

***Are you aware of Ripton's recent vote to withdraw from the Addison Central School District (ACSD)?***

**Backstory:**

On January 12, 2021, the town of Ripton voted to withdraw from ACSD. This vote came after almost two years of failed attempts to engage the people in power to come up with creative solutions for Ripton Elementary School to stay open. It became certain that the school would close.

The townspeople of Ripton took action to defend the school, and now we need your help by ratifying the vote in your town. On town meeting day, March 2nd 2021, all towns in the ACSD (Bridport, Cornwall, Middlebury, Salisbury, Shoreham, and Weybridge) will be asked to vote on this issue. In spite of Ripton's vote by a significant majority to withdraw from ACSD, Ripton will rely on your vote to allow it to leave the ACSD and keep the Ripton Elementary School open.

**Q: How will Ripton's withdrawal affect my taxes?**

**A:** In all likelihood, you will not see any significant tax ramifications if Ripton withdraws. Even in the numbers recently put forth by the board in opposition to Ripton's departure, both scenarios (Ripton leaving and keeping its school or Ripton's school being closed but its students expected to attend an ACSD school) resulted in tax savings for the rest of the district. The latter scenario resulted in infinitesimally more savings (0.03% or 1/3 of a penny on the dollar).

Ripton has one of the smallest schools in the district, so it is also one of the most expensive to run. Without Ripton, the per pupil spending in the rest of the district is minimally impacted, and in one initial study, the per pupil spend actually decreased in the rest of the district with Ripton out of the equation. Also, keep in mind that, as it is modeled, Ripton would continue to contribute to ACSD's bottom line by tuitioning its secondary students to MUMS and MUHS. We feel confident that Ripton's departure will have a revenue-neutral effect on the other towns.

Below is an estimated cost projection put together by a Weybridge local and whose estimates were affirmed to be reasonable by former ACSD Business Manager, Brittany Gilman. Gilman agreed that, Ripton's withdrawal will have "negligible" tax implications for the other towns.

	<b>FY22 Proposed Budget</b>	<b>FY22 Projected Students</b>	<b>Cost Per Student</b>
<b>Ripton</b>	\$721,283	36**	\$20,036
<b>Weybridge</b>	\$693,575	36	\$19,266

<b>Bridport</b>	\$1,046,470	57	\$18,359
<b>Salisbury</b>	\$1,124,704	70	\$16,067
<b>Cornwall</b>	\$1,117,922	74	\$15,107
<b>Mary Hogan</b>	\$4,856,810	385	\$12,615
<b>Shoreham</b>	\$987,766	95	\$10,398
<b>Total With Ripton</b>	\$10,548,530	753	\$14,009
<b>Total Without Ripton</b>	\$9,827,247	717	\$13,706

\*\*These projections are based on the assumption that the sixth grade will be moved to MUMS and do not include tuition students from Hancock and Granville in the denominator

**Q: What will Ripton do if they win this vote?**

**A:** It will maintain its own elementary school. We will also continue to serve as an important resource for children from Hancock and Granville who are bussed over for elementary school. Our secondary students will continue to head down the mountain, as tuition students, most likely to MUMS and MUHS.

**Q: Will Ripton's withdrawal increase the likelihood that additional small schools will now be slated to close?**

**A:** The activism around this vote has contributed to the board recently putting the entire facilities master plan on hold. This is encouraging for everyone who feels protective of their community school. We believe that Ripton's self - initiated withdrawal will help the district's bottom line as far as finances, and thereby should not add to their incentive to close additional schools. In effect, we are asking for the same thing the board intended with their plans: to remove the expense of Ripton's school from the ACSD budget. In addition, Ripton's activism provides a model for other towns who feel their voice is not being heard by this school board.

**Q: Does Ripton still want to leave in spite of the facilities master plan being put on hold?**

**A:** It has been made very clear that there is no plan moving forward, which includes keeping Ripton Elementary School open. The master plan has been put on hold more than once, but not once has Ripton's school's survival been included in a list of alternative solutions. At this point, Ripton has legally voted to leave the district, so irregardless of the forward motion of the facilities plan, we now need the other towns to ratify our vote.

**Q: Is Ripton's withdrawal fair from the standpoint of equity?**

**A:** Ripton is seeking to maintain an institution that is based on equity. We want a tight-knit community where people of all ages won't slip through the cracks. We believe that maintaining a school at the center of that community sets a standard of accountability and success. If you poll current and future Ripton parents, you will hear that they are overwhelmingly in favor of keeping this school open.

**Q: How would Ripton's departure affect the tax burden on low and moderate income residents in Ripton?**

**A:** The school tax situations for a new Ripton district would be the same as they have been under ACSD. In other words, there is the homestead exemption and also the income exemption, meaning that school taxes apply only in full to the home and two acres rather than the total property holdings. As for income, I think that those below \$120,000 pay their school tax based on income rather than property value. That will be the same for Ripton residents in the new district, should the new district come to pass. There is also the prospect of the State House making changes in school funding legislation. There are current discussions at the state level about income taxes being the source of all school taxing purposes, but that seems to be not in play at present.

**Q: Where will Ripton's secondary students go?**

**A:** As for high school and middle school access, there is more decline in student population right now at the secondary levels than there is at the elementary levels, so we do not anticipate that the ACSD will fail to find room at MUMS and MUHS for our students. The real question is how the state will assign us to a supervisory union. We anticipate that Ripton will have school choice for our students, meaning that our school board can designate which secondary schools parents can choose for their children: it might be in Middlebury or Bristol or Vergennes or even other districts.

**Q: What will happen with Ripton's sixth-graders?**

**A:** The 6th grade question is a good one. This will be decided after a Ripton school board is formed should we win withdrawal. Town-wide polling and input will drive the future model for RES.

**Q: Will Ripton's departure dissolve the ACSD?:**

**A:** Based on the statute 16 V.S.A. § 724, there is a possibility that the State Board of Education can dissolve ACSD; however, when you consider "it shall [also] determine whether it is in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts remaining in the unified union school district that the unified union district continue to exist" you might realize that dissolution is actually a slim possibility and it's more likely the State Board would "declare that the unified union district shall continue to exist despite the withdrawal of [Ripton]."

The remaining ACSD students and staff will be reconfigured and “repurposed” based on seniority like what is currently happening in the district with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade move and the future closing of schools. Ripton withdrawing should not affect teachers who wish to remain employed by ACSD.

The full statute is here: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/16/011/00724>

*Provided by Save Our School, LLC*

*Molly Witters, President*

*Millard Cox, Vice-President*

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*[www.saveourschoolsvt.org](http://www.saveourschoolsvt.org)*