

WWSU Executive Committee and Act 46 Study Committee
Joint Meeting and Public Forum
23 May 2016
The Big Picture
Waitsfield, VT

Attendance

WWSU Executive Committee: Rosemarie White (Harwood), Kate O'Neill (Moretown), Christine Sullivan (Waitsfield), Alycia Biondo (Warren), Alex Thomsen (W-D), Doug Mosle (Fayston)

Act 46 Study Committee: Jill Ellis (Fayston), Rosemarie White (Harwood ex-officio), Gabe Gilman (Moretown, arrived 6:02), Christine Sullivan (Waitsfield), Alycia Biondo (Warren), Alex Thomsen (W-D for Waterbury)

Administration: Brigid Nease, Superintendent; Michelle Baker, WWSU Director of Finance and Operations

Other Board Members: Heidi Spear (Fayston), Adam Greshin (Warren), Jen Watkins (Warren), Eve Frankel (Waitsfield)

Moderator: Roger Stauss

Public: Peter Forsthuber (Warren), Susan Forsthuber (Warren), Emily Church (Waitsfield), Tim Jones (Fayston), Valerie Bigelow (Warren), Jean Berthiaume (Fayston Principal), MRV-TV Camera Operator, Lara Seaberg (minute taker)

WWSU Executive Committee

Call to order: Christine Sullivan called the WWSU Executive Committee meeting to order at 5:50 PM.

Confirm Agenda: There were no edits to the agenda.

Action items

Approve Minutes: Jill Ellis moved to approve the minutes of the 11 May 2016 Study Committee meeting as written. Alycia Biondo seconded and the motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Alycia Biondo moved to approve the minutes of the 11 May 2016 WWSU Executive Committee meeting as written and Alex Thomsen seconded. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Executive Committee Work

WWSU Warrants: None.

Financial Report: Rosemarie White made a motion to accept the Financial Report and Alex Thomsen seconded. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Sign Employee Agreements: Brigid Nease informed the Executive Committee that the Committee Chair needed to sign the WWSU Employee Agreements. Kate O'Neill moved to authorize Committee Chair Christine Sullivan to sign the WWSU Employee agreements. Alycia Biondo seconded and the motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Other Business: None.

Adjournment: On a motion by Kate O'Neill and seconded by Christine Sullivan WWSU Executive Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 PM.

Study Committee Work

Call to Order: Gabe Gilman called the Study Committee meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Communications Plan Update: Brigid Nease led the committee in a review of the communications plan. The communication plan for the upcoming merger vote includes flyers, lawn/roadside signs in each town as well as two banners, one for the Mad River Valley and one for Waterbury. There are ten signs per town. Michelle Baker brought the signs to the meeting so that the committee members could take them for their towns. The individual town story cards are on the WWSU website and at district town schools. Jason Gibbs will be talking about the upcoming vote on WDEV.

Adjournment: The committee voted to adjourn at 6:30 on a motion made by Gabe Gilman and seconded by Jill Ellis.

Public Forum

Moderator Roger Stauss opened the public forum at 6:30 PM. Mr. Stauss asked the committee members to introduce themselves to the audience. After committee introductions Gabe Gilman began the forum by giving an overview of Act 46 and the benefits of a preferred governance structure. Jill Ellis presented an overview of the charge of study committee and the work they have done. She shared that the committee decided that an accelerated merger was in the best interest of the SU district towns. Brigid Nease provided some of the educational opportunities a unified district could allow the community. Christine Sullivan presented the documents produced by the committee which are all on the WWSU website. She went through each of the Articles of Agreement which were drafted by the committee and have been approved by the AOE and State Board of Education. Copies of the Articles of Agreement are on

the WWSU website and in each district town school as well as at town libraries and town clerks' offices. Michelle Baker shared a sample ballot during the presentation. Michelle also presented the updated tax projections and excess spending threshold. She stated that looking forward Harwood Union would hit the spending threshold within two years in a "do nothing" scenario. The tax projection slides are on the WWSU website. Alycia Biondo shared information on the topic of local control and local advisory councils.

Roger Stauss opened the floor to the Question & Answer and comment portion of the forum. Some question and comments presented to the committee were:

- A question concerning school closures.
- A question about entrepreneurial options and financial questions in a merger.
- A former school board member who supported Act 60 gave his support of the Act 46 merger and stated that he still supports all Vermont state students.
- A question was asked what a supermajority meant in the event there was ever a vote on a school closure. Gabe Gilman answered that a supermajority of the combined board would be 2/3 of the weighted vote.
- Heidi Spear expressed her gratitude for the work the committee has done and offered her support of a "yes" vote on the merger and stated that the merger is an effective tool to protect what we currently have in our educational communities.
- Eve Frankel also expressed her gratitude for the committee's work and that from an efficiency stand point the merger is a good move. She supports a "yes" vote.

When there were no more questions or comments Roger Stauss closed the public forum at 8:44.

Respectfully submitted,
Lara Seaberg