

## **Merger advisory committee holds first meeting**

Dec. 14, 2017 – The process to study a possible merger between Arkport and Canaseraga school districts officially got underway Dec. 11 when an advisory committee comprised of 16 volunteers from both districts met for the first time in the Canaseraga cafeteria.

Arkport and Canaseraga are each represented on the Annexation Study Advisory Committee by four community members, two teachers, one school staff member and one administrator. They will attend a total of four meetings between now and June.

Monday's meeting – led by education consultants Alan Pole and William Silky of Castallo & Silky, who are conducting the merger study – focused on two areas: past and projected student enrollment in both Arkport and Canaseraga; and the current academic and extracurricular offerings of both districts.

Some key takeaways presented by the consultants:

- The student enrollment of a newly formed district would be approximately 670 K-12 students.
- A merged staff would allow the new district to streamline its workforce or add more courses.
- Performance on state assessments is more alike than different between the two districts.

More than two dozen residents attended.

“There were some great questions from both the committee and members of the audience,” Superintendent of Schools Jesse Harper said. “We’re off to a good start.”

“I was very encouraged with the number of local residents who attended the meeting,” Mr. Chad Groff, Superintendent of Canaseraga added. “Getting the details firsthand is always a plus. The committee members, meanwhile, worked diligently to digest the large amount of information begin presented by Mr. Silky and Mr. Pole. I appreciate their willingness to be part of this important process.”

All information presented at the meetings will be posted on each district's website.

The committee will next meet Feb. 7, 2018, to discuss facilities, transportation, staffing and finance, and then again on April 16 to review a draft report from Castallo & Silky. A final report will be presented to the boards of education on June 18, and then public hearings would be scheduled through July and August. If both boards agree to move forward, an advisory referendum would be scheduled for October. Finally, if a simple majority in both communities votes yes, a final referendum would be held in December 2018.

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