

September 10, 2021

Dear Members of the Strafford Community,

We write to you with the intention of providing some information about the upcoming vote on the future of the 7th and 8th grades, i.e., “the Middle School,” at Newton School. In this packet you will find information about the recent history of the middle school issue in Strafford; information about where, when, and how to vote; a letter from Principal Thompson; a sample ballot; and financial information regarding the relative cost of maintaining or closing the 7th and 8th grades.

The financial information included in this mailing was assembled in September, 2021 and is the best information we have available to us at this time.

The question to be voted on October 5th, 2021 is whether or not we will continue to provide education to 7th and 8th grade students at the Newton School. The alternative is to tuition out the 7th and 8th grades just as we do for high school students. In advance of the vote, the Strafford Board of School Directors will host an informational meeting on Saturday, September 25, 2021 from 1:00PM-3:00PM at Barrett Hall. If you attend in person, you will be required to wear a mask. You will also be able to attend this meeting virtually, if you prefer, via Google Meet.

<https://meet.google.com/ypq-qjit-nwm>

Dial-in info (in case needed or if no Google account, call charges apply)
678-653-3979
PIN: 266 017 704#

A Brief History

During the winter of 2018-2019, the School Board hired consultant Dawn Ellis to perform a survey regarding the climate and culture of the Newton School. Surveys and interviews were conducted in early 2019 and the report created by Dawn Ellis was released to the community in May, 2019.

At Town Meeting in March 2019, there was a discussion surrounding the creation of what ultimately became the Newton Middle School Task Force, which was formally created in June, 2019. The Task Force conducted its work during the summer of 2019 and presented its final report to the School Board in October, 2019.

During the summer of 2019, a series of executive (private) sessions were held in which the School Board heard from families of middle school students.

Former Principal Greg Bagnato announced his resignation in May, 2019. On July 1st, 2019, Tracy Thompson began her position as interim principal, which was made permanent the following year.

In March, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed our lives. Plans for the School Board to hold community meetings on the subject of the middle school and the Task Force report were put on temporary hold in April, 2020.

September 10, 2021

Newton Community,

The conversations and discussions surrounding the middle school at Newton have taken place for many years. The timeline included in this mailing demonstrates the overall work and changes that have taken place and what has led to this final vote. Considering all this information is an important part of your decision. I offer the following facts to help you in making this decision.

Newton currently has a stabilized enrollment. Current total enrollment at the Newton School is 100 students. In 2020 our enrollment was 92 students (83 in person and 9 at the Virtual Academy established due to COVID). The 2021-2022 class sizes are listed in the chart below and represent an average class size of eleven students with a total enrollment to date of 98 students.

Current Class Size: 2021-2022 School Year (as of 9/4/21)

PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13	10	13	14	12	13	13	9	13	3

The middle school education offered at Newton currently aligns with the programs, expectations, and opportunities needed for a high quality middle school. The community is encouraged to watch the presentation given by Nancy Doda on December 16, 2020. She shares a great deal of information on the needs of middle school aged children and the structure and classroom size most beneficial to providing them a high quality education that meets their academic and social-emotional needs.

I would also encourage you to view the community presentation which was given on April 13, 2021 by our current middle school staff and Scott Thompson of the Tarrant Institute. Hi-lights from this work will provide you an understanding of the current practices at the Newton School and the goals for the future. There have been many changes in the structure of the middle school at Newton. We know it is important to provide opportunities for students to mix across grade levels to increase their social groups. We currently consider our middle school to be grades 5-8 to allow for more social interaction. We also have increased the number of teachers who work with students to grow the interactions with adults and are looking for more opportunities to build the leadership capacity of our students by seeking out individual opportunities which allow students to follow their individual passions. Below are some key points outlining the current teaching at Newton.

Goals:

- Multi-aged opportunities to widen the social connections between grade levels
- Build the team capacity of our students and teachers
- Access community extension opportunities aligned to student interests
- Focus on transferable Skills and proficiencies
- Multigrade advisory programs with regular team building activities across all grade levels

Finally, regardless of the decision that is made, the Newton School is committed to a high quality education for all of our students. This work includes direct instruction targeted to student needs, high quality programming, and regular analysis of performance and assessment data. Most importantly, we are committed to building strong relationships with students and the larger community. Finalizing the structure of the Newton School will allow us to move forward and build sustainable programs and budgets that reflect what is truly needed to meet these goals.

Tracy Thompson, Principal

Former superintendent Bruce Labs announced his resignation in December, 2019 (effective June 30, 2020). Current WRVSU superintendent Jamie Kinnarney began his tenure on July 1st, 2020.

In the fall of 2020, the School Board began to work on a timeline for discussing the important points raised in the Task Force report and, ultimately, to hold the vote that is now approaching in the fall of 2021. This timeline was adopted by the School Board at its regular meeting in February, 2021.

The School Board held a series of special community meetings to address important points raised by the Task Force report. Each of these meetings afforded time for questions and comments after the presentation was completed.

- December 16, 2020: Nancy Doda, Ph.D., gave a presentation on designing developmentally-responsive middle grades.
- February 6, 2021: School Board members Glenn Wylie and Aaron Dotter gave a presentation on the financial and budgetary implications of maintaining vs. closing the 7th and 8th grades at Newton.
- April 13, 2021: Principal Tracy Thompson and Scott Thompson of the Tarrant Institute at UVM provided an overview of current instructional practices at the Newton Middle School and discussed research-based best practices.

These three presentations were all recorded. If you have not had a chance to see them, please contact a School Board member and they will share with you how to access them. For those who did not see the presentations by Nancy Doda and by Principal Thompson and Scott Thompson, we will provide a screening of both on September 23rd at 6:30pm at Barrett Hall (masks required). The School Board will host an informational meeting on September 25th, 2021 and then the vote will be conducted as follows.

Where, When and How to Vote

Voting will occur by Australian Ballot. A ballot will be mailed to each registered voter in Strafford no later than September 15, 2021. Once you receive your ballot you may vote any time by filling out the ballot and either:

- Mailing it to the Town Clerk's office using the provided envelope;
- Bringing it to the Town Clerk's office, either inside or in the deposit box outside the office;
- Or, if you wish to vote in person, on October 5, 2021, the polls will be open from 10:00AM-7:00PM at the Town Clerk's Office.

Detailed instructions on how to vote will accompany your ballot. All ballots must be at the Town Clerk's Office by 7:00PM on October 5, 2021 to be counted.

In closing, we would like to thank you for taking the time to review the information we provide here. We encourage you to attend the informational meeting on September 25th. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to any of us.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Dotter	Sarah Root	Meghan Teachout	Jessica Tidman	Glenn Wylie
Chair	Member	Member	Clerk	Vice Chair

Jamie Kinnarney, Superintendent of Schools
 Anda Adams, Chief Academic Officer of MTSS
 Annette Rhoades, Director of Special Services
 Tara Weatherell, Business Manager
 Raymond Ballou, Director of Technology
 and Communications



461 Waterman Road, Royalton, VT 05068
 Phone: 802-763-8840 Fax: 802-763-3235
 www.wrvsu.org

Memo:

To: Community Members of Strafford

From: Jamie Kinnarney, Superintendent of Schools, WRVSU and Tara Weatherell, Business Manager, WRVSU

Date: Friday, September 10, 2021

Subject: Pertinent Budget Information for the Town of Strafford regarding upcoming school structure vote

You will find tax sheets included with this document that should serve to provide the following information:

- **Scenario #1:** Strafford School District 22-23 Projected Expenditures, Revenues, Per Pupil Spending, and Tax Rate for Strafford while maintaining operations K-8 (current structure).
- **Scenario #2:** Strafford School District 22-23 Projected Expenditures, Revenues, Per Pupil Spending, and Tax Rate for Strafford if the town votes to tuition grades 7 and 8 beginning in the fall of 22 and educational programming remains the same.
- **Scenario #3:** Strafford School District 22-23 Projected Expenditures, Revenues, Per Pupil Spending, and Tax Rate for Strafford if the town votes to tuition grades 7 and 8 beginning the fall of 22 and K-6 programming is altered in order to stay under the penalty threshold. This scenario will require the following reductions in staff:
 - Reduce Principal from a 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to a .6 FTE
 - Reduce Guidance from a 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to a .6 FTE
 - Reduce Library from a .8 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to a .4 FTE
 - Remove World Language
 - Remove Outdoor Education
 - Remove Interventionist
 - Remove 1 Teaching position

These figures were derived from the current faculty/staff and by projecting the current 21-22 budgeted revenue, salary/benefit increases, and tuitioning out the projected number of 7th and 8th grade students.

The revenue was apportioned out based on what the school district is receiving from grants local/state/federal/small schools and other budgeted revenue from things such as rentals, etc.

Scenario	Total Expenses	Per Pupil Spending	Tax Rate
#1 Current Operating Structure	\$3,298,332	\$18,060.15	\$1.5958 before Common Level of Appraisal
#2 Structural change resulting in the tuitioning of grades 7&8 beginning in the fall of 2022 and K-6 educational programming remaining the same.	\$3,657,979	\$21,535.87	\$1.9030 before Common Level of Appraisal
#3 Structural change resulting in the tuitioning of grades 7 and 8 with K-6 educational programming being altered.	\$3,421,602	\$18,788.87	\$1.6602 before Common Level of Appraisal

***Minimum amount to be reduced to result in spending under the excess spending threshold is \$236,500**

STRAFFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
FY23 PROPOSED BUDGET PER FY22 STRUCTURE

TAX RATES		PRIOR YR BUDGET	CHG %
		\$3,354,119	-1.66%
		\$3,110,841	-1.79%
		\$18,389.94	-1.79%
		1.625	-1.79%
Budget	Act 68 Tax Factors	Property Yield	\$ 11,317
	3,298,332	Common Level of Appraisal	97.67%
Changes	0	Base rate fixed	1.0000
Total	3,298,332	VT Non-Residential rate	1.6120
- Local Revenue	(243,277)	1.6300	Final Per H.436
Education Spending	3,055,055	Adjustment for CLA	
Equalized Pupils	169.16	FY22 169.16	Estimated Actual Residential FY23 Tax Rate
Education Spending Per Pupil	\$ 18,060.15	\$18,789.00	1.6339 AFTER CLA
Less Exclusions	\$ 47.58		Estimate Actual Non-Residential FY23 Rate
PP over cap amount	\$ -		1.6505 AFTER CLA
Revised PP spending	\$ 18,060.15	Actual Residential Tax Rate FY22	1.6637
Equalized Residential Tax Rate BEFORE CLA	1.5958	Actual Non-Residential Rate FY22	1.6505
Equalized Non-Residential Rate BEFORE CLA	1.6120	Change in Tax Rates from FY22 to FY23	
Prior Year Per Pupil Cost	18,389.94	Actual Residential Tax Rate	(0.0298)
Act 68 per pupil change	-1.79%	Actual Non-Residential Rate	(0.0000)
	\$ 19,143.84	amount to cut .01 cent of tax rate	

INCOME SENSITIVITY CALCULATION			
PER PUPIL SPENDING			
/ INCOME YIELD			
X INCOME PERCENTAGE			
= TAX AMOUNT INCOME SENSITIVITY			
STRAFFORD/NEWTON			
\$	18,060.15	PER PUPIL SPENDING	
\$	13,770.00	INCOME YIELD	Final Per H.436
	2.74%	INCOME PERCENT	
3.59% INCOME SENSITIVITY			

STRAFFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
FY23 PROPOSED BUDGET TO TUITION GRADES 7&8

TAX RATES

	Act 68 Tax Factors	
Budget	3,657,979	
Changes	0	
Total	3,657,979	
- Local Revenue	(243,277)	
Education Spending	3,414,702	
Equalized Pupils	169.16	
Education Spending Per Pupil	\$ 20,186.22	
Less Exclusions	\$ 47.58	
PP over cap amount	\$ 1,349.64	
Revised PP spending	\$ 21,535.87	
Equalized Residential Tax Rate BEFORE CLA	1.9030	
Equalized Non-Residential Rate BEFORE CLA	1.6120	
Prior Year Per Pupil Cost	18,389.94	
Act 68 per pupil change	9.77%	
	\$ 17,944.10	amount to cut .01 cent of tax rate

PRIOR YR BUDGET	\$3,354,119	CHG % 9.06%
PRIOR YR ED FUND	\$3,110,841	9.77%
PRIOR YR PER PUPIL	\$18,389.94	17.11%
PRIOR YR TAX RATE BEFORE CLA	1.625	17.11%

Property Yield	\$ 11,317	10,998	Final Per H.436
Common Level of Appraisal	97.67%	101.65%	
Base rate fixed	1.0000		
VT Non-Residential rate	1.6120	1.6300	Final Per H.436

Adjustment for CLA

Estimated Actual Residential FY23 Tax Rate	1.9484	AFTER CLA
Estimate Actual Non-Residential FY23 Rate	1.6505	AFTER CLA

Actual Residential Tax Rate FY22	1.6637
Actual Non-Residential Rate FY22	1.6505

Change in Tax Rates from FY22 to FY23

Actual Residential Tax Rate	0.2847
Actual Non-Residential Rate	(0.0000)

INCOME SENSITIVITY CALCULATION
PER PUPIL SPENDING
/ INCOME YIELD
X INCOME PERCENTAGE
= TAX AMOUNT INCOME SENSITIVITY

STRAFFORD/NEWTON			
\$	21,535.87	PER PUPIL SPENDING	
\$	13,770.00	INCOME YIELD	Final Per H.436
	2.74%	INCOME PERCENT	

4.29% INCOME SENSITIVITY

STRAFFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
FY23 PROPOSED BUDGET TO TUITION 7&8TH GRADERS TO BE BELOW THRESHOLD

TAX RATES		CHG %		
		PRIOR YR BUDGET	\$3,354,119	2.01%
		PRIOR YR ED FUND	\$3,110,841	2.17%
		PRIOR YR PER PUPIL	\$18,389.94	2.17%
		PRIOR YR TAX RATE BEFORE CLA	1.625	2.17%
Budget	Act 68 Tax Factors	Property Yield	\$ 11,317	10,998 Final Per H.436
Changes	3,421,602	Common Level of Appraisal	97.67%	101.65%
Total	0	Base rate fixed	1.0000	
- Local Revenue	3,421,602	VT Non-Residential rate	1.6120	1.6300 Final Per H.436
Education Spending	(243,277)	Adjustment for CLA		
	3,178,325	Estimated Actual Residential FY23 Tax Rate	1.6998	AFTER CLA
Equalized Pupils	169.16	Estimate Actual Non-Residential FY23 Rate	1.6505	AFTER CLA
Education Spending Per Pupil	\$ 18,788.87	Actual Residential Tax Rate FY22	1.6637	
Less Exclusions	\$ 47.58	Actual Non-Residential Rate FY22	1.6505	
PP over cap amount	\$ -	Change in Tax Rates from FY22 to FY23		
Revised PP spending	\$ 18,788.87	Actual Residential Tax Rate	0.0361	
Equalized Residential Tax Rate BEFORE CLA	1.6602	Actual Non-Residential Rate	(0.0000)	
Equalized Non-Residential Rate BEFORE CLA	1.6120			
Prior Year Per Pupil Cost	18,389.94			
Act 68 per pupil change	2.17%			
	\$ 19,143.84	amount to cut .01 cent of tax rate		

INCOME SENSITIVITY CALCULATION
 PER PUPIL SPENDING
 / INCOME YIELD
 X INCOME PERCENTAGE
 = TAX AMOUNT INCOME SENSITIVITY

STRAFFORD/NEWTON	
\$ 18,788.87	PER PUPIL SPENDING
\$ 13,770.00	INCOME YIELD Final Per H.436
2.74%	INCOME PERCENT

3.74% INCOME SENSITIVITY

**TOWN OF STRAFFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
IN PERSON/REMOTE PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING
NOTICE and AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER 25, 2021**

The Town of Strafford School District Board of Directors will be holding a public informational hearing in person at Barrett Hall and by electronic means on **Saturday, September 25, 2021 at 1:00PM** to discuss the Australian ballot article on the October 5, 2021 Special Warning.

Information on how to access the remote hearing:

- Join via Google Meet <https://meet.google.com/ypq-qjit-nwm>
- Dial In: 678-653-3979 PIN: 266 017 704#
- The recording from the meeting will be posted to the Newton School website and Facebook page.

AGENDA FOR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

- Call to Order
- Additions or deletions to the agenda
 - o Public comment
- Review and discuss **Article I: Shall the legal voters of The Strafford Town School District continue to provide resident students in grade levels seven and eight educational programming at The Newton School.**
 - o Public comment
- Discussion of other non-binding business (if applicable)
- Entertain motion to adjourn hearing.

Dated this _____th day of September 2021 in Strafford, Vermont.

Strafford Board of School Directors

Aaron Dotter, Chair

Glenn Wylie, Vice Chair

Jessica Tidman, Clerk

Sarah Root, Member

Meghan Teachout, Member

Received for recording this ___ day of _____, 2021.

Lisa Bragg, School District Clerk
Town of Strafford School District

**STRAFFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
OCTOBER 5, 2021**

OFFICIAL SPECIAL MEETING BALLOT

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS: To vote for an article, fill in the oval  at the right.

ARTICLE ONE: Shall the legal voters of The Strafford Town School District continue to provide resident students in grade levels seven and eight educational programming at The Newton School?

YES

NO

