Merger Study Group 15
Draft Meeting Minutes
September 30, 2026
4:00 pm

In Person: Green Mountain Community Education Center

Virtual: Via Google Meet

School Board Representatives Present:

Bart Bezio (Virtual)	Lamoille North
David Bickford	Elmore-Morristown
Elliot Waring	Wolcott
Kasey Allen	Craftsbury
Mark Stebbins	Cambridge
Patrick Kane	Hazen
Tiffany Donza	Stowe
Terri Vest	Mountain View

Superintendents Present:

Cat Gallagher	Lamoille North
Ryan Heraty	Lamoille South
Becca Tatistcheff	Orleans Southwest

1. Facilitator Call to Order

   Meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm.

2. Welcome and Introductions

   Regional Facilitator and Board Members briefly introduced themselves.

3. Overview of Committee Roles

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Brad Morgan outlined that the regional facilitator role is to guide discussions and remain neutral on merger recommendations, and that the Committee Chair serves as the presiding officer, handles votes, and is the primary contact for regional facilitator.

4. Merger Committee Organization

    a. Adoption of Robert's Rules of Order

    b. Election of Chair

    c. Establishment of Committee Norms

    d. Determination of future meeting location (s) and meeting cadence

Brad Morgan requested that Robert's Rules of Order be adopted and the school board members agreed unanimously (no vote).

The election of the Chair was delayed until the second meeting as several members were meeting each other for the first time.

Brad Morgan shared some sample norms for meeting operation and asked that the board use those as a guide to develop the group's norms at our next meeting.

With the delay of the election of the Chair and a lack of data to help frame discussions, Brad Morgan agreed to seek more information on the release of the requested information prior to setting up a meeting cadence. The plan is to meet one more time to finish up the housekeeping business and any other items that may arise.

5. Good Faith Standard Review

Board members had reviewed the Good Faith Standard in advance and voiced no issues or questions with operating under this standard.

6. Public Input

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Eric Hutchkins flagged concerns regarding consolidation impacts on student bus ride times and rising property taxes. Eric Hutchkins raised a formal notice of open meeting law violation regarding public notification timing.

7. Act 170 Overview Presentation

David Younce presented an overview of Act 170, succeeding Act 46 to improve regional educational opportunities. He explained that Act 170 establishes 7 CISA regions and mandates shared services for special education and operations. He added that merger committees target a combined ADM of 2,000 students while protecting districts under 750 students. Finally, he added that merger committees face a report deadline of September 1, 2027, preceding public votes on March 7, 2028.

8. Proportional Representation Determination

Brad Morgan shared two options with the board members, but told them they could also explore something different.

Kasey Alllen flagged a legal conflict between Act 170 mandates and 16 VSA 706 regarding how the committee was formed. Brad Morgan shared that he would pass this onto David Younce. He added that he felt the representation should be equal.

Tiffany Donza understood his request but wanted time to consider how representation should be decided.

9. Areas of Committee Interest and Next Steps for Next Meeting

    a. November Meeting - Regional Assets Discussion

    b. Other

Board members debated the 600 square mile geographical scale and the feasibility of student transportation mergers. When Brad Morgan asked the board members to consider regional assets, there was a unified response that they wanted to bypass the activity and get to work.

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The group shared that the required work and timeline was extremely tight. However, they voiced their concerns over starting the work without the necessary data as well as where the data was coming from and how it was gathered and interpreted. The group shared that their concern was that the State-provided data will primarily focus on financial figures and potential savings, not on student learning or outcomes.

They added that rising transportation, fuel, and health insurance costs complicate district budget and that without concrete financial data, this work will face strong board resistance.

Past education legislation has created a high level of skepticism regarding state-driven mandates.

10. Agenda Building

This was delayed until the next meeting with the election of a Chair.

11. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:14 pm.

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