



The Scoop

Produced by the School Board to help keep Starksboro residents informed of news relating to Robinson Elementary School **November 2015**

Act 46 – Information and Implications for Robinson School

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At the end of the 2015 session of the Vermont Legislature, Act 46 (known as the School Consolidation Legislation) became law. Because this legislation could have profound implications for Robinson, it will be most important that Starksboro residents have information about it. In the October Scoop, we provided an overview of the law (some of which is reprinted here). We have also scheduled a public information night to provide more detailed information and to give everyone an opportunity to ask questions.

We invite all Starksboro residents, and all residents of the 5-town region (Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton, and New Haven) to join the Robinson Elementary School Board at **7:00 November 9th at Robinson's Multi-purpose room** for an informative discussion of the challenges and opportunities offered by Act 46. Nicole Mace, Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association, will be with us to outline how school boards across the state are responding to this game changing legislation, and what the law requires and allows. Representatives Dave Sharpe and Fred Baser will also be joining us to offer their perspectives on the current public education landscape in Vermont and the intention and the hope for Act 46.

School Board Members	
Chair	
Louis duPont	453-5538
Vice Chair	
Nancy Cornell	453-2681
Clerk	
Caleb Elder	434-4805

Robinson Principal	
Edorah Frazer	453-2949
Assistant Superintendent	
Catrina DiNapoli	453-3657
Scoop Editor	
Karen Wheeler	453-6943

Goals of Act 46 of 2015

Act 46 is designed to encourage and support local decisions and actions that:

- Provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities statewide;
- Lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards, adopted as rules by the State Board of Education at the direction of the General Assembly;
- 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;
- Promote transparency and accountability; and
- Are delivered at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

Act 46 intends that all school boards will attend to these goals, while acknowledging that the means to achieve these goals will vary, depending on the particular circumstances of different districts.

Addison Northeast has formed an Act 46 Study Committee. Starksboro's representatives on this committee are Robinson board members Nancy Cornell and Caleb Elder, and community members Herb Olson and Kristen Toy (alternate). The first meeting of the Study Committee is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2015. Location TBA.

As Robinson's representatives on this committee, we will be considering the following key questions, prompted by the details of this legislation:

- Should Robinson "merge" with the other schools in the five towns of Addison Northeast, to form one school district, with one School Board and one unified budget? What might be the advantages, and disadvantages, of such a merger?
- Should Robinson consider merging with one or more other schools outside of Addison Northeast?
- What are the alternatives to merging with another school district, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of those alternatives?
- If we do decide to recommend any kind of merger with one or more school districts, what should be the criteria by which we determine whether this move is successful, and how soon should we make this determination?
- If Starksboro decides to participate in a merger with other school districts (as determined by an affirmative vote of the town), what options would be available to us if the move proves unsuccessful?

In addition to the requirement that all school districts consider merging, Act 46 has established "allowable growth" spending caps on all school budgets. The Robinson Board will begin work on the school budget for 2016-2017 very soon. The Act 46 spending cap for FY '17 represents a serious challenge to the Board, as it seeks to develop a budget that ensures taxpayers an excellent return on their investment. Please be checking agendas for upcoming board meetings, and plan to attend to provide the board with information on what you see as the priorities in the Robinson School budgeting process.

Robinson School Board

Upcoming Meetings

10/26/15 @ 7:00 PM, ANESU Act 46 Study Committee Meeting, Location TBD

11/9/15 @ 7:00 PM, Act 46 Public Informational Meeting, Robinson Multipurpose Room

11/17/15 @ 7:00 PM, All Districts Carousel Meeting at Mt. Abraham Large Cafeteria

11/17/15 @ 8:00 PM, Starksboro School Board Meeting at Mt. Abraham, Room TBD