

## **PETITION TO INITIATE WITHDRAWAL PROCESS: EXPLORING PHILLIP'S EDUCATIONAL FUTURE**

The withdrawal process is quite detailed, involving approximately 22 steps, each ensuring that the decision is carefully evaluated and planned. Importantly, a town can withdraw from the process at any time if it decides not to proceed further. Exploring this process is often seen as an effort to assess whether withdrawal is a practical and beneficial solution for the community.

### **Reasons Phillips may wish to explore withdrawing from the school district:**

**Local Control:** To have more say in decisions about your schools, like curriculum, staffing, or budgets, if Phillips manages its own district instead of being part of a larger one.

**Cost Concerns:** Is Phillips paying more into the district than it benefits from; it might consider withdrawing to better control its spending

**Quality of Education:** The current district isn't meeting the educational needs of its students and the town believes they can provide better services independently.

**Community Identity:** Schools are often a big part of a town's identity. Some towns might want their schools to reflect their unique values and priorities

**Budget Concerns:** Phillips may wish to take this step due to ever-increasing budget requests, as seen with MSAD 58, despite declining student enrollment and low student performance outcomes compared to national standards. For example, in the Town of Strong, some residents have already gathered signatures to formally initiate the withdrawal process, which is seen as the first step to determine if this is a viable option

**Lack of Fiscal Responsibility:** Concerns that the current board and administration have failed to consider the town's ability to reasonably afford the continual budget increases each year. This is particularly troubling when taxpayers are legally obligated only to fund academic education, yet the district continues to expand the teacher base and extracurricular activities, regardless of the financial burden on the town.

**Signing this petition allows the town to begin the process of gathering valuable information, evaluating costs, and identifying potential solutions. Your signature simply starts the conversation—it does not commit the town to withdrawal, but rather opens the door to explore whether this option is in the best interest of the community.**

**You must be registered to vote in the Town of Phillips**

## **Phillips Petition to Explore Withdrawing from RSU 58 Fact Sheet**

**This petition only begins the process of withdrawing from RSU 58 (Legal Name for MSAD #58). The town can decide not to go through the withdrawal process at any time.**

**Phillips needs 50 signatures from registered voters in the Town of Phillips. We hope to get more.**

Once the petition signatures are certified by the Town Clerk, the Select Board would vote to hold a special election. The date currently being considered is Tuesday, June 9 – the same date as the school district budget referendum.

The petition and request will then go before voters on Tuesday, June 9 by secret ballot. It must be approved by a majority vote of those voting. Townspeople can vote to proceed with the withdrawal process. This petition only gets the ball rolling. The article must specify a dollar amount to be raised to support legal and other withdrawal process costs. Typically, this number is \$40,000 to \$75,000, but can be much higher. The process is quite complicated, involving negotiation how many buses the town would get as well as teacher contracts.

If the town approves moving forward with the petition to withdraw, the petition to withdraw would be presented to the Regional School Board of Directors and to the Maine Commissioner of Education.

After that, the Phillips Select Board would appoint a Withdrawal Committee that would look into whether Phillips would become k-12, tuition high school and/or middle school students to another district.

Strong has circulated a petition to withdraw from the School District. There is some unofficial discussion that Strong and Phillips could join together to form a new district, giving both towns more control over the cost of education.

### **Why Now?**

There is no money in the upcoming budget to repair the HVAC system at Phillips Elementary School. The current proposed budget does not include any additional projects such as HVAC at PES.

Under the District's Strategic Plan, the Phillips Elementary School would close and the Day Mountain School would be closed thereafter. Students would be sent to the remaining open schools. The School Board and Administration has not given any projected dates on when this might happen.

A central campus of k-12 is being considered to be built in 8 to 10 years. The Administration is looking at very competitive grant and there is no guarantee the district would qualify for the funding. If that central campus were to be created in Salem Twp., the assets no longer belong to the towns, but to the state. That is one of the reasons the school district has cited for keeping Mt. Abram High School open.

The plan to move students from Strong to Phillips and Middle School from Phillips to Strong is not saving the anticipated money, as the school district had hoped when they made the change a few years ago.

Once the school is closed, the town does have the first right to purchase the building. However, other negotiations such as the allocation of buses, contracts, etc., could become more complicated. If the town withdraws from the district, the school would be included in the reallocation of assets from the district.

Debt service, the amount of debt the town would be responsible for if the town withdraws from the district is currently relatively low.

The rising cost of education is not sustainable. The proposed 2026 budget is 12,854,225.89, which is \$946,311.94 or 7.95 percent higher than last year's budget of \$11,907,913.95. ***That is almost \$1 million more than last year.***

Enrollment continues to decline.

From the district's information the **average class size** of the four schools is:

- Phillips, 20
- Day Mountain, 18
- Kingfield, 15
- Mt. Abram Area High School, 14

Total Projected Enrollment for 25/26 in the four schools is :

- Phillips, 114
- Day Mountain, 143
- Kingfield, 93
- Mt. Abram Area High School, 194