

Cornish School District SAU Planning Committee Report

Article III of the 2016 Cornish School District Warrant, SAU Withdrawal, asks Cornish voters whether or not the Cornish School District should withdraw from SAU 6. A 'yes' vote is a vote to withdraw from SAU 6 and become our own single district SAU. A 'no' vote is a vote to remain with SAU 6. The article to withdraw must pass by a 3/5 majority to take effect. The *Cornish School District SAU Withdrawal and Organization Plan* is available at www.cornishnh.net. Paper copies are available at the Cornish Elementary School. Below is a summary of the major points of the SAU Withdrawal Plan:

- The state of NH requires that school districts receive SAU services. SAUs ensure that school districts operate smoothly by helping school districts develop an educational mission and curriculum, comply with state and federal laws, negotiate contracts, pay employees, pay bills, organize transportation, write grants, etc. An SAU can provide these services to several districts, or an SAU can be a single school district.

Cornish is one of three school districts in SAU 6 along with Claremont and Unity. SAUs have their own budgets and their member districts each pay a share of the SAU budget to the SAU. Cornish paid \$221,000 to SAU 6 for the 2015/16 school year. The total amount paid by all the three SAU 6 districts for 2015/16 was \$1,866,730.

The Planning Committee has decided that becoming our own single district (just Cornish) SAU would be the best decision for students, the school, and the community. To become our own single district we need to withdraw, or end our legal relationship, with SAU 6. We feel that Cornish would have a full voice in how we govern our school if we were a single district SAU.

- As a small school, a part time Superintendent, Finance Director, and Special Education Director would serve the needs of the Cornish School District. We could either find people willing to work part time, or we could hire people who are already working part time somewhere else and want to increase their time. The Plainfield School District has a part time SAU staff with time available to do contract work for Cornish. The Cornish School District would not hire Plainfield staff individually but through a two to three year contract with the Plainfield's SAU 32. Because SAU 32 (Plainfield) is so similar to Cornish in size, we feel that contracting staff who are familiar with what small schools need will be the best way to meet the needs of our school.

A growing part of every school budget is technology. If Cornish withdraws from SAU 6, we would lose access to the SAU 6 Technology Office. Windsor Southeast Supervisor Union, a larger VT Supervisory Union, has built a computer network that we could join at a price that is much cheaper than the cost of building our own network just for Cornish.

The proposed partnerships with Plainfield and Windsor are based on contracts. **Cornish would not be merging or joining with any district.** The relationship between Cornish and Plainfield or Cornish and Windsor would be like a business contract between separate corporations.

- We looked at what we thought Cornish would pay SAU 6 in the 2017/18 school year and what we thought Cornish would spend on its own SAU in that same year. We found that having our own SAU could save the School District some money.
- If Cornish leaves SAU 6 in the 2017/18 school year, the two districts remaining (Claremont and Unity) would pay more to SAU 6. The increase for Claremont and Unity could be reduced if SAU 6 chose to trim its budget accordingly for the 2017/18 school year.

How much do we estimate it will cost Cornish to be our own SAU?

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF CORNISH WITHDRAWAL FROM SAU 6 FY18 CORNISH SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET	ESTIMATED Proposed Cornish SAU FY18 Budget	ESTIMATED SAU 6 FY18 Cornish Assessment	Difference (Cornish Proposed less SAU 6)	Percent Increase/ Decrease	ESTIMATED FY18 Cornish Tax Rate Impact* Inc/(Dec)
SAU Office	\$ 212,351	\$ 230,350	\$ (17,999)	-7.81%	
Anticipated District Budget Increase/Decrease	\$ (22,660)	\$ -			
ESTIMATED FY18 Impact without one-time costs	\$ 189,691	\$ 230,350	\$ (40,659)	-17.65%	\$ (0.23)
ADD: Anticipated one-time costs	\$ 22,400	\$ -			
ESTIMATED FY18 impact (includes one-time costs)	\$ 212,091	\$ 230,350	\$ (18,259)	-7.93%	\$ (0.10)
*Subject to change: ESTIMATED Tax Impact calculate using 2015 valuation					

- The Committee estimates that a Cornish SAU Office will be an expense of \$212,351 in the Cornish School District 2017/18 budget.
- There will be some decreases in our School District budget because of the way that we will reorganize our district as our own SAU. The decrease is estimated at (\$22,660).
- There will also be one-time costs for setting up the new SAU in the 2017/18 school year. The one-time costs are estimated at \$22,400.
- Taking the decreases and the one-time costs, the Cornish SAU Office is estimated to have a budget impact of about \$212,091.
- This is \$18,259 less than we estimate SAU 6 will cost Cornish in that same year.

Who decides?

The Cornish voters will decide at the 2016 School District Meeting. The article to withdraw from SAU 6 must pass by a 3/5 majority of the voters. If the School District votes to withdraw from SAU 6 in March of 2016, the actual withdrawal will not take place until July 1, 2017. The year between is called a transition year. The Committee has found that the School District will need to plan for about \$16,767 in legal, business, records transfer and technology transition expenses during the transition year.

Why go to all this trouble?

Our committee believes that giving Cornish voters a full voice in the administration, resources, and mission of the Cornish School District will give us the opportunity to provide our students with a school that is educationally and financially sustainable.

Respectfully,

The Cornish School District SAU Planning Committee

Heidi Jaarsma, Chair
 Bill Palmer, Vice-Chair
 Peter Lynch, Secretary
 Sandra Carlson

Justin Ranney
 Nicole Saginor
 Holly Taft