

**Process Overview:**  
**Steps the citizens of the Town of Lincoln took**  
**To keep an excellent, fiscally responsible elementary school open**

*Lincoln is part of a long-standing five-town community, comprised of Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton, New Haven, and Starksboro, and has historic and positive connections and relationships with its sister towns. Until a few years ago, (July 1, 2018), this five-town community operated five community elementary schools and a shared secondary school, as members of a supervisory union and a union high school district. Under this model there was an informed and engaged voice on behalf of the community elementary schools as distinct from the shared secondary school. There was also a board dedicated to the concerns and needs of secondary schools and its students. There was fiscal transparency in the supervisory union central office. There was financial rigor and accountability because the citizens and taxpayers had a voice.*

*To address the future of the education and opportunities for all of the children and students in all five towns, over the last several years there has been a great deal of volunteer community involvement among the citizens of these deeply connected communities. We believe that a comprehensive history and narrative of this extensive five-town community involvement could be useful in informing the discussion of larger issues before the Committee, and we would be happy to provide such a narrative.*

*At present, however, we wish to emphasize that when faced with the unnecessary and harmful effective closure of three of the five elementary schools in the unified district, and steps were taken to remove the right-- guaranteed in the District Merger Articles of Agreement-- of each town to vote on the closure of its school, the citizens of the Town of Lincoln felt compelled to look more deeply into how to preserve that which is best for the elementary school child. A group called Save Community Schools was formed and was inclusive of all five towns in its concerns and thinking, but ultimately could only take steps to preserve the Lincoln Community School, an educational asset known to attract young families that is the center of our vibrant town.*

*None of this was easy. Through great care and diligence we undertook extensive research, gathered information, sought out relevant knowledge and experience of others, and connected with state and local officials, always with the goal of understanding and communicating accurate information in a responsible, transparent, and inclusive way.*

*Our recent process, **in full reliance on existing statutes**, is itemized briefly as follows.*

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**Timeframe:** *While the Lincoln Community has been engaged in many matters on many levels beginning in earnest in the fall of 2020, the activities listed below began in July 2021, starting with a petition, (with 10% of the voters gathered in a weekend), organized by Save Community Schools and filed with the Lincoln Select Board, to schedule a town-wide vote on withdrawal, (i.e. preservation of an elementary school), from the Mount Abraham Unified School District (MAUSD).*

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## **Prior to Town Vote**

- Consultation with MAUSD Leadership
  - Meetings with Superintendent, Business Manager, Lincoln Community School Principal
  - Analysis of Lincoln enrollment, staffing, and financial data
  
- Information Gathering and Research
  - Budget analysis: similar VT schools
  - Review of Statutes
  - Becoming more informed citizens about school funding in Vermont, including critical levers of equity such as equalized pupils
  - Conversations with current and former educators in Lincoln/nearby region
  - Supervisory Union structures; other governance models
  - Education research and scholarship
  
- Engagement with Lincoln and Neighboring Communities
  - Information sessions: topics included student equity, finances, maintaining vibrant communities
  - Provided residents with an estimate of potential tax changes [slight reduction indicated for FY21, had Lincoln been out of MAUSD]
  - Two well-attended special informational meetings
  - One special select board informational meeting
  - Outreach and discussions via Front Porch Form, Letters to the Editor, SCS Website, mailings, individual inquiries on particular questions.
  - Coordination with Lincoln Select Board, Town Clerk

**\*\* August 24, 2021 Withdrawal Vote \*\***

**Turnout:** 697 voters (> 60%)

**Withdrawal approved: 525 to 172 (75.3% to 24.7%)**

### **After Town Vote/Prior to Ratification**

- Continued Consultation with District Leadership
  - Additional meetings with Superintendent, Business Manager, Lincoln Community School Principal
- Engagement with Lincoln and Neighboring Communities
  - Information sessions: why ratify the Lincoln withdrawal vote?
  - Provided an estimate of potential tax changes to residents in other district towns [MAUSD projected negligible tax changes]
  - Outreach via Front Porch Form, Letters to the Editor, SCS Website
- Consultation: Four-town Ratification Vote
  - Request for guidance from Agency of Education, Secretary of State Elections Division
  - Communication with Town clerks and Select Boards in Bristol, Monkton, New Haven and Starksboro
- Conversations with Ripton School District
  - Options for shared governance, supervisory union services
  - Preliminary data gathering and analysis: enrollment, staffing, financial information

**March 1, 2022 (Town Meeting Day)**

**Ratification Vote Scheduled**

*Bristol, Monkton, New Haven, Starksboro*

