

To the Athens Grafton School District Board of Directors;

We, the members of the Rockingham Town School Board of Directors, have been keeping abreast through Superintendent Haas of your ongoing discussions and deliberations concerning the future of the elementary school in Grafton. We all understand that this can be a painful and sometimes divisive conversation and we support your plan of having community-wide discussions to attempt to reach a consensus regarding your next steps for the school.

We are also concerned about the continual decline of student numbers in the Town of Rockingham and one of our board goals is to maintain a viable and sustainable town school district. In particular, we are concerned about maintaining the Saxtons River Elementary School (currently grades K-4) as a fully operational and high-performing entity.

We feel that there may be mutually beneficial steps that our two boards could explore together. One option would be to discuss becoming a joint school district. This is, of course, a complicated matter that has many potential nuances depending upon the final form of the articles of consolidation that are agreed upon, but presumably there may be strength in numbers and potentially some cost savings as well. Obviously, the future of the Grafton Elementary School would have to be one of the subjects of discussion in formulating the articles of agreement.

A second option- should you decide to close the Grafton Elementary School- would be to enter into an agreement with the Rockingham School Board to designate Rockingham as the recipient of some or all of your student grade levels, but at a negotiated tuition cost that is lower than our currently announced tuition rate. This would certainly reduce your current school costs and it would help Rockingham maintain viable student numbers, at least for the present. We understand that many of your K-6 students live in the Town of Athens. For these students, it would be a shorter bus ride to school in Saxtons River than going to Grafton. The WNESU already provides transportation to all Athens and Grafton students going to the Bellows Falls Middle School and to BFUHS so there would be no additional transportation routes or costs associated with bringing them to the Saxtons River or Central Elementary Schools.

These are the two options we can see for collaboration with your board and towns, but there may be others. We understand that your communities are going through a decision making process and that many points of view will certainly be heard. We wish you clarity and the best of luck. Please reach out to us at any time should you have questions or if you would like to schedule a joint meeting of our two school boards.

Regards,  
Members of the Rockingham Town  
School Board