

To: Selectboards and Town Administrators/Coordinators
From: Alan Genovese, STRPB Chairperson; Greg Snedeker, Vice Chair/Secretary/Treasurer
CC: Planning Board Members
RE: Updates on activities as we approach the finish line in the Fall!
Date: July 15, 2026

We trust you enjoyed all the festivities associated with our country's 250 Anniversary. This great experiment, "Government by the People" continues to evolve as people make important decisions through our local elections. This includes the upcoming vote on whether or not to form a new regional school district. We all know how important it is to have residents fully informed before they vote. We plan to have several recorded presentations available on our website and on the public access channels. Additional "in-person" presentations will be held in September. Our website has been updated with more relevant information on the home page.

DOR Grant: This grant ended on June 30th. However, the Planning Board still has work to do in preparation for a vote in the Fall. It is noteworthy that these dedicated volunteers have given so much of their time without any compensation, many for the duration of 7 years, for the sole betterment of our students' future education. Such is the nature of what happens in small communities. Without them it would be difficult to oversee town business.

Regional Agreements: I believe you are aware that our attorney, Kevin Bresnahan, of Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehan, LLP provided some suggested edits to both RAs. These non-substantive changes helped to clarify intent in a few areas and aligned common language for consistency. These were shared and accepted by officials as presented. Both RAs are on our [website](#).

Meeting with the Commissioner of Education: On June 25th, Greg and I met with the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Financial Officer, Chief of Staff and the two DESE officials that worked with us on the Regional Agreements. This was an incredibly productive meeting. They totally get it! More students provides more opportunities for them and the Commissioner complimented us on the flyer we created for our residents. It was also acknowledged that just providing more money does not address the structural decline that districts are facing. Any additional money appropriated to small districts will yield far more benefits, especially at the middle and high school levels if the student population is larger. The meeting concluded with the Commissioner saying that if the towns vote to regionalize DESE is interested in forming a partnership with the new district to help in its implementation.

Ballot Question: Many thanks to town administrators and Selectboards who inquired about an update from our legislators regarding the status of the Ballot Election. Kevin, Greg and I provided feedback on the language being proposed in late May. We received an update last week. I still do not understand why this process is taking so long because Greg, Jane Dutcher and I provided testimony at a Joint Committee Hearing on April 6th, along with your written testimony supporting a Ballot Election in all towns. Hopefully, we will know soon.

Potential Meeting with Town Clerks: It seems prudent to have a meeting with all Town Clerks as soon as possible, before they get busy preparing for the primaries. Listening to the various perspectives on what our best options are regardless of the venue for voting will benefit everyone. Some potential topics might be: Do we try to have all towns vote on the same day? Do we have Warwick vote first on the Six Town and if it passes then residents will know that both the Six Town and Five Town RA Ballot questions will be in play in Gill, Bernardston, Leyden, Montague and Northfield ballots. If Warwick votes yes, then only the 5 town ballot question will be relevant. Do we want to coordinate the Special Election with another election (dual election in November) or the Tech Ballot question? If the legislators do not support the Ballot Question being voted at the polls in all towns, then how do we want to schedule our Special Town Meetings?

The reason for these conversations is to address the timing issue with the respective towns so the Planning Board sends out its notification for the towns to vote on the RAs in a collaborative, collective manner. The town Clerks in Warwick, Gill and Montague have provided some insight to consider. We plan on reaching out to them to see if a collective meeting is possible. If you have any ideas, please pass them along to your town clerks.

Dissemination of Information:

Regional Agreements - The regional agreements need to be filed with the Clerk and it would be helpful to have a copy in a prominent place in our Town Halls, with a note not to remove them from the building. There is a cover page that will tell people where else they can find them, such as the library (which includes the days and hours the library is open) and of course directs folks to our website.

In Warwick, the Tax Collector and the Town Clerk have agreed to have their names and office hours on this cover letter so people can sit and review them in their office if they wish so additional copies have been made for them. We will be sending out a sample cover letter to Planning Board members to coordinate this effort.

Flyers and Postcard size informational materials - Additionally, we will have these available in Town Halls, on your informational bulletin boards, and elsewhere, so people will be encouraged to take them and visit the 6towns.org website for more information. Planning Board members will also be distributing these materials in stores, businesses and other prominent places.

Website: Thanks to the help of Dorinda Bell-Up, Lindsay McCarthy and our consultant, Mary Broderick, the website has been updated again as noted above. We want the information that people are most interested in at the forefront. In the next couple of days we will be turning our attention to updating the Q&A tab and then updating it on a weekly basis. This is where you can help. If you hear any misinformation or misunderstanding of information please bring it to Greg's attention ASAP so we can address it. Also, if you have questions or concerns, please let us

know. We are here to serve you! The more accurate information residents have, the better informed they will be prior to voting.

All Town Meeting: There were two All Town Meetings (Bernardston and Gill) where the Planning Board presented information. Prior to the vote in our towns, it might be a good idea to hold one of these in September so we can review the benefits, explain what is happening in our districts with declining enrollment and what you can expect financially if something different doesn't change in the future. Greg has developed an econometric model analysis that demonstrates very clearly how districts with low enrollment respond to this challenge. (see below)

Panel Forum: Wouldn't it be interesting to have a panel forum between school officials and some members of the Planning Board, moderated by a neutral third party, to discuss the educational benefits and financial implications presented by PVRSD and then have STRPB present its findings and the financial implications of forming a larger regional school district? All this followed by questions and answers directed to both panels. Any thoughts on this idea?

Econometric Model: Greg has spent several months developing a model that analyzes the relationship between enrollment and cost pressure due to the rigidity of fixed costs at each level of education (elementary, middle, and high). The analysis helps shed light on what happens to districts (especially at the middle and high school levels) when enrollment declines and how administrations attempt to address rising cost pressure. Using some of our remaining grant funds we engaged the services of Data for Decisions, LLC who verified and supported Greg's findings. Coincidentally, discussions and comments made at the recent Town Meetings and School Committee meetings support Greg's findings. This model clearly demonstrates that **if we want to make changes that will benefit students, we need to do something different. It is NOT just about getting more state money as money cannot manufacture students. Our plan does! It's utilizing this money more efficiently!**

If you have any questions, concerns, suggestions, please feel free to email us or call. Your Town Administrator/Coordinator has our phone numbers. Sometimes a simple phone call can avoid a long thread of emails! We look forward to working with you as we approach the finish line. We remain optimistic that informed voters will approve the formation of the Great River regional School District.

Thank you for taking the time to review this lengthy email. We hope this update was helpful. Best wishes in the summer months!

Related documents attached or links to them:

Five and Six Town Regional Agreements

Flyer and Postcard Printed Materials

Econometric Model

6town.org website