

To our neighbors in Fairfax, Fletcher and Georgia,

We are reaching out as school board members and community volunteers who have been working together in response to the passing of Act 46. We have been meeting twice a month since January to explore the best options for our communities, and we have narrowed it down to pursuing one of two final courses of action, which may require your vote this coming Town Meeting Day.

The idea behind Act 46 is to merge smaller districts into larger districts which can contribute to stable budgets and can help to equalize education for children throughout Vermont. The state has given guidelines for preferred structures to become a supervisory district, including a minimum requirement of 900 students, which none of our districts in the Franklin West Supervisory Union currently meet. This committee has worked through nearly a dozen different scenarios and has come to settle on these final two:

Alternate Structure: *Fletcher and Fairfax merge into one PreK-12 school district; Georgia stays as its own K-8 school district with high school choice*

Fairfax and Fletcher would merge to become one school district. The key points of this merger would be **a)** one school board with members from both towns **b)** one school budget that both towns vote on **c)** the district will still have two elementary school campuses **d)** and Fletcher students will attend Fairfax Middle School and Bellows Free Academy Fairfax.

Although Georgia does not meet the suggested number of 900 students, they are suggesting they are large enough (with over 860) to remain their own school district. If Georgia's proposal is accepted, it would be "taken under advisement". This means Georgia would still be susceptible to a merger with another district that does not meet the state structural requirements if the state deems this necessary when statewide restructuring is finalized in 2018. This merger could not take away Georgia's high school choice, but it could force Georgia to share a budget and board with another district that is also PreK-8.

Georgia would submit this proposal alongside that of the Fletcher/Fairfax merger with the hopes of remaining in the Franklin West Supervisory Union - meaning that Georgia would continue to share in the cost for and services of the superintendent, curriculum coordinator, special education services, financial services, etc.

It is important to note that in this scenario, Fletcher and Fairfax would only merge if both towns voted in favor of this individually during a general election. Georgia would not need to vote, but would simply fill out the lengthy application to be considered as an alternative structure.

Unification: *Fletcher, Fairfax and Georgia merge into one PreK-12 school district*

The key points of this merger would be **a)** one school board with members from all three towns **b)** one school budget that all three towns vote on **c)** the district will continue to use the three elementary school campuses and two middle school campuses **d)** a new union high school would be built that all three towns attend

The first step in this proposal was for the committee to look at the financial feasibility of building a high school that could serve our towns if we merged into one school district. When pooling the budget for BFA Fairfax with the tuition money that Fletcher and Georgia send out each year, we would be able to cover the cost of an appropriate bond for the construction of this school and the operating costs - we crunched some numbers, we sent them to an engineering firm to check our work, and we felt confident enough to continue moving forward and exploring the pros and cons of such a venture.

It is important to note that in this scenario, all three districts would need to vote in favor of unification for it to move forward.

Both of these proposals carry their own unique risks and rewards, which are worthy of sharing with you - the members of our community. The Act 46 Study Committee would like to welcome all members of Fairfax, Fletcher and Georgia to attend our meeting on Thursday, October 13th in the GEMS Library at 5:30. Our two subcommittees will be giving presentations on the details involved in each proposal, and we will also take this opportunity to engage in public discussion and answer questions.

It is also an opportunity to become informed voters when you face a decision (as necessary) in the spring of 2017.

We hope you will plan to attend,

The Franklin Supervisory Union Act 46 Study Committee