

MEDIA ADVISORY

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HINDS/KULIK: BILLS FOR MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOLS AND MIDDLEFIELD SIGNED INTO LAW

BOSTON – State Senator Adam G. Hinds (D- Pittsfield) and State Representative Stephen Kulik (D- Worthington) thank Governor Charlie Baker for swift action on two local bills, *H. 2859, An Act relative to the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and the Hawlemont Regional School District* and *H. 1119, An Act authorizing the appointment of a superintendent of streets in the town of Middlefield*.

“One of the most important responsibilities we have as legislators is to sponsor and advance special legislation requested by our cities and town,” said State Senator Adam G. Hinds (D- Pittsfield). “These bills provide Middlefield and the member communities of the Mohawk Trail Regional School District with the ability to function more efficiently and effectively. The Governor’s final approval of these local initiatives is much appreciated and well deserved.”

“I applaud Governor Baker for signing this bill into law so quickly. This law remedies longstanding discrepancies with state statute and recognizes the District’s ability to officially teach Pre-K through grade 12, as well as approves the District’s ability to resolve budgetary matters keeping the decision making at the local level,” said Representative Stephen Kulik.

H. 2859 – Relative to the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and the Hawlemont Regional School District

This law resolves longstanding legal issues for the Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) by authorizing a reorganization of the schools, prompted by the voluntary closure of Heath Elementary.

Further, H. 2859 ratifies an amendment to the Mohawk Trail Regional Agreement that was passed by member towns in spring 2016 and confirms the District’s unusual voting methodology, known as the unit method, used for the purposes of approving its annual operating budget. (Two units are voted by each Pre-K to Grade 12 town, and 1 unit is voted for each Grade 7 to Grade 12 town, with a total of 10 out of 14 necessary to approve the budget).

The District will no longer be required to seek special legislation to confirm future amendments to the Regional Agreement, which has always been a direction of the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) because of Mohawk Trail’s voting methods.

This legislation was sponsored by the legislators who represent MTRSD’s member towns -- Hinds, Kulik and State Representative Paul Mark (D- Peru) -- at the request of the School Committee and Superintendent. While advocating for H. 2859, the legislators ensured DESE had no objections to the bill.

During the Education Committee’s April 13th public hearing Hinds testified in favor of the bill on behalf of the legislative delegation with Mohawk Trail Superintendent Michael Buoniconti. The Committee

issued a favorable report for H. 2859 on May 25th, after which the legislation was passed by the House of Representatives on June 5th. This month Hinds shepherded the proposal through the Senate review process and ultimately secured the Senate's approval June 29th. Having been signed on June 30th by Governor Baker, this law goes into effect immediately.

The Governor's signature was timely as the legislation is drafted to take effect on July 1, 2017. Delay of the matter may have begun a cascading effect of renegotiating multiple agreements, arrangements and decisions which have been made by the School Committees and District towns.

H. 1119 – Authorizing the appointment of a superintendent of streets in the town of Middlefield

This home rule petition, sponsored on behalf of the Town of Middlefield by Hinds and Kulik establishes the appointed position of Superintendent of Streets. Now law, the Select Board will have the authority to appoint the Superintendent and establish an employment contract.

The Superintendent of Streets will serve for a term of three years and work to ensure that the Town's roads are well maintained and in compliance with safety standards and regulations.

H. 1119 received a favorable report from the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government on April 13th and was passed by the House on May 25th under Kulik's leadership. Hinds ushered the legislation through the Senate review process and secured its passage by the Senate on June 29th. The home rule petition received Governor Baker's signature on July 7th.

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