scott said during the campaign that Act 46 was "falling far short of the cost containment and property tax solution Vermonters are looking for."

Vote No to Article 1, Barre Town School Merger Jan. 31

TERRY REIL, HADDIE11@GMAIL.COM, HIGH STREET

In the mailbox this morning was an orange card in favor of Article 1, Barre Town Merger from the Partners for Barre Area Schools. The card says to get the facts.

The first bullet point, "Article 1 does not merge schools...". I think the simple answer to that is, not now. What prevents the Unified District from merger schools in the future? Nothing. They can't you say? Page 29 of the Barre Town Final Report, Article 7 (A) transfers all real and personal property, including land, buildings, and content to the new District. They go a step further in Article 7(B), where the new District AT ITS DISCRETION can sell the property if it is no longer used for educational purposes. The only roadblock to this is if the new District conveys the property back to the municipality and the municipality uses the property for community and public purposes.

Tell me again how Article 1, merging Barre Town School is in the Barre Town residents best interest? Is transferring ownership of our school really a good idea?

Vote NO to Article 1, Barre Town School Merger, January 31st.