

Compendium of Useful Info on Section 9 Proposals:

Here is what we have received from the State relative to the Section 9 AGS proposals- note especially the questions that Secretary Holcombe sent to districts, on Page 2, these are the specific questions that the Secretary will expect answers to.

From Donna Russo Savage, AOE:

“ * The boards of school districts subject to the requirements of Act 46, Sec. 9 have already prepared and, in almost all cases, submitted their proposals under that section.

* Each school board will have the opportunity to meet for a "conversation" with the Secretary of Education at some point during the next few months.

* Prior to that meeting, we will send each board a list of topics that we would like them to be prepared to address during the conversation.

* During the summer, the school boards will have an opportunity to present testimony to and respond to questions from the State Board.

* Citizens who are not members of the school board will also have an opportunity to testify at that time.

* A school board is welcome to supplement and amend its proposal at any point in the process. “

From Krista Huling, Chair, State Board of Education:

“The boards of school districts subject to the requirements of Act 46, Sec. 9 have already prepared and, in almost all cases, submitted their proposals under that section. Each school board will meet for a “conversation” with the Secretary of Education at some point during the next few months. During the summer, the school boards will have an opportunity to present testimony to and respond to questions from the State Board.

Just as the Sec. 9 proposals and the situations giving rise to them vary widely, so too will the “conversations,” the testimony, and the State Board’s deliberations and ultimate decisions.

A school board is welcome to supplement and amend its proposal at any point in the process – for example, if a particular issue arises during conversations with the Secretary or testimony before the State Board.”

From John Castle, a Superintendent applying for a Section 9 AGS:

“ We gave them essentially everything in Rule 3400 and then some, my own research and narrative. We had a small board committee oversee the process. All local boards have approved and the actual documents were hand delivered to the AOE on Dec. 29 after okay from (Donna Russo Savage). I met with Rebecca Holcombe last week on a

variety of issues and she said that “they would have us come down” for a review at some point.”

From Rebecca Holcombe:

Topics of Discussion

1. How does the proposal support your ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?
 - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
 - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?
 - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
 - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?
5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver[education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?

6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then
 - a. Why is merger not “possible”?
 - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?

7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then
 - a. Why not?
 - b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?

The Law:

“Alternative Structure” Includes:

- A supervisory union “composed of multiple member districts, each with its separate school board.” (Act 46, Sec. 5(c) and 10(a)(2))
- A “unified union school district with [an] average daily membership” of less than 900 (Act 46, Sec. 10(a)(2))

Act 46, Sec. 5(c), as amended by Act 49, Sec. 7:

SU with multiple member districts “*may meet* the State’s *goals, particularly if:*”

- Consider selves to be *collectively responsible* for PK-12 students
- SU *complies* with SpEd, transportation, etc requirements of § 261a
- SU “has the *smallest number of member school districts practicable*, achieved wherever possible by the merger of districts with *similar operating and tuitioning* patterns”
- SU “has the smallest number of member school districts practicable after consideration of *greatly differing levels of indebtedness* among member districts”
- Combined *ADM 900+*

Proposal (Act 46, Sec. 9(a)(3)):

- “demonstrate[] through reference to enrollment projections, student to staff ratios, the comprehensive data collected pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 165, and otherwise, *how the proposal ... supports the district’s or districts’ ability to meet or exceed each of the” Goals*
- “*identify] detailed actions* it proposes to take to continue to improve its performance in connection with each of the” Goals

Statewide Plan (Act 46, Sec. 10):

- “provide educational opportunities through *sustainable governance structures* designed to meet the” Goals of Act 46
- “*If it is not possible or practicable* [for the Statewide Plan to merge Remaining Districts, where necessary, into a Preferred Structure] in a manner that adheres to the ... protection for tuition-paying and operating districts[] or that otherwise meets all aspects of Sec. 5(b), then the [Plan] *may also include alternative governance structures as necessary, such as a supervisory union with member districts or a unified union school district with a smaller average daily membership.*”

(Act 46, Sec. 8(b)):

“State Board shall approve the *creation, expansion, or continuation* of a supervisory union *only if* the Board concludes that this alternative structure:

- (1) is the *best* means of meeting the [Goals] in a particular region; and
 (2) ensures *transparency and accountability* for the member districts and the public at large”



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Sec. 9 Proposal Process Overview

- January-May 2018:
 - Secretary of Education and Agency staff review all Sec. 9 proposals and other information (e.g., Agency data, community input, earlier merger proposals, etc.)
 - School Board has “conversations” about proposal with Secretary
 - *The Agency will call / send an e-mail to schedule these meetings*
 - *Meetings will occur between now and May 1*
 - *Meetings will occur at the Agency’s Offices in Barre*
 - *Because the Secretary must look at each proposal locally, regionally, and on a statewide basis, it is doubtful that the Secretary will be able to give a final answer during these meetings about whether the proposal will or will not be incorporated into the proposed Statewide Plan*
 - School Board has opportunities to supplement its proposal
 - State Board of Education (SBE) also has copies of all Sec. 9 proposals and each SBE member begins reviewing them
- June 1, 2018 – Secretary presents proposed statewide plan that may incorporate a School Board’s Sec. 9 proposal in full, in part, or not at all
- June–October 2018:
 - SBE reviews all Sec. 9 proposals and other information (e.g., Agency data, community input, earlier merger proposals, etc.)
 - School Board presents testimony to SBE and answers SBE’s questions about proposal
 - *The SBE has tentatively decided to receive testimony on Sec. 9 proposals at its July, August, and September meetings*
 - *It has also tentatively decided, in concept, to divide the state into three regions so that it can schedule those three meetings to occur in each of the three regions*
 - *Because the SBE must look at each proposal locally, regionally, and on a statewide basis, it is doubtful that it will be able to give a final answer during these three regional meetings about whether the proposal will or will not be incorporated into the final Statewide Plan*
 - School Board has opportunities to supplement its proposal
- November 30 – SBE issues the Final Statewide Plan that merges districts and redraws SU boundaries to the extent necessary to achieve sustainable governance structures capable of meeting/exceeding the Act 46 Goals of equity, excellence, and efficiency – the Final Plan may incorporate School Board’s Sec. 9 proposal in full, in part, or not at all
 - *The SBE must: discuss each proposal; give instructions to the Agency regarding what it wants to include in a draft final Plan; review and potentially amend the draft version of its Plan (a public record); and vote on the final Plan prior to the November 30 deadline for issuing the plan – as a result, School Boards will have an indication of the SBE’s actions before the SBE issues the final Statewide Plan*