

DOE to VB: All is now forgiven

By Elizabeth Deprey

VAN BUREN - SAD 24
Superintendent Clayton Belanger said he is very happy that the district's state subsidy check will no longer be withheld.

Department of Education Commissioner Susan Gendron was holding the district's \$272,000 monthly subsidy check because the district did not submit a draft plan for the upcoming school consolidation.

SAD 24 is the only district in the state to refuse to submit a plan by the Dec. 1 dead-

line.

At the time, Belanger said there was nothing in the plan to submit, so the board voted to wait and submit it when it was complete.

In response, Gendron told the remaining members of the proposed St. John Valley Regional School Unit to create a plan without SAD 24 and withheld the district's subsidy check.

A hearing was scheduled for mid January, and then postponed.

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In the meantime, Belanger wrote a letter to the commissioner explaining that the district was taking part in the Reorganization Planning Committee and moving forward in the process that would bring the consolidation decision to the voters.

Belanger submitted the attendance report for the RPC meetings, showing Gendron that at least one representative from SAD 24 attended each meeting and that each subcommittee had a member from SAD 24.

"I want to assure you," Belanger wrote, "that we have all taken and will continue to take very seriously the deliberations around consolidation/regionalization."

"While the school board has serious concerns about the entire consolidation/regionalization process as evidenced by its action of November 28, 2007, there is

also recognition that we must continue to participate in the process through to completion."

Gendron responded in a letter dated Jan. 18, stating "Thank you for your letter...explaining the position of MSAD 24 and your continued participation in the reorganization process with the other communities of the St. John Valley RPC.

"Accordingly, I will cancel the hearing previously scheduled for January 23, 2008 and have no further plans to withhold subsidy from MSAD at this time. Thank you for your efforts to date."

Belanger said the district always intended to follow the law and work with the RPC, and that it will continue to do so until the task is completed, and the decision goes to the voters.

Belanger said he should receive the subsidy check within the next week.