

LUDLOW-MOUNT HOLLY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Merger Study Report and Articles of Agreement

Ludlow, Mount Holly, and Union District #39 (Black River)

October 9, 2017

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Merger Study Committee Members

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Christopher Adams, Director of Financial Operations

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Executive Summary

This merger would create a single, unified union school district among three districts in the Two Rivers Supervisory Union (TRSU): the Ludlow Town School District, the Mount Holly Town School District, and Union School District #39 (Black River). Ludlow and Mount Holly are the only two member districts of Union District #39.

The new unified union district would operate the Ludlow Elementary School and the Mount Holly School for students in grades PK-6. The new unified union district would also operate Black River Union High School for a period no longer than two years after the effective date of the merger. After that time period, the unified union district would pay tuition in accordance with the law to provide for the education of its students in grades 7-12 at schools of their choice.

This merger would qualify as a “side-by-side” merger with the newly formed Green Mountain Unified School District. Accordingly, this merger would qualify for the side-by-side RED tax incentives described by Act 153. These incentives reduce the tax rate by 8 cents, 6 cents, 4 cents, and then 2 cents for each year over a four-year period. The merger would preserve approximately \$131,426 in revenue that previously went to Ludlow and Mount Holly under the Small Schools Grant program.

The Committee concluded the State will likely compel these districts to merge under the state

This proposed merger is likely the last and only opportunity for these communities to obtain tax incentives for merging, something they will probably be required to do anyway at some point in the future.

governance plan required in 2019. This proposed merger is likely the last and only opportunity for these communities to obtain tax incentives for merging, something they will probably be required to do anyway at some point in the future.

Consistent with the goals of Act 46, the Committee concluded this merger would create a more sustainable and effective governance structure. The merger would create a single school board to oversee PreK-12 education instead of having separate elementary boards in each community and a different board for middle and secondary education. The Committee concluded a single board PreK-12 will be in a better position to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, and will be better able to monitor student outcomes at each grade level to ensure all students meet high standards.

Governance Study Context and Process

TRSU Districts and Act 46

These districts have been challenged to find a path forward under Act 46. One group of districts in the TRSU centered around Green Mountain Union High School came together to form a unified union

district. In 2015, Ludlow and Mount Holly initially joined the merger study committee that led to the formation of the Green Mount Unified Union School District. Ludlow and Mount Holly ultimately left this committee when it became clear that geographic barriers and variations in costs per student among the districts would be challenging obstacles for them to overcome in forming a merged district. Another major concern was the merger would force the closure of Black River Union High School, a major concern for Ludlow.

Later that same year, Ludlow and Mount Holly formed another merger study committee with the member communities of the newly formed Mill River Unified Union School District. This merger required the closure of Black River Union High School at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Ultimately, this merger committee was successful in

producing a merger plan and articles of agreement to put before the voters in the spring of 2017, but the voters in Ludlow rejected the merger by a 2 to 1 ratio. Mount Holly voters, on the other hand, approved the merger by a 2 to 1 margin. Since Ludlow and Mount Holly are both members of Union District #39, however, any merger would require the consent of both districts so this merger plan failed as well.

The geography of the TRSU and the location of buildings create large challenges. Green Mountain Union High School is a well-maintained, modern facility which could house all middle and high school students in the supervisory union. However, it is located in Chester, 13 miles from Ludlow and 23 miles away from the Mt. Holly School. Some students on the far side of Mt. Holly reside 30 miles away. The current realities prevent this from being a viable, equitable plan for all students and communities. With a modern school building already within the current supervisory union, it is hard to imagine the public supporting construction of a new, centrally-located facility.

-GMUSD Merger Study Report

The Looking Forward Committee, Summer of 2017

With the passage of Act 49 in June 2017 and the extension of RED tax incentives, the two communities decided to form an exploratory committee to study their options. This committee, called the Looking Forward Committee, convened in the summer of 2017. This committee decided to commission a financial analysis of four governance options:

1. The Mount Holly Town School District and the Ludlow Town School District would merge and form a unified union district for students in grades PK-12. This district would continue to operate the two elementary schools, but Union District #39 would be dissolved and the new district would provide tuition for students to attend the schools of their choice in grades 7-12.
2. The Mount Holly Town School District and the Ludlow Town School District would merge and form a unified union district for students in grades PK-12. This district would operate the two elementary schools for students in grades PK-6 and operate Black River for students in grades 7-12.

3. The Mount Holly Town School District and the Ludlow Town School District would not merge and each town school district would continue to operate its elementary school. Union District #39 would be dissolved, and the districts would provide tuition for students to attend the schools of their choice in grades 7-12.
4. The Mount Holly Town School District and the Ludlow Town School District would not merge. Mount Holly would continue to operate its elementary school for students in grades PK-6. It would enter into a joint contract agreement with Ludlow to send its students in grades 7 and 8 to Black River, and it would provide tuition to students in grades 9-12 to attend a school of their choice. Ludlow would become a unified union school district and operate its elementary school for students in grades PK-6 and Black River for students in grades 7-12.

The financial analysis indicated there would be financial benefit to closing Black River Union High School. Informed by this data, the Ludlow and Mount Holly school boards formed a formal merger study committee in September of 2017. That Committee met once with a focus on producing a merger plan to implement Option #1: merging the districts but eventually closing Black River and implementing school choice for students in grades 7-12. Based on the analysis of the previous merger study reports and the recent financial analysis of its merger options, the Committee determined it was advisable to merge the districts under these terms at the end of its first meeting.

Committee Findings

Policy Objectives of Act 46

The Committee concluded this merger would be an effective solution for the region to meet the policy objectives of Act 46. These policy objectives are focused on creating a more sustainable school district governance system to support local decisions that:

1. Provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities;
2. Lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards;
3. 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;
4. Promote transparency and accountability; and
5. Are delivered at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

Goal #1: Equity in the Quality of Educational Opportunities

The Committee identified the following opportunities to meet this goal by merging the districts:

- A single school district with a single school board will be better able to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.
- The new district would educate its secondary students by paying tuition for students to attend the school of their choice. This will expand the quality of available learning opportunities for secondary students.
- A single district creates the opportunity for expanded elementary school choice.

Goal #2: Students Exceeding or Achieving State Quality Standards

The Committee identified the following opportunities to meet this goal by merging the districts:

- A single district PK-12 will enable the school board to monitor student progress across all grade levels.
- Implementing school choice for students in grades 7-12 will allow students to choose secondary schools that are better aligned to their personal learning aspirations which will no doubt translate into higher achievement levels.

Goal #3: Maximize Operational Efficiencies

The Committee identified the following opportunities to meet this goal by merging the districts:

- A single district will allow for greater sharing of resources, including staff FTEs, at the elementary level.
- A single district creates one treasurer and one audit greatly simplifying the financial organization of the districts.
- A single district consolidates payroll functions by creating one employer of record.

Goal #4: Promotes Transparency and Accountability

The Committee identified the following opportunities to meet this goal by merging the districts:

- This merger would create a single school district where there are currently three. A single district with a single tax rate will promote greater transparency to tax payers, and enable greater accountability of the district's finances.
- A single school board creates one point of contact for parents and community members PK-12.

Goal #5: Services Provided at a Cost that Parents, Voters, and Taxpayers Value

The Committee identified the following opportunities through merging the districts:

- The financial analysis of the proposed merger indicates education spending will be reduced significantly with the implementation of school choice in grades 7-12.
- This merger leverages incentives available to merging districts including tax rate reductions, preserving revenue currently provided through the Small Schools Grant program, and the future utilization of the 3.5% hold harmless provision for a loss of equalized pupils if necessary.

Projected Tax Rate Implications

FY2018 Financial Information

A formal study of the financial implications of merging these districts was completed in the summer of 2017. The Committee used this information to focus its analysis on Option #1 where the districts were merged and Black River was shut down in favor of implementing school choice in grades 7-12. The financial modelling for this analysis was based on using FY2018 financial information to determine the potential effect of merging on the tax rate. The FY2018 financial information used for this analysis is summarized in the tables below.

Table 1: Education Spending, FY2015-FY2018

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Ludlow	\$1,795,025	\$1,818,425	\$1,735,560	\$1,777,370
Mt. Holly	\$1,306,851	\$1,266,806	\$1,300,027	\$1,339,301
UD #39	\$3,754,808	\$3,256,924	\$3,228,004	\$3,054,451

Table 2: Equalized Pupils, FY2015-FY2018

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Ludlow	117.29	110.00	103.29	102.23
Mt. Holly	79.42	72.82	74.31	83.50
UD #39	194.52	195.62	193.11	177.41

Table 3: Pre-CLA Tax Rates, FY2015-FY2018

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Ludlow	\$1.6153	\$1.7302	\$1.7321	\$1.7255
Mt. Holly	\$1.7368	\$1.8207	\$1.8034	\$1.5919
UD #39	\$1.7232	\$1.7425	\$1.7231	\$1.7087

The Option #1 Model: Education Spending

In this model, education spending would change because costs associated with operating Black River would be replaced with the costs with providing tuition. Also, transportation costs would change since it is assumed all student transportation would be provided by the new district, unlike the current arrangement where Ludlow receives its transportation through the town's municipal transit services.

Current enrollment of Black River indicates the new district would have to tuition 131 students. Under Vermont law, the new district would be responsible for providing the full tuition to any public school or the union district average tuition amount to any approved independent school. Since the announced tuition rates of regional public schools are usually higher than the union average rates, the public school rates were used in the model. The table below summarizes the most recent "allowable" tuition rates for area secondary schools.

Table 4: 2015-2016 Allowable Tuition Rates for Regional Secondary Schools

	Tuition Rate
Black River High School	\$17,368
Mill River High School	\$15,053
Green Mountain Union HS	\$14,279

Allowable tuition rates are determined by the State by November 1st in the year following the prior school year, and are the actual tuition rates sending districts must pay. For the purposes of this analysis, \$16,000 was used as an assumed secondary tuition rate. With 131 students, the secondary tuition cost for the new district would be \$2,096,000.

To make a comparison to current secondary costs, two other costs centers were included, special education and transportation, since the new district would likely have these additional secondary costs beyond tuition costs. It is assumed special education costs (\$452,871) and revenues (\$182,867) would remain the same as budgeted in the UD #39 budget. The net different between these budgeted costs and revenues is an additional \$270,004 in education spending.

Mount Holly's full transportation costs and applicable revenues are already represented in its education spending. Ludlow Municipal Transit had budgeted expenditures of \$238,895 and revenues of \$9,300. Some of their services included non-school services, but for the purposes of this analysis \$229,565 was used as an estimated cost (expenditures minus revenues) since the school transportation costs represent a significant percent of their total costs. This amount was further reduced by 40% since bringing these costs into the new district would make them eligible for state reimbursement. This reimbursement is made in the year after the services are provided, but to make a good comparison they were included in the same year. With 40% reimbursement, the new district would have additional net student transportation costs of \$137,727 for Ludlow students.

The supervisory union had completed some modelling of a unified union governance structure and concluded education spending could be reduced by \$60,000 through changes in staffing patterns and reductions in other administrative costs. These savings were included in the education spending model below along with the other variables described previously.

Table 5: Model Education Spending, Option #1

	Education Spending
Ludlow Town School District	\$1,777,370
Mount Holly Town School District	\$1,339,301
Secondary Tuition	\$2,096,000
Secondary Special Education	\$270,004
Ludlow Transportation	\$137,727
Administrative Savings	(\$60,000)
Total	\$5,560,402

Option #1: Equalized Pupils

This model would create a single unified union school district. The equalized pupils from the town school districts and the equalized pupils of Union District #39 would be aggregated together into a single district.

Table 6: Equalized Pupils, Option #1

	FY2018
Ludlow	102.23
Mount Holly	83.50
UD #39	177.41
Total	363.14

Option #1: Tax Rate

With model education spending and equalized pupils, the model tax rate for this governance option could be determined. The model yields an Education Spending per Equalized Pupil amount of \$15,312. This amount was then divided by a Property Yield value (\$10,076) to determine a tax rate of \$1.52.

To make the comparison to current tax rates, the composite tax rate for each community was determined. This rate is calculated by determining the percent of each town's students that attends school at the town school district level and at Union District #39. This percent is then applied to the tax rate of each of these districts. Table 7 shows the current tax rates compared to the model tax rate.

Table 7: Model Tax Rate Compared to Current Tax Rates, Option #1

	% by District		Prorated Rates		Current Rate	Model Rate	Variance
	Town	UD #39	Town	UD #39			
Ludlow	48.15%	51.85%	\$0.83	\$0.89	\$1.72	\$1.52	(\$0.20)
Mt. Holly	55.36%	44.64%	\$0.88	\$0.76	\$1.64	\$1.52	(\$0.12)

Since this merger would qualify as a side-by-side RED structure, it would qualify for tax incentives. In the first year of the merger, this incentive would further reduce the tax rate by \$0.08.

Table 8: Model Tax Rate with Incentives

	Current Rate	Model Rate	w/ Tax Incentive	Total Variance
Ludlow	\$1.72	\$1.52	\$1.44	(\$0.28)
Mt. Holly	\$1.64	\$1.52	\$1.44	(\$0.20)

Conclusion

It is impossible to determine the actual future tax rate since that calculation would be based on future amounts of education spending, equalized pupils, and the variables of Vermont's education funding system determined by the General Assembly on an annual basis. When FY2018 financial information is used to model the impact of merging on the tax rate, however, merging the districts and closing Black River would seem to save the districts about \$610,720 in education spending. This translates to a \$0.20 tax rate decrease for Ludlow and a \$0.12 tax rate decrease for Mount Holly before incentives are applied. The incentives further lower the tax decrease for each district by another 8 cents in the first year of the merger.

Hold Harmless Provision for Equalized Pupils

The law provides a mechanism in the education funding system to protect a district from a significant decrease in the number of students. This mechanism protects a district to a maximum of a 3.5% decrease in equalized pupils even though the district might have a greater decrease. In the past, this has been an important consideration for Ludlow and Mount Holly. Act 46 grandfathers merging districts in at 3.5% and gradually reduces the rate for non-merging districts. This merger would ensure the new district would have access to the full 3.5% in the future if it was applicable.

School Closure

This merger would qualify as a Regional Education District (RED) as described by Act 153. This law provides some protection to a community that might be concerned about a merged school district closing its school at some point in the future. Under Act 153, the community of a school must first give its approval before a school can be closed. This default protection extends for a period of four years after a merger.

The Committee desired to expand upon these protections for elementary school closure. Article 7 states no elementary school shall be closed without a unanimous vote of the school board and an affirmative vote of the town in which the elementary school it is located.

Expanded Elementary School Choice

The Committee believes one of the potential advantages of this merger is that it will allow for school choice among the elementary schools operated by the District since the current district boundaries will no longer confine student attendance to the elementary school in their town of residence. The districts currently allow some elementary school choice on a limited basis. The Committee has included language

The Committee believes one of the potential advantages of this merger is that it will allow for school choice among the elementary schools operated by the District since the current district boundaries will no longer confine student attendance to the elementary school in their town of residence.

under Article 14 to require the new school board to enact a policy to expand elementary school choice. The Committee believes expanded elementary school choice would be beneficial for both students and families, and support the broader goals of improving the quality and equity of educational opportunities for all students.

Board Governance and Representation

The Committee believes it is important to ensure both communities have an equal number of representatives on the new school board. To do this, all school board members would be elected through “at-large” voting. At-large voting means that all school board members would be elected by all voters of the new district. For example, a Mount Holly resident wishing to run for the board would file a petition with the Clerk of the Town of Mount Holly with the requisite number of signatures of Mount Holly residents to get on the ballot. At the election, however, the Mount Holly candidate along with the full ballot of board member candidates from Ludlow and Mount Holly would be voted on by the voters of the new district not just Mount Holly voters.

The Committee proposes the following board configuration of the new district.

Table 9: Board Configuration

District	Number of Representatives
Ludlow	4
Mount Holly	4
Total	8

Student Transportation

The implementation of school choice for students in grades 7-12 could impact transportation routes and costs. The new school board and the TRSU board will have to monitor the impact of school choice on transportation costs and seek to strike a balance between ensuring equitable access to schools and school activities for all students while at the same time keeping an eye on costs. The Committee believes

an approach to secondary transportation that ensure students have access to both Mill River and Green Mountain High Schools is a good approach, while transportation to other schools not receiving large numbers of the district's students should be avoided. Ultimately, this issue will need to be resolved through the transportation policies of the new districts and the TRSU.

Articles of Agreement

The Merger Study Committee recommends the following Articles of Agreement be adopted by each necessary and advisable school district for the creation of a Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 unified union school district to be named the Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified Union School District, hereinafter referred to as the “New Unified Union District.”

Article 1: Necessary and Advisable School Districts

The Ludlow Town School District and the Mount Holly Town School District are necessary districts to the merger. Union School District #39 (Black River) is also a necessary district to the merger, but its interests are represented by the voters of each of its member districts.

If the New Unified Union District is created, then the districts that voted in favor of merger shall be referred to herein as the “Forming Districts”. The term shall also include Union School District #39 except where it clearly refers solely to the town school districts.

Article 2: Additional Districts Advisable to the Merger

There are no additional districts being recommended as advisable districts to the merger.

Article 3: Grades to be Operated by the Union School District

The New Unified Union District will operate schools in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Six. The New Unified Union District will also operate Black River Union High School until no later than June 30, 2020. The School Board of the New Unified Union District shall determine the timeline for closing Black River Union High School. After the New Unified Union District has ceased operating Black River Union High School, it will pay tuition in accordance with the law to provide for the education of its students in grades seven through twelve.

Article 4: New Schools to be Constructed

No new school construction is necessary to, or proposed for, the formation of the New Unified Union District.

Article 5: First Year of District Operations

The New Unified Union District will provide for the transportation of students, assignment of staff, curricula, education programs, and student services that, to the extent practicable, are consistent with the contracts, policies and practices that were in existence during the year immediately preceding the first year of the New Unified Union District’s operation.

The New Unified Union District Board of School Directors will comply with 16 VSA Chapter 53, Subchapter 3, regarding the recognition of the representatives of employees of the respective forming

districts as the representatives of the employees of the New Unified Union District and will commence negotiations pursuant to 16 VSA Chapter 57 for teachers and 21 VSA Chapter 22 for other employees. In the absence of new collective bargaining agreements on July 1, 2018, the New Unified Union District Board will comply with the pre-existing master agreements pursuant to 16 VSA Chapter 53, Subchapter 3. The New Unified Union District Board shall honor all individual employment contracts that are in place for the forming districts on June 30, 2018, until their respective termination dates.

The Board of School Directors of the New Unified Union District shall make all subsequent decisions relative to the operation of the new district consistent with state and federal laws and these Articles of Agreement.

Article 6: Funds, Indebtedness, and Special Funds

All operating surpluses and/or deficits of any of the Forming Districts shall become the property, and/or the obligation of the New Unified Union District, effective July 1, 2018. Those Forming Districts with surpluses or remaining reserve funds as of the close of business on June 30, 2018, will transfer all such funds to the New Unified Union District. Reserve funds or like accounts held by school districts prior to June 30, 2018, that have specified conditions of use will be used in accordance with said provisions. All debts or obligations of the forming districts shall be transferred to and assumed by the New Unified Union District.

The debt and funds specified above shall be transferred to the New Unified Union District in accordance with procedures and timelines established by the New Unified Union District Board following its organizational meeting, as further discussed in Article 12.

Article 7: Real and Personal Property

1. No later than June 30, 2018, the forming districts will convey to the New Unified Union School District, for the sum of One Dollar, and subject to all encumbrances of record, all school-related real estate and personal property owned by them, including all school-related land, buildings, and contents.
2. Disposal of Real Estate. In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the New Unified Union School District Board of School Directors determines, in its discretion, that any of the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by one or more of the forming districts is or are unnecessary to the continued operation of the New Unified Union School District and its educational programs, the New Unified Union School District shall convey such real property, for the sum of One Dollar, and subject to all encumbrances of record, the assumption or payment of all outstanding bonds and notes and the repayment of any school construction aid or grants as required by Vermont law, to the town in which it is located, except as provided below for any properties conveyed to the New Unified Union District by Union District #39.
3. In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the New Unified Union District Board of School Directors determines, in its discretion, that any of the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by Union District #39 is or are unnecessary to the continued operation

of the New Unified Union District and its educational programs, the New Unified Union District shall sell such real property, subject to all encumbrances of record, the assumption or payment of all outstanding bonds and notes and the repayment of any school construction aid or grants as required by Vermont law, to the Town of Ludlow for One Dollar.

4. The conveyance of any school properties to a town shall be conditioned upon the town owning and utilizing the real property for community and public purposes for a minimum of five years. In the event a town elects to sell the real property prior to five years of ownership, the town shall compensate the New Unified Union District for all capital improvements and renovations completed after the formation of the New Unified Union District and prior to the sale to the town. In the event a town elects not to acquire ownership of such real property, the New Unified Union District shall, pursuant to Vermont statutes, sell the property upon such terms and conditions as established by the New Unified Union District Board of School Directors.
5. The School Board of the New Unified Union District shall not close or discontinue the use of any elementary school within its boundaries without a unanimous vote of the school board and an affirmative vote of the town in which the elementary school it is located.

Article 8: Board of School Directors

The New Unified Union District Board of Directors shall be composed of eight (8) directors. Directors shall be nominated from the legal voters of each town school district and shall be elected on an at-large basis by Australian Ballot vote by the voters of the New Unified Union District. Directors shall have equal votes and shall be allocated as follows: Ludlow four (4) directors and Mount Holly four (4) directors.

Article 9: Initial Board Member Terms of Office and Election

The term of office for School Directors elected on November 28, 2017 shall be one, two, or three years, respectively, plus the additional months between the date of the Organizational Meeting of the New Unified Union District (16 VSA § 706j), when the initial school directors will begin their term of office, and the date of the New Unified Union District's annual meeting in the spring of 2018, as established under 16 VSA § 706j. Thereafter, terms of office shall be three (3) years and shall begin and expire on the date of the New Unified Union District's Annual Meeting. The following table establish the dates of the initial terms of office for directors of the New Unified Union District.

Initial Term	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
Next Election	2019	2020	2021
Ludlow	1	2	1
Mount Holly	1	2	1
Total	2	4	2

Article 10: Vote to Form the Union School District

The proposal forming this Union School District will be presented to the voters of each town school district on November 28, 2017. The candidates for the new Union School District Board of School Directors will be elected on the same date, as required by law. Nominations for the office of union school director representing any district/town shall be made by filing with the clerk of that school district/town proposed as a member of the union, a statement of nomination signed by at least 30 voters in that district or one percent of the legal voters in the district, whichever is less, and accepted in writing by the nominee. A statement shall be filed not less than 30 nor more than 40 days prior to the date of the vote.

Article 11: Annual Budget and Australian Budget Voting

The New Unified Union District voters shall vote on the budget and other public questions by Australian ballot with polling places provided in each member town. Ballots will be counted in each member town and the results delivered to the New Unified Union District Clerk. The outcome of the vote shall be established by the majority of the votes cast.

Article 12: Operating Date

Upon an affirmative vote of the electorates of each district and upon compliance with 16 VSA § 706g, the New Unified Union District Board shall have and exercise all of the authority which is necessary in order for it to prepare for full educational operations beginning on July 1, 2018. The New Unified Union District Board shall, between the date of its organizational meeting under 16 VSA § 706j and June 30, 2018, undertake planning and related duties necessary to begin operation of the New Unified Union District on July 1, 2018, including preparing for and negotiating contractual agreements, preparing and presenting the budget for fiscal year 2019, preparing for the first District Annual Meeting, and transacting any other lawful business that comes before the Board, provided, however, that the exercise of such authority by the New Unified Union District shall not be construed to limit or alter the authority and/or responsibilities of the forming districts that will remain in existence during the transition period for the purpose of completing any business not given to the New Unified Union District.

Article 13: Forming Districts Cease to Exist

On July 1, 2018, when the New Unified District becomes fully operational and begins to provide educational services to students, the forming districts shall cease all educational operations and shall remain in existence for the sole purpose of completing any outstanding business not given to the New Unified Union District under these articles and state law. Such business shall be completed as soon as practicable, but in no event any later than December 31, 2018 when the forming districts shall cease to exist.

Article 14: Elementary School Choice

By July 1, 2018, the School Board shall adopt a policy providing a process for parents or guardians to request that their child attend any elementary school operated by the New Unified Union District. This elementary school choice policy shall consider issues including, but not limited to, transportation, socio-economic equity, proximity to the selected school building, attendance of siblings, and the relative capacities of the schools.

Article 15: Financial Analysis of Merger

By July 1, 2023, the School Board shall complete a detailed financial analysis of the merger of these districts, and shall publish a report of its findings and analysis to the public.

Article 16: Local Community Input

The New Unified Union District Board shall provide opportunity for local input on policy and budget development. Structures to support and encourage public participation within the New Unified District, such as school committees, will be established by the New Unified District Board or Modified Union District Board on or before June 30, 2018.

Appendices and Data

Town Demographic Data

These data come from the most recent US Census information.

Table 10: Town Demographic Data

	Ludlow	Mt. Holly
Total Population	1,963	1,237
Percent of Population Under 5	3.9%	4.0%
Median Age	49.5	47.7
Total Households	930	541
Family Households	507	361
Median Family Income	\$44,453	\$60,236
Individuals Below Poverty Level	14.1%	7.2%

2017 School Enrollment by Grade

Table 11: 2017 School Enrollment by Grade

Grade	Ludlow	Mount Holly	Black River
Pre-K	20	27	
KG	15	15	
1	13	17	
2	10	9	
3	13	17	
4	19	10	
5	15	10	
6	11	6	
7			22
8			23
9			20
10			29
11			30
12			11
Total PreK-6	116	111	
Total 7-12			135