

# Foes seek to overturn Region 14 proposal

## Those fighting for local schools try new tactic

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WOODBURY — Reconfiguration opponents will try a new tactic to save their hometown elementary schools.

Save Region 14 Elementary

wants to amend the educational plan that has guided the region's operations since 1968 to maintain the present elementary school grade configuration.

The plan should have been amended before the Region 14 Board of Education decided in

October to reconfigure Mitchell and Bethlehem elementary schools, but it wasn't, making the move illegal, group members said at a news conference Monday.

They said reconfiguration represents a fundamental

change to the regional plan, and a state law says a town's legislative body can request that it be amended. In the case of Woodbury and Bethlehem, it means residents can request to change the plan by gathering signatures on a petition, said Charles W. Bauer, the group's attorney.

See **SAVE**, Page 2B

## **SAVE:** Group says town action needed

*Continued from 1B*

"Whatever the town's legislative body is, and in most towns that is the town meeting, that town meeting that requests an amendment starts the process," Bauer said.

The board wants to make Bethlehem Elementary School a primary school for all kindergarten through second-graders from the two towns, while Mitchell Elementary School would house third- through fifth-graders. Bethlehem now serves kindergarten through fifth-grade, while Mitchell is

kindergarten through fourth-grade.

Residents must petition either town if they want the opportunity to decide at referendum whether to change the plan. Save Region 14 has scheduled a petition drive from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at Hollow Park on Hollow Road where residents may sign petitions.

Twenty signatures from Bethlehem residents, or 100 signatures from Woodbury residents are needed to trigger a referendum, according to Bauer. If voters in either town

decide they don't want the plan amended, the move would fail.

Save Region 14 members think they have enough support to petition for a referendum. President Erica Barber last month submitted an e-mail to the school board with 400 names requesting the decision to reconfigure go to a vote in the two towns, but that request was declined.

John Howard, school board chairman, said it was within the board's authority to reconfigure. He said the board's lawyer would review Save Region 14's request.