

From: Holcombe, Rebecca [Rebecca.Holcombe@vermont.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2015 1:17 PM
To: Springer, Darren; Johnson, Justin; Allen, Susan; Coriell, Scott
Subject: exec privilege

Resending to loop in Scott.

Their ask conflicts with our ask for a position back. It also misrepresents our staffing.

The real issues is that we have a problem in that the lines of authority here are muddy. I report to the Gov, not the board, and currently, the support for the Board is through the AOE. They are testing their wings and trying out a more assertive and independent role. It is a tough moment in time for that, given the delicate nature of their current work. Basically, they are testing what it means to have shifted the secretary to a cabinet position. I am not willing to supervise people who don't report to me and the Agency.

Effectively, this request creates a new bureaucracy to support the board, some of which is duplicative of work in house, and also one that is autonomous of the Agency. This is not necessarily good or bad, but it does put us in competition with the Board for resources, and it does necessarily alter our relationship with the board. In addition, folk in house have benefits of access to information necessary to do this work, but to which they will not have access as an autonomous board supported by three staffers.

This creates a more fractured system. It is what it is. How well it works will be a function of how well the board does its homework and understands the issues. I understand their impulse, but I am not sure they have fully thought through the implications.

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From: Holcombe, Rebecca
Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2015 9:19 AM
To: Springer, Darren; Johnson, Justin; Allen, Susan
Subject: Heads up

We need to discuss this as some point. See below. It is politically tricky. There are also a few inaccuracies, and also they are going full steam on this without thinking it through.

Board Of Education Seeks New Staff To Implement Consolidation Law
By HOWARD WEISS-TISMAN

The state Board of Education is considering asking lawmakers to approve funding for three new

positions it says are needed to administer Act 46, the state's new education consolidation law.

The board will vote at its Oct. 20 meeting on whether to forward the request to the chairs of the Senate and House appropriations committees.

The state Board of Education does not have paid staff members, but Chairman Stephan Morse says the board needs the help as districts begin to move ahead with consolidation.

"It would be a huge change," Morse said. "And we hope that the appropriations committees see the wisdom of it and understand that if Act 46 is going to be successful the state Board of Education is going to need its own independent staffing."

The board wants legal help, a staff support person and a facilitator who will work with school districts during the mergers and then report back to the board. The new staff members would work under the board chairman, Morse said.

The three jobs will cost about \$200,000 annually, according to an Agency of Education spokesperson.

"For Act 46 to succeed (and other state board requirements to be accomplished), it is essential that adequate staffing be provided," Morse says in a recent letter to lawmakers. "Without adequate staffing, Act 46 will simply unravel as 140 years of barren history demonstrates."

The Legislature passed Act 46 earlier this year. The law offers tax incentives to districts that approve a consolidation plan before July 1, 2016 and which have the merged districts in place before July 1, 2017.

New districts must have at least 900 students under the new law.

"Such staff increments must be added immediately," Morse wrote in his letter to lawmakers. "Accelerated merger requests are being developed and local districts must stage their activities to coincide with town meetings coming up in a matter of months. The state board must be in a position to act quickly and thoughtfully."

"Without adequate staffing, Act 46 will simply unravel as 140 years of barren history demonstrates." - Board of Education Chairman Stephan Morse

The board has authority to restructure districts that do not merge before 2018.

Act 46 authorizes the board to review and approve consolidation plans. The plans then go before voters in a town for approval.

The Agency of Education lost staff members over the past few years and Morse says the board can't rely on the agency to help with the extra work the board will be taking on.

The implementation of the new law is expected to be spread over four years. If the board votes in

favor, the request is expected to ask for the new staff positions to be funded during the entire time period, and evaluated beyond.

An additional staff member has already been added to the Agency of Education to help with Act 46.

"Now that Act 46 has come along, the playing field has changed somewhat," Morse said. "Under the law new districts will come to the agency for their recommendations and then the agency sends it on to the board for final approval. So we're in a different role, and so the board is going to have a discussion on whether we need individual, separate staffing at our next meeting later this month."

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