

Frequently Asked Questions on Potential Closure of Castleton Village School

Updated September 22, 2021

1. What is the history concerning district reorganization (creation of a district middle school)?

In the fall of 2018 the Slate Valley Innovation Committee was formed and began exploring ways in which to respond to decreasing enrollment, increasing taxes, decreases in the availability of staffing and increasing educational opportunities. Part of the outcome was the recommendation to create a district middle school. The district put forth a bond vote in March 2020. The vote failed.

Despite the failed bond vote, the Board decided to still move forward with the middle school and instead house 7th and 8th grade within the existing floor plan of the high school. There are renovations that we needed to make this happen and it is being addressed through the budgeting process.

The board voted to officially reorganize the schools on May 24, 2021 for the fall of 2022. With 7th and 8th grade leaving the Village School the board voted to have 6th grade attend Castleton Elementary School. At this point the board can decide to use Castleton Village School for another educational reason or vote to close the building. The board would like to move forward with closing the building. However, the town of Castleton would have to agree to close the building as well.

2. What are the Articles of Agreement?

The Articles of Agreement were drawn-up by the Act 46 Study Committee in 2016 and voted on by Slate Valley voters in 2017. They established the criteria for how the Slate Valley District operates.

3. What are the requirements in the Articles of Agreement for the closure of a school?

Per the Act 46 Articles of Agreement: A vote of 75% or more of the Board of Directors and a positive vote of the municipality by Australian Ballot in which the school is located, shall be required to approve the closure of a school. Prior to holding a vote on whether to close a school the Board shall hold three (3) public hearings regarding the school's closure. At least one (1) of the public hearings shall be held in the community in which the school is located. If after conducting public hearings, the Board of Directors intends to vote on whether to close a school, it shall give public notice of its intent to hold a vote on whether to close a school, stating the reason for the closure, at least ten days prior to the vote.

4. What are the next steps after the board votes to close the school?

An article pertaining to the closure of Castleton Village School is warned by the school board presumably for March 1, 2022.

5. Why does the town of Castleton only vote to close the school?

The Act 46 Articles of Agreement clearly stipulate that "a positive vote of the municipality by Australian Ballot in which the school is located, shall be required to approve the closure of a school."

6. Are there any concerns with the property title for the Village School?

Marketable title requires a title search of 40 years and it is likely that a title search will provide an opinion that the school district has a clear title.

7. If the vote is “no” on Town Meeting day what happens next?

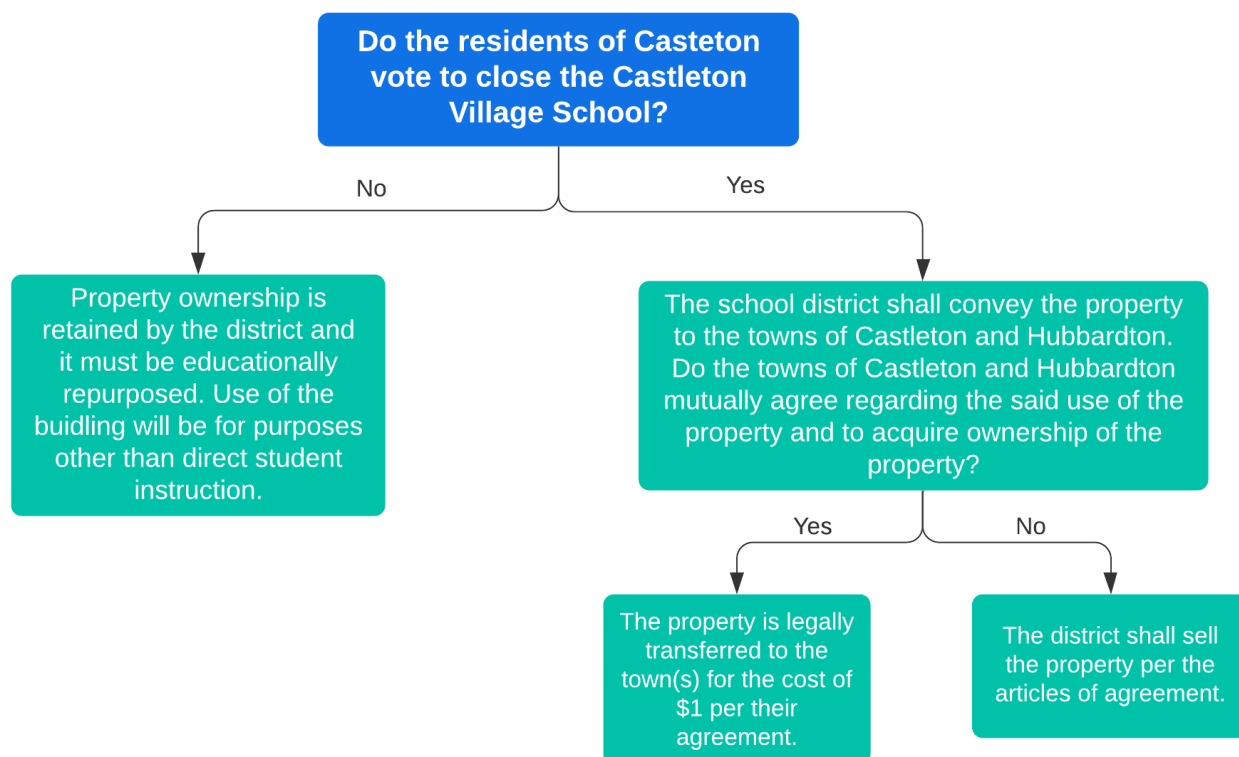
The school district will continue to retain ownership of the building and use it for an educational purpose but it would no longer be a middle school. Most likely most of the building will not be used except for occasional use of the gym.

8. If the vote is “yes” on Town Meeting day what happens next?

Under the Articles of Agreement the towns of Castleton and Hubbardton would have the right of first refusal for the property.

“In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union School District Board of School Directors determines, in its discretion, that any of the real property, including any land and/or buildings, conveyed to it by the CastletonHubbardton Union Elementary School or the Castleton-Hubbardton Village School, the Castleton-Hubbardton Union School District shall convey the property to the towns of Castleton and Hubbardton. In such instances, the towns of Castleton and Hubbardton **shall reach a mutual agreement** regarding the use of said properties and/or buildings.

The conveyance of any of the above school properties shall be conditioned upon the town(s) owning and utilizing the real property for community and public purposes for a minimum of five years. In the event a town(s) elects to sell the real property prior to five years of ownership, the town(s) shall compensate the Union School District for all capital improvements and renovations completed after the formation of the Union School District and prior to the sale to the town(s). In the event Castleton and Hubbardton elect not to acquire ownership of such real property, the Union School District shall, pursuant to Vermont statutes, sell the property upon such terms and conditions as established by the Union School District Board of School Directors.”



9. What are the annual operating costs of the Village Schools?

Description of Cost	Amount	Notes
Personnel - wages and benefits including a portion of Facility Manager	\$87,850	0.25 fte Facility Manager 0.10 fte Maintenance Technician 1.00 fte Custodian
Repairs and maintenance services including trash	\$30,700	
Utilities	\$3,700	
Electricity - net of solar credit	\$15,550	Without solar credit - approx \$17,500
Oil	\$15,100	
Grounds maintenance	\$7,300	
Property insurance	\$10,000	Insurance is charged for the entire district. This is an estimate for CVS. This amount may be quite different if the building were to be insured separately.
Total	\$170,200	

10. Is Castleton University interested in the building?

At this time the University is not interested in the building as they are in the process of consolidating.

11. What are the potential deferred maintenance issues related to CVS?

Roofing Replacement (shingle) \$75,000.00

Exterior Door Replacements \$15,000.00

PA System \$10,000.00

Classroom Door Releases \$7,500.00

Emergency and Exit Lights \$8,500.00

Oil Tank Replacement (1990) \$100,000.00

Hallway Drop Ceiling / Lighting \$20,000.00

Fixture Replacement \$7,500.00

Parking Lot Sealing \$4,500.00

Total= \$248,000

12. How many students are slated to attend the new middle school at FHUHS?

Approximately 180

13. What is the cost of the middle school project at the high school and how will it be paid for?

Approximately 3 million and ESSER Funds

14. Is a simple majority of the voters in Castleton required for school closure?

Yes