

## Hancock–Deposit Merger Exploration

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) from the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting

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#### **1. Can parents of tuitioned-in students from Pennsylvania vote or sign merger petitions?**

**No.** Only *qualified residents* of the New York school districts involved in the merger process are permitted to vote or sign any petitions related to the merger. Families who tuition their children in from out of state are not eligible.

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#### **2. Will the merger affect local municipalities, highway departments, or emergency services?**

**Generally, no.** Most municipal operations (like fire, ambulance, and highway services) remain unaffected. However, if a local library relies on the school district for its tax levy, those libraries may find it beneficial to consider merging as well.

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#### **3. Can community members — including parents, students, and local groups — be included in the RFP (Request for Proposals)?**

**Absolutely — and they should be.** Including diverse community voices through focus groups or advisory committees is encouraged to ensure transparency and broad-based input during the study phase.

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#### **4. Will the public know how the new district will be configured before voting?**

*(For example: Where high school, middle school, and elementary students will attend school)*

**To the best extent possible.**

The feasibility study will include detailed *financial, operational, and educational* models. These models will present an “optimal configuration” based on available data, community input, and expert recommendations. This information will be shared with the community prior to the vote so residents can make informed decisions.

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**5. What happens if the newly merged district cannot spend the additional \$4 million in the first year? Is there a time limit or restriction on how the merger aid can be used?**

The merger aid is **unrestricted**, meaning the new district can decide how to allocate the funds. Common uses include:

- Equalizing tax rates between communities
- Expanding or enhancing academic programs
- Aligning employee salaries
- Investing in building upgrades or deferred maintenance

Unspent funds in any given year would go into designated reserves or unrestricted funds. The capital reserve is an example of a designated reserve. Unspent funds could be used for items such as athletic fields that may not be aided in the project.

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**6. What must be included in the merger feasibility study (and in the RFP for consultants)?**

The feasibility study must describe how a combined district would operate if the merger moves forward. Required components include:

- Current and projected student enrollment
- Current and projected staffing needs
- Current and projected housing plans
- Plans for education programs and curricula
- Plans for transportation
- Financial implications of the reorganization, including state aid, expenditures, and local tax effort