

# *Woodbury School Study Public Hearing*

Presented By:

**School Study Committee**  
and  
**Woodbury School Board**

January 11, 2010

# *What It's All About!*



# *School Study Mission*

## **Three-part Study Mission:**

- Research cost-containment strategies;
- Improve learning opportunities for students; and
- Increase efficiency of school operation

# *School Study Challenges*

- Change process very complex
- Helping voters understand issues is challenging
- Strong sentiment for maintaining a school in town
- Fear of the unknown when considering closing a local school
- Rumors run rampant

# ***Ground Rules for Public Hearing***

- Take turns asking questions
- Let everyone else have a turn before you ask a second question
- Respect others' point of view
- Consider ideas with an open mind
- Think about the impact of options based on school cost, quality, and efficiency of operations
- Save questions for the end of the slides – take notes in the margins

# *Executive Summary Highlights*

- History of Woodbury education
- Definition of problem
- Primary cost driver is student/teacher ratio
- Cost and quality concerns
- Keeping the school open
- School closure and choice
- Joint contract and union options

## ***What Focus Group Members Said***

- Limited knowledge of programs and budget process
- Why educate at Woodbury if more expensive
- Residents don't know correct number of students
- How to sustain the school with low enrollment
- Art, P.E., Music and After-school programs important
- Residents need more information
- Difficult to assess quality and cost
- Increase school energy efficiency

# ***What Can Be Done to Keep the Woodbury School Open***

- Increase student teacher ratio from 8:1 to at least 15:1
- Consolidate classrooms to open up possible lease space
- Reduce one classroom teacher
- Increase adult to student ratio from 3:1 to at least 8:1
- Increase energy efficiency of school
- Raise taxes and keep school open

# *Options if the Woodbury School Closes*

- Full school choice for students
- School board pays tuition
- Voters can restrict choice options by designating other public schools
- Receiving schools must agree to accept designation
- Parents can choose approved independent schools
- Lease or sell Woodbury School
- Lose \$68,000 Small Schools grant
- Repay state previous school building construction aid

# *Options if the Woodbury School Closes*

- Minimal savings to tuition students out
- No school board representation at receiving school(s)
- Woodbury Board isn't required to provide bussing
- Longer student travel time
- VT Dept. of Education regulates tuition charges
- Create elementary union district with Calais, Cabot, or Hardwick
- Neutral impact – some families may leave town; might attract other families, due to school choice

# ***Woodbury Could Lease Space to Orchard Valley School***

- Extra revenue to reduce Woodbury taxes
- Students may have options to attend both Woodbury Elementary or Orchard Valley Schools
- Economic development by attracting other students and/or schools to Woodbury
- Additional families might do business in town
- May attract more families to town with approved independent school option
- Board only pays tuition if Woodbury closes the school

## ***Definition of School Governance***

“Governance is the relationship between school district voters, school boards, school administrators, and the legislative and executive branches of state government.

It means the assignment of roles and responsibilities to each of those entities, and the organizational structures created to allow each entity to carry out its responsibilities.”

## ***School Consolidation vs. Merger***

- **Consolidation** - Implies top-down, state-directed school governance change
- **Merger** - Assumes school leaders and voters from multiple districts work together to research benefits, challenges, and efficiencies associated with school governance change

# ***Developing Joint Contract or Union Districts with Other Towns***

- Hardwick most economical and cost-effective option
- Calais highest NECAP scores and lower cost
- Some NECAP scores higher in Hardwick and Cabot
- Share cost saving benefits by increasing student/teacher ratio
- Elect Woodbury board member to joint/union board
- More program options

## ***Other Secondary School Options***

- Current high school lottery system for choice (Act 150)
- One to one student school swaps available
- Withdrawal process from Hazen Union difficult
- Create union district with Cabot
- Become additional member of U-32 or Twinfield Unions
- May warrant changing supervisory unions

## ***Voters' Role***

- School closing
- Pay tuition to one or more elementary schools
- Designate a single secondary school
- Sell or lease school
- Create joint contract or union district with another town
- Add Woodbury to an existing union district
- Upon notice by parent/guardian, authorize board to pay tuition to an approved independent school

# *Next Steps*

## January

- School Board reviews public hearing feedback
- May seek voters advisory opinion
- Print Study findings and next steps in town report

## March

- Town meeting feedback
- Decide next steps
  - Might include more prioritization and in-depth analysis

# *Questions and Clarifications?*

## ***For More Information Contact***

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