

Cabot School Sustainability Committee

Approved Minutes: August 13, 2026 Meeting 4:30-5:45 PM Cabot School Library

1. **Meeting began at 4:30 PM.** In attendance: Stef Burt, Becky Nally, Shannon Ralston, Lynn Rockwell, Melissa Pratt, and Chris Tormey
2. **Draft minutes of the July 1 Committee meeting** were reviewed and approved
3. **This afternoon's draft agenda** was reviewed and approved
4. **Discussion:**
 - A. **Update: Cabot School Board July 27 meeting**
(plans for communication/outreach on future options for Cabot School)

Chris reviewed discussion/decisions made at the July 27, 2026 meeting of the Cabot School Board, and distributed copies of several documents soon to be shared with the community about possible options for Cabot High School in the future. Those options are:

1. Close Cabot HS beginning w/ the 2027-28 school year and pay tuition for HS students to attend their choice of any public or independent accredited high school in VT.
2. Keep the high school open during the 2027-28 school year while researching the possibility of merging with neighboring preK-12 districts and forming a larger joint high school in the process.

Committee members discussed details of the two options and also commented on the potential benefits/drawbacks of each option.

Details that were clarified included:

1. If Cabot chose to merge with one or more neighboring preK-12 school districts (Danville, Twinfield, etc.), the new enlarged district would have a single budget and governing school board with a single high school, but elementary/middle grades would remain at Cabot.
2. Voters in all of the districts involved in this potential merger would vote the merger up or down in March 2028.
3. By the terms of Act 73, a merger study committee would meet regularly from September 2026 to September 2027 to determine the feasibility of a new merged district
4. By Act 73's terms, district merger is not required but being part of a committee to study a potential merger is.

Perspectives from committee members about the potential options included:

1. Holding a vote this fall on whether or not to close the HS seems rushed.
2. Because Cabot families tend to go in so many directions for work etc., having "full high school choice" would be better than just one merged high school
3. How will forming a merged district impact the number of "slots" open to Cabot students for "Regional HS Choice"?
4. A new joint high school would be beneficial by keeping all of our kids together and not scattered (joint sports teams have already worked well).
5. It's uncertain what inflation will do to the future costs of a joint HS or tuitioning our students

6. The decision to merge or tuition is challenging because at this point there's no way to know the exact taxpayer impact of a new merged district
7. It's likely that a district merger would only be proposed by the merger committee if it was likely to reduce costs
8. Voting to close the HS and begin tuitioning might quickly get more expensive if more families moved to town with HS students looking for "full choice"
9. Beyond the potential cost difference between tuitioning in 2027-28 or keeping Cabot HS open while researching merger, the educational opportunities are also an important consideration.

B. Planning for two community forums in early September
(about Cabot School's future options)

Committee members had a general discussion about the structure of the two community forums planned by the School Board for 9/10 and 9/15.

- Goal: Inform community members and gather input about the two options, allow community members to hear diverse perspectives from students, staff and community members
- Committee members agreed to use again that the structure of the June 2024 forum:
 - a. Seat attendees randomly at round tables
 - b. Start with general info about the process/potential cost
 - c. Have people at each table respond to 2 or 3 general questions
 - d. Have a designated spokesperson from each table summarize their table's questions/perspectives to the entire forum

Important points raised by committee members:

- a. Chris mentioned that Margaret McLean from the Rural School Community Alliance has offered to help present at each forum
- b. It's important that board members, students, teachers, Principal and School Superintendent are there
- c. Publicity and food are key
- d. More planning needed closer to the forum dates!!

5. Set Date for Next meeting : Members agreed on Monday, 8/31 at 4:30 PM

6. Meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM

(Draft notes by C. Tormey)