

Dear Community Members,

Good evening, thank you for coming and being a part of this meeting and dialogue. This budget is the first budget of the newly formed Oxbow Unified Union School District. This budget being presented tonight was developed and approved by each of the local school boards in our communities. We fully understand that there are concerns which surround this budget and we wish to encourage these to be vocalized and discussed during this meeting.

We feel it is important to let you know that we understand that both communities have been hurt through the process of Act 46. As the newly merged board, we are committed to bringing our towns together to provide the best educational opportunities for our children. This vote is about the budget and not affirming or denying ACT 46.

Below we have put together a question and answers sheet. We sincerely hope that this will aid you in your decision to support our budget and offer some potential talking points prior to tonight's vote. We thank you for your continued support of the children in our communities.

Sincerely the OUUSD Board.

Danielle Corti

Angela Colbeth

Melissa Gordon

Timm Judas

OUUSD Budget Vote FAQ

What is this new budget vote all about?

This is the first budget for the new consolidated school district. The merged budget is just the sum of all the school budgets that local school boards developed independently. This includes the budgets for: Newbury Elementary School, Bradford Elementary School, Oxbow High School and River Bend Career and Tech Center.

How does the tax rate work?

The big difference is in the tax rate that this merged budget assigns to each town. In the merged district, taxpayers in towns will pay one and the same education tax rate. However, that tax rate is adjusted by the common level of appraisal in each town (CLA). The CLA increases or decreases the tax rate based on each individual town's CLA.

What is going on with the Act 46 lawsuit right now? Why is Newbury voting on a local elementary school budget?

There is a Superior Court case in progress, which could wind up in the Vermont Supreme Court. Legally, the new district is set to operate on July 1. The Legislature did not pass any changes to the law this session. The Newbury School Board voted to warn a local budget as a back-up in case the court case overturns the decision to merge the school district. However, this budget cannot be used to operate the school on July 1 unless the law is changed. If the consolidated budget failed and the local budget passed, the local budget can't be used to run the school. That would require a change in the current law.

I'm hearing a lot about school district debt, what's that about?

Under current State law, all of the assets and debts of the local school districts transfer to the new merged district. This means that any operational surplus or deficit transfers, and assets transfer with their original stated intents, and any loans or bonds transfer as well. Under current State law, there is no mechanism to adjust the debt or assign it back to the original towns. There is a detailed explanation of the current debts in your budget materials.

What happens if the budget fails?

If the budget fails the new school district still needs to operate the school district on July 1. We need funds to pay bills, operate programs, and pay staff. Under current State law there is no default budget to operate on, because this is the district's first year in operation. If the budget fails we do not revert to local budgets, the law doesn't allow it. Not having a budget on July 1 would create a cash flow problem for the operation of the new district and endanger our ability to operate.

If the budget fails the school district is still created, and the new Unified Board still operates the new district. It does not change the merger.

