

STAMFORD SCHOOL
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“Preparing students to find new solutions to real world challenges by providing the skills, experiences, and habits of mind that support innovative thinking”

Senator Philip Baruth
pbaruth@leg.state.vt.us

Representative Kathryn Webb
kwebb@leg.state.vt.us

January 15, 2019

Good Day Senator Baruth and Representative Webb,

As Chairman of the Committee on Education and House Chairwoman, please find attached a report from the Stamford School Board of Directors to the General Assembly, outlining the last few months activity of the Stamford, VT and Clarksburg, MA interstate merger committee.

The interstate committee has made great strides in the last two months, which includes the hiring of a consulting firm to help us study merger options for our school. The report outlines this and shows that we are working in earnest to lock down high-quality education for our students through this endeavor. This has been an incredible journey so far and as we compile more information, we can see the educational advantages that await our students.

We would be most honored to speak with you and the Education Committee members. The interstate study will be concluding in the spring, so perhaps there would be a date to discuss the next phase on or around April 22, 2019, at your convenience.

We cannot begin to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to explore this innovative approach to the Act 46 guidelines. Our board has created new contacts in education in both Vermont and Massachusetts while strengthening our ties with our neighbors in Clarksburg, MA.

Please feel free to contact either of us at the email addresses below. We will be more than happy to hear from you and answer any questions you might have.

With Sincere Regards,
Cynthia Lamore, Stamford School Board Chair
clamore@stamfordelementary.com

Dr. Kimberly Roberts-Morandi, Interstate Committee Member
kroberts-morandi@napsk12.org

**REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STAMFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STAMFORD, VT
PROPOSED MERGER
WITH CLARKSBURG, MASSACHUSETTS
JANUARY 15, 2018**

It is with much enthusiasm that we, the Stamford School Board of Directors, write this report to the Vermont General Assembly giving an update on the progress of our proposed Interstate Merger with Clarksburg, Massachusetts.

The merger committee has been meeting at least monthly, alternating meeting sites between the Stamford School and Clarksburg School. There has been much information to compile and details to discuss, but all of the committee members are eager to keep this endeavor moving forward.

Stamford School board members Cynthia Lamore and Erika Bailey attended a meeting on April 9, 2018 with the Agency of Education in Barre, VT. The AOE called the meeting to discuss the merger and identify reasons why Stamford should be allowed to continue exploring the merger under the Act 46 guidelines. The meeting was productive as the decision they made was to allow further investigation of the interstate school district.

Stamford/Clarksburg Interstate Committee member Dr. Kim Roberts-Morandi and Cynthia Lamore met on September 19, 2018 in Chester, VT with the State Board of Education to discuss the Statewide Plan and our merger progress. As you might already know, the State Board of Education issued the *Final Report of Decisions and Order on School District Merger Decisions Pursuant to Act 46, Sections 8(b) and 10*, at the end of November 2018. In this decision the SBE wrote, “Accordingly, the Board confirms the provisional decision for these districts made at its October 29 and November 15, 2018 meetings and approves the Secretary’s proposals for them for the reasons stated at those meetings and as reflected in the Minutes.”

Since that September meeting with the SBE the merger committee has held several meetings in which they successfully wrote a Request for Proposal (RFP), a scoring rubric to help decide which firm would work most effectively and efficiently to the RFP specifications, held interviews with the two responding firms and hired a firm to perform the study. The Boston, Massachusetts firm, Public Consulting Group (PCG) was awarded the contract. They have experience consolidating and merging schools in many states but especially, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts. They have already shown major enthusiasm by scheduling tours of the schools, interviews with administrators, superintendents, office managers, teachers, and a dual town meeting to introduce themselves to our townspeople and invite them to join a focus group. They are eager to work with all of us and have noted that we have given them a very ambitious completion date in which we will all need to stay collectively focused and on task. PCG has committed to weekly updates to the committee and each update will contain an overview of what they have completed and what they attend to accomplish in the next week. An example is attached as page three of this report.

In an effort to gather more information and move forward, Dr. Kim Roberts-Morandi met in Washington, DC at the end of October with top-level education aides. During the hour meeting she presented an over view of our committees' work, from how it began to where we are now. Dr. Roberts-Morandi identified barriers such as cost for furthering the study, blending of funding structures and blending of retirement systems. The aides will discuss these issues with their Senators and try to find ways to support our local and state representatives. They also recommended developing a formalized way to communicate with people and have continual exposure for information sharing. We are planning to host monthly updates and will be establishing a schedule for that in the very near future.

Our merger committee has been working diligently and we believe they have made great progress to date. PCG's merger study is scheduled to be presented to the merger committee in May 2019. We look forward to the report and the information it will bring to help advance our student's educational opportunities and streamline costs.

It would be the pleasure of the interstate merger committee to meet with you in April, to discuss any progress to date. Once we have the report from PCG we will send a copy with the findings to your chairman.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank, Senator Dick Sears, Senator Brian Champion, Representative Laura Sibilila, the State Board of Education, the Agency of Education and the General Assembly for allowing Stamford the opportunity to investigate this groundbreaking merger with the State of Massachusetts.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stamford School Board of Directors,
Cynthia Lamore, Chair
Erika Bailey, Vice Chair
Barbara Malinowski
Jessica Tatro
Kelly Holland

First Weekly Update for Week Beginning 1/7/19:

Key Priority Tasks Are:

- Review materials for kick off meeting and Joint Town Informational Meeting.
- Draft a set of questions for the meeting
- Identify key decision makers for participation in the 1/23 meeting and review questions for meetings with key decisionmakers.
- Finalize meeting questions 1-18-2019 to 1-22-2019

Dates for the Kick-Off Are:

- January 22:
 - 3:30 PM–5:30 PM, Interstate Merger Committee Meeting
 - 6:30 PM–7:30 PM, Joint Town Meeting, Clarksburg School
- January 23:
 - 9 AM–12 PM, Meetings with Key Decision Makers, Stamford School

Weekly Update for Week Beginning 1/14/19:

Key Priority Tasks Are:

- Review materials for kick off meeting and Joint Town Informational Meeting (John to review from 1/16 through 1/17).
- Identify key decision makers for participation in the 1/23 meeting and review questions for meetings with key decisionmakers (to include 30-minute interviews with principals, school committee members as available, and town administrators – John is reaching out to schedule).

Dates for the Kick-Off Are:

- January 22:
 - 3:10 PM–3:30 PM, PCG Tour of Clarksburg School
 - 3:30 PM–5:30 PM, Interstate Merger Committee Meeting, Clarksburg School
 - 6:30 PM–8:00 PM, Joint Town Meeting, Clarksburg School Gymnasium
- January 23:
 - 9 AM–12 PM, Meetings with Key Decision Makers, Stamford School

Other Upcoming Dates Are (To Be Discussed in Additional Detail at Kick-Off):

- February 14–15: Central Office Interviews
- February 25–27: Second Joint Town Meeting; Stakeholder Engagement Focus Groups and Interviews