

OPTION #1 All Districts Merge into a Single Unified District

One board will oversee the new district.

Initially, there are two primary choices for how to operate:

- A. Continue basic operations as currently designed. (or)*
- B. Continue elementary school operations. Operate a primary middle school at Black River. Operate the primary high school program at Green Mountain. Specialty high school program at Black River. Policy approach to allow Mill River attendance for high school students living on the west side of Mt. Holly*

Considerations

Creates a flexible district that is of a sustainable size to withstand continued declines in student population.

Creates options for how to operate in the future as circumstances continue to change.

Allows achievement of scale, avoids extremely small classes, and provides for more flexible staff assignments to respond to student needs.

Provides greater equity and expanded student opportunity across the region.

Qualifies for incentives and protections and exempts the districts from state action.

Will affect town tax rates in varied ways as the tax rates get melded.

Could create some uncertainty on the future fate of schools.

Increased transportation time for many students.

Can create uncertainty for staff in assignments across large territory.

Special actions to consider related to Option 1B:

Would need to work with Mill River on assuring acceptance of West Side Mt. Holly students.

Need to develop article wording that pre-determines eligibility for students in designated region to qualify for school choice or tuitioning or, in the articles recommend policy action by the new board.

Need to estimate how many students would likely be tuitioned out of the district and add those costs to estimates.

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**OPTION #2 Unified District between Chester, Ludlow, Cavendish,
Andover, Baltimore**

One board for all current districts except Mt. Holly.

Union #39 is dissolved. Mt. Holly connects with Mill River.

Continue three elementary schools.

Unify middle and high schools within the new region.

Considerations

Five districts create a sustainable district that can withstand continued declines in student population.

Mt. Holly connects with the Mill River District which creates sustainability and predictability.

Distances are more acceptable for shared programming in both directions.

Allows achievement of scale, avoids extremely small classes, and provides for more flexible staff assignments to respond to student needs.

Provides greater equity and expanded student opportunity across the region.

Qualifies for incentives and protections and exempts the districts from state action.

Creates somewhat longer bus rides for students depending on location of schools

Can create uncertainty for staff in assignments across large territory.

Will affect town tax rates in varied ways as tax rates get melded.

Will likely necessitate middle/high school consolidation within the new district with the loss of Mt. Holly students.

Special actions to consider:

Articles would need to make sure to both Ludlow and Mt. Holly that they both need to approve the dissolution of the Union #39 district and that they would each need to be successfully included in other union districts.

Discussions need to begin immediately with Mill River.

It is our understanding that Mt. Holly would get the remaining tax incentives that are continuing in the Mill River District and would need to seek a clear commitment that the small schools grant would be protected.

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OPTION #3 2 K-12 Unified Districts

- *Ludlow-Mt. Holly*
- *Chester, Andover, Cavendish, Baltimore*

Operations remain similar to current situation.

Considerations

Represents least change.

Reduces number of districts within Supervisory Union, simplifying overall operations and opportunities for collaboration between two entities instead of many.

Levels tax rates among former Black River towns and among former Green Mountain towns.

Chester, Andover, Cavendish, and Baltimore would be creating a RED and would receive the incentives and protections. Mt. Holly and Ludlow would not receive any tax incentives.

The proposal does not increase overall economies of scale, particularly at the middle and high school levels. It may be difficult to show how the proposal will achieve educational and financial objectives.

At the moment, two PK-12 districts do not qualify for “side-by-side” incentives and there is no guarantee that the state board will not require the new Ludlow-Mt. Holly district to merge into the other district regardless of the action taken.

Specific actions to consider:

If this is the preferred approach, a legislative fix would be needed to allow for two PK-12 districts to be considered for “side-by-side” incentives. Perhaps there should be a request just for this district to receive a special consideration given the uniqueness of the situation. There is no guarantee of such a request being successful.

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OPTION #4 2 Side-by-Side Districts—one PK-12 operating, one PK-6 or 8 operating with choice or designation thereafter

- *Chester, Andover, Cavendish, Baltimore (PK-12 Operating)*
- *Ludlow-Mt. Holly (Operate elementary and/or middle, Tuition middle and/or high school)*
 - A. *PK-6 with choice for 7-12—open or designated*
 - B. *PK-8 with choice for 9-12—open or designated*

Ludlow and Mt. Holly cease operating grades 7-12 or 9-12. They decide whether to offer total choice or to designate 1-3 secondary schools.

Considerations

Comes with incentives and protections since it qualifies as a “side-by-side”.

Creates the ability for Ludlow and Mt. Holly students to pick their secondary school program, and allows families to select the program that is best for the family.

Choice or designation is attractive to a number of families in the Ludlow-Mt. Holly region.

Levels tax rates among former Black River towns and among former Green Mountain towns.

Ludlow and Mt. Holly would lose a governance role in designing and overseeing secondary education for their students.

Would involve the closing of all or a portion of Black River Jr.-Sr. High School and the layoff of staff.

Being a choice district invites part-time residents to seek/claim residency for tuition assistance and can place added pressure on budgets.

Districts lose control of secondary expenditures and this can place added pressures to cut elementary programs.

Special actions to consider:

Mt. Holly and Ludlow would need to decide whether to operate PK-6 or PK-8.

Part of the plan would need to be Ludlow and Mt. Holly agreeing on whether to provide open choice or whether to designate one-three public or private schools. The advantage of designating is that you can discourage residency manipulation. The new district may also be able to develop some type of advisory connection with the schools that are designated.

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