Committee Attendance: Erika Baldasaro; Betzi Bilodeau; Raj Chawla; Jason DiRosa; Theresa Fletcher; Lori Houghton; Max Levy; Kim Maiberger; Christine Packard; Michael Smith; Brad Luck; and Ally Vile.

Others Present: Bridget Meyer; Wendy Johnson; George Tyler; Adam Solace; Brian Roy; Pat Scheidel; Adriane Martin; Andy Watts; Matt Leighninger; Kayhl Cooper; and Irene Wrenner.

Agenda Item 1: Call to order. Brad Luck called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. He was looking for a delicate balance to the meeting as the process needs to meet statutory requirements, however it can proceed with some informality and people should be able to speak freely. He asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. There were none.

Agenda Item 2: Introductions. Ally Vile asked each member to introduce themselves and reflect on an experience that made them feel proud, as follows:

Jason DiRosa, representing Prudential Committee, is proud that he has 3 children partake in the Town and Village recreation services.

Ally Vile, as Town Recreation Director, she is proud to see the growth in the community - the campers move up to lifeguards, etc. It is a positive feeling. As a 10 year resident, it is fun to pick her kids up from programs and know they are satisfied.

Max Levy, Town Selectboard Chair, is proud of the recreation departments and the quality of life it brings to the community. The residents value the services.

Raj Chawla, has lived in the Village for 12 years. His kids have gone through childcare, then onto programs and now want to be counselor. He is proud of the programs.

Michael Smith, representing the Prudential Committee, loves the passion people exhibit towards parks and recreation. He wants to keep it preserved.

Kim Maiberger, Village resident and works at Essex Middle School. She sees the programs at the school and her kids love the programs and camps. She is proud to be a part of the Committee and be a voice.

Lori Houghton, Village Trustee, was a part of the Recreation Advisory Committee. She is proud of the community and happy there were no fights at the Easter Egg Hunt.
Erika Baldasaro, lives in the Village. She is proud because her children feel like they belong to a recreation family.

Betzi Bilodeau, lives in the Town and she was also impressed with the Easter Egg Hunt. She is happy her daughter made it off the 'wait list' and is enrolled into a summer camp.

Christine Packard, lived in the Village for 10 years and the Town for 20 years. She is proud of Indian Brook Reservoir and has been there everyday for 30 years. She hears comments from out-of-towners as to how great a place it is.

Brad Luck, Village Recreation Director, enjoys the fun and new and familiar faces each year during staff training week wherein he see 100+ people.

**Agenda Item 3. Elect Chair & Secretary.**

Jason DiRosa nominated Michael Smith as Chair. The nomination passed 9-0.

Raj Chawla stated that he would be willing to be secretary, however he asked about the meeting minutes. A discussion ensued regarding how to proceed with future minutes. It was decided that someone should be hired, with the expense being split between the Town and the Village, so that all members could focus on the meeting. Brad Luck stated that he needs to check with the Town and the Village on finances. Ally Vile asked if the School District could also help with expenses as it currently involves all 3 entities. Lori Houghton suggested that if a secretary can't be hired, then they should take turns rotating the meeting between the committee members.

Michael Smith nominated Raj Chawla as secretary. The nomination passed 9-0.

**Agenda Item 4. Agree on Scope of Work (Goals/Objectives) and Timeline.**

Brad Luck asked for suggestions on written rules for the meeting. The Committee agreed to the following:

- One speaker at a time;
- Be on time;
- Start on time;
- End on time;
- Share the floor;
- Be respectful of others opinions; and
- Make time for public comments.

Max Levy stated the importance to take comments from the community.

Erika Baldasaro read the *Joint Municipal Survey* comments into the record, as follows:
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- We remain focused on what it will take to maintain or improve the level of excellent service Essex Junction Parks and Recreation provides to the community;
- We as a group can come up with the best possible set-up for the recreation departments. This outcome should encompass a solution that both meets the needs of the community and is fiscally responsible.
- This committee will be successful if it positions EJRP to continue to provide high-quality, programming, child care and recreational facilities for the Essex Junction community in a sustainable and affordable way. Success will be measured by ensuring that employees are retained, facilities are preserved and the community continues to see the organization as a centerpiece of the community.
- All avenues are explored including the possibility of including other municipal entities such as the senior center and libraries in the final results.
- We have a solid recommendation on how to continue or exceed the level of quality recreation programming available to our community.
- Examine all the information and makes an informed recommendation.
- We stay focused on the decision of overall governance and stay out of the weeds of people and transition.
- We set agreed upon goals and adhere to them and the timeline. Respect each other with regards to input and who "has the floor." Be committed and embrace this opportunity to serve.
- We ensure the public is well informed throughout the process.
- We have an open discussion and cohesive understanding about what we are trying to accomplish.

The Committee broke into 3 groups to develop goals. Suggestions were as follows:

Group 1: Explore all avenues and entities before making a recommendation and engage the community in the process; and Make a recommendation that everyone is comfortable with.

Group 2: Make a decision in a timely manner - by the end of the school year and keep the public informed; and Be fiscally responsible.

Group 3: Ensure the quality of services are continued and enhanced; and Ensure the funding is sound.

Max Levy asked the audience if they had any suggestions on goals. There were none.

Brad Luck asked if there was any opposition to making a recommendation by the end of the school year. He noted that if the task can be accomplished by 7/1/16, this will give time to sort the issue out for 2017. The Committee agreed to meet this goal.

Agenda Item 5. Identify Meeting Days, Times and Location.
Recreation Governance Study Committee
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Luck stated that he and Vile will go through all the options and create a detailed outline for the next meeting. At the end of that meeting, there should be a general direction so the Committee can start to focus. He suggested an additional 3-5 meetings would be required.

The Committee reviewed their schedules and determined that the next meeting date to be Monday, April 25th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Other meeting dates scheduled are May 4th, May 11th, & June 1st. All meetings will continue to be held at 75 Maple Street.

**Agenda Item 6. Review Options to be Explored.**

The Committee was given the following options that will be explored at future meetings:

A. Continue to operate two recreation departments
   1) Essex Junction Recreation Program (EJRP) continues to serve the Village of Essex Junction.
      a. Under the Village municipality
      b. Through a non-profit corporation
   2) Essex Parks and Recreation (EPR) continues to operate under the Town municipality.
      a. Continues to serve the Town of Essex (including the Village)
      b. Serves only the Town Outside the Village

B. EJRP and EPR consolidate into one department.
   1) Under the Town municipality
   2) Through an interlocal contract
   3) Under a union municipal district
   4) Under the Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District.
   5) Through a non-profit corporation

Luck stated that 'Other' options can be added. He noted that the community decided to unify the school districts. If the Unified School, (Westford, Town and Village) is not a viable solution, the Committee will be exploring Options A or B above. Eventually, the current school district will dissolve and the EJRP will need to move. Luck noted that consolidation has begun between the Town and Village and the following departments are now shared:

- Shared Town Manager;
- Finance Departments combined. A benefit is that landowners only receive 1 tax bill.
- A portion of Public Works is joined and work is starting to combine the remainder.
- The Thoughtful Growth process was helpful with looking at consolidation and made suggestions for Planning & Zoning.

Luck stated that the time has come for a decision to be made on whether consolidation is right for the recreation departments. It is for the Committee to make a decision on its
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5 recommendation. Luck stated the next meeting is when the Committee will dig into the Options.

Michael Smith asked if they will have legal representation at a meeting. Luck said yes, VLCT will be at a future meeting.

Agenda Item 7. Brainstorm Ways to Engage and Communicate with the Public.

- Facebook  - Presence at events  
- Front Porch Forum  - Community Forums  
- Press Releases  - Focus Groups  
- Posting the minutes - where?  - Interviews  
- Survey  - Other?  
- Channel 17 coverage  

Luck introduced Matt Leighninger, who works for Public Agenda based in New York City. Leighninger said it is helpful to get citizens and school systems involved in engagement. He suggested it would be helpful to categorize the list as 'thin forms of engagement' and 'thick forms of engagement'. He stated that empowering small groups gets people thinking as the work is intensive. This would be a thick form of engagement. He described thin forms of engagement as less intensive and requiring someone to be less involved, such as signing a petition. Leighninger noted that the conventional forms of engagement are not tuned to give people a chance to be heard, but he is conscience of law requirements. He believes that more can be done.

Luck informed the Committee that he and Vile must do a lot of simultaneous work and also engage the public. He asked for direction on how they want them to proceed. A discussion ensued on how to reach out to people and the use of surveys, a mailing and associated costs, the use and cost of the Essex Reporter, the use of Friday school folders, use of a bean pole, and attending the Village Meeting to use as a platform.

Bridget Meyer said that the Committee has been chosen to represent the community and to ask uninformed people what they want is a pre-conceived notion, with prejudices and will confuse the process. She stated that it is the Committee's job to talk to community members at public places, such as sporting events and relay the issues. She noted that the Village meeting provides an opportunity at the end of the meeting for public discussion. She noted two populations the Committee did not speak to, which were 1) people who moved into the community who don't have children; and 2) Seniors who don't have kids in schools.

Matt Leihanger noted that a meeting tomorrow night was too short a window, but it would be good to say something about the topic.

Max Levy noted the school consolidation had good communications and asked if they could get that person in to share their experience. Luck said yes.
Lori Houghton noted that she doesn't want to exclude senior citizens on their opinions. She asked if there were resources on each staff that can help with the outreach. Luck stated that there is a communications coordinator, Kayhl, for Essex Recreation. Vile stated that staff will do the work.

Max Levy stated that they need to define a budget as the costs of some of the suggestions adds up quickly.

A brief discussion ensued on whether the focus should be placed on public attendance for the next meeting - before the Committee makes a decision on its focus or if it should be the following meeting. Jason DiRosa suggested that it would be good for the public to get the "informational dump" at the next meeting.

Christine Packard suggested the discussion include bringing in the seniors and libraries as her concern is that both is a huge amount of the community. Max Levy said the process can be structured to keep the door open to broaden the scope.

Agenda Item 8. Organizational Profile Presentations

A. Essex Parks & Recreation - Ally Vile

Ally presented a power point and spoke briefly on the following points:

- Vision/Mission (noting a completed 2011 Needs Assessment);
- History – she noted that the position was part-time in 1972 and went to full time in 1979; 575 acres was purchased to obtain Indian Brook; 2004 started recreation impact fees. This money is used for recreation needs as they arise; 2005 extended school started and is now an after school program; 2010 was the purchase of the Tree Farm; Starting January, 2017, the senior activity coordinator will become full-time;
- Governance Model;
- Staffing/Organization Chart;
- Operating Budget and its Revenue;
- Capital of $490,000, noting that overall the Recreation Department receives 1/5 of the money to cover Park Asset, Park Equipment, Milfoil Mitigation, Indian Brook Dam Repairs and Senior Van;
- Capital Expenses to cover field expenses, pool infrastructure, park equipment, new playground equipment, court resurfacing, etc.;
- Programs/Events. A handout was provided listing the programs;
- Youth Program Highlights;
- Teen & Adult Program Highlights;
- Co-Sponsored Events – She noted that the Town and Village have been working together for close to 20 years. She provided an example using the Easter Egg Hunt, which required 8,000 eggs;
- Parks, Pools, Facilities – She noted that there are a total of 18 parks and facilities and described some of the locations and work,

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such as the 76 acres of Prairie Fields behind the Middle School, the school district 90 acres located in Saxon Hill, Indian Brook Reservoir, mowing the area along the Susie Wilson Bypass, and more. She noted that the Sand Hill pool was built in 1979 and in 2010 a spray ground was installed;

- She announced the recent agreement to lease 71 Center Road for additional space for programs. A contest was held for its name, which is ‘Sunset Studio’. A grand opening is Saturday, April 30th;
- She was pleased to report that Vermont is the only municipality to offer free van appointment service;
- She described the Committees being Trails Committee, Positive Youth Sports Alliance of Essex, Healthy Youth Coalition, VRPA State Conference Committee (which is the oldest committee nationally), and VRPA Executive Board Committee.
- She noted the strengths as being excellent customer service, building strong relationships with patrons/families; strong institutional and community knowledge with 4-full time and seasonal staff; inclusive programming to the entire Essex community; community builder; and large supporter of senior programming and accessibility.
- She noted that both recreation departments would be impacted if the resources provided by the School District were eliminated as being Human Resources (Finance, HR, Legal, IT, etc.), Financial impact, and equipment/services.
- If there was a new governance model she would like to see a smooth and seamless organizational transition both inside for the employees and outside for the patrons; hopes to retain the trust and satisfaction of the community; will work together with open communication and collaboration; and maintain an independent work culture to create and develop programs within staff capacities.

B. Essex Junction Recreation & Parks - Brad Luck

Brad presented a power point and spoke briefly on the following points:

- Vision/Mission;
- History – he noted that in the year 2000 a $2.1 million dollar bond for a new pool and recreation center was obtained. The payoff will be in 2019;
- Governance Model – he noted his position working in the school district was desirable because everyone worked for the same employer;
• Staffing/Organizational Chart – was passed out. He stated there are 10 full-time and 5 part-time employees and over 200 part-time and seasonal employees;
• Budget – he described the operation budget, capital budget and tax dollars;
• Capital Expenses – he described that the expenses are voted on as a separate article; there are two separate line items for the %0.01 on the municipal grand list; recent projects include small pool resurface, truck & tractor, and a new maintenance garage. Future projects include, an electric sign, complete new maintenance garage; water/sewer to new program space, and program space addition;
• Programs/Events – he noted that over a course of one year, over 115 programs are offered. He described the locations and percentages of the spaces used and population served;
• Joint Programming – he noted shared events such as Halloween celebration, Senior Thanksgiving lunch, Winter Carnival, and Easter Egg hunt. He noted the Town coordinates fall soccer and Essex Lacrosse for the entire community and the Village coordinates youth basketball for the entire community;
• Parks, Pools, Facilities – he noted that the Village has 3 parks and described the areas and activities held at the locations;
• Committees – he stated it was a 9-member committee, with 4 adults and 1 youth appointed by the Planning Commission, and 4 adults appointed by the Trustees. The Committee advises the department staff and serves as a conduit to the community;
• Strengths – he is proud that the tax rate has remained level for 10+ years; proud of the social media presence; proud that there are over 250 kids in care during the school year; proud of the relationship with schools; and entrepreneurial spirit – they are constantly starting new programs.
• He noted the following resources would be needed if the program left the school district: Human (finance, HR, legal, IT, etc.); Financial impact; and equipment/services.
• If there was a new governance, he would care most about an independent budget, system of childcare, entrepreneurial spirit and relationship with the schools.

In response to an inquiry, Luck stated that if costs increase the Village taxpayers get to vote on the Village Recreation Budget. He explained how fund balance rolls directly back to the recreation department and not into the municipality.

Lori Houghton stated that understanding the history was important and there needs to be a contractual agreement with the school.
Agenda Item 9. Future Agenda Items.

Brad Luck and Ally Vile will work on the information received at this meeting for the next agenda.

Agenda Item 10. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

These minutes were reviewed and approved on ____________.

____________________________

Michael Smith, Chair
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
April 25, 2016


MEMBERS ABSENT: Jason DiRosa

ADMINISTRATION: Brad Luck, EJRP; Aly Vile, Essex Parks & Rec.

OTHERS PRESENT: Andy Watts, Irene Wrenner, Rose Drost, Adriane Martin, Collin Flanders, Adam Sollace, Wendy Johnson, Keely Schell, Pat Scheidel, Abby Friedman, Marla Durham, Bridget Myers, George Tyler, Anne Marie Dennis, Randall Forguites, Martha DiMaggio.

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS
Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM. Committee members were introduced.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
April 5, 2016
MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Max Levy, to approve the minutes of April 5, 2016 as presented. VOTING: unanimous (9-0); motion carried.

3. REVIEW MEETING AGREEMENTS
There were no questions or comments on the previously agreed to meeting protocol that includes:
- one speaker at a time
- arrive to the meeting on time
- start the meeting on time
- share the floor
- be prepared
- be respectful of others’ opinions
- end the meeting on time
- allow time for public comment.

4. REVIEW COMMITTEE GOALS
There were no questions or comments on the meeting goals of:
- Ensuring the current quality of rec services is maintained and enhanced.
- Exploring all avenues and entities before making a recommendation.
- Actively engaging the community in the process and making information easily accessible so the public is informed.
- Being cognizant of affordability and ensuring the funding structure is fiscally responsible and will be supported by the public.
- Reaching a consensus on a final recommendation by mid-June.
5. **DISCUSS HANDLING PUBLIC COMMENTS**
There was agreement the meeting agenda will include the opportunity for the public to comment on items not on the agenda, and to allow three to five minutes per person for public comment.

6. **EXPLORE GOVERNANCE MODELS**
   **Union Municipal District & Interlocal Contracts**
Abby Friedman, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center, reviewed state statute for the union municipal district and interlocal contract governance models (24VSA121Subchapters 3&4). The statutes outline formation, authorization, finances, organization, flexibilities, and pro/cons. The following was noted/discussed:

- Examples of union municipal districts include CCTA and Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD). An example of interlocal contracts is police services.
- In essence the Recreation Governance Study Committee will do a report and hold a public vote. The Attorney General approves the governance model before ratification by the legislature. Having the legislature ratify the model is recommended, but not required.
- The agreement for the union municipal district lays out how the organization will operate. The agreement should be clear with all items spelled out including whether the governing board is elected or appointed, number of members, length of terms, and such. An attorney should assist in drafting the agreement. A finance expert should help lay out financial items.
- A union municipal district has a budget voted by the voters, can make assessments or go through the municipality to borrow. With interlocal contracts the budget is under the authority of the town or village. CCTA and WVPD, for example, are funded through town budgets, but can assess taxes.

**Non-Profit 501(C)(3)**
Abby Friedman reviewed the “non-profit” model. EJRP could become a non-profit or there could be consolidation of the two entities into a new non-profit organization. The following was noted:

- One challenge as a non-profit is borrowing funds. Of consideration is the village is presently paying off a bond and there is need for rec facilities that will need bonding. Accountability and oversight with borrowing are also considerations.
- To become a non-profit involves paying the application fee of up to $125 and securing tax exempt status from the IRS (501(C)(3) with attorney fees up to $1200. Heart & Soul is a 501(C)(3) organization as an example.

**Unified School District**
Martha Heath and Marla Durham briefed the committee on the RED study committee’s recommendation that the rec program standalone from the unified school district to allow for more flexibility and because the rec programs from Essex and Westford would have to be included so there is equal opportunity for all. The following was noted/discussed:

- According to Attorney Paul O’Brien it is possible to have the rec program under the unified school district provided there is buy-in from all three communities and the program serves all three communities.
• There is a time constraint to determine a governance model and there may not be
time to confirm buy-in by all three municipalities to have the rec program under
the unified school district. Residents of Westford may not want to pay for rec
services that are so far away from them.
• Further clarification is needed if one of the towns is not interested in having the
rec program under the unified school district.

There was discussion of the childcare program through the rec department if the rec
program does not stay with the school district. The following was noted:
• To maintain the current village rec program of blended licensed childcare and
extended after school supervision would require an MOU so staff sharing can
continue (rec and school).
• The town childcare program uses high school students with contracted instructors.
• The school board would want equal programs so it is hoped the new rec program
would provide after school childcare in all the schools.
• Clarification is needed on how the childcare program would work in terms of
access to the schools and school staff if the rec program is a separate entity. For
example, access to Park Street School is a big issue. The rec program provides
preschool for 35 families.
• Having the Prudential Committee move rec before June 30, 2017 would be easier
than an MOU for the ACE program.

There was discussion of existing bonds on rec buildings and the pool as well as the
school. The following was noted:
• Any existing debt of the individual school district becomes debt of the unified
school district. Any contracts or binding agreements in effect as of July 1, 2017
must be honored.
• The voters who voted for a bond are responsible for payment.
• If parks and rec move away from the school district the legality of moving
ownership of facilities and debt to a new entity must be reviewed.
• The Prudential Committee signed the bond for the rec department. There is a
portion of debt and revenue as of June 30, 2017 that will move to the unified
school district and shared.
• The issue of ownership versus governance needs to be resolved.

**Village Governance of EJRP**

George Tyler said the village can assume administrative control of the village rec
department. The goal would be to maintain the department as is. The issue of the budget
being separate or incorporated into the general fund would have to be settled. Presently
the village and town are on a trajectory of shared services especially administrative
services to eliminate duplicate delivery systems and to have a simpler administrative
model, but operationally separate entities. Having EJRP under the village would simplify
the debt question.

Pat Scheidel reviewed the cost to town and village taxpayers with separate rec
departments versus combined operations, highlighting the following:
• Town rec department cost is $81 for town taxpayers for a budget of $1,364,944 with an estimated tax rate of $0.0289.
• Village rec department cost is $271 for village taxpayers for a budget of $2,352,223 with an estimated tax rate of $0.0680.
• Combined department cost is $164 per town and village taxpayer for a budget of $3,717,167 and an estimated tax rate of $0.0585.
• Issues to consider with combining the programs include adding to a program that is at capacity and possibly delineating geographic areas and programs (i.e. Hiawatha students would attend programs at Hiawatha School).
• Regardless of the governance model chosen there will be cost shifts.

There was mention of town residents paying decreased fees if the rec programs are combined and possible impact on the budget. Brad Luck explained non-resident fees are put into an enhancement fund for scholarships and projects. The operating budget is not impacted.

7. GOVERNANCE MODELS TO PURSUE/ELIMINATE
The committee did a survey using Survey Monkey and eliminated the non-profit governance model from further consideration. All the other models will be further explored. Results of the survey will be forwarded to all the members along with issues to consider with the various governance models.

8. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION
RED Committee Experience
Keely Schell reviewed the process followed by the Red Committee to engage the public in the unified school district issue. Types of activity included:
• Doing a survey to raise awareness of the discussion taking place.
• Tuning into issues the public may be discussing.
• Publishing information in the local newspaper.
• Using Front Porch Forum to broadcast information.
• Publishing answers to questions by the public.
• Hosting booths or tables at local events to provide information to the public.
• Holding multiple public forums.

Ms. Schell stressed the committee always spoke in a unified voice and approved any information prior to publication.

Rec Governance Study Committee Survey
The committee reviewed the survey questions on the new governance model and suggested adding demographic questions. There is opportunity to opt out of any of the survey questions.

Video
The committee viewed the informational video explaining the purpose and goals of the governance committee.

Engagement Strategies
Suggested methods of engagement include:
- Front Porch Forum
- Facebook (village, town, neighborhoods)
- Essex Reporter
- Rec Dept. email distribution list
- School Friday folders
- School announcements
- Information flyers

9. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
Next meeting is May 4, 2016 at 6:30 PM. Agenda items include:
- Further discussion of governance models and winnowing the list
- Distributing the survey and compiling/discussing results

10. **ADJOURNMENT**
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

*RScty: MERiordan*
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
MAY 4, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Smith, Christine Packard, Raj Chawla, Lori Houghton, Jason DiRosa, Theresa Fletcher, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Andrew Watts (alternate member for Max Levy), Betzi Bilodeau.

ADMINISTRATION: Brad Luck, EJRP; Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Recreation

OTHERS PRESENT: Adriane Martin, Adam Sollace, Lisa Allen, Gibson Smith, Stacy Jordan, Annie Cooper.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Raj Chawla called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members introduced themselves.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

There were no comments from the public.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Erika Baldasaro, to approve the minutes of May 4, 2016 as presented. VOTING: unanimous (10-0); motion carried.

Michael Smith returned to the meeting at 6:35 and resumed with the meeting agenda.

5. REVIEW MEETING AGREEMENTS

There were no questions or comments on the previously agreed to meeting protocol that

one speaker at a time
arrive to the meeting on time
start the meeting on time
share the floor
be prepared
be respectful of others' opinions
end the meeting on time
allow time for public comment.

6. REVIEW COMMITTEE GOALS

There were no questions or comments on the meeting goals of:
Ensuring the current quality of rec services is maintained and enhanced.
Exploring all avenues and entities before making a recommendation.
Actively engaging the community in the process and making information easily accessible so the public is informed.
Being cognizant of affordability and ensuring the funding structure is fiscally responsible and will be supported by the public.
Reaching a consensus on a final recommendation by mid-June.

7. BRAINSTORM WAYS TO ENGAGE AND COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC

A general discussion ensued about the level of public engagement for the RGSC. It was decided that for the committee’s goals, the current level of public engagement was appropriate. Once a recommendation is made to the Selectboard and the Trustees, public engagement will morph into selling the recommendation to the public. However, the commitment from the current members ends in June when the recommendation is made. Brad Luck added that it is most likely that the Boards will prefer that interested public members of the RGSC lead the public engagement effort regarding the recommended model.

Discuss Information from Keeley Schell, RED Committee Member

Members agreed with the recommendations from Keeley Schell and that many of those had been used by the RGSC already, such as Front Porch Forum, the Essex Reporter and a public survey.

RGSC survey & video update

Members reviewed the most recent survey results. The survey ends on May 8th and so far, a little over 300 people responded. The majority of respondents were ages 25-44 and 45-64, 55% lived in the Village including the Town and 41% lived in the Town outside the Village. The majority of respondents had children ages 18 and younger and were frequent users of recreation programs and parks in the Village and/or Town. The top three ways that respondents stated as the most helpful way to get information were the Essex Reporter, Front Porch Forum and Facebook.

Ms. Vile mentioned that staff was trying to work with someone (MJ Engel) to get the survey data in a more comprehensive collection to present to the board members once the survey was complete. She asked the board members to let her know if they could recommend anyone who could help with this.

Members agreed that there had been positive comments about the video.

RGSC future engagement strategies

Members decided to continue with the current engagement strategies through the Essex Reporter and Front Porch Forum. It was agreed to resend the Front Porch Forum posting for the survey that ends on May 8th.

8. EXPLORE AND ASSESS GOVERNANCE MODELS

Brad Luck introduced this issue. Members did not have any overarching questions about the five Governance models. Mr. Luck directed the members to break into small groups to discuss
the five governance models identified and to discuss the pros, cons and what is needed for each model. Groups rotated to each chart to record ideas and check off ideas that they agreed with from other groups. Afterwards, the members reviewed and discussed each of the governance models and the written comments. The following were the results:

Governance models:
A1. Village Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>For this model to work, we would need…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| -Initial ease of transition  
-Continuity of programs  
-Essex Town taxes won’t increase….or increase gradually | -Could eventually address this topic again (perhaps a pro)  
-with uncertainty of how mudget is handled down the road (whether under municipal budget or separate article)  
-potential loss of school space and use (whims of the boards)  
-potential loss of shared personnel and continuity for children  
-change of all support services (IT, HR, Finance)  
-Continuation of preschool (Village in preschool business?) *Lori stated that the Trustees understand the value of preschool. | -To talk to school regarding use of space  
-Talk to Trustees about M.O. U. with unified school district  
-How would after school care continue?  
-How would shared staffing work? (looking at Colchester Recreation Model for licensed preschool was suggested) |

B1. Town Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>For this model to work, we would need…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| -No Charter change expanding town program  
-streamlined-one stop shop  
-cost savings?  
-reduced taxes for Village residents | -Budget is contained within Town article  
-possible impact of school facility access  
-More stringent background check standards with school  
-continuity of staff with children  
-quality of staff without Full time status (EJRP)  
-Possible staff turnover (EFRP)  
-Town voters may not | -Greater understanding of the budget-Australian ballot/Town MEeting/Charter Change  
-How do you integrate programs  
-M.O.U. for school access  
-Would both parks and recreation programs operate as separate entities or have to merge? (co-exist under Town administration but separate operations)  
-What needs to happen with |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2. Interlocal Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pros</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Eliminate duplicate services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- More efficient/streamlined operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ease of administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Equal access to programs (town and village)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No charter change</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Flexibility in modifying</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3. Union Municipal District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pros</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unites communities under one umbrella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Puts both communities on equal footing from the start</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Has to be approved by both communities
  - Eliminate redundancies in programs
  - Expected cost savings
  - Stability/permanence
  - Structural flexibility
  - Standalone budget (directly funded)
  - Potential for new programs and services
  - Could “house” train hop, farmer’s market, senior center, libraries, etc.

- Shared staffing losses
  - Potential of 2 different tax districts (approval from both communities might be a con, too)
  - New Charter and a community vote
  - Continued preschool questionable
  - Oversight of budget

- Systems?
  - Guaranteed use of shared staffing and buildings, schools
  - M.O.U.s from school districts that guarantee use of schools through many years
  - Associated cost and structure of support services (Finance, HR, IT, etc.)

---

**B4. EWED Unified Union School District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>For this model to work, we would need....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal programming</td>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>- If Westford would want this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing flexibility</td>
<td>Limited Time (timeline, is it doable?)</td>
<td>- If the budget would be separate from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared use of school buildings</td>
<td>Westford</td>
<td>- Does Westford have to have the option or do they have to join?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared staffing, continuity, retention</td>
<td>Unknown of future school boards</td>
<td>- How would M.O.U.’s work, would we need them under this model?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate budget article</td>
<td>Rising tax burden</td>
<td>- What does Westford have now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of school IT services</td>
<td>Added burden to unified school board</td>
<td>- How could we operate without Westford?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminates barriers</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Is the school district interested in this? Does the UUSD support this model?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the discussion, members took a vote on the models based on what they have heard so far and that they felt could meet the members’ goals and the community’s needs. The result of that vote was the following: Village Municipality received a total of 22, with an average of 2.2, Town Municipality received a total of 21, with an average of 2.1, Interlocal Contract received a total of
18 with an average of 1.8, Union Municipal District received a total of 46 with an average of 4.6 and the EWEC Unified Union School District received a total of 33, with an average of 3.3.

The Interlocal Contract model was eliminated since it was the lowest score. Members discussed whether the Town Municipality model and the Village Municipality should be eliminated as well. However, members decided to keep all four models for further discussion.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & NEXT STEPS

- Committee members will repost the notice about the public survey and the deadline coming up on Sunday, May 8th.
- Further discussion will occur on the four remaining governance models at the next meeting on May 11th.
- Michael Smith will contact the EWEC Unified Union School District to see if they are able to attend the next meeting on May 11th. A summary of reasons why members are in favor of this model and a list of questions will be sent beforehand.
- Erika Baldasaro will craft a summary of tonight’s meeting.
- Ally Vile will contact WVPD to see about having a representative attend a future meeting for questions.
- Brad Luck will generate an estimate for administrative costs paid to CCSU.

10. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Town of Essex
Recording Secretary
Saramichelle Stultz
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
May 11, 2016  

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Smith, Theresa Fletcher.  
ADMINISTRATION: Brad Luck, EJRP; Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec.  
OTHERS PRESENT: Andy Watts, Adam Sollace, Bridget Myers, and Alex Gaydos [via Skype].

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS  
In the absence of Michael Smith, Raj Chawla called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM. Introductions were done.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD  
There were no comments from the public.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
May 4, 2016  
MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Erika Baldasaro, to approve the minutes of May 4, 2016 with correction of the date for the approval of the minutes to April 25, 2016. VOTING: unanimous (8-0); motion carried.

4. REVIEW MEETING AGREEMENTS & COMMITTEE GOALS  
The meeting agreements and committee goals were reviewed. There were no questions or comments.

5. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS  
It was noted the survey was out April 27th through May 9th. The video was also released. The survey was promoted through the rec departments and the webpages as well as social media. There were 386 respondents. Alex Gaydos compiled the answers to the survey questions into 13 themes.

Ms. Gaydos reported:  
- Spread through all age groups were the themes of quality of programs, accessibility and affordability.
- Equity was the chief theme (finance) then accessibility (no change in accessibility to services - people appreciate having baseball camps at Maple Street Park and Essex Town, for example). Those who want change are hesitant of the implications, but recognize change is coming and want to make the change successfully.
- The local newspaper followed by Front Porch Forum and Facebook then the websites and emails were the most used ways people sought information.
- Most of the respondents were:
In the 25-64 age group
- village and town residents
- income range of $66,000 to $90,000 plus
- have at least two children
- are users of the parks and rec programs

Brad Luck suggested the responses to each governance model can be evaluated to determine which model is best. Jason DiRosa mentioned calculating the cost savings with a consolidated rec organizational structure. Max Levy suggested a phased approach could be taken and efficiencies identified. Ally Vile noted the survey results indicated people are fearful of losing programs. There are 20,000 people to serve. Combining the departments will make the largest rec department in the state. Job descriptions can be streamlined and the focus can be on equity, but there are all the facilities and programs to maintain so a cut in the number of positions is unlikely. Brad Luck stated the rec departments do not have a preference of model, but just want to know where they will be so they can get to work. Details on the cost structure will come later based on the model chosen. With the municipal model there will not be legal staff, HR, finance director services. Under the school district these services are available. The rec departments pay for these services.

There was agreement the interest of the school district in having the rec departments needs to be confirmed. Brad Luck noted Martha Heath, Unified Union School District Chairperson, invited two committee members to update the District at the next meeting (May 17, 2016). Erika Baldasaro and Jason DiRosa volunteered to attend the meeting to give an update and get some direction on the position of the school district.

The draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District and the Parks & Recreation Union Municipal District was reviewed. In sum, points highlighted in the MOU include:

- The rec department has priority after the school to school facilities and schools have priority after the rec department to rec facilities.
- The rec department can disseminate information through the schools.
- The rec department will provide school aged licensed childcare and have access to space in the school. Similar opportunity will be provide to each school in the district if feasible.
- People working in the afterschool rec programs are also employed by the school as is occurring today (i.e. shared personnel).
- The rec department can use Park Street School for preschool space.
- The rec board and Unified Union School District Board will hold a joint meeting at least once a year.
- The MOU agreement has a three year term with automatic renewal for one year. If one party wants out of the agreement the contract exists for two more years.

Jason DiRosa asked if all the children can be accommodated in the childcare program. Adam Sollace noted Summit Street School and Hiawatha School are at capacity due to space limits. Fleming School and Maple Street Park are close to capacity. Wait lists are
anticipated at all locations. Ally Vile noted space is an issue with the town’s childcare program as well. The town rec program uses the Y for childcare services and offers classes. There are time gaps between sessions. Parents can coordinate classes for their children. There are some classes with wait lists. Raj Chawla asked about the cost between the two programs. Adam Sollace said the Y charges $86/week per child. EJRP charged $72.50/week per child. The cost is competitive with the private sector. Brad Luck stated the rec program provides essential services for the community. All programs are self-sustained. Tax money pays for buildings and utilities.

Ally Vile spoke about park maintenance. The town rec department maintains fields on school property in the town at the expense of the rec department though the school covered some costs for the fields on Foster Road. Jason DiRosa stated conversation is needed on who is responsible for field maintenance and cost.

Andy Watts observed the MOU is essentially the inter-local contract model that was eliminated from the list of choices. Multiple inter-local contracts will be needed as a union municipal district. Raj Chawla said he did not like the inter-local contract model because he wanted a more permanent overall entity. Christine Packard added the public has nothing to do with inter-local contracts which could be an advantage or disadvantage. Jason DiRosa commented having agreements in place is good regardless of the model chosen.

6. EXPLORE/ASSESS GOVERNANCE MODELS
There was agreement the Union Municipal District is the prevailing option. Existing examples of a union municipal district include the Winooski Valley Park District and Lake Iroquois Park District. Under this model the village rec budget and the town rec budget would be consolidated into one budget. Taxpayer funded portion through the Essex Junction school district as a separate article would now levy taxes and the town rec budget would be eliminated from the town budget and appear as a separate line item on the tax bill.

Further information that is needed on the Union Municipal District model includes:
- Timeline to form the district and types of agreements needed to provide the services people receive today.
- Property and debt transfer.
- Does the school district accept the MOU with the union municipal district and all the provisions including shared staff or does the school board prefer rec to be under the school.
- Does Westford have the option to join or must all three communities participate.
- Estimate of the tax rate needed to support the Union Municipal District.
- Can there be separate tax rates with two separate entities under one Union Municipal District and then proceed with a slow, methodical merging (phased approach).
- Once the umbrella of a Union Municipal District is created there is opportunity to bring other entities in, such as libraries, farmers markets, senior centers.
- If the union is not done in the next two years should the departments remain independent.

The Village Municipality and Town Municipality models are on hold pending reaction by the Unified School District to the two prevailing options (Union Municipal District and WEC Unified Union School District).

7. **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**
Press releases giving a synopsis of the committee meetings continue to be published.

8. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
Next meeting is June 1, 2016 at 6:30 PM. Brad Luck will Doodle additional meeting dates in May and June.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

RScty: MERiordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
June 8, 2016


MEMBERS ABSENT: Jason DiRosa.

ADMINISTRATION: Brad Luck, EJRP; Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec.

OTHERS PRESENT: Andy Watts, Adam Sollace, Diane Clemens, Marla Durham, Randy Forguites, Colin Flanders.

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS
Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
There were no comments from the public.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
June 1, 2016
MOTION by Christine Packard, SECOND by Max Levy, to approve the minutes of June 1, 2016 as written. VOTING: unanimous (9-0); motion carried.

4. REVIEW MEETING AGREEMENTS & COMMITTEE GOALS
The meeting agreements and committee goals were reviewed. There were no questions or comments.

5. RECAP 6/6/16 PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE AND 6/7/16 UNITIFED UNION MEETING.
The following was reported:
- The Prudential Committee resolved to support EJRP, continue to support the preschool program, and support the new union municipal district.
- The Unified Union Board supports the union municipal district.
- Once the union municipal district is in place then MOUs will be drafted for facilities. The documents are drafted, but talks are on hold until the new entity is formalized prior to the November 8th vote. The documents will be posted on the website for the public.
- All properties will transfer to the new Unified Union District including ownership of Park Street School and existing contracts for services, leases, loans.
- The Prudential Committee wants to enter into a lease prior to the transfer of Park Street School so the preschool program can continue. The Prudential Committee values the partnership and wants to continue. The Prudential Committee wanted to consider a different type of an arrangement, not necessarily a lease, for the preschool program.
- At the June 22nd joint meeting there is an action item to adopt the resolution by the Prudential Committee.
The new union municipal district and board will exist before the Prudential Committee is dissolved. It is recommended the articles be submitted to the state legislature for approval, but the statutory requirements to exist are met.

6. RECOMMENDATION OF GOVERNANCE MODELS

Brad Luck noted per 24VSA121§4861 the Board of Trustees and Selectboard charged the rec governance study committee with determining to proceed or not to proceed to form a union municipal district and draft the appropriate articles of agreement if the determination is to proceed.

Andy Watts asked if there is any harm in waiting until the joint meeting on June 22nd for the vote on the governance model. The Selectboard is expecting some discussion before the vote is taken. Mr. Watts requested waiting to vote until after the presentation to the Selectboard and Trustees and the Prudential Committee. Raj Chawla said delay is a concern. As it is the agreements will have to be drafted over the summer. There are minutes of the study committee meetings that the Selectboard, Trustees, and Prudential Committee can read to get up to speed. Lori Houghton pointed out that both the Selectboard and Trustees should have been kept informed through the representatives on the study committee. Marla Durham said the Prudential Committee has read the minutes and submitted questions to the representative on the study committee (Jason DiRosa). Max Levy said the minutes from the study committee have not yet been provided to the Selectboard.

Results of the straw vote on forming a union municipal district as the governance model for recreation is as follows:
- Lori Houghton – aye
- Christine Packard – aye
- Erika Baldasaro - aye
- Kim Maiberger - aye
- Betzi Bilodeau - aye
- Max Levy - aye
- Michael Smith - aye
- Raj Chawla - aye
- Theresa Fletcher - aye

7. PLAN FOR JOINT MEETING ON JUNE 22, 2016

At the June 22, 2016 meeting the recommendation from the committee will be presented. Each board at the meeting will take action separately on the recommendation. Brad Luck reviewed the handout detailing roles and the timeline. If the governance model is approved then work sessions will be scheduled to complete the agreements. The attorneys are now drafting language. The documents must be filed and submitted to the state’s Attorney General in August for approval. Once the paperwork is submitted to the Attorney General the study committee’s work is done. Next steps if the recommendation for a union municipal district is accepted is to publish information so the public is informed for the vote in November.
There was continued discussion of the public information component. Each committee member can decide whether or not to continue working on the remaining tasks so there is continuity. Experts can be invited to participate in specialty areas (HR, IT, school, budget, etc.). Staff will get assurances from the town and school that they support and understand the potential demands on staff going forward. The committee disbands once the work is done.

Brad Luck will use Survey Monkey to determine the committee members who wish to continue and Doodle for a work session date in July and a meeting in mid-August.

The committee reviewed the draft letter from the Prudential Committee to the Trustees and Selectboard regarding the formation of a union municipal district by July 2017. The yes/no vote requires a majority from each municipality.

There was further discussion of whether the committee should take formal action on the choice of governance model. Andy Watts argued it shows more respect to the separate boards to give them the opportunity to hear the recommendation before the committee takes a vote. Lori Houghton stated the committee was asked to make a determination so a motion should be made. Marla Durham (Prudential Committee) and Diane Clemens (Unified Union Board) concurred the committee was charged with providing a recommendation as the first step and fleshing out the recommendation as the second step which is the expectation of the respective school boards.

**MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Erika Baldasaro, to approve the creation of a union municipal district between the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex to promote plans for more efficient and economical operation of local government services specifically related to establishing, maintaining, and conducting a system of public recreation.**

**DISCUSSION:** There was review of the goals and whether the decision supports the goals, especially the affordability and funding structure. There will be a separate budget for the union municipal district and the public will vote on the budget. There were no further comments.

**VOTING:** unanimous (9-0); motion carried.

There was discussion of the presentation at the June 22, 2016 joint meeting. The presentation will provide information on the history, process, benefits, timeline into the future, and questions and answers. Possible location of the meeting is Albert D. Lawton School for ease of parking. Social media, the local newspaper, and website will be used to communicate to the public.

**8. BACKUP PLAN**

Brad Luck noted if the voters do not approve the union municipal district governance model then the current agreement between the Prudential Committee and the Trustees that the Prudential Committee govern EJRP will transfer to the Unified Union District which is not interested in the recreation program. The Prudential Committee has seven months to determine what to do with EJRP including sending the program to the Unified
Union District or suggesting the program go under the governance of the village trustees. The backup plan is for the Essex rec program to stay with the town and EJRP to stay with the village. The decision to accept the rec program can be made by the Selectboard and Trustees respectively. There was agreement that the matter needs to be made clear to the public of what happens if the vote fails. Information that the new Unified Union District does not want to take on recreation and supports the union municipal district governance model needs to be publicized.

Marla Durham cautioned that the recreation budget if under the jurisdiction of the village trustees will become part of the municipal general fund and typically the first budget cut is the one not needed for municipal services.

Diane Clemens suggested to protect the budget if the department goes under the village trustees is for the recreation department to become a self-sustaining enterprise fund. Lori Houghton noted the Trustees recommend a budget to the voters and the voters can make changes or vote approval.

9. FAQs
Sample questions include:
1. Why the change?
2. What happens to childcare?
3. How is the childcare program impacted in the village and town?
4. Will there still be non-resident charges?
5. Changes to taxes?
6. Layoffs?
7. Benefits – long and short term?
8. Challenges?
9. How much will be saved?
10. Where will the rec central office be located?
11. Opportunities for expansion of programs?
12. What about Westford?
13. Change in services?
14. Loss of parks? Addition of parks?
15. Other changes?
16. Park access?
17. Length of board terms?
18. When are petitions needed by board members?
19. Board members elected by the separate municipalities or comingled votes?
20. Board structure?
21. What options for governance were looked at?
22. Downsides?
23. Sample ballot should be posted to show the public what to expect.
24. Where to contact for more information should be posted.

10. ADJOURNMENT
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

RScty: MERiordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING
Joint Municipal Survey Committee
Meeting Minutes June 22, 2016

Joint Meeting with the Recreation Study Committee, Prudential Committee,
Village Trustees, and Selectboard

Albert D. Lawton School Cafeteria
104 Maple Street, Essex Junction, VT

Present:
[From the Recreation Study Committee] Michael Smith, Raj Chawla, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldassaro, Max Levy, Betzi Bilodeau, Theresa Fletcher, Jason DiRosa

[From the Prudential Committee] Michael Smith, Marla Durham, Candace Morgan, Patrick Murray, and Jason DiRosa

[From the Village Trustees] George Tyler, Dan Kerin, Elaine Sopchak, Andrew Brown, Lori Houghton

[From the Selectboard] Irene Wrenner, Max Levy, Andy Watts

Absent:
[From the Recreation Study Committee] Christine Packard

[From the Selectboard] Michael Plageman, Susan Cook

Administrators present: Judith DeNova - CCSU, Patrick Scheidel – Village/Town, Brad Luck - EJRP, Ally Vile - ET Parks and Rec,

Others present: Kim Kedzierski (minutes), Andrew Bolduc, Paul O’Brien - CCSU, Adam Sollace, Adriane Martin, Samantha Crocker, Lou Ann Cioli, Greg Duggan, Harlan Smith, Kayhl Cooper, Craig B. Agricola, Dynan Giambatista, Randy Forguites, Diane Clemans, Lou Anne Pioli.

Call to Order:
This meeting is a joint meeting with the Recreation Governance Study Committee, Prudential Committee, Town of Essex Selectboard, and Essex Junction Village Trustees.
Michael Smith, Chair of the Prudential Committee and member of the Recreation Governance Study Committee, called the meeting to order at 6:36 P.M.

Max Levy, Chair of the Town of Essex Selectboard, called the meeting to order at 6:36 P.M.

George Tyler, President of the Essex Junction Trustees, called the meeting to order at 6:36 P.M.

**Introductions:** Michael Smith asked the assembled members of the Recreation Governance Study Committee, Village Trustees, Essex Selectboard, and Prudential Committee to introduce themselves to each other and the audience.

**Visitors to be Heard:**
Lou Anne Pioli - Senior Coordinator - Essex Area Senior Center
- Lou Ann Pioli - Questioning if there will be a line item in the budget for Senior Services?

**Agenda additions or changes:** None

**Consent Agenda:**

Mike Smith moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of meeting minutes from June 8, 2016.

**MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Max Levy, to approve the minutes of June 8, 2016 as written.**

**VOTING: unanimous (9-0); motion carried.**

**Work Session Dates and Final Meeting of RGSC/first meeting of new group - Brad Luck**

- The RGSC needs to set works session dates and final meeting
  - June 27, July 14, July 21 were agreed upon by the majority.
  - Aug 10 last meeting of REC study committee
  - At this meeting the RGSC committee will vote to approve and vote to dissolve committee as is.

**Sharing Draft of FAQ’s:**
- Copies of the draft for the RGSC have been distributed to all members of all the boards present.
- Nothing further regarding this will be discussed tonight.

**RGSC Presentations with Q&A - Max Levy and Erika Baldasaro:**

The RGSC has created a Powerpoint presentation entitled, “Recreation Governance Study Committee”. This powerpoint is a presentation to the Selectboard, Trustees, Prudential Committee, and visitors. The presentation is an overview of the many hours of work done to get to the decision that is being presented today.

- **Slide 1 - 3: Why are we here?**
  - In November 2015, community members in EJSD, ETSD, U46 and Westford voted to consolidate school districts by July 1, 2017 - leaving EJRP without a governing body.
In March 2016, a 10 member study committee (both board and community representation) was formed to study recreation and explore all various options for potential restructure of the Village and Town recreation departments.

- **Slide 4: Governance Options Explored**
  - 14 governance models explored.

- **Slide 5: Let’s Get Going**
  - Members agreed to meeting etiquette (i.e., on time, one speaker at a time, etc)
  - Members agreed to committee goals, to include:
    - Ensure that the current quality of recreation services are maintained or enhanced
    - Explore all avenues and entities before making a recommendation
    - Actively engage the community in the process and keep them informed by making information easily accessible.
    - Keep the community’s affordability in mind and ensure that the funding structure is fiscally responsible and will be supported by the public.
    - Reach a consensus on a final recommendation by the middle of June 2016.

- **Slide 6: RGSC Summary of Work**
  - RGSC held 7 [public] meetings between April 25 and June 22.
  - An informational was created and was marketed to the community via Facebook and Front Porch Forum.
  - A community survey was done and 386 responses were gathered.
  - RGSC looked at 7 of the governance options carefully - variations include if the recreation departments stayed separate or combined.

- **Slide 7 and 8: Survey Results**
  - Survey asked 3 questions and 386 responses were gathered.
    - Recreation themes that matter most to you?
      - 38% year-round diversity, 25% variety of recreation facilities, 22% affordable and accessible, 20% maintenance
    - What do you want the committee to keep in mind?
      - 29% Program Affordability, 26% Program Accessibility, 25% Change (appreciation of current programs and fear of changes), 24% Program Quality, 23% Program Diversity
    - Most helpful ways of communication?
      - [In order from most to least] Essex Reporter, Front Porch Forum, Facebook, Websites, Information shared at meetings, Informal face to face, Videos, Forums, Channel 17

- **Slide 9 to 14: Process of Elimination**
○ Option 1 - Non-Profit
  ■ Not chosen due to concerns of ability to borrow funds, non-profit accountability to taxpayers, oversight of tax dollars supporting a non-public department
○ Option 2 - Interlocal contract - an agreement between existing municipalities to perform a governmental service, activity or undertaking
  ■ Not chosen due to concerns of funding being compromised by other municipal needs, lack of community vote, not a permanent solution, confusion of joint oversight by 2 boards
○ Option 3 - Village Municipality
  ■ Not chosen due to concerns that it’s not a permanent solution, funding being compromised by other municipal needs, Parks and Rec budget not a separate article
○ Option 4 - Town Municipality
  ■ Not chosen due to concerns that funding would be compromised by other municipal needs, Parks and Rec budget not a separate article
○ Option 5 - Essex Westford Unified Union School District
  ■ Not chosen due to concerns that UU board not showing initial interest in taking Parks and Rec on as a school function, implications/involvement of Westford, question whether schools should/would serve the expansive role of recreation

● Slide 15 and 16: Relationship with schools
  ○ RGSC discussed at length the importance of the relationship between municipal recreation and the schools to include: space use, child care, preschool and communications with families
    ■ Both the Unified Union Board and the Prudential Committee passed resolutions recognizing their continued support and relationship with municipal recreation

● Slide 17 and 18: The Right Choice
  ○ Union Municipal District
    ■ Reasons this was selected
      ● Unites community recreation under one umbrella
      ● One budget - voted on by community
      ● Isolated budget
      ● Both communities and departments on equal ground - starting new
      ● Communities will get to vote by Australian ballot
      ● Eliminate redundancies - ie. brochures, etc.
      ● Potential cost savings - ie. postage, printing, etc.
      ● Long term stability
      ● “One-Stop” shopping - reduce confusion
      ● Equity in communities
      ● Ability to “house” other community initiatives (now and in the future: farmer’s market, senior center, etc.)
● Another step in line with recent consolidation and unification efforts.

● **Slide 19 to 21: RGSC Approval and Statutes**
  ○ On Wednesday, June 8, 2016, the RGSC voted in the affirmative, 9-0...
    ■ **MOTION:** Approval of the creation of a union municipal district between the Village of Essex Junction and Town of Essex to promote plans for more efficient and economical operation of local government services - specifically related to establishing, maintaining, and conducting a system of public recreation.
    ■ Next steps: Draft agreement and voter vote whether to enter into an agreement
    ■ Letters of support:
      ○ Patrick Schiedel, Municipal Manager and Judith DeNova - CCSU

● **Slide 22: RGSC Roles and Timeline**
  ○ June 8 - August 9: recommend governance model, develop district agreement, create FAQ’s, file district agreement and submit to Attorney General
  ○ August 10 - December 13: Publish community info, spread the word, created public outreach campaign, and implement public outreach strategies

● **Slide 23: Recreation Governance Transition Team**
  ○ The transition team will convene for a one hour meeting to learn about new governance model and timeline, to brainstorm additional questions to be addressed, and have questions answered about the process. Then, the co-chairs will work with different sub groups on an as needed basis to address the relevant issues.

● **Slide 24 and 25: Transition team areas to address and Items to be Determined**
  ○ Timeline: June 22 to December 13, 2016
  ○ Exhaustive list includes (but not limited to): Organizational Structures, Job Descriptions, Budget, IT, HR Functions, Maintenance, School use, EJRP debt relief, etc.
  ○ Items yet to be determined are: Prudential Committee (preschool resolution, etc.), Village Trustees (Park property, etc.), Selectboard (Park Property, etc.)

● **Slide 26 to 28: Next Steps - Draft Timeline**
  ○ [Starting in July 2016] RGSC prepares agreement for the formation of the district through 1-3 work sessions. Major areas: purpose, composition, election, terms, budget vote, etc.
  ○ July 25 - District agreement filed with Trustees, Selectboard, Planning Commission, Town
  ○ August 2016 - District agreement presented to Selectboard (8/1), UU Board (8/1), Trustees (8/9), Prudential Committee (TBD)
  ○ August 10 - District agreement approved by RGSC - RGSC dissolves
  ○ August 11 - District agreement submitted to VT Attorney General
  ○ October 8 - Petitions available for candidates to the Rec District Council
º November 7 - Petitions due
º November - Selectboard (11/7), Trustees (11/8) warn special meeting for December 13 for the voters to vote on District agreement and elect council
º November 23 - Absentee ballots available
º December 13 - District agreement is submitted to voters for approval by Australian ballot at special meeting and vote for Rec District Council
º January 13, 2017 - District agreement is submitted to VT Legislature for approval
º January 2017 - New Rec District Council takes seats
º April 11, 2017 - Rec District budget vote
º May 2017 - District Agreement approved by VT Legislature and signed by Governor
º July 1, 2017 - Union Municipal District commences
º TBD:
  ■ Trustees and Selectboard land conveyance decision and timeline
  ■ PC to convey assets/buildings/improvements
  ■ SB & PC resolution to transfer assets, capital account monies, equipment, etc.
  ■ Addressing the bond debt for EJRP

º Slide 29 to 34 - Top 5 FAQ’s - DRAFT
º Work in progress. Will answer the following:
  ■ Why is it better to form a new rec district than to follow a similar path to other village/town service consolidations?
  ■ What will be the tax implications of forming a new rec district?
  ■ Will forming a new rec district reduce expenses at all?
  ■ Are there examples of other union municipal districts? Are any related to recreation?
  ■ If the Village is subset of the Town, which entities are actually forming the new rec district?

Questions & Answers
º Why vote on December 13? Why not vote in general election in November?
º There are challenges with voting in general election in November 2016 due to:
  ■ Federal election
  ■ Absentee ballots timelines are different for local election
  ■ Folks could in theory get Fed absentee ballots but not Local election ballots
  ■ Deemed impossible by town clerk
  ■ If not December - then the next available vote date would be March 2017. A major issue would be budgets which start well before March
  ■ After a meeting with town clerk, it was deemed impossible to hold the Rec Vote in November. The Secretary of State was also consulted and it is confirmed that a November vote is impossible.

º Are you doing articles of agreement like what was done in the RED study? (Marla Durham)
○ Per Brad Luck, yes, the work group will be tackling that.

● Is there going to be a deadline if one of the municipalities wants to pull something out (land)? (Marla Duham)
  ○ Per Andrew Bolduc, no.

● In a district like this, what’s the oversight?
  ○ Elected board. Rec governance committee will decide how many and from where, etc.

● When a new municipality is formed, normally the Legislature approves, with this only the attorney general needs to approve?
  ○ Per Andrew, this type is a little different, however, it has been recommended that we submit to Legislature as well as the Attorney General

● Will you base representation upon population or just open to everyone? (Marla Durham)
  ○ Per Brad, that is up for discussion

● Does all the work to be done by the transition team need to be done by July 25th? All the nuts and bolts, for example, property transfers, won’t be done yet. (George Tyler)
  ○ Andrew Bolduc states that because we are forming a new entity, don’t need to deal with land transfers as of yet.
  ○ Brad Luck states that there are a lot of parts. The public will be provided with as much info and intentions before Dec 13. For example, the Trustees own the 3 parks - they will have to decide on conveyance.
  ○ Transition team - starting now (Brad). How the new consolidated district will process payroll for example, is info needed now. There will be a communications team to get that info out to the public.

**Meeting of the RGSC Adjourned:**

Mike Smith moved to adjourn RGSC meeting at 7:56 pm to move on to Prudential Committee Meeting.
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee

Meeting Minutes: July 14, 2016

Essex Junction Recreation & Parks, 75 Maple Street, Essex Junction, VT

Present: Michael Smith, Raj Chawla, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldassaro, Betzi Bilodeau, Jason DiRosa, Christine Packard, Max Levy

Absent: Theresa Fletcher

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: Andrew Bolduc (attorney representation), Andy Watts, Bruce Post, Robert & Joan Bates, Margaret Smith, Alan Luzzatto, Sara Stultz

Call to Order: Michael Smith, Chair of the Recreation Governance Study Committee, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Agenda additions or changes: None

Public to be heard:

- Rich Maggiani sent a letter to be read as he couldn’t attend the meeting in person. Ally read this aloud.
- Bob Bates, resident outside the Village voiced concerns re: oversight and how it seems anti-transparent. No representation by Selectboard (SB) or Village Trustees (VT) yet is somehow listed as an advantage to be on its own board. Voting – what’s the rush and why not have it take place in November with Federal election or in the spring when other votes for Town/Village/School are happening?
- Sara Stultz, resident in the Village. Noted that if the dollar amount was swapped, more residents of the Village would be present vs. outside the Village. Loves the connection with EJRP and the schools and how childcare carries over from schools to programs. Short-term, might see some expenses, but long-term means the future of our community will include high quality programming. What is the fact in regards to the price increase/decrease of taxes for Town/Village residents? Why doesn’t this board want to have SB or VT representation on the new District Board? What happens to the new Rec District if the Town and Village municipalities merge?
- Bruce Post, resident outside the Village – has spent a lot of time with Essex Governance Committee and commented on the number of elections taking place. Bruce wanted clarification on how funds were raised for EJRP (through the school or separate vote)? Will public hearings be held before the SB & VT place this on a ballot? Please be sure that publications and quality outreach are available to all residents of the community. Would the budget be voted by a floor meeting or Australian ballot? Bruce questioned petition for a bond for long term indebtedness? It was very difficult to find all of this information and nothing was put on the calendar on the Town of Essex website, though found the information within the TOE site, he did not reference the EJRP website.
Brad Luck clarified that the final agreement will be presented to the Selectboard, Trustees, EWECUUSD, and Prudential Committee prior to submitting the document to the Attorney General. Those are all options for public to be heard, but that there aren’t public hearings prior to those Board meeting presentations scheduled at this time and that is something this committee can look into.

Bob Bates asked if a budget would be available by the time the vote is on the ballot and it was noted that a true budget would not be ready to vote on until April 2017. There would be proposals but nothing actual. Bob doesn’t believe this vote will pass if there isn’t a hard number to show the community/voters. The more specificity and transparency that is provided, the more likely the vote would go through.

Erika agreed and clarified that respective numbers would be available at the time of the December vote.

Alan Luzzatto, resident outside the Village, suggests the RGSC needs more time to be a well-informed voter.

Margaret Smith, resident outside the Village, concerned about the lack of transparency, how untangled the EJRP budget is with the school, concerned about lack of oversight (mentioned embezzlement). Margaret also wanted clarification to daycare/childcare/preschool options available through EJRP vs. the Town. Margaret felt that the Board should not quickly become “at large” until the two municipalities are one; therefore, everyone would be “at large” similar to the Selectboard elected officials.

Max commented that it is almost more oversight due to the focus the new Board would have with just a Parks and Recreation budget.

Approval of June 27th minutes:

Amendments: Change Max to being absent and Andy in his place. Approved: 9-1

Review new Timeline for December Vote:

Brad clarified that after a discussion with the Town Clerk and referencing the Secretary of State’s office, a November 8th vote is not possible due to the districting in Essex based on a Federal vote vs. a simple Local vote. Pat Scheidel pushed for an earlier vote than March 2017 (with Town Meeting), resulting in a December 13th vote.

Current timeline states the Agreement would be presented to the Boards in early August. There is little time to have a Public Hearing prior to the August Board meetings. Discussion took place on how and when to provide a public hearing separately or coinciding with those Board presentation dates.

Christine commented that we have a lot of questions already answered, along with work to still do to the FAQs, but many of the Public Comments tonight were because the FAQs are not widely available.

Max senses a rushed feeling from the public; Lori noted that we have only heard from 10 people and not anything from those who like this plan/idea. And the process is similar to the RED Study with no phasing. Raj noted that the public perceives a lack of communication and information.
- Andy commented that this group is coming up with an Agreement on how to form this municipality. Could a new District be formed with just EJRP in it and then the Town could be on a transitional 3-year plan to transfer into the new District?

- Updated schedule of timeline on presentations and public hearings:
  - July 27th (PC @ 6:30pm @ EJRP): Michael, Jason & Christine
  - August 1st (SB @ 7:30pm @ 81 Main): Max, Andy & Betzi
  - August 1st (EWEC @ 6:30pm @ EHS Library): Jason & Erika
  - August 9th (Trustees @ 6:30pm @ 2 Lincoln): Raj & Erika

- Public Hearing Meeting: Thursday, August 4th @ 6:30pm @ EMS, 60 Founders Road): Raj, Jason & Erika

**Work Session on District Agreement:**

- Max brought up the name change that was discussed at the last meeting. Committee members were asked to come to the July 21st meeting with more thought.

- Points of comment were mentioned per section:
  - 1-1: edits
  - 1-3.1: edits to operation of contracts
  - 1-3.8: edits
  - 1-3.20: who is the “host community”? Ok to “strike out”
  - 1-3.23: add in “power to hire and terminate”
  - 1-7: Composition – simplify to state number of Board members
  - 1-8: Selection of Directors – initial board would be 7 people (5 community, 1 from SB, 1 from VT) as a transition board, or keep it as 5 board members (1 from each board and 3 voted from community). Terms: 1yr term = At large voted, 2yr terms = SB & VT serving member, 2- 3yr terms = 1 from the Town outside the Village, 1 from inside the Village. At the end of the 2yr terms, those positions become elected At Large positions.
    - Voting suggestion: offer a ballot with all 3 options available to all residents of the community (everyone gets to vote on those seats in the Village, Town and At Large)
  - 1-15: Executive Director – questions asked on how autonomous the ED is from the Board (leave of absence, termination, restructuring (effecting budget), etc.)

Next meeting: 5:45pm @ 75 Maple Street to allow Public to be Heard time but still stay on track with Work Session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee
Meeting Minutes: July 21, 2016

Essex Junction Recreation & Parks, 75 Maple Street, Essex Junction, VT

RGSC Present: Michael Smith, Raj Chawla, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldassaro, Betzi Bilodeau, Christine Packard, Max Levy

RGSC Absent: Jason DiRosa, Theresa Fletcher

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: Andrew Bolduc (attorney representation), Colin Flanders (Essex Reporter), Sara Stultz

Call to Order: Michael Smith called meeting to order at 5:50pm

Agenda additions or changes: None

Public to be heard: None

Approval of July 14th minutes: Max moved, Raj 2nd discussion

Amendments: Raj and Max made a few amendments that are now adjusted in the minutes from 7/14/16 just to restate their comments/statements. Minutes approved: 7-0

Review new Timeline:
- PC has moved their 7/27/16 meeting to 8/1/16 to combine with the UU meeting
- Erika will move her presentation help to the 8/1/16 SB meeting; Jason will solely present to UU Board
- January 2017: Agreement submitted to VT Legislature; might be removed from timeline. Andrew gave an update to the committee: AG recommended anything submitted to the Legislature should go through the Charter change process. That means that the Agreement can still come in to effect by voter approval and the new district can submit a charter the following year so any items that come up that should be changed in the first year of active status can be officially changed with one charter submission process. The only limit that really seems to happen with this “delay” is the new district couldn’t go through a bond process until the Charter is approved by the Legislature. Brad noted that the two advantages to this change in submitting the Agreement to the AG Office will preserve the district in perpetuity and it will make it more difficult for the final charter to change. All amendments will still have to go through Charter change procedures.

Draft Press Release regarding Public Hearing: No comments

Draft Presentation Outline: Brad asked for feedback on the draft presentation.

Christine asked about adding in housing other community organizations. People are already uneasy about the possible change coming up, the RGSC agreed to keep the focus on Parks & Recreation and talk about future opportunities during presentations.
Max commented that it should be formatted with the “5 bullets, 5 words” format to keep all information flowing.

Raj asked about changing the wording re: the isolated budget and mention more about the increased transparency. Christine commented she heard the word “oversight” more so than transparency; public has more involvement due to the separate process/vote.

Erika suggested the “is not to...” section of the presentation purpose set a negative tone and to keep it all positive. Review items from 6/22 meeting and move forward.

Brad suggested presenters for Board meetings should review the FAQ list to be more prepared for what may be asked by the Boards. Details over the next four months will be hashed out to have answers for the community for public hearings.

Betzi felt it would be beneficial of a department recap for both EJRP & EPR so everyone is on the same page. She is concerned that a similar feeling to Calendar2.0 would come up if people are not previously informed. Erika wants to also keep the main focus on the model the RGSC chose and the Agreement created.

**Work Session on District Agreement:**

1-5: Definitions – Naming of the District. RGSC isn’t keen on having Arts as part of the name. Majority likes “Community” added in the name. Essex Community Parks & Recreation was decided as the favorite name of the District.

1-7: Composition – Brad asked that this composition language be noted that it is for the first three years and after that, the five positions become “at large” with 1, 2 and 3 year terms. Discussion ensued regarding long-term possibilities. It was decided that the initial description would indicate 5 members, and section 1-8 will discuss timeframe details of elected officials.

1-8: Selection of Directors – Max asked for clarification if SB or VT representation should be an elected member or an appointed designee. Intent is to be an elected member, but could be an appointed resident based on SB or VT Board discretion.

1-13b: Vacancy – Betzi noted that the Town of Essex Charter verbiage states 50% attendance in a calendar year is needed and requested that be added to this section.

1-15c,d: Executive Director – Andrew updated these additions and Brad commented that these are similar to what the school’s language reflects.

- Ally asked about reorganization duties allowed or not allowed by position and if any additional oversight would be needed by the Board. The Committee felt that was micromanaging the Exec. Director or “tying their hands” in being able to effectively do the job for which they were hired.

1-16: District Clerk – Andrew added this in the document to take items off the Executive Director position and that the paid position could even be the existing Town Clerk.

1-24: Preparation and Approval of Budget – Max asked specifically about the voting difference between the operating and capital funds, referencing 1-28: Capital Reserve Fund. After discussion, a separate article could be voted on but then annually counted within the budget from the initial approved vote, similar to how the Town budget is processed now (Capital within Operating but steady year after year).

1-24c: Brad requested edits for submitting the amount to be raised by taxes or rate on a dollar of the grand list. Raj asked about bonding capabilities and if down the road, the vote can be based on overall majority or if it was still going to be based on Village vs. Town approval majorities. Once the District is formed it will be the only “merged” part of the Essex community for full approval votes.

1-26: Limitations to Appropriations – Andrew updated what had been added by suggestion of Brad, similar to what is stated in the Town of Essex Charter.

1-29: Special Authority meetings – Max asked for clarification

1-35d: Reconsideration – Betzi noted that no timeframe is indicated on when it could be brought up to the Board again (12 months? Budget year? Etc.) Andrew will look into if a separate provision has been used before.

1-40: Dissolution of the District – Petition must go through the Board. Brad noted that dissolution is different from withdrawal process, but requested there be a minimum timeframe allowed for the District to be active. Raj brought up the most recent SB meeting and the hesitation of Board members with the advancement of unified municipal district and feels the written minimum timeframe of the district to be active is probably needed to prove the decision was the right one, similar to the 3-year trial timeline with the Public Works departments. Brad suggested that the Agreement could state that if dissolution were to happen within the first three years, the District Board, SB and VT would all have to agree to then go to the voters.

- 1-40c: Betzi asked for clarification and edits were made.

Side Questions/Comments:

- Max asked if there was a way to limit the increases that would take place for the first “X” years.
- Brad mentioned that the South Burlington School District has a provision index to their budget.
- Raj noted how the EPR and EJRP presentations prove how lean both departments currently operate
- Sara Stultz (resident inside the Village) asked about the bond debt with EJRP; Max commented that Pat Scheidel believes whoever voted for the debt, pays for the debt. Michael commented that for the current debt, it will shift to the UU Board budget.
- Sara Stultz also asked about the “access” to parks and programs and wants to make sure it is addressed.
  - Committee revisited this FAQ: Camp registration systems are very different at this time. Brad commented that a plan would have to be discussed and created. Equal access in all programming aspects isn’t finalized at this point but could definitely exist; the childcare (summer camp) is the most challenging to make the same until more is unified.
- Michael asked about full-time positions – who creates those positions. Andrew commented that it is currently with the Executive Director. Brad noted that at the last meeting, employment and contracts were discussed, the UU Board has language on continuation of positions. He also updated the RGSC that he and Ally are working with Town and School HR in regards to how to move forward with current positions. We need language that provides protection for both department employees moving forward.
- Andrew is going to include a provision re: tax abatement
- Andrew will include that if and when a charter amendment is made, it will supersede the existing charter.
- Andrew noted that a separate treasurer should be added as a position to assure “checks & balances” to alleviate any concerns. Is this a separate position completely? It doesn’t have to be a full time position. The Board could assign duties to this individual, equaling more oversight. This could be completed through an MOU; lots of options.
- Approval/another meeting prior to presentations: not enough members are available to meet next week (7/25-7/29). Andrew will have an updated DRAFT available by Tuesday, which will be sent out for approval prior to 8/1 but in time for SB and VT member packets. Ally will take reply only feedback, compile for Andrew and have an updated one for approval and presentations.
- FAQs: add final FAQs to 8/10 meeting.

**Adjournment**: Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 4, 2016


MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Smith, Christine Packard, Lori Houghton, Theresa Fletcher.

ADMINISTRATION: Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec, Brad Luck, EJRP.


1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Raj Chawla called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM and explained the procedure to be followed at the meeting. There were no changes to the agenda.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
Barbara Higgins, 7 Cindy Lane, read a statement requesting the committee ask the Essex Selectboard to delay warning a vote on the union municipal (rec) district until March 2017 so there is more time for everyone to understand what a union municipal district is and the implications. There is a two year window to deal with the issue. The questions and suggestions raised regarding checks and balances bear further consideration and study.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
July 21, 2016
MOTION by Max Levy, SECOND by Erika Baldasaro, to approve the minutes of July 21, 2016 with the addition of the following:
“The discussion on removing the section on indebtedness and bonding was brief. Attorney Andrew Bolduc pointed out it was a lengthy section, but is covered by statute and does not have to be in the agreement.”
VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.

4. PRESENTATION: Essex Community Parks & Recreation Agreement
Betzi Bilodeau and Erika Baldasaro gave a presentation that explained how the option of a union municipal rec district was chosen by the study committee and the agreement that was drafted which covers budget, tax rate, audit of finances, borrowing money, capital
reserve, amending the agreement, developing a charter, addition or withdraw of a municipality from the district, and dissolving the district. Assurance was given that all questions from the public will be reviewed and all information will be published and posted for the community to view. The rec district will be its own, independent municipality with a five member elected governing board and an annual budget approved by the voters. Open meeting laws will be followed. Consolidating the village and town recreation departments into a union municipal rec district will eliminate redundancies, has potential for cost savings, will allow for “one stop” shopping for services, provides long term stability, and brings in additional initiatives. The agreement is the first step. The community will vote on whether or not to enter into the agreement drafted by the rec governance study committee. The new name for the rec district is “Essex Community Parks & Recreation”.

The timeline, important dates for voting, and next steps were reviewed. It was noted having the communities vote in December on whether to join the rec district allows enough time to compile the information on transition of operations and develop the budget. Each community must vote in the affirmative majority to join.

5. **FEEDBACK ON AGREEMENT**
The following comments were made (some individuals spoke more than once during the meeting and replies to comments are shown in brackets [ ] following the comment):

- Dennis Bergeron, 20 Alder Brook Road, stated in 2006 the town and village attempted to merge and the voters say no because taxes would go up. Now with consolidation the voters are being “nickel and dimed” and taxes have gone up. The town has a great rec department with four people and handles more on less of a budget. The village has 12 people in their rec department. Merging together is not fair because taxes for the town go up and taxes go down for the village. People in the village can vote for the village and town so the town should be able to do the same if there is going to be a district. Dennis Bergeron also pointed out IBM received a tax break. The fairgrounds could be taxed to provide revenue. Town residents pay out of pocket to use rec facilities in Essex Junction. [Max Levy explained any time two different departments consolidate the tax on residents outside the village go up because the village has been supplementing the town by paying taxes to the town since the village is part of the town. Consolidating the departments is a move toward tax equity. People living in the town outside the village do not supplement the village rec department. Attorney Andrew Bolduc explained village members vote twice because according to the Secretary of State’s Office it is an equity issue. Village members also are members of the town so to not have a contested election there must be two votes. Betzi Bilodeau said village residents pay parks and rec fees for both rec departments. Residents of the town outside the village do not pay for EJRP. Jason DiRosa said the staffing for the village versus town rec departments is due to the types of services offered. Essex Junction offers licensed childcare, for example, which the town does not offer. Work needs to be done to see where there is overlap.]
• Corey Wood, Fairview, thanked the committee for the work, time and effort. According to parents in the village the rec program is a major part of why they live in the village. Residents get a bargain for the facilities and programs. Lots of communication is needed so people can engage and get out the vote.

• John Larkin, Saxon Hollow Drive, questioned the option of a special district which may be in line with recent consolidation measures, but these measures did not require special districts. Only the schools required a special district. The wisdom of forming a special district is questioned given information about its dangers. [Raj Chawla said the committee did investigate the matter and believes the agreement addresses the major concerns around special tax districts (i.e. budget, audit, voter approval, oversight). The intent is to come together so everyone is on equal footing and no one has a monstrous tax increase. Max Levy added the committee tried to be as forward looking as possible, looking 10 to 20 years down the road with the district so there would not be multiple transitions. The voters can decide to move the senior center or the library into the district if wanted. There is direct access to the budget by the public and voting the budget is in one place so more people can participate.]

• Judy Dow, Old Stage Road, recalled years of paying fees for her children to participate in rec activities in the junction. Also, the junction gave up the precious jewel of Indian Brook because of a fee to repair the dam. The townspeople paid to repair the dam. Ms. Dow asked what happens to the 18 town parks and facilities and the three parks in the village when starting on “equal footing” and if the town will charge the village for use of the 18 town parks. The assets should be resolved before the vote on the district is held. [Ally Vile said discussion has just started on the transfer of assets. No decision has been made. Both recreation department directors (Ally Vile and Brad Luck) will be part of the discussion of assets, finances, and IT. There is a line item in the capital budget for repair of the Indian Brook dam. The money could remain in the capital budget and the new rec district could start a capital improvement fund. “Equal footing” means two departments coming together as the same team and possibly in the same physical space, but Essex Parks & Rec will not become EJRP. There will be agreements on how the properties are used and maintained. Answers to questions will be published to help inform people.]

• Betsy Dunn, Cindy Lane, said it is bothersome for the municipality to have a new district that can levy taxes and ask for a new building down the line. It may be best to do a charter change for all of Essex to merge (village and town). Also, having October as the time for petitions to run for the district board does not allow full understanding of the complexity of the district. Everything is moving too fast. There is not enough time or consideration of the public. The committee needs to be thoughtful about the money because people are not getting raises, but the offices in town are getting increases so the taxpayers are falling behind in their income versus what they are paying in taxes. There is a large amount of money involved. Not many people attend the meetings so they are not informed. People do not know this is happening even though the committee has done its best to inform them. [Max Levy stated the voters will vote the budget that is presented by the board, either up or down.]
• Randy Port, town resident and former village resident for 30 years, said as a village resident he paid town and village taxes, but as a town resident he does not pay village taxes. EJRP is part of the school system and was a special vote each year. If nothing is done then the Prudential Committee (five members) decide what happens to EJRP. The rec district process is out in the open and gets the public involved. [Max Levy pointed out merger of the communities if this happened would not include EJRP because the rec department is part of the Prudential Committee.]

• John Sheppard, Greenfield Road, said a good job was done on the option chosen, but it appears the other options were ignored. The minutes of February 16, 2016, line 33 refers to the deadline for the decision which perhaps could be by budget time in the fall. There does not appear to be any option evaluation, just the one presented. Per the memo from Brad Luck, dated February 10, 2016, the process followed by the appointed committee was to review options, but this does not seem to be the case. At the Essex Selectboard meeting one member said there are other communities in the state that combined rec departments, but none of these communities were contacted for information. There are a number of similar districts formed in the state, but none have taxing authority yet the new municipality (rec district) has taxing authority. [Raj Chawla pointed out the town including the village is a member of the municipal districts of CCTA, CSWD, Winooski Valley Park District, and all have taxing authority. The rec study committee spent a majority of time considering multiple options. At the June 22, 2016 meeting at ADL School the options were presented to the Prudential Committee, Selectboard, Board of Trustees, the new union school board, and the public. All the meetings are well publicized.]

• Marla Durham, West Hillcrest, stated the EWECCC UUSD (new union school district) was an 8 to 1 vote to support the rec district. Ms. Durham said she was the “nay” vote because she felt the school district did not do a strong enough statement supporting the committee. The individual recreation directors should explain the difference in the number of FTEs because the village rec program does different programs and has childcare with a portion toward school taxes which saves people money. Consolidating the two programs gives the town schools a benefit. It is the right time to consider consolidation because the ramifications of merger and tax differences is significant. For the school district merger the taxes were flat and a savings will be realized. The village annual meeting is a voice vote on the budget. Sometimes there are only 30 people attending the meeting and deciding the budget. Sometimes people cut the budget. With the rec district budget voted by Australian ballot more people will be voting the budget which will not be a line item in the municipal budget with the risk of being cut because money is needed for streets first. Ms. Durham recalled 20 years ago when her son went to programs with town and junction kids and had to pay a different price for service. Ms. Durham said she would like to know more about the properties and how that will work before voting. Also, the legal documents are confusing and would be easier to understand by the public if every day language were used. The committee is complimented on the work that was done. The options were discussed and the public was allowed to comment. No one comes to
the school board meetings to provide feedback like the rec study committee has received.

- Annie Cooper, Franklin Street and former town resident, stated the passion for recreation has helped the children, families, single people, the elderly and that is why people live in Essex Junction in Chittenden County. The more people get involved the better. The committee is going in the right direction and is thanked for their work.

- Bruce Post, Cindy Lane, took offense to the Village President’s comments that implied acting like a grown up. Mr. Post asked if there will be a tax increase or a phase in of an increase, and whether the Selectboard can amend the agreement. It was surprising to hear the library can come under the new district. Also, the school district budget is different from the municipal budget. Act 46 provided incentive money for school consolidation, not municipal consolidation. With all these efficiencies, costs and taxes keep rising which seems counter intuitive. [Max Levy said the committee is writing the agreement on governance and can put in stipulations. The Selectboard could decide not to fund the town portion of the special vote. The agreement was presented to the Selectboard and feedback is being collected. On August 10, 2016 the committee will review the comments and determine where changes in the agreement are needed.]

- Ramona Sheppard, Greenfield Road, said she found a power point on the options that were turned down due to funding for other municipal needs and that is appalling. Of the list of examples of union municipal districts (Winooski Valley Park District, Lake Iroquois District, and others) none are taxing districts, but are line items in the town budget so there is not another layer of bureaucracy. There are no examples of taxing districts in the state. There is concern about the assets of the town (land, buildings, vans, swimming pool) being conveyed to the new rec district. These assets will have to be given away otherwise if they are sold the people will pay for them again. Max Levy should recuse himself due to a conflict of interest.

- Joe Gonillo, Briar Lane, said he worked for the village and town rec departments and they are both great. If they are consolidated it will be a powerful rec department. People did not think the unified school district would happen and it did. The same will work out for the rec district.

- Margaret Smith, Alder Lane, asked about the population served by the village rec department and by the town rec department compared to the total population and the taxes paid by the villagers compared to the equivalent use in the town. The committee is pushing too fast with step one. Regarding daycare being available to town residents, it is not clear daycare will be equally available to all. [Raj Chawla said the town assets are also assets of village residents because village residents are members of the town, too. The difference between the rec department budgets will be researched. The tax contribution is about the same and the population served is about the same. Brad Luck added the rec tax in FY17 on an average house valued at $280,000 is $81/year in the village for Essex Parks & Rec plus $190 for EJRP. The rec tax on the same average house in the town is $81/year. Regarding childcare, the intention is as much as possible to offer an equal program in the village and town. It is hoped to expand the preschool and after
school program in the town at the resident rate and equal access. It is hoped to bring quality, affordable childcare to the town. The town offers an extended school day program which the village would have access to as well. Max Levy calculated the average tax on a house in the town valued at $280,000 is approximately $1,300 municipal. The rest is school tax. The village has additional taxes (village and town) so the amount would be higher.]

- Diane Clemens, Williams Street, said she is a member of the unified school board and invited everyone to attend the meetings to discuss the March meeting versus the December meeting for the vote on the rec district and having the school district take over recreation. A Venn diagram is needed to show taxes paid by the village and town to better understand what people pay. With the rec district the amount of money raised will be the same, but will be divided differently because the village will not be paying twice as is the case now. All village and town residents will only pay once. Diane Clemens urged everyone to get the communications piece down because being informed is everyone’s responsibility.

- John Sheppard, Greenfield Road, stated the rec district is a great idea, but like a new law it needs to be promulgated so people know about it and can make an informed decision. More time is needed to spread the word and let people comment. Regarding the draft proposal and officers, executive director, treasurer, the duties are all on one and that is not wise financial management against fraud.

- Betzi Bilodeau said the committee discussed how much authority the director will have to do the job without coming back to the board for authorization. There will be further discussion of this. Raj Chawla added the committee is looking at the current paradigm for both departments.

- Bridget Meyer, Pleasant Street and former town resident, stated consolidation of the school districts with monumental budgets followed the same timeline as consolidation of the rec departments so the committee should be allowed to decide how to consolidate. Unified districts are common throughout the United States. There are 80 in California alone so these can be researched as examples.

- Judy Dow, Old Stage Road, asked about the charter steps and what happens if the agreement is not accepted by the voters. Ms. Dow asked if there is documentation showing that special districts really work. Max Levy explained if the voters say no to the agreement then the rec department is in the hands of the Prudential Committee. The charter is not written yet. The agreement goes to the Attorney General. Charter changes go to the legislature. Attorney Bolduc further explained the agreement is under statute and approved by the Attorney General’s Office. Once complete the new district is formed and the charter option as outlined by statute can be pursued. There is a separate adoption process for the charter change. If the legislature says no to the charter change then the agreement holds. Regarding documentation on special districts, there is CCTA, CSWD and others
as examples. The agreement does address the issues. EJRP website has all the documentation produced by the study committee.

- Betsy Dunn, Cindy Lane, commented there is no constraint on taxes because the district writes the rules and has overwhelming power. Ms. Dunn said she would like to see the rec departments joined without having a dramatic amount of power to levy taxes. With the rec district there is another set of people getting salaries and two directors may be needed because there is a larger program. It feels like there is more upper management. It does not make sense to have three votes. Having two votes now is confusing and exhausting, and not the way to get people involved. [Raj Chawla said the committee was cognizant of the taxation issue. The check on taxation is the voters of the village and town who can give feedback on the budget and vote it up or down. Jason DiRosa added the elected officials on the rec district board are like the Selectboard or Board of Trustees who vote to pass the budget onto the voters for approval. Having the votes gives the public specific say on the rec budget as opposed to the budget being a line item in the municipal budget.]

- Bridget Meyer, Pleasant Street, asked the last tax increase for the village and town rec departments, noting the directors are both responsible people who run responsible departments while providing excellent services. The village has oversight by the school. The town has oversight by the Selectboard. Both have oversight by the Municipal Manager. There will still be oversight with the rec district. [Ally Vile said any increase in the town rec budget has been small. Salary and benefits increase slightly each year. In 2007 & 2008 enterprise funds were formed so programs pay for themselves. Brad Luck said since 2006 the tax rate has been level for the village rec department.]

- Irene Wrenner, Thrush Lane and member of the Essex Selectboard, noted the RED committee had a charge to consolidate the schools into one district, but spent four months on one option, not considering four or five or 10 options in four months as the rec study committee did. The rec district is adding a layer of government so it is not a good comparison to RED. Ms. Wrenner suggested bringing in people who worked on the past merger movement to understand why the vote went the way it did. The people say a tax increase, the name of the town change, and the location of town hall change. Residents in the town outside the village will see a tax increase and lose the rec department. People in the village will see a tax decrease with the rec department staying as is so the hurdle is not as big for the village as the town. What is presented in November must be equally appealing to the people in the village and the town. Regarding other options being dismissed too quickly, the committee is urged to take the time and compare the options side-by-side to improve the success rate for the rec district. People will not be so defensive and will see new angles. Regarding the Selectboard appointing the committee to make the decision on the option, the Selectboard approved doing the study and gave away the power as a selectboard. Per the minutes, George Tyler made a motion to set up the rec governance study committee which was corrected to “joint survey committee”. Further research of the statutes revealed how the power of the selectboard was given away to the committee, but this was not pointed out when the study committee was presented.
Ms. Wrenner said she had no idea of this when the idea was presented and relied on and trusted staff and the other board members. [Marla Durham noted the school boards all discussed options and decided to look at a unified school district. Diane Clemens added there were 20 questions to answer on merging and the answers were sent into the state. Brad Luck said seven options were reviewed by the rec study committee. The committee never had to hold public hearings or bring the decision back to the local boards because they were empowered by statute to form an agreement on the rec district and submit that to the Attorney General for approval. The steps that were followed included forming the committee, evaluating options, writing the agreement which will be sent to the Attorney General for evaluation, finalizing the agreement and preparing for the vote. Between now and November the committee will work out the operational details. In November there will be the agreement and operational details so voters can make an informed decision. Ally Vile took offense to the dig about location. Max Levy pointed out the Selectboard, Board of Trustees, and Prudential Committee had opportunity to comment all through the process. Regarding power being taken away, the unified municipal district option just puts more work on the committee to come up with an agreement. The Selectboard and Board of Trustees will decide if the agreement goes to the voters for a vote and then the voters will decide if the agreement is approved.]

- Judy Dow, Old Stage Road, asked if the agreement will be passed next week and the committee will not hear the concerns of the people. [Ally Vile said the committee is passing the agreement to move to the next step. The voters will decide at the polls whether to accept the agreement or not. Max Levy added at the next meeting (August 10th) the committee will discuss the agreement and consider all the comments.]

- Ramona Sheppard, Greenfield Road, questioned if the Open Meeting Law was followed and the public properly informed. Per the February 16, 2016 minutes the Selectboard thought a committee was being formed to evaluate options and provide a recommendation to the three boards (Selectboard, Trustees, school board). The intent was to form a committee to make recommendations, not do what the committee has done (i.e. choose an option and draft an agreement). The agreement may be illegal.

- Annie Cooper said the high level of respect shown by the committee during all the comments is impressive. All voters will have an opportunity to vote on the rec district in the end.

Max Levy reiterated the August 10, 2016 meeting will cover input on the agreement. Beyond that questions will be answered over time. The intent is to give enough time for people to be informed when they vote. An answer to whether the agreement is legal will be available by the August 10th meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 9:04 PM.
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
A.D. LAWTON SCHOOL
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 10, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT:  Michael Smith [arrived 7:02 PM]; Raj Chawla, Jason DiRosa, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Max Levy, Betzi Bilodeau, Christine Packard, Lori Houghton.

MEMBERS ABSENT:  Theresa Fletcher.

ADMINISTRATION:  Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec, Brad Luck, EJRP.

OTHERS PRESENT:  Paul Austin, George Tyler, Ed Stowe, Carl Potter, Doug Kemerer, Linda Myers, Ramona Sheppard, John Sheppard, Art Kilmen, Adrianne Martin, Annie Cooper, Elaine Sopchak, Mike Plageman, Mary Reardon, Adam Sollace, Iris Banks, Pat Scheidel, Kathleen Hibbert, Glen Bostick, Wendy Li Johnson, Irene Wrenner, Sue Cook Hubie Norton, Don Maxon, Paula DeMichele, Bridget Meyer, Marla Durham, Dylan Giambatista, Andrew Bolduc.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Until the arrival of Chairman Michael Smith, Raj Chawla facilitated the meeting and called to order at 6:30 PM. Additions to the agenda included a summary of the presentation on the agreement and community feedback, and an excerpt from the 8/9/16 Board of Trustees draft minutes on the presentation on the rec district.

MOTION by Max Levy, SECOND by Jason DiRosa, to approve the agenda as amended. VOTING: unanimous (8-0)[Michael Smith not present for vote]; motion carried.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
Paula DeMichele, Essex, requested information on the status of the treasurer position for the proposed rec district with the treasurer reporting to the director, noting the committee is asking for exemption from Vermont state civil law. Having the treasurer independent is one of the main ways to deter fraud. Ms. DeMichele also asked for an explanation of other waivers being requested. Raj Chawla said the committee will be discussing these issues.

Carl Potter, Essex, asked if the committee members have changed. Raj Chawla said the committee is the same as was appointed.

Doug Kemerer, 6 Margaret Street, spoke in support of consolidation, but asked for an explanation of the rationale to create a separate bureaucracy with five people on a relatively small portion of town business, especially when a separate lawyer, treasurer, finance officer, and insurance would be needed when the municipality already has these functions in place. The town and village all want money so a decision will have to be
made. Raj Chawla said the committee has been discussing these issues for the past few months.

Ed Stowe, Birchwood Manor, asked for information on the committee. Raj Chawla explained the Rec Governance Study Committee was appointed by the Selectboard and Board of Trustees with members from the Trustees, Selectboard, Prudential Committee, and three citizens from the village and town to explore what to do with EJRP which will no longer be under the school district due to the formation of the unified school district. Lori Houghton added with the Trustees consolidating services the town was brought into the discussion.

John Sheppard, Greenfield Road, Essex, objected to the validity of the committee which may not have been formed with the appropriate authorization. The committee seemed to start and run along its course. Mr. Sheppard reiterated he does not think the committee is valid and can set up another municipality. Andrew Bolduc, town attorney, said he was asked by the Municipal Manager to assist with legal questions and draft the agreement for the rec district. The question of whether the Selectboard was properly informed of duties and powers of the Rec Governance Study Committee was researched. Draft questions were presented to both municipalities for input on whether a union municipal (rec) district should be formed. The intent of the resolution is the committee puts forth the resolution with a recommendation and the Selectboard decides whether or not to fund the special vote. The Open Meeting Law will be further discussed at the meeting on August 18, 2016. The committee was a duly formed body that followed the letter of the law. George Tyler added the village rec department does not function like the town rec department. The village rec department operates on village municipal land, is governed by the village school board, and receives administrative services from the school supervisory union. The town rec department functions like traditional rec departments. The Rec Governance Study Committee was formed to determine how to synthesize the departments. The Prudential Committee governs the village rec department and had to be involved. More collaboration was needed than with typical consolidation of services. Lori Houghton pointed out the village votes separately for the village budget and rec budget.

Paul Austin, Essex, said the fix could be easier and cheaper than what is proposed. Taxpayers struggle with the school budget and the general budget, and now it will be further complicated by having another district with powers that are scary and can get out of control. Sewer, water, plowing, maintenance are all big budget numbers. The Selectboard decides the priorities, but this will not happen with an independent rec district. The voters look to the Selectboard to advocate for the taxpayers as to what comes next. Taxpayers have not had a raise in five years so $300 is a lot of money. The village has done a lot in the last few years. If townspeople use the facilities then they should be charged a fee.

Mary Reardon, Essex, asked what happens if the vote for a separate district in December fails or is supported by only one of the municipalities. The rec department does not belong under the school district so there needs to be the option of being under the town or village municipality. Raj Chawla said both the town and village must vote affirmatively
for the rec district or EJRP remains with the Prudential Committee and the Prudential Committee will decide what will happen.

Irene Wrenner, Essex, urged using the proper terminology so people are not deceived and suggested instead of saying “UMD” (union municipal district) the name should be a special taxing district because that is what is proposed. The district is a big black hole both for taxing and oversight. Regarding the point system for admission, what to do to get into programs should be detailed and there should be equal access for all. Ms. Wrenner urged all to watch the Channel 17 tape of the 2/16/16 meeting where she asked why the committee was being called a “survey committee” and did not get an answer. The proposal needs to be compared to other options and to consolidating the rec department under the town which everyone is expecting. Brad Luck pointed out per the 2/16/16 minutes there was a memo from him regarding union municipal districts. Lori Houghton added the committee reviewed seven options before deciding on the rec district option.

Annie Cooper, Essex Junction, said she has watched the meeting tape and read all the information, and is still very excited with the collaboration. A large portion of the community not present at the meeting feels the same. People who are not informed on the rec district are urged to get informed.

Leona Sheppard, Essex, said the nomenclature is an issue because the function is to tax the residents unlike other districts in the county that issue an assessment to the town that becomes part of the municipal budget. Because the rec district will be directly taxing people it is accurate to call it a taxing district.

Carl Potter, Tanglewood Drive, asked when the vote will be held on the proposed budget. Raj Chawla answered in April 2017 on the same day as the vote on the school budget.

Doug Kemerer, Margaret Street, spoke in support of taking the rec department out of the school budget, but noted the parks belong to the town and village and both are running rec programs so the matter seems complicated.

Marla Durham, Essex Junction, said she has served on the Prudential Committee for over 20 years and is now on the new unified school district board. Ms. Durham said the rec budget in Essex Junction has always been voted separately from the school budget. The school never backed the rec budget with funding. Over $300,000 in administrative costs is paid by EJRP to the school district.

A gentleman in the audience said putting parks and rec either under the Selectboard or Board of Trustees eliminates all the confusion. The village has two votes and the town has one vote. If the intent is to determine the wishes of the village residents versus those who live outside the village then the vote should be by people in the village and a vote taken by people in the town. Andrew Bolduc explained according to the Secretary of State’s Office village residents are members and taxpayers of two entities and vote as
both. If the village does not vote as a member of the village and a member of the town the results could be contested.

Max Levy, speaking as a member of the public and not as a member of the Selectboard or of the Rec Governance Study Committee, said all citizens including every Selectboard member have a right to free speech, but because elected officials’ words carry more weight in the public arena they have an added responsibility to speak truthfully and accurately, and must ensure that their words do not misinform people and either deliberately or accidentally confuse the public debate. Every effort in particular should be made to respect the work of private citizens they appoint to special committees. Recently a pamphlet was distributed by a member of the Selectboard which represents only that member’s opinions and is not the position of the entire Selectboard. The information in the pamphlet disparages the work of the Rec Governance Study Committee, a committee appointed and approved unanimously by all members of the Selectboard. With inaccuracies and omissions of important facts, the pamphlet appears to deliberately misrepresent the committee’s work and recommendations. As an example, the author of the pamphlet knows no branch of local government can predict today what the budget will be next year, but the pamphlet implies the Rec Governance Study Committee should have produced such a budget now. Readers could be left with the false impression the committee is deliberately withholding information. In addition to the task of accurately informing the voters of its findings and recommendations the committee now has the added burden of refuting misinformation included in the pamphlet. Collaboration between the elected boards (Selectboard, Board of Trustees, school boards) requires thoughtful, respectful dialogue especially when there is disagreement or differing perspectives. Inflammatory or misleading rhetoric poisons the atmosphere. Going forward it is hoped Essex residents will look to the committee’s communication team for accurate information on the subject.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
   
   August 4, 2016
   
   MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Kim Maiberger, to approve the minutes of August 4, 2016 as presented. VOTING: unanimous (9-0); motion carried.

4. **DISCUSS FEEDBACK ON AGREEMENT/AMEND & ADOPT AGREEMENT**
   
   Suggested edits to the agreement based on the feedback from the last meeting were reviewed. There were discussions of the following:
   
   - Continuing to have a voting member from the Selectboard and Board of Trustees on the board rather than ex officio members - It was noted continuing to have representatives from the Selectboard and Trustees could dilute the board because there would be only three community members. Having ex officio members will provide the liaison to the respective elected boards. There was comment on having checks and balances in place and elected and appointed boards in the county.
   - Increasing the timeframe from three years to five or more years from the formation of the district before dissolution is possible to allow the new entity time
to get settled and work out issues - Andrew Bolduc advised dissolution can occur prior to three years provided the additional threshold of an affirmative vote representing a majority of votes of all Members and an affirmative vote by the elected boards is met. The statute says each union municipal agreement has to include conditions and procedure for withdrawing. Statute also discusses no less than a one year timeframe. Comments on this item in the agreement are anticipated from the Attorney General. If a Member withdraws from the rec district there are stipulations to pay debts and liabilities by that Member. Dissolution applies to the entire district. There was mention of including language allowing a petition of 5% of the voters to dissolve the district. The language is similar to the petition for amendment of the agreement. Chapter 17 of state statute allows for a petition. A charter or a legislative act could disallow a petition. Any lending institution issuing a loan would want to see stability in the entity.

- Adding language to the agreement to allow a petition of 5% of the voters to request withdraw from the district after a certain time period and after bonds are paid - Andrew Bolduc noted withdraw of one municipality when there are only two municipalities in the district is not dissolution because the district itself is a municipality. A charter approved by the legislature would confirm this. The voters can approach their municipality to request a vote to withdraw.

- Bonding must have an affirmative vote by the board and the entire community - The town rec department does not have any outstanding bonds. EJRP is in Year 17 of a 20 year bond to be paid by Essex Junction taxpayers.

- What happens if the rec district budget is not passed by the voters - Brad Luck noted there is some guidance in state statute regarding public notice and public hearings after the vote, but this is not prescriptive. Erika Baldasaro said if the budget is not passed then the rec district would work off the previous budget and seek a revenue anticipation note. There was a comment on spending for education items and it was noted the budget for education is separate from the budget for recreation. Account records will be audited.

- Process to join the rec district is the same or more difficult than the process to withdraw from the district - Andrew Bolduc said the language in statute says voters can withdraw in no less than one year. There is also a provision for the municipality to withdraw. Feedback from the Attorney General is anticipated on this item in the agreement because statute always trumps the agreement because the agreement is not a charter.

After further discussion the following edits were made to the agreement:

- Rewrite Section 1-7 Composition to note that there shall be a Board of Directors consisting of five (5) directors. Each director shall be a resident of his or her municipality and registered to vote in municipal elections at the time of the director’s election. At the expiration of the terms of the appointed directors as defined in Section 1-8(b) of the agreement there shall be one additional “ex official” non-voting director from the Selectboard and Board of Trustees respectively appointed according to each Member’s method of making appointments.
In Section 1-15 Executive Director of Parks and Recreation add that the executive
director shall not be a member of the board and replace the duration not to exceed
10 years and threshold of $25,000 for lease agreements, contracts and purchase
orders with approval by the board. Delete the subsection regarding the executive
director entering into employment contracts. Transfer subsections (e), (f), (g), (h),
and (i) relative to finances to Section 1-17 Treasurer.

In Section 1-17 Treasurer add the text from Section 1-15 (e)(f)(g)(h)(i) relative
financial functions of the rec district.

In Section 1-39 Withdrawal of a Municipality note that five (5) years will be the
threshold before a Member can withdraw from the district. The voters can ask
their municipality to withdraw from the district.

In Section 1-41 Dissolution of the District note that five (5) years will be the
threshold before the district can be dissolved and add language that will allow the
voters to petition to dissolve the district after five years.

MOTION by Jason DiRosa, SECOND by Raj Chawla, to accept the Essex
Community Parks & Rec Agreement with the amendments incorporated and
forward the document to the Attorney General for review/acceptance. VOTING:
unanimous (9-0); motion carried.

5. TIMELINE REVIEW
The following was noted:
- Transition team begins to prepare operational details on August 11, 2016.
- The communications committee will discuss best ways to communicate and
  connect with the public. Information will be posted on a dedicated website.
- The full committee cannot dissolve until the Attorney General accepts the
  agreement.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION WORK
Other people can join the communications committee to help inform and educate the
public. Subcommittees can be formed with more focused targets. The rec and parks
brochure contains a summary of what the committee has accomplished to date. School
Friday folders will include information on the rec district. Presentations/information can
be provided to the Rotary, Senior Center, PTOs, and at the voting polls. Six potential
dates for public forums where free childcare will be offered include:
- September 28, 2016 (in the town)
- September 29, 2016 (in the village)
- October 13, 2016
- October 18, 2016 (in the village)
- November 16, 2016
- December 6, 2016

Locations will be divided between the town and village.

Next meeting for in-depth discussion of communications strategy is 8/16/16 at 7 PM.
Location to be determined.
7. ADJOURNMENT
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 9:43 PM.
RScty: MERiordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee

Meeting Minutes: August 16, 2016

Town offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Michael Smith, Raj Chawla, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Betzi Bilodeau, Jason DiRosa, Lori Houghton, Max Levy

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: Irene Wrenner (15 Thrush Lane), George Dunbar (9 Juniper Ridge Road), John Sheppard (55 Greenfield Road)

Call to Order: Michael Smith called meeting to order at 7:05pm

Agenda additions or changes: Transition Team Tasks document in regards to outreach discussion

Public to be heard: None from public. Lori and Max gave a brief update to the 8/15/16 SB meeting as a few members were not in attendance in regards to public to be heard, the support given at the meeting – as well as community members who questioned the process, the communications policy with the SB and the overall process of RGSC forming and working through the last 4.5 months.

Approval of minutes: Max moved, Lori 2nd discussion

Amendments: Max had 2 corrections to note: asked for wording on page 4 to state that the committee was appointed unanimously by all members of the Selectboard. Also, the note about a gentleman in the audience opined the handout, etc….to be removed from the minutes.

Approved 8-0 in favor to minutes with amendments.

Transition Team Update: Brad gave the update of the co-lead meeting by Brad and Ally to the TOE and CCSU staff, along with department staff in attendance. The presentation by the RGSC was given by the two of them with modifications and updates related to specific transition needs for staff. Everyone seemed engaged and prepared to help work on tasks to help address current and future questions. They were asked to review the task list, add, remove and detail out specifics to then come back to Brad and Ally in a few weeks in time for RGSC meeting to prepare for the initial public forums. Brad reminded the RGSC that he and Ally will prepare their EPR & EJRP proposed budgets for FY18 as well as work on a proposed ECPR budget to start comparing numbers and give a better picture to the voters. This topic will remain on the upcoming RGSC agendas so updates and clarifying questions can be processed in enough time to answer community members on a regular basis and at the forums.

Public Information & Outreach: Keeley Schill and Liz Subin were asked to join tonight’s meeting; however, the EWECUUUSD had a Board meeting at the same time.
Max reminded the RGSC that the point of the public forums were to inform and give pros and cons to the public and to not tell them how to vote.

Lori spoke in regards to the RED Study and noted that one person was the designated voice for communication. She feels there is a lot of misconception to how each department functions now and feels it is important to communicate that to the community so they understand the parks and recreation current processes and how the departments could work in the future. Erika agreed it is a perfect time to get that basic information out there now to have a starting point so people can really see how the future will be different – good & bad. Raj brought up how a conversation on social media today generated general questions about how the two entities are even governed. Lori believes that if one person is the name out there for the information (compared to Brendan Kinney from the RED Study), but the person is part of the communications sub-committee, then everyone knows where their information should come from and trusts the resource. Lori was happy to volunteer to be the “name” to the public communication; however, she was hesitant due to her Trustees association. Erika volunteered to be the “name” out there for people.

**ACTION:** Lori offered to contact Front Porch Forum to give Erika access to all 9 neighborhoods for the fall timeframe.

Max and Raj asked if others could be brought in to the outreach/communications sub-committees and also if people could be recruited. The RGSC decided to tackle that as it comes up.

**Outreach efforts and upcoming public forums:** Raj thought there should be a designated group to present at the forums and then taking that information back to the RGSC, which then Erika would communicate through neighborhood posts.

Max feels there are three types of communication – RGSC meetings, social media and other outreach (handout information with contact information). Ally mentioned Erika should have a specific email address that is advertised on these communications pieces so it relates to RGSC. Brad brought up the new domain of [www.essexrec.org](http://www.essexrec.org) and how it is possible to create XXXX@essexrec.org email addresses as necessary.

Committee members broke down the communications efforts so it is spread between all active members.

Lori asked about public forum logistics and asked if Staff could help prep those forums – pens, paper, audio, visual, etc.

Brad spoke to those who will present at public forums will have time between now and then to help with basic outreach now before the presentations. He suggested only splitting into two groups – outreach and research. Raj wanted clarification on how communication would take place in between meetings and it was confirmed that five or less committee members are allowed to email/meet as six members make quorum.

Betzi noted that the RED Study did not choose to have a social media page and any social media responses needs to be quick. Lori suggested the RED Study be asked how they managed getting information back to posted questions. Erika noted that social media can spiral and evolve, and it was stressed to monitor the EssexVT and DowntownEJ Facebook pages to consistently link the webpage.

Jason and Raj are interested in gathering information for the forums and help vet the information that will be communicated in general.
Max would like to be on the outreach subgroup, Jason noted he wanted to make sure there was an even spread of members on each subgroup. Betzi wanted clarification on the public forum and outreach committee – Lori said to make sure all data is gathered in prep for forums, and outreach was researching what other local events were going to take place where RGSC information could be handed out (with permission). Brad added that someone from the public forums subgroup needed to outline the format so it stayed consistent each time, how people could ask questions, and overall structure. Kim volunteered to be on the outreach subgroup. Betzi will be on the social media/news subgroup.

Subgroups were formed as:

OUTREACH & FORUMS – Kim, Max, Lori, Christine, Michael

R & D (Research & Discussion) – Erika, Betzi, Jason, Theresa, Raj

Lori suggested that each subgroup designate a chair to keep the meetings moving. Kim and Betzi will lead their subgroups. Max asked that each subgroup come with an outline for the next RGSC meeting. Brad and Ally will be staff resources (or will designate staff) and will work to attend each subgroup meetings.

**ACTION:** Brad will get Erika an email address from the new site – [www.essexrec.org](http://www.essexrec.org).

Before breaking out into subgroups to plan first steps, the RGSC scheduled their next meeting.

**ACTION:** Next meeting for RGSC is September 1st, 2016 @ 7pm, location TBD. Lori requested Brad and Ally to see if Liz and Keeley are available to join that meeting.

Members discussed getting communication out during the Champlain Valley Fair. Ally offered the suggestion of information being available at the Rotary and Essex Lions tables.

**ACTION:** Max will confirm that RGSC information can be distributed at the Rotary table at the CV Fair. Ally or Brad will connect with the Lions regarding their table.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee

Meeting Minutes: September 1, 2016

Essex Police Department, 145 Maple Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Betzi Bilodeau, Raj Chawla, Max Levy, Jason DiRosa, Michael Smith, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher, Erika Baldasaro

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: Andrew Bolduc (Attorney representative), Dennis Bergeron (Alderbrook Lane), Ramona & John Sheppard (Greenfield Road), Gabrielle Smith, George Tyler (Acorn Circle), Colin Flanders (Essex Reporter), Liz Subin, Keeley Schell, Joel Baird (non-resident, Burlington), Greg Matses (Lamell Avenue)

Call to Order: Michael called the meeting to order at 7:04pm

Agenda additions or changes: Max asked that the committee add a discussion re: dissolution of the RGSC to the agenda. The committee agreed to the addition and would be discussed after the update on the Agreement.

Public to be heard:

- Dennis Bergeron (Alderbrook Road): asked if committee was familiar with the 4-way test? Is it the truth? Fair to all concerned? Will it be good willed? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Dennis got involved with the RGSC at the August 4th meeting, and since then has done his back research and doesn’t feel as though the work being done is following the 4-way test and feels the independent enterprise will have no oversight. He doesn’t feel that anyone on the RGSC should be allowed to be nominated to the 5-member board on the December vote. He made note of EPR and EJRP budgets.

- George Tyler asked for clarification: When the committee approved the final agreement, which process did it go through?
  - Michael confirmed that only the Agreement was recently sent to the AG office, not a report on the process the RGSC followed.
  - Ramona Sheppard also stated she believed the AG only got a copy of the Agreement and did not get a copy of the process or follow the process and feels the process is still in question with community members.
  - Keeley Schell asked for clarification in comparison to the RED Study Committee.
  - Andrew Bolduc clarified that once a Charter is submitted, more will be reviewed. He, and the firm, were also asked through the Town to review the process once the RGSC moved toward creating the Agreement for oversight and to assure legalities were followed.

- Dennis Bergeron: reiterated the memo from 2/10/16 regarding the upcoming process and committee work to be done. He asked where the recommendations were and noted that the SB, Trustees and PC were only notified of the options on June 22, 2016. He believes the committee failed in approaching the
community with the recommendation and were not given a chance for input with other options. All he is asking is for everyone to be truthful to the community.

**Motion to Approve Aug. 16 Minutes:** Motion made by Lori, 2nd by Max

**Amendments to Minutes:**

- Max: page 2 edit – Max asked for his quote to be clarified and made more accurate to what he said at the meeting. He asked for the change: “Max reminded the RGSC that the point of the public forums were to inform and give pros and cons to the public and to not tell them how to vote.”
- Betzi noted that the attendance was incorrect. Christine was not at the meeting, but Jason & Lori were in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes:** Approved with amendments: 7-0

**Update on Approval of Agreement with Attorney General Edits:**

- Andrew Bolduc spoke with the update. The only section questioned for review from the AG Office was the Conduct of Meetings, section 1-35 (a) & (b). He spoke with the Assistant to the Attorney General regarding this section as it was never brought up as a point of discussion with concern during the RGSC work sessions. He provided suggestions to edit as provided.
  - (a) At all Special Authority meetings of the District, the provisions of Title 17 shall apply except where clearly inapplicable.
  - (b) The District Clerk shall perform the functions assigned to the Secretary of State under that title. The Chittenden Unit of the Vermont Superior Court shall have jurisdiction over petitions for recounts. Election expenses shall be borne by the District.

Andrew reviewed it with the AG office based on the Secretary of State Title document and the AG office wasn’t sure why that made it past review in the first place for the SoS. After further discussion, Andrew recommended removing those items (above) from each section based on his discussion. Other than this section, it was 99% good to go.

Lori made the motion to approve the ECPR Agreement, as edited by the Attorney’s and AG offices. Jason seconded the motion.

**Approval of the amended Agreement for resubmission:** Approved 7-0

Ramona Sheppard: wanted to voice opinion on Section 1-39 re: Withdrawal of a Municipality and feels the old version where a withdrawal could take place in one year is better for the community.

Andrew clarified that this is not approved by the AG office, as amended. He will re-submit the Agreement for a final approval.

Jason asked about a timeframe for a response. Andrew said the AG office wants to turn it around quickly, but was not given an exact date. He thinks it shouldn’t take more than two weeks; Andrew also clarified that resubmission does not start the 30 days over again and the 30 days will be up as of September 10, 2016.
Discussion on Committee Dissolution (as added on agenda from Max): When is the appropriate time to dissolve as a committee? Andrew advised to wait until full/final approval letter from AG office prior to dissolving just in case something else comes back.

Once the Agreement is submitted and approved, the Committee will have filled their statutory obligation and can dissolve. As far as what the committee’s duties are, the communication and outreach tasks could be left to the legislative bodies involved instead. If any RGSC members, or members of the public, want to meet as a “Friends of…” group to help get the information out to the community that would be allowed. His legal recommendation was once the task is completed (Agreement passed/approved), due to the current legal and political climate, all other tasks could be left to the SB and Trustees, and (if desired) to form as a “Friends of” group, unaffiliated to the RGSC and to provide factual outreach. Andrew did say that the RGSC could fulfill the role of providing information to the community, but would need to be conscientious of clearly communicating information only, and not advocating a position.

Keeley wanted to let the RGSC know that the RED Study Committee did have to have a final meeting to approve the official dissolution meeting minutes.

Ramona Sheppard asked Andrew if the Town EPR was allowed to have a web link to the www.essexrec.org on their site, as it seems to be affiliated politically. Andrew said he would have to look into it; however, felt that links could be provided as a resource if the SB supported that level of communication.

George Tyler asked permission to ask the RED Study Group members what parameters they were given. Keeley confirmed the members were allowed to inform after their final meeting with no repercussions through community forums, social media, etc. No one formed political action committees but could have done that on their own “Friends” groups if desired.

Betsy Dunn believes the new outreach committee should be allowed to have new members added to the group. Committee members agreed.

Lori asked a question to Keeley and Liz regarding when the forums were held, if each of them were still members of the RED Study. Liz clarified that she was not on the Study Committee, but represented the School Board in written communication, forum facilitation, etc. Keeley noted that the State gave the RED Study a budget for outreach and it was clear how the designated website and signage were either paid for by existing school board contributions or the by State.

Raj believes the SB and Trustees should help continue the communication outreach so the work done by the RGSC would have been for nothing.

Ramona voiced that what would have made her happy, would have been for the RGSC to dissolve and let the Boards (SB & Trustees) take the information forward with outreach to the citizens regarding the possible December vote. Raj reminded Ramona that the RGSC was not completely finished with the Agreement at this point.

Brad asked for clarification before moving on to the next agenda item. Jason and Max agreed this discussion regarding dissolution can continue at the next meeting.
Discussion re: Outreach:

- Liz & Keeley are the Communications Task Team for the UU Board and are here to inform how communication & outreach were done with the RED Study. Liz was not on the RED Study but was on the communications team for the outreach for the unification. They are both elected officials on the current UU Board.

- They both went through the www.essexrec.org website and shared suggestions on some improvements to be made to the dedicated ECRP website. Items included:
  
  - Lead with a strong and succinct statement about why the committee believes this model is best for the community
  - Give specific examples:
    - Increased transparency
    - Greater oversight
    - Reduced complexities
      - Infographic of current rec structure in the Town and Village
      - Graphic of new governance model
    - Eliminate redundancies
    - Potential for cost savings
      - Tax rates and program use rates per family
    - Long-term stability
    - One-stop shopping
    - Equity in community
    - Ability to “house” other initiatives
  - Give more details about the other models explored and why they were rejected
  - Budget and tax implications by 9/28 or inform community that the information is not yet available.
  - Financials not available on website; if not available by 9/28 public forum, let community know before the meeting, and why they aren’t available yet.

- Don’t keep everything on website. Add perspectives to the Essex Reporter

- Avenues used: open forums, FPF, Westford School Board Newsletter, all school websites, RED website, Essex Reporter. Postcards (mailers) were discussed but never acted on due to cost (with given budget). In-person events were also attended but primarily with information on upcoming public forums.

- Why is this the model being recommended?

- In regards to public forums, recommendations for forum structure. They were in two-three meeting clusters. The first three were presented the same exact way. All questions asked were documented; some were answered on site, some were then given to the specific person at the school or committee level. All questions were listed as asked on the website. The second set of three meetings were revised and tweaked based on how the first three meetings went. Liz suggested the last two forum presentations should be revised from the first few meetings. Liz also suggested having a neutral facilitator and being thoughtful to who that person is (works in community but doesn’t live here/have a vote). Forums started and ended as advertised; any additional questions were documented later, and some members stayed later to continue small discussion.

- Brad asked Liz to walk through the timeline of a forum:
- 1 hour (20 min. presentation, 40 min. discussion)
- Intro to members of the RED Study, Board Members, Elected officials
- Logistically prepared with paper, pens, chairs vs. tables
- Sign in sheet
- Please hold questions during presentations, note questions during presentation, and time will be given at the end to take a few questions. There was also 2-3 minutes at the end of the presentation for quiet questions generating before questions were asked/answered.
- All questions were collected and scribed.
- Superintendents and CFOs were resources in the room
- Moderated discussion with equitable air time
- Goal within a week to get back to people’s questions

- Dennis Bergeron asked about financial details in the RED Study presentations and how none of that (cost analysis) is indicated in any of the presentations so far. How can the RGSC show the benefits or pros/cons?
- Lori respectively asked that the community give the Boards, RGSC and staff time to get all the information out to the community but feels as though the RGSC is under attack without the chance to provide.
- Betsy Dunn: brought up the RGSC page in the Recreation brochures and how it is not evenly informing the community and believes it should be pulled from publications.
  - In response: Lori asked for time and confirmed that the RGSC hears the concerns but is requesting one specific meeting devoted to that topic.
  - Liz added that the RED Study process was more about the outcome for the children in the community and asked the public to give the RGSC the same respect to outline the process and details but to let them gather the information and promote the possible future outcome of the UMD.
- Keeley respectively added that she did not yet know how she was going to vote on this issue and looked forward to hearing more information. She hoped that the community would have a civil discussion of the proposal and not continue with the negative attacks and conspiracy theories that are not representative of Essex.

**Task Team Updates:**

- **Outreach & Public Forums:** Kim – discussed the sub-group had created a Google calendar on upcoming community events that are possible to reach out to voters. Kim & Lori reminded the RGSC that events like the Farmer’s Market, school open houses, etc. were coming up and would be good to attend. The group is ready to go when allowed.
- **Research & Discussion:** Betzi – asked the RGSC what the preferred focus would be for the presentation; many FAQs are not about the Agreement. Lori suggested a specific meeting was needed in order to flush out the forum details together. Lori asked for clarification on what sort of questions they were receiving and how responses were provided. Betzi noted they have only responded to two questions so far. Updates: essexrec.org went LIVE as of 8/23/16 with a lot of information; they have identified how to process FAQs and would like to answer within five business days; Erika was set up on FPF and has sent out one post (long version from ER article); EPR brochure went out with forum information and EJRP’s is
published and going out soon – it was noted at the SB meeting on 8/29 to make it more neutrally written. A draft communications calendar has started and it was suggested to combine both sub-group calendars; email update option on website; feedback on communications tone.

- Betsy Dunn asked that any further communication shows that the RGSC recognizes the non-neutral tone from the original information published.
- Andrew confirmed he and the Firm reviewed the document and to remember to be a-political, keep out descriptors, stay more in line with the Town Communications policy. Betzi also commented on the publication that a special vote was declared when it has not been warned by the SB or Trustees. Members suggested the wording state “a proposed vote is scheduled for December 13”.
- Brad reminded the RGSC that they received a 5-0 vote in support of forming a UMD and the SB gave a 4-1 vote supporting the concept of forming a UMD with further information, so there was no inclination at this time that a warning would not take place, it just hadn’t been officially done at this point.
- Ramona commented that there was a discussion at the 8/29 SB meeting that three SB members were not in full support for a vote at the most recent SB meeting.

**Transition Team:** Ally & Brad gave an update on the presentation given to the Transition Team, which consisted primarily of CCSU and TOE staff; additional small meetings are taking place next week to gather more information from Finance, HR and IT. Brad also updated the RGSC on how outcomes will take place based on a yay or nay vote (non-binding resolutions, letters of intent, etc.). Jason thanked Brad and Ally for all their hard work, individual and staff work and time, and generating all of this information in addition to regular duties.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, September 8, 2016. Location TBD

Lori asked Brad & Ally to provide the most recent PowerPoint Board presentation, as well as the June 22 presentation.

Michael began discussion on agenda items for the next meeting

- Public Forum presentation outline
- Agreement update
- Communication policy
- Discussion on dissolution of the RGSC

Betsy Dunn asked if there was a resolution made in regards to correcting the publication from the recreation program brochures. Discussion on communication and correcting previous communication can take place at the next meeting as it is not on tonight’s agenda.

**Adjournment:** Michael adjourned the meeting at 8:43pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING
Joint Municipal Survey Committee
Meeting Minutes: September 8, 2016
Village Offices, 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Betzi Bilodeau, Max Levy, Jason DiRosa, Michael Smith, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Raj Chawla

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: Andrew Bolduc (Attorney representative), Gabrielle Smith (Beech St.), Colin Flanders (Essex Reporter), George Tyler, Adrian Martin (EPR), John Sheppard (Greenfield Rd.), Irene Wrenner, Tim Jerman (Sycamore Lane), Dylan Giambatista (Arlington St.)

Call to Order: Michael called the meeting to order at 7:01pm

Agenda additions or changes: None

Public to be heard (on items not on the Agenda): None

Motion to Approve Sept. 1, 2016 Minutes: Motion made by Lori, 2nd by Kim

Amendments to Minutes: None

Approval of Minutes: Approved with amendments 7-0 (Raj arrived at 7:04pm, after the approval of the minutes)

Dissolution Discussion:

- Max reminded the committee that communication is allowed by this committee and doesn’t feel that the RGSC’s job is done. He believes the RGSC is responsible to continue and provide information to the community so voters can make an informed vote.
- Michael agreed; Jason asked that if the RGSC were to dissolve, whose responsibility it would be to provide the information. Andrew’s comment from the last meeting was brought up again and Max and Lori felt the communication would be turned over to the SB and Trustees, but that the RGSC’s job wasn’t complete. Jason reiterated that the committee needs to provide the information in a very neutral manner, so not to sway any one decision.
- Betzi asked if the SB and Trustees took over the communication if they would have to involve RGSC members. She didn’t feel 100% sure that it was the RGSC’s role moving forward.
- Erika felt this committee is in the best position to put out the information to the community, to the best of the committee’s ability. She is concerned the SB and Trustees would not engage with the RGSC members. Jason reminded her that if they didn’t involve the RGSC, a PAC could be created by those who do want to help provide neutral information.
- Betzi doesn’t disagree that the RGSC has the deepest working knowledge of what was studied and believes the governing boards would engage the dissolved members but knows there isn’t a guarantee of the involvement.
- Max asked what statute Lori was citing. Lori noted 24 VSA 2832, “…To provide for the distribution of information resulting from such surveys, studies and programs.
- Raj believes the RGSC has just arrived at the engagement piece and that the committee hasn’t had the chance to really provide that distribution to the voters.
- Lori is willing to bring this back to the Trustees to see what they feel their role is going forward. Jason asked Max to bring the same topic back to the SB. Specifically: Does the SB feel it is within the committee’s prevue to disseminate the information to the voters? He feels the RGSC needs the opportunity to present at the advertised forums, which can then bring new members of the community to the communications aspect. Raj thinks the question should be: “What would be the Selectboard’s & Trustees’ plan to disseminate the information to voters?” Betzi asked what the RGSC would then do at their next meeting based on those answers from the boards. Raj would be willing to revisit the dissolution once given the opportunity to provide a few initial public forums.
- Andrew was asked – he thinks the discussion brought back to the Boards gives him more comfort; he referenced the RED Study’s process and they had a budget to do the work and were given a specific timeframe as to when they could dissolve, which was after the vote date. He also thinks that Section 2 of the statute does allow the committee to continue communicating to the voters.
- George Tyler noted the 8/23 Trustees meeting approved communication by the RGSC through the December 13th vote. Brad reminded the committee that the SB gave an approval vote based on further information provided at a later date.
- Jason asked about when a proposed budget would be available. Brad said one would be available by the Oct. 3 SB meeting date. Which confirmed two public meetings could still take place before presenting at the next SB meeting and a possible dissolution.
- Michael’s concern with staying on as a committee, is the option of bringing in other people from the community if the RGSC is an appointed study group. He is unsure of the rules when adding others in to the discussion and planning. Max and Brad confirmed the structure of the committee couldn’t change, but experts could be brought in to help the committee.
- John Sheppard asked what would stop the committee from dissolving now, and continuing with the education the RGSC has to provide. If no one is interested in stopping the communication, why not continue but not as a formed committee? Jason agreed with Mr. Sheppard but still feels the RGSC should finish out the calendar month, give the two presentations with the bulk of the information that is available to the community and then reconsider the next steps in the process, based on comments from the SB and Trustees. Raj wants to get the RGSC information out, through all the advertised forums.
- Bridget Myers believes the committee members are those with the authority. If the RGSC dissolves, they become a citizen group and that can be very dangerous. She believes there will always be dissenters, but believes the RGSC can be those to provide the facts and knowledge.
- Gabrielle Smith wants to make sure that there is clear responsibility on the roles of the public forums and it’s not just about content. She doesn’t believe that Lori and Max should be the Board representatives at all of the forums.
- Jason asked for the next step on this topic of discussion. He wanted to make sure there was time available for anyone’s doubts. Betzi believed that being in the communication role through available budgets and initial forums was appropriate.
- A general consensus was given that this topic can be revisited at a future meeting but that moving forward with communication to the voters was necessary by the RGSC at this time.

**RGSC public participation protocol discussion & adoption:**

- Brad led the discussion based on the memo provided in the packet re: a model policy from VLCT would be more in line with the spirit of how the RGSC meetings have been going.
- Lori reminded the committee that at the last meeting she asked the audience to give the RGSC time to do the work in time for the upcoming public forums and had a conversation separately with Michael regarding the continued process for the meetings.
- Max felt it was important for the audience to understand this process if the RGSC were to adopt this model policy, so that Michael would explain that at the start of each future meeting.
- Jason’s concern noted #3 on the protocol document that stated each member of the public will be afforded one opportunity to speak on the agenda item for up to two minutes. Jason and Max suggested offering the audience to write their questions/concerns down to then be answered at a later time.
- Betzi and Erika were concerned about limiting audience comments.
- Jason asked if 2/3 of the committee could move the discussion to be closed. Michael said that, as the Chair, the decision to end the participation would just be ended.
- Max believes the RGSC needs to honor the community’s input, but there needs to be a constraint in order to move the meeting along.
- Lori said that the RGSC has working meetings going forward and that questions asked cannot continue in a debate fashion. Jason thinks the open comments need to have limits. Raj is happy people are attending these meetings, but feels that in order for the RGSC to have the ability to move forward, with the Chair’s discretion, is to end the audience participation within reason.
- Betzi doesn’t believe that discussion at the conclusion of an agenda item, but before any action is taken by the public body has been done at the RGSC meetings. Betzi doesn’t believe the RGSC needs this draft public participation protocol at this point in the process.
- Overall, Jason feels the time limits, or available times, are restrictive to the audience. Raj felt there has been plenty of opportunities since the process started in April for public comment, questions and concerns.
- Lori reminded the RGSC that this point of the process is to get the presentation ready and the meetings are more work sessions. Max felt it was up to the Chair based on the audience size per meeting.
- Betzi likes the term “guide” and feels meetings should continue to offer audience time so people still feel welcome to be heard.
- Jason and Max feel it should be the Chair’s discretion going forward. Everyone was in agreement.

**Task Team updates**

- **Transition Team – Ally & Brad**
  - Brad gave an update and noted how positive and supportive the meetings have been with the TOE and CCSU staff. There are a dozen plus people working to help gather information to be
ready before the end of the month. Ally was in full agreement that these meetings have been a breath of fresh air to the work being conducted.

Public Forums planning:

- Jason had a draft “shell” of a presentation based on the June 22 and August 8 meeting information. He presented the slides and asked for comments.
  - Raj – too wordy; each bullet should be its own slide; FAQ handout; instead of “what the UMD does”, but state what the UMD is
  - Lori – list Goals of committee, top survey results, list of options – lead with chosen one but then list pro/con list or have handout available, agreement specifics, “what’s next” and FAQs. She thinks an explanation of the current situation on how each P&R currently work and how the oversight of each are now and how it will be in the future if a UMD was voted in.
  - Max – noted Liz & Keeley’s comments from the last meeting about leading with a strong and succinct statement about why the committee believes this model is the right path for recreation and the community
  - Betzi – did the RGSC want to decide now that the first 2 forums would be the same exact presentation, then revisit for any updates, give the updated presentation to the next 2 forums, and so forth? Members agreed. She then asked if these 6 forums should be advertised as a “3 part series” as each 2 forums will have updates. Lori thinks the “shell” of the presentation should stay the same, but the FAQ part will change over time. Time in the beginning will be spent more on the “shell”, and more time will fall under FAQs toward the later forums.
  - Erika felt the slides needed to be tailored to the current FAQs that have consistently been coming in from the public, not to present the same information/slides they have already seen. Focus information on what the public is really passionate about (childcare, assets, voting, oversight, etc.). She also thought many slides were about the current situation and feels it needs to be paired down and focused on why the UMD was chosen and how it will be in the future if chosen – or not chosen.
  - Kim wants to be sure that the consolidated efforts is still the focus, even though it is creating another municipal level.
  - Max asked about how to get a neutral facilitator? Brad informed the RGSC that Sue McCormick was contacted to provide names/contacts of facilitators in Chittenden County.
  - Jason offered to continue to work on the presentation and give an updated packet before the next meeting.
  - Questions about open meeting law were clarified in regards to how the smaller task teams can function. Andrew – it is very clear that any sort of public body board can take a few members (non-quorum amount of the committee) and not be categorized as having an illegal meeting. Communications that the non-quorum members have notes, they could be subject to a public information request.
  - John Sheppard – noted that the term sub-committee is what is in question as the RGSC does not have the authority to create sub-committees.
  - Lori did remind the members that information can be sent to the whole committee, but responses can only be sent directly back to the sender. She also said that their task team hadn’t
produced much in comparison and wanted to clarify what they needed to do more of. Members mentioned flyers to the school open houses, Farmer’s Market, etc.

Brad gave an update on the work being done for the video updates and asked what the RGSC wants to do before they are released to the public. Brad will send the first link out tomorrow and ask for reply-only comments by Sunday for a Monday release.

Next meeting date/time: Wednesday, September 14 @ 7pm, location TBD with a work session to discuss presentation

Adjournment: Michael adjourned the meeting at 8:41pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee

Meeting Minutes: September 14, 2016

Essex Town Offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Betzi Bilodeau, Andy Watts, Jason DiRosa, Michael Smith, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Raj Chawla

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher, Max Levy

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: Irene Wrenner, Marla Durham

Call to Order: Michael called the meeting to order at 7:08pm

Agenda additions or changes: Michael wanted to add an update from the Trustee and SB members of the most recent meetings; Brad asked for some time to talk about the EJRP budget.

Public to be heard (on items not on the Agenda): None

Motion to Approve Sept. 8, 2016 Minutes: Motion made by Jason, 2nd by Lori

Amendments to Minutes: Page 2, bullet 4 - Raj wanted a small change about the question re: information disseminated to voters to also include the Trustees. “What would be the Selectboard’s & Trustees’ plan to disseminate the information to voters?”

Approval of Minutes: Approved with edits 8-0

Update from Trustees & SB Meetings this week (added to agenda):

- Lori: provided DRAFT resolution presented at the 9/13 meeting, and with a minor change in wording, it was passed unanimously without too much discussion on the resolution.
- Andy: two agenda items from the 9/12 meeting in regards to communications by the RGSC and a Consent Agenda item re: the Agreement about the Town Manager managing both municipalities. No action was taken on either item.

EJRP Budget (added to agenda): two pages provided with factual information to help answers and clarifies any questions or concerns. One question that has recently come up was in regards to the use of a Fund Balance; this is required in school districts to be used in the new fiscal year. Also, a question has come up about a level tax rate and Brad explained the process and details to the Committee. The grid provided just looked at tax support based on an avg. home value of $280k. Lori suggested the information should be provided at the forums – whether as an added slide or handout. Raj wanted a comparison provided by the Town to show the difference in operations to the public. Ally will work with the Director of Admin. Services to draw up a comparison for RGSC to handout/have available at forums.
Task Team updates: Erika asked the Chair to start off with clarification that any “tasks” are only assigned to two members. Primarily to assure that Open Meeting Law is not violated, but also to be sure that only those two involved know what they “own” in getting it ready for the committee to approve. Andy was appreciative of that clarification. Lori asked if any new FAQs have been coming in from the website. Betzi has taken on the role of gathering answers to incoming questions; Erika continues to be the responder to the public inquiries.

- Outreach & Public Forums – Kim
  - Google calendar update handed out – a summary of upcoming events to have a member available to attend and hand information out. Lori gave an update on what that handout could look like, which opened up to discussion. Jason suggested Betzi compare the FAQs to the more frequent ones she has seen and possibly replace some on the flyer. Andy suggested that members ask permission from the schools to be sure they are ok with handouts at afterschool activities. Ally reminded members to be sure any publications are neutrally toned. Members offered a few suggestions to the flyer but will email Lori directly.
  - Ally let the committee know that EPR has Manager’s permission to provide transportation to seniors for the first two forums.

- Research & Discussion – Betzi
  - Pros & Cons are up on the “why” tab at www.essexrec.org, a FPF post is ready to go with approval; the new video has been posted on the website (as well as other social media outlets).

- Transition Team – Ally & Brad
  - Brad & Ally gave a quick update that information is still coming in from staff in the separate departments and will have info to share as soon as available.

Public Forums planning:

- Jason and Betzi discussed the two possible presentations and asked for feedback using primarily the white background option. Members gave slide edits; Jason made corrections to the draft presentation. Brad and Ally were asked to provide significant differences (2 main items being park acreage vs. licensed childcare).

Next meeting date/time: Monday, September 26 @ 7pm, location TBD

Adjournment: Michael adjourned the meeting at 9:50pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee

Meeting Minutes: September 26, 2016

Essex Town Offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Betzi Bilodeau, Andy Watts (SB alternative), Jason DiRosa, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger, Raj Chawla

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher, Max Levy, Michael Smith, Erika Baldasaro

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: George Dunbar, Irene Wrenner (Thrush Lane), Adam Stein (Old Stage Road)

Call to Order: Raj called the meeting to order at 7:01pm

Agenda additions or changes: Brad asked to move the video updates to the Public Forum planning section of the agenda.

Public to be heard (on items not on the Agenda): None

Motion to Approve Sept. 8, 2016 Minutes: Motion made by Lori, 2nd by Andy

Amendments to Minutes: Betzi asked what Raj’s comments were all about. Raj referenced the Sept. 8th minutes; page 2, bullet 4 – “Raj thinks the question should be…” – he wanted to make sure the question also included the Trustees. Andy asked for word clarification on the EJRP budget paragraph. Text edits were made and will be updated. Betzi wanted to be sure that her role “answering” the questions (top of pg. 2) was really just to gather answers to incoming questions but Erika was still the one answering the public.

Approval of Minutes: Approved with amendments, 6-0

Public Forums Planning: Brad handed out a packet with presentation guidelines for the committee to review that were provided by Marc, the facilitator.

- Agenda/Moderator: Brad met with Marc Wennberg today and included his resume in the packet. He was recommended by Kate Brayton. Marc is on board for the two forums this week and is also willing to facilitate the additional four scheduled. Not an Essex resident, doesn’t have any prior knowledge of forming a recreation district but has facilitated similar forums in the past. As stated by the CCSU Superintendent, the PC will pay Marc’s expenses and a decision on his expenses will be made on the additional four forums at the October meeting. Brad reviewed the proposed agenda and facilitating details provided by Marc. Members discussed the goals/objectives, etc. of Marc’s agenda proposal with edits that Brad will take back to Marc.

- Presentation:
  - Brad showed the latest video showing the differences between the two recreation departments. Members requested edits to be made before it is sent out/made live on YouTube or used in the forum presentations.
- Jason walked through the PowerPoint slides. Members requested edits that Jason will make to the presentation.

- **Logistics:** Kim and Ally reviewed the needed items list and small handout with forum details. Brad told the committee that Brian Moreau is available for a very low cost to provide audio during the forums. Members felt comfortable about this audio security.

**Joint Meeting of Selectboard, Trustees & Prudential Committee:**

- **Monday, Oct. 10 @ 7pm @ 81 Main Street, 1st Floor Conference Room**
- **Presenters:** Jason & Betzi

**Task Team updates:**

- **Transition Team – Ally & Brad**
  - Most updates shown with added presentation slides
- **Flyer – Lori**
  - Updated flyer at municipal offices, libraries, etc.
- **Public Outreach Opportunities – Kim**
  - ETSD open house tables, Seniors, Fall Soccer Saturdays @ the Tree Farm
- **Videos – Brad**
  - Shown earlier on agenda
- **FPF & Essex Reporter outreach – Erika**
  - Ally to add an all-neighborhood post
  - Raj is wondering why RGSC can’t have a weekly article. He will contact ER to check on possibility.
  - This week: post about video(s) once edited
- **Web Updates – Betzi**
  - Betzi added “A new, shared entity” to all pages, flushed out Why page, Forum page has new links
- **Web Inquiries – Betzi**
  - One recent question re: preferred suggestion

**Next meeting date/time:** Thursday, October 6 @ 7:30pm, location TBD

**Adjournment:** Raj adjourned the meeting at 10:36pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
JOINT MUNICIPAL SURVEY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
ESSEX MIDDLE SCHOOL
ESSEX, VERMONT
September 28, 2016

MEMBERS ABSENT: Erika Baldasaro, Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher.
ADMINISTRATION: Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec, Brad Luck, EJRP.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:24 PM. Introductions were done. Meeting moderator, Marc Wennberg, was also introduced.

2. PUBLIC FORUM
Marc Wennberg explained the process to be followed at the meeting, acknowledged that those in attendance are present because everyone wants the best for the village and town, and called for a respectful gathering, sharing of information, and opportunity to be heard.

A video was viewed of the mission, operation and budget, and programming for parks and rec in the village and town. A presentation was given on the history of the Recreation Governance Study Committee and the process followed that resulted in the recommendation to the Essex Selectboard and Village Trustees to form a union municipal rec district combining the village and town rec programs. The combined entity was named “Essex Community Parks & Recreation” (ECPR). Seven different governance models were evaluated before making the selection for a union municipal district which was unanimously supported by the study committee. Articles of agreement were drafted as the first step. The articles had to be approved by the Vermont Attorney General and provide the framework for ECPR. The vote by the public on whether to enter into the agreement and form ECPR is December 13, 2016.

Advantages to forming ECPR were noted:
- Independent budget approved by Australian ballot in April of each year concurrent with the school budget vote.
- Unites community recreation.
• Allows both rec departments and both communities to come together on equal
ground.
• Provides long term stability.
• Another step forward in tax equity in the community.
• Provides increased transparency with all operations of ECPR which is overseen
by a five member Board of Directors.

Disadvantages to forming ECPR were noted:
• Two small departments are combined into one large department.
• Realizing tax equity will result in an increase for town-outside-the-village
taxpayers.
• Adds another elected board and government entity to the community.
• Potential administrative costs as two departments move to one independent
department.

The five member Board of Directors for ECPR will have staggered terms. At the start the
membership will include one Selectboard appointee, one Trustee appointee, one Essex
Junction resident, one town-outside-the-village resident, one at-large resident.
Subsequent boards will be five elected members from the community at large. An
Executive Director will be hired by the Board of Directors to oversee operations of ECPR
and appoint an independent Treasurer to manage the finances. Open Meeting laws will be
followed. Yearly independent audits will be done. There may possibly be a Rec Advisory
Council. Budget vote for ECPR will be by Australian ballot.

The Transition Team with members from both rec departments, members of CCSU,
members of municipal staff has been working on the goal to create a seamless transition
if the vote is passed. The team has been researching information and answering
questions. The mission is to ensure existing services are maintained or enhanced. FY18
operations recommended by the Transition Team include:
• ECPR handling daily receipts, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and HR.
• Essex Town will provide services for the Treasurer, check signing, accounting
and audit, tax collection, and run elections.
• A 3rd party provider will handle payroll, IT support, and legal support.
• Lands and buildings will be leased to ECPR for $1/year and the village and town
will retain ownership of their respective properties. ECPR will insure the property
and buildings and name the village and town as “additional insured”.
• ECPR will maintain facilities and parks and provide capital asset and equipment
replacement.
• Supplies and equipment purchased by the rec departments will transfer to ECPR
and be used for parks and rec purposes by staff and be insured. Future
maintenance and replacement is the responsibility of ECPR.
• Capital reserves in FY18 related to parks and rec will be retained by the town and
the rec district may request use of the funds for intended purposes. Requests must
be authorized by the Selectboard.
• The village will assume the debt payment on the Maple Street bond for the final three years of payments.
• There is a proposal that the village phase out additional tax support for ECPR over five years to help relieve the tax burden and the village will no longer budget for the block party, farmers market, and train hop which will be included in the ECPR budget.
• The estimate of tax increase on a $280,000 house for a resident in the town-outside-the-village is $23 (from $87 to $110) for ECPR. Village residents will see a tax decrease of $3 (from $280 to $277).
• If ECPR is formed then there is need to plan for program access, enhancements or changes, finalizing the budget for the April vote, and continuing work on agreements related to village and town rec assets.
• A “yes” vote from the Town of Essex at large and the Village of Essex Junction means ECPR is created, members of the Board of Directors are concurrently elected, and the Transition Team continues to work to merge the two rec departments.
• A “no” vote from either the Town of Essex at large or the Village of Essex Junction means the Prudential Committee will decide the next steps for EJRP and if the Prudential Committee takes no action then EJRP transfers to the Unified Union School District on 7/1/17. The Unified Union School District said they support recreation and will work to establish a community use policy that continues to prioritize a partnership with rec and parks departments, but governance of EJRP falls outside the scope of work of the school district. The Village Trustees are willing to work with the Prudential Committee to negotiate transfer of governance to the village government and will seek to maintain and enhance all current services, explore finance and governance models that allow EJRP to maintain its current approach to financing and providing services, and will work to keep the budgets separate. The village would not pursue any further efforts to consolidate rec departments with the town at this time.

Next steps include the vote before the year end to allow time to develop the budget for the coming year. The Selectboard and Trustees may warn a special election vote on December 13, 2016. Petitions for positions on the ECPR Board of Directors are available 10/7/16 and due to the Town Clerk by 11/7/16. Members can be elected by absentee ballot starting 11/23/16 or at the polls on 12/13/16. If ECPR is created then the vote on the budget will be in April 2017 with ECPR in effect 7/1/17.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
1. Were seven different options ranked? How did they rank below the Union Municipal District? Were the pros and cons assigned weights? Why does there have to be a stand-alone entity and not a department like police or highway?
   • Answer: Seven options were ranked and the public in attendance at committee meetings when the options were reviewed were polled. Information will be posted on the website on the ranking of the options.
2. What is an “inter-local contract”?
Answer: An inter-local contract would have been a way to combine the two rec departments under one of the municipalities. The budget would have been under one of the municipalities. There was concern that there would only be a contract (not a long term solution) between two municipalities and not necessarily a merger of the two departments under one municipality so there was some uncertainty with that. Examples of inter-local contracts are police and the community, EMS and the community. Additional information will be posted on the website.

3. Why are there not three options being voted: merge under Essex municipalities, stay as is, or STD (special tax district)?
   - Answer: The mission of the committee was to provide one recommendation to the Selectboard and Trustees. The committee looked at options and weighed the pros and cons. The warning for the vote and the ballot cannot have three different options by law. The vote on the ballot must be a “yes” or “no” choice.

4. There is concern about accountability. How will this be better?
   - Answer: The budget will be audited. The budget will be voted by Australian ballot. There will be a five member board with the mission of rec and parks.

5. What makes this better than a department for parks & rec? Why have an added layer of bureaucracy?
   - Answer: For the Village of Essex Junction there is not an added layer of bureaucracy because the rec department is separate from the municipality and the budget is voted by Australian ballot. The committee discussed and decided that forming ECPR as recommended was the best way to move forward.

6. What happens if other departments want to do the same thing and there are multiple budgets to be voted?
   - Answer: The committee was tasked with talking about rec in the community and cannot answer for other departments.

7. How could the existing option, STD, be changed and could it be changed by a petition signed by voters?
   - Answer: The answer will be researched and posted on the website.

8. When will financial due diligence be available?
   - Answer: The proposed budget will be available after the Board of Directors is elected and forms the budget. The voters will vote on the final budget proposed by the new board.

9. In five years what will the tax be in the village and town?
   - Answer: The proposed budgets for the town, village, and school districts are not known for the upcoming fiscal year at this point in time. A proposed rec budget for FY18 is being pulled together, but it would be challenging to predict future years. Both departments have managed their budgets responsibly over the past 10 years. EJRP has had a level tax rate for the last 10 years and the voters have seen only a one dollar change in the tax rate for rec since 2007. The first year of the budget shows taxes for a resident of the town-outside-the-village going up $23 and for village
residents going down by $3. Any increase in the budget the year after would be equivalent for residents whether in the village or town-outside-the-village.

10. Are the directors and officers of the union municipal district required to complete a conflict of interest statement annually?
   - Answer: The Board of Directors once elected will decide if a conflict of interest statement must be signed. The Selectboard and Trustees both sign ethics statements annually.

11. Why not pursue continued cooperation with the Selectboard on a “no” vote?
   - Answer: If there is a “no” vote and EJRP is under the village government the village will not pursue merging the rec departments with the town because it was the consensus that there needs to be some stability for the stakeholders (staff of EJRP, working families that rely on the licensed childcare through rec). When the vote comes in the village will view it in the broadest terms and if one community votes “no” then that is how it has to be interpreted.

12. Does consolidation mean all residents, town and village, have equal access to all rec resources and programs?
   - Answer: At this point most of the programs would be accessible in the same manner as one unified department. There are some logistics to figure out so there is no guarantee in Year 1 (for example, finding additional space for licensed childcare services). The idea is the department would grow into an all access, even access format.

13. The current budget of the two departments combined is $3.73 million. What is the total budget?
   - Answer: The financials will be on the website. The numbers are a best prediction, but may change. With the tax information that was in the presentation total expenses for the rec district is $3,696,000.

14. The Prudential Committee owns Saxon Hill property and leases to ERP. Will the land revert to the union municipal district?
   - Answer: The Prudential Committee will be discussing property that it owns, such as Saxon Hill and Park Street School, on October 3, 2016.

15. Will village residents have one vote as village residents and one vote as Essex Town residents and Essex residents have only one vote?
   - Answer: The law is clear on how votes are held. Village residents vote as village residents and vote as town residents. Residents outside the village vote just as town residents. The village resident vote and the town resident vote will be counted separately. Both must be positive to form ECPR.

16. Assuming merger of the rec departments and establishment of the STD is approved, will the village get one vote as village residents and one vote as town residents on the annual operating budget, capital expenses, bonds, or allowing other municipalities to join the STD while residents outside the village get just one vote?
   - Answer: If the district is approved any operating budgets thereafter are voted by all residents in the town including the village with one vote; everyone gets just one vote.
17. At what point do the village and town rec departments equalize?
   • Answer: If equalized means access and programs they equalize on 7/1/17 when ECPR comes into existence. If equalized means a financial footing there is an outstanding bond for Maple Street that the village must pay off so village taxpayers will continue to pay for that. Once the bond is paid off the department will equalize.

18. Request is made that the committee present out year budgets for FY19-FY22 assuming a constant budget and showing the tax impact to residents in and out of the village.
   • Answer: The Selectboard, Trustees, and school boards do not know today what the budgets will be when they go for a vote in April. It is unlikely the out year budgets can be done because there are too many variables.

19. If a “no” vote and the Trustees will not attempt or agree to further unification of the rec programs, what about other town/village programs?
   • Answer: The resolution pertains to the rec departments only.

20. If the union municipal district is approved both Brad Luck and Ally Vile could be out of a job. Do they support the proposal and why?
   • Answer: Ally Vile said she will not voice her opinion because the public is here to become informed voters and decide on their own with their vote. Between the two departments there are over 19,000 people to serve and though there may be some duplicate named positions within the two departments, there is not duplicate staffing. There is plenty to do with combining the full time staff into one department and welcome those who want to come over if the vote is “yes”.

21. What will happen to rec based after school, vacation camps, summer camps if the vote is or is not passed? Will the town have more access to childcare and the village stay the same?
   • Answer: It is an uncertainty right now before the vote. The school has indicated the intent to make rec a priority and help provide services to residents. Without knowing how the departments will be combined or split in nine months there is no decision on how everything will work. EPR hopes to continue to stay within the Essex schools and work with the YMCA on childcare. If the departments combine space will have to be found to sustain the program or grow the program.

22. Was EJRP ever to be a part of the new school district?
   • Answer: The answer will be researched and posted on the website.

23. What if the vote is “yes” to the union municipal district and “no” to the budget?
   • If the budget is voted down, the ECPR Board of Directors reworks the budget and brings it back for another vote.

24. Why did the committee not select successfully sharing under one rec department?
   • Answer: Essex and Essex Junction rec departments are unique. There were challenges of public support in moving one department under another rec department.

25. How will the budget be decided, Australian ballot or voice, and why not in March?
Answer: The budget vote will be by Australian ballot in April in conjunction with the community school budgets and the village budget vote, along the lines of the EGG effort to consolidate as many opportunities for the community coming together at the ballot. The vote is not in March because the only Australian ballot item in March is the town budget vote. The majority of Australian ballot votes are happening in April. Also, having the vote in April gives more time to develop the budget.

26. Will ECPR employ its own HR, IT, legal, and financial services or use the village and town?
   • Answer: HR is in-house, IT is provided by staff in-house, and there will be a 3rd party provider. A/R, A/R, daily cash receipts will be in-house. General accounting, signing checks, annual audit will be done by the town. Legal will be outsourced as is done in the village and town.

27. There are additional concerns about expenses related to this merger. What is the committee’s response to the issue of sensitivity of voters to potential tax increases, both short and long term?
   • Answer: The committee is very sensitive to a tax increase for anyone. That concern was expressed to the Selectboard and Trustees. The Trustees agreed there should be a phased-in process and is sensitive to the fact that it will not be easy for anyone.

28. What is the salary range for the ECPR Executive Director?
   • Answer: The ECPR Board of Directors will make that decision. The merger vote and the vote on members of the Board of Directors are at the same time after which the Board of Directors will put together the budget for ECPR which will include salaries. That is the process.

29. Will we lose economy of scale (i.e. sharing equipment and mowing) between the rec department and the town maintenance department?
   • Answer: The Transition Committee is working on this. ERP does lots of facility maintenance and mowing now. It is not determined at this time if there will be an MOU with the town to work together or be completely separated.

There were no further questions. The public forum ended at 7:31 PM.

3. OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD

Stan Bushway, Butternut Court, Essex, noted the special tax district is in force for five years and the communities can withdraw during that time, but it is assumed the communities will continue to merge and after five years be one. If after five years the merger dissolves the STD does ECPR become a department of the new community?
   • Answer: The answer will be researched and posted on the website.

Ron Lawrence, town resident, said the concern is setting up another level of governance which complicates, not makes simpler. It is hoped the Trustees can re-evaluate their stance if there is a “no” vote because it does not mean the voters do not approve the move to combine services. Mr. Lawrence applauded the work and the idea of two departments
working together, and said he is proud of the resources the town has and likely the village feels the same way. No one wants to see anyone lose anything. Mr. Lawrence reiterated he applauds the move to try to combine resources.

Francis Raymond, town resident, but grew up in the village, said the issue is not about money, it is about creating another tax organization. ECPR should be a town organization or a village organization, not a separate organization. People will be upset at having another tax district and may not vote it through. Essex Junction rec department wants it the way they want it and does not want anyone to control their money. They are worried about their money. They are worried about the Prudential Committee or the Trustees managing them. They want their own.

John Harnish, town resident, said he is all for consolidation, but not as a separate tax district because all he sees is added cost. Mr. Harnish mentioned his background in mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures in his corporate life, and said he was surprised there are not any good numbers and next year’s budget will be less than this year’s budget when all the people remain. That is not how mergers and acquisitions go. This is not being run as a business and it should be. The committee should be looking out for the taxpayers of the town and village.

Mary MacEwan, Essex, spoke in support of ECPR going through because it will be more efficient to have one department and will not double the cost and will be clearer. Having two communities working together is a wonderful idea.

Bruce Post, Essex, said he would like to know more about the phasing in of the tax shift and how that would be accomplished. Also, if there is going to be a separate municipality that spins off functions to the town then why have a separate municipality. It is ridiculous.

Gabrielle Smith, town and village, disclosed her husband is Chair of the committee, spoke in support of the pros and cons listing and that it seems four of the pros would have been accomplished if the committee recommended consolidation with the town. Two items not addressed might be long term stability and equal ground. Further explanation of these two items is requested.

Brec Norton, Sandhill Road, thanked everyone for their hard work. Mr. Norton said he understands the inequity of the village paying more and that has to be fixed, but it is not clear how building a separate district is cost effective to merging into the town. Taxes are double what they ought to be now so this is not the way to go.

There were no further comments or questions. The committee will post answers to the questions on the website. Future forums will also provide more information.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

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RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE  
JOINT MUNICIPAL SURVEY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
ALBERT D. LAWSON SCHOOL  
ESSEX JUNCTION, VERMONT  
September 29, 2016


MEMBERS ABSENT:  Michael Smith, Erika Baldasaro, Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher.

ADMINISTRATION:  Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec, Brad Luck, EJRP.


1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Raj Chawla called the meeting to order at 6:21 PM. Introductions were done. Meeting moderator, Marc Wennberg, was also introduced.

2. PUBLIC FORUM
Marc Wennberg explained the process to be followed at the meeting and stressed having a respectful gathering to hear information and have the opportunity to be heard.

A video was viewed on how the two rec departments presently operate. A presentation was given on how the study committee was formed and developed the recommendation to establish a union municipal district called “Essex Community Parks & Recreation” (ECPR) that combines EJRP and EPR. Seven different governance models were evaluated before making the selection for a union municipal district. Articles of agreement were drafted which had to be approved by the Vermont Attorney General and which provide the framework for ECPR. The vote on December 13, 2016 is to decide whether or not to enter into the agreement and form ECPR.

Advantages to forming ECPR were noted:
- Independent budget voted by Australian ballot in April of each year concurrent with the school budget vote as has been done with EJRP and was suggested by the study group.
- Unites community recreation.
• Allows both rec departments and in turn the two communities to come together on equal ground.
• Provides long term stability.
• Another step forward in tax equity in the community.
• Provides increased transparency with all operations of ECPR which is overseen by a five member Board of Directors.

Disadvantages to forming ECPR were noted:
• Two small departments are combined into one large department.
• Realizing tax equity will result in an increase for town-outside-the-village taxpayers.
• Adds another elected board and government entity to the community.
• Potential additional administrative costs as two departments move to one independent department.

The five member Board of Directors for ECPR initially will have one Selectboard appointee, one Trustee appointee, one Essex Junction resident, one town-outside-the-village resident, and one at-large resident. Subsequent boards will be five elected at large members. An Executive Director will be hired to oversee operations and appoint a Treasurer. There will be an annual independent financial audit. The budget will be approved by Australian ballot vote. There is the possibility of a Rec Advisory Council.

The Transition Team made up of members of the rec departments, school district, and municipal staff have the goal of creating a seamless transition if the vote passes. The team has been researching and getting answers and wants to ensure existing services are maintained or enhanced. The Transition Team is recommending:
• ECPR handling daily receipts, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and HR.
• Essex Town will provide the Treasurer, check signing, accounting and audit, tax collection, and elections.
• A 3rd party provider will handle payroll, IT support, and legal support.
• Lands and buildings will be leased to ECPR for $1/year and the village and town will retain ownership. ECPR will insure the properties and buildings and name the village and town as “additional insured”.
• ECPR will maintain the spaces and provide capital asset and equipment replacement.
• Parks and rec supplies and equipment purchased by the rec departments will transfer to ECPR and be used by rec staff. ECPR will insure and provide future replacement and maintenance.
• Capital reserves related to parks and rec held by the town will be retained, but the rec district may submit a request for use of the funds. Requests must be authorized by the Selectboard.
• The estimated budget assumes growth of 1% in the grand list, the village assuming debt relief payments on the Maple Street bond, the village proposal to phase out additional tax support for ECPR over five years to ease the burden on
the town, and the village no longer budgeting for the block party, farmers market, and train hop.

- The estimate of tax impact of ECPR on a $280,000 house for a resident in the town-outside-the-village is $16 (from $87 to $103). Village residents will see a tax decrease of $11 (from $280 to $269).

- Decisions need to be made if ECPR is formed on a plan for program access, enhancements or changes, finalization of the budget for the April 2017 vote, and agreements related to village and town rec assets.

- A “yes” vote from Essex at large and the Village of Essex Junction means ECPR is created, members of the Board of Directors are concurrently elected, and the Transition Team continues to work to merge the two rec departments.

- A “no” vote from either Essex at large or the Village of Essex Junction means the Prudential Committee needs to decide the next steps for EJRP and if the Prudential Committee takes no action then EJRP transfers to the new Essex-Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District on 7/1/17. EWSD stated they support recreation and will work to establish a facilities use policy that continues to prioritize a partnership with the rec and parks departments, but governance of EJRP falls outside the scope of work of EWSD. The Village Trustees expressed willingness to govern EJRP and would seek to maintain and enhance all EJRP programs and services and explore finance and governance models to allow EJRP to maintain its present entrepreneurial approach to creating and financing programs and services. The Trustees and the village would not pursue any further efforts to consolidate rec departments with the town at this time.

Per the election laws a vote could not be held in November due to the national election so the next step is to hold a vote before the end of the year to allow time to develop a budget. The Selectboard and Trustees may warn a special election vote on December 13, 2016. Petitions for the ECPR Board of Directors are available 10/7/16 and due to the Town Clerk by 11/7/16. If the vote is warned then the village and town can vote on ECPR and the Board of Directors via absentee ballot starting 11/23/16 or at the polls on 12/13/16. If ECPR is created then the vote on the budget will be in April 2017 with ECPR in effect 7/1/17.

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

1. Would some of the programs currently offered by EJRP be offered in the town outside the village?
   - Answer: Program access overall is being reviewed. Access may not be immediate, but the goal is to make the programs open to everyone.

2. If the rec departments combine how will the potential for overcrowding at the Maple Street pool be handled (i.e. maintaining and enhancing current services given the potential for additional use)?
   - Answer: Maple Street Park is a very busy place as it is and would continue to serve people as is done today (i.e. pool opens 15 minutes before opening time for members and then on a 1st come, 1st served basis). There
3. Please explain how the proposed union operations could acquire a budget or substantial increase without the public knowing about it or without any power to prevent it?
   - Answer: The budget will be planned following a positive vote in December and the seating of the Board of Directors in January. The Board of Directors will work on the budget. The process will be equal to the process currently underway for the Selectboard and Trustees. The process is completely open and public. The budget will have to be passed by the voters of Essex and if not passed then the Board of Directors must rework the budget and bring it back before the voters. There are no major increases planned. The tentative budget numbers look fairly stable.

4. What will the oversight of the Treasurer be and how often?
   - Answer: The Treasurer is appointed and not a member of the Board of Directors. The duties of the treasurer are as outlined by the Attorney General. Financial statements will be open to the public.

5. Explain why the option of union municipal district versus the other options (i.e. under the village or town) was chosen and what is an “inter-local contract”?
   - Answer: With an inter-local contract the departments would merge under a contract, but would not be under the municipality so there is not a long term solution. The budget would reside under one of the municipalities. The study committee and the public comment that was heard was to have the budget as a separate line item vote. The two rec departments are unique. One reason for the choice was public support and bringing the departments under a new roof and not forcing one department to be put in a mold. The best parts of both can be taken to create a new entity for the community.

6. How will the new district be governed to ensure proper supervision and decrease the likelihood of legal issues (i.e. what will supervision be for the new parks director)?
   - Answer: Supervision for the parks director will be similar to the municipal director – the voters and the five member board will operate similar to the Selectboard, Trustees, and Prudential Committee today.

7. What do projected tax numbers look like beyond 2018 when the village tax phase out is zero?
   - Answer: Total cost of the tax funded through the district for the average town homeowner outside the village and for the average village homeowner in FY23 after the phase out by the village and elimination of the debt paid by the village will be $163. There are a lot of assumptions with the information and it must be kept in mind that the Trustees, Selectboard, and school board do not know what their budgets will look like for the next year. As well the budget projected for FY23 is for an organization that does not exist.

8. Will the proposal exacerbate current demand for programs because all are considered residents (i.e. capacity to meet demand)?
Answer: The vast majority of programs for both departments have space for additional people. When demand exceeds supply the departments look for other ways to provide more. Preschool went from one classroom to two, Village Kids expanded to 59 kids, Camp Maple Street capacity increased to 120, Camp Reach expanded to 59 so there is a track record of finding ways to meet the demands of the community. As one, district staff will try to make sure there is equal opportunity in both the village and town and try to mirror the programming throughout the district.

9. How many layers of oversight are there with the proposed union?
   • Answer: The voters, five member elected board, Executive Director, and potential for a rec advisory council.

10. What is the difference between a special tax district and a union municipal district?
    • Answer: It is believed there is no difference. The union municipal district is by Vermont state statute.

11. How will the new parks and rec department ensure all children in the community will be welcomed?
    • Answer: The same process used now will continue to support the needs of the individual, adult or child. There is an overall blanket of care for every child in the program and staff will continue with the way they work with families.

12. Where is the “one roof”?
    • Answer: The Transition Team identified the “new roof” as 75 Maple St.

13. Why would the village no longer budget for the block party, farmers market or train hop?
    • Answer: The proposal is for the rec department to take over these events.

14. Will the new rec district and governing board adopt conflict of interest guidelines that would require conflicts to be stated and individuals to abstain from voting?
    • Answer: The Board of Directors will decide on what is adopted. The Trustees and Selectboard have policies and it is hoped the new board will look at how the municipalities are run and adopt the same.

15. Was the village paying the remaining bond for the pool ($322,000) included in the tax example and why not share this with the town since they will also be paying resident rates?
    • Answer: The FY18 budget numbers show the bond payment as an expense for the village. A bond must stay with the people who voted for it. Village residents cannot pass the bond they voted on to the town. The bond cannot be redistributed.

16. Will it be likely voters in the town-outside-the-village will vote “no” because taxes will increase and what is the potential impact of a “no” vote?
    • Answer: There is potential for the town to vote “no”. Tax equity will cause town taxes to go up slightly, but it is felt the benefits outweigh that and at some point all would be on equal ground. The Trustees hope to gradually bring down the increase so there is not a big hit. Both communities have to vote “yes” for ECPR to be approved and if not then the Prudential Committee determines what happens to EJRP which could either go under
the unified union school district or the Board of Trustees. The Trustees would try to maintain the entrepreneurial spirit of EJRP.

17. How many people vote the EPR and EJRP budgets now and how many are expected to vote on the new rec district based on historic school district voting trends?
   - Answer: At annual town meeting with village residents and town-outside-the-village residents the vote is roughly 250 people. For the town-wide Australian ballot vote for Selectboard the vote is roughly 1200 to 1500 people. The Presidential election is expected to have higher numbers.

18. What do you mean by “program access enhancements”?
   - Answer: Going forward with the district the group will continue to look at enhancements. All residents of the district have equal access. There might be some limitations for certain programs.

19. Have there been or will there be hearings?
   - Answer: There is opportunity to be heard at each meeting.

20. What is the ability to obtain bond issues as a municipality, contract, or nonprofit part of the town budget?
   - Answer: A nonprofit cannot bond. Inter-local contract is technically under the municipality and can bond. If the department is under the town or village it can bond. Forming a union municipal district through the legislature for a charter means the district can bond.

21. Do other town residents use EPR and EJRP currently and what are the numbers?
   - In general there are non-residents and town residents using EJRP programs. The town rec program considers all as residents of the town. Both EJRP and EPR provide large youth programs that do not conflict with one another and work together. EPR provides Essex youth ball and soccer, Bolton after school bus (four buses), and lacrosse. EJRP provides youth basketball and summer soccer.

22. Under the new entity with growth in the town if the pool must be expanded will all town and village homeowners pay for it?
   - Answer: Residents of the village are residents of the town and are paying for Essex rec and EJRP so for village residents there would be no change. Only village residents pay for EJRP.

23. How does the plan move the community forward to a unified community rather than creating a new municipal function that potentially could make unification more complicated?
   - Answer: The reason the union municipal district was recommended is that it unites the community under one roof and does not force one department into the other department. The option also provides stability. The other choices were not stable.

24. If the Selectboard declines to warn a vote then what is next and will it result in the same conclusion as a “no” vote?
   - Answer: IF the Selectboard or the Trustees decline to warn the vote in December then ECPR will not happen and the decision will be in the hands of the Prudential Committee and they could move rec to the unified
There were no further questions. The public forum ended at 7:20 PM.

3. OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD

Sara Stultz, Essex, spoke of the process that began last year with forward thinking, enthusiasm, and thoughts about the possibilities. In order to know if it will work combining the two departments needs to be tried. There is a safety net of five years if it does not work. Regarding oversight if the department is under the town, the village residents would not have a voice like they do with the Trustees so there would be less oversight.

Annie Cooper, village resident, said she is excited about combining the departments and having worked with both rec departments simultaneously is a great gift. There is no greater idea for the community at large than the passion and professionalism that both departments currently utilize at current locations. At combined locations will be beautiful. Ms. Cooper said she is thrilled the community is talking about this.

Daniel Stein, village resident, said regarding tax equity other departments are one department for the entire town. Roads are a separate taxation district so the village does not pay for town roads outside the village and vice versa. Both are already equitable. The difference in tax rates can be accounted for with three departments: parks & rec, library, and fire. Mr. Stein said he is encouraged by the courage of the people working to face down the tax inequity with the proposal for rec. The last time this was tried was when the village tried to become a city or the vote on merger. There was a split vote by too many to maintain tax inequity. It is hoped there is not a material difference in the outcome of the vote on rec.

Marla Durham, village resident, stated the rec study committee deserves a round of applause and has taken some heat in the media. Some have had personal slings and arrows thrown at them. The courage of the committee is appreciated.

Deb Bilodeau, Essex resident for the past 36 years of which 32 have been in the village and former Village President, stated the vote on December 13th is one of the most suppressed votes being 35 days after the national vote for the new President and in between two of the major holidays of the year. People are worn out and the “snowbirds” are out of town. It is understandable why the vote is when it is being held, but it feels like voter suppression.

- The reason why the vote is scheduled as it is will be posted on the website.

Kim Woods, town resident, assured she will vote in support of ECPR because it is a good idea that brings the community together.

Maura Collins, village resident, said the reasons to consider the vote should be the budget implications, research, and governance. As a mother of three children who utilize both
rec programs it will be exciting for the village children to be using town parks and camps and vice versa so the community can start acting like one community.

Annie Cooper, village resident, commented having the children together through the school district and the rec district makes going to high school together easier.

There were no further comments or questions. Information will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

4. ADJOURNMENT
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 PM.

RScty: MERiordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee
Meeting Minutes: October 6, 2016
Essex Police Department, 145 Maple Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Max Levy, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Betzi Bilodeau, Jason DiRosa, Michael Smith

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher, Raj Chawla, Lori Houghton

Administrators Absent: Brad Luck-EJRP, Ally Vile-EPR

Others Present: Kim Gleason, Irene Wrenner

Call to Order: Michael called the meeting to order at 7:34pm

Agenda additions or changes: Michael asked to exclude the approval of the meeting minutes from September 28 & 29. Also, Erika said she was not at the last meeting and that it should have read that Betzi gave the updates.

Public to be Heard (on items not on the agenda): None

Motion to Approve September 26, 2016 Minutes: Motion made by Michael, 2\textsuperscript{nd} by Erika.

Approval of Minutes: Approved 6-0

Public Forums Review:
Michael thought it went well at EMS. Jason was pretty happy with outcomes except for some issues with IT, particularly at ADL, and with the projector focus at EMS. He suggested putting a “local” copy of the video on the laptop prior to the next forum. Jason also thought having the facilitator and sound person was key. Michael wondered if it was recorded and Jason confirmed it was. Michael wondered what the plan was for the recording moving forward. Jason wondered about posting it and Betzi mentioned a sound cloud or the like. Kim thought it was hard for Lori to be the runner for the questions, have time to read and mark them, and also answer. Others seemed to think it worked pretty well. Jason thought we should have a copy of the FAQ’s on hand. He also said there was a comment at the ADL Forum that someone wished they knew it would go until 8pm. There was discussion on making the breakdown of the evening more clear and posting it on the site and FPF. The flyer only states a start time of 6:15pm so that is fine to continue handing out as is. The group thought offering childcare is a good idea to continue. Jason thought the budget sheet was good to have and that perhaps there should be a version without the Village proposal. Also to make it clear to the public that these are preliminary numbers. Betzi did not agree that a new version was necessary but Jason said maybe having one on hand to refer to at the forums would suffice.
Review of Forum Question Responses/Response Plan:
The RGSC members need to get responses to questions to Betzi by October 8, 2016. She will make a
consistent voice to it and will send back to the group for review. Erika said she can help with that task.
Many of these questions were answered at the forums but will be posted for others to read. Max
inquired about the possibility of any questions from the forums being put on a slide or two. Jason said
there was room to add one or two slides with the commonly asked questions to show the public we are
listening. Betzi suggested, due to feedback, that under the 7 models we add slide(s) with pros/cons and
what the committee liked and did not like. Jason did not feel those needed to be added and that the
info is out there on the essex rec website and that it is too much info to add as part of the presentation
slide show. Perhaps there could be a slide ready as back-up.

Joint Meeting of the Selectboard, Trustees & Prudential Committee (October 10, 2016, 81 Main Street,
7pm):
Michael reminded us of the joint meeting on October 10, 2016. Jason and Betzi agreed to present and
Christine Packard is planning to attend. Max said the Selectboard “supports this pending further details”
so the RGSC is presenting. Michael said the RGSC piece would likely end around 8pm and the format
would be the same as is at the forums.

Task Updates:
Kim Gleason suggested the breakdown of the forum times be listed on the website. An estimated
schedule discussed by the group was:
6:15-7pm Video and Presentation
7-7:30pm Q&A
7:30-8pm Public to be Heard (around one minute each)
Public outreach-Kim let the group know she brought fliers to the Essex Free Library, soccer at the tree
farm, open houses at FMS and EMS. She reached out to the Lions Club and is waiting to hear back, plans
on distributing to Seniors at the next EMS luncheon and at Essex Eats Out on 10.14.16. Also that logistics
for the next forum at EES on 10.13.16 are all set.
FPF & Essex Reporter- Erika said she put an update on FPF on October 5, 2016 re: budgets. The next one
is slated to go on October 10, 2016 re: info for candidates. Erika said Lori is sending info to The Reporter
and that Raj may be taking that over but she has not heard back yet. Also that questions written into the
essex rec site have been answered.
Web updates- Betzi said that Brad mentioned that a line itemized budget may be available by October
15, 2016. Also that we make sure we are clear on assumptions when posting feedback on FPF.

Next meeting date/time:
The RGSC should meet after the October 18, 2016 forum. We are looking at the week of October 24th,
perhaps on the 27th. Michael is going to ask Brad to put out a meeting wizard or the like.

Adjournment: Michael adjourned the meeting at 8:50pm
1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
Village President, George Tyler, called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7 PM.

Selectboard Chair, Max Levy, called the Essex Selectboard meeting to order at 7 PM.

Rec Governance Study Committee (RGSC) and Prudential Committee Chair, Michael Smith, called the RGSC and Prudential Committee meetings to order at 7 PM.

The assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance. All were welcomed to the joint meeting of the Trustees, Selectboard, EGSC, and Prudential Committee to hold a work session on the RGSC recommendation for the rec departments, dissolution of the RGSC, options based on the outcome of the vote on the recommendation for the rec departments, and discussion of the tax equalization plan.

2. WORK SESSION/DISCUSSION
Pat Scheidel noted the following materials:
- Correspondence from Sue Cook, dated 10/10/16, regarding edits to the district agreement
- Letter from Daryl and Saramichelle Stultz
1. RGSC Presentation
A video was viewed on how the two rec departments presently operate and a presentation was given on how the study committee was formed and developed the recommendation to establish a union municipal district called “Essex Community Parks & Recreation” (ECPR). Seven different governance models and five options of consolidating were evaluated before making the unanimous selection for a union municipal district under a new roof, a new shared entity. Articles of agreement were drafted which had to be approved by the Vermont Attorney General and which provide the framework for ECPR. The vote on December 13, 2016 is to decide whether or not to enter into the agreement and form ECPR.

Advantages to forming ECPR:
- Independent budget voted by Australian ballot in April of each year concurrent with the school budget vote as has been done with EJRP and was suggested by the study group.
- Unites community recreation.
- Allows both rec departments and in turn the two communities to come together on equal ground.
- Provides long term stability.
- Another step forward in tax equity in the community.
- Provides increased transparency with all operations of ECPR which is overseen by a five member Board of Directors.

Concerns with forming ECPR:
- Two small departments are combined into one large department.
- Realizing tax equity will result in an increase for town-outside-the-village taxpayers.
- Adds another elected board and government entity to the community.
- Potential additional administrative costs as two departments move to one independent department.

ECPR will be overseen by a five member Board of Directors initially with one Selectboard appointee, one Trustee appointee, one Essex Junction resident, one town-outside-the-village resident, and one at-large resident, all with staggered terms. Subsequent boards will be five elected at large members. The Board of Directors will operate under the state Open Meeting Law. An Executive Director will be hired to oversee operations and appoint an independent Treasurer. There will be an annual independent financial audit. The budget will be approved by Australian ballot vote. The oversight for ECPR includes the voters, five member Board of Directors, Executive Director and possibly a Rec Advisory Council.

The Transition Team made up of members of both rec departments, CCSU personnel, and municipal staff have the goal of a seamless transition if the vote passes. The team is...
researching and getting answers to questions and wants to ensure existing services are maintained or enhanced. The Transition Team is recommending:

- ECPR handling daily receipts, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and HR.
- Essex Town will provide the Treasurer, check signing, accounting and audit, tax collection, and elections.
- A 3rd party provider will handle payroll, IT support, and legal support.
- Lands and buildings will be leased to ECPR for $1/year and the village and town will retain ownership. ECPR will insure the properties and buildings and name the village and town as “additional insured”.
- ECPR will maintain the spaces and provide capital asset and equipment replacement.
- Parks and rec supplies and equipment purchased by the rec departments will transfer to ECPR and be used by rec staff. ECPR will insure and provide future replacement and maintenance.
- Capital reserves related to parks and rec will be retained by the town and ECPR can request use of the funds. Requests must be authorized by the Selectboard. Capital reserves for FY18 are estimated at $213,000.
- The estimated budget assumes growth of 1% in the grand list, the village continuing debt relief payments on the remaining three years of the Maple Street bond, the village proposal to phase out additional tax support for ECPR over five years (five cents reduced by one cent each year) to ease the burden on the town, and the village no longer budgeting for the block party, farmers market, and train hop.
- The estimate of tax impact of ECPR on the average home valued at $280,000 in 2017 is for a resident in the town-outside-the-village is $16 (from $87 to $103). Village residents will see a tax decrease of $11 (from $280 to $269).
- Decisions need to be made if ECPR is formed on a plan for program access, enhancements or changes, finalization of the budget for the April 2017 vote, and agreements related to village and town rec assets.
- A “yes” vote from Essex at large and the Village of Essex Junction means ECPR is created, members of the Board of Directors are concurrently elected, and the Transition Team continues to work to merge the two rec departments.
- A “no” vote from either Essex at large or the Village of Essex Junction means the Prudential Committee needs to decide the next steps for EJRP and if the Prudential Committee takes no action then EJRP transfers to the new Essex-Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District on 7/1/17. The Village Trustees expressed willingness to transfer governance of EJPR to the village government and will seek to enhance maintenance of the program’s entrepreneurial approach. The Trustees and the village would not pursue any further efforts to consolidate rec departments with the town at this time.

A vote is needed on the matter before year end in order to have time to develop a budget. The Selectboard and Trustees may warn a special election vote on December 13, 2016. Petitions for the ECPR Board of Directors are available 10/7/16 and due to the Town Clerk by 11/7/16. If the vote is warned then the village and town can vote on ECPR and the Board of Directors via absentee ballot starting 11/23/16 or at the polls on 12/13/16.
Any budget is hypothetical now. IF ECPR is approved by the voters the ECPR Board of Directors will draft the budget for rec and the voters will vote on the budget in April 2017. ECPR will be in effect 7/1/17.

Appreciation for the work and effort put forth by the RGSC was expressed by the assemblage.

2. Comments from the boards
Sue Cook, Essex Selectboard, opined the view of the pros and cons is subjective, for example “independent budget” and “potential administrative costs” when the administrative costs are known. Lori Houghton said the independent budget was viewed as a positive by the committee based on the survey, public participation, and the data at hand. At the time the decision was made the administrative costs were not known. Sue Cook suggested the presentation be updated to be current (i.e. reflect known administrative costs). Elaine Sopchak pointed out EJRP budget is already voted separately by the villagers so the process exists and is well received.

Marla Durham, Prudential Committee, suggested there should be information on the voice vote on the municipal budgets for the village and town being decided by only a small number of voters attending the annual meeting versus the ballot vote on EJRP that has many hundreds of votes.

George Tyler, Village President, said it is understandable the December 13th vote might be confusing, but there is a section of the village for federal and state elections that are considered part of the town (for local elections that section of the village is not considered part of the town) so there would be voters from that section of the village having to go to both places to vote or have a special section for them to vote. Also, there is a timing issue with the absentee votes and if the warning is not heeded then the vote could be contested. The decision for the vote in December was made outside the RGSC which wanted the vote in November.

Irene Wrenner, Essex Selectboard, said the vote could be held in November with a separate voting section and a separate voter checklist and the ballots put in a lockbox, but someone decided this would not be the preferred approach or the preferred date. Brad Luck noted the complication is the local ballot being sent out after the presidential election. Information on the voting issue was known and discussed on June 22, 2016. Irene Wrenner said the issue is only about the board seats themselves otherwise the vote could be held in November for the rec special tax district, and should be as there are more people at the polls. The matter was not pursued hard enough. Ms. Wrenner said she found out on September 20th that it is not impossible to make it work. Max Levy said no one liked the December 13th vote, but did not want to take the chance of a contested election. Irene Wrenner said in her experience on merger votes the village went strongly one way or another. Ms. Wrenner said she does not think the rec vote would have been so critical that it would have been contested.
Andy Watts questioned if a Rec Advisory Council is really needed since there is a five member board. Jason DiRosa said having the advisory council will be a decision of the ECPR Board of Directors. Marla Durham said the Rec Advisory Council for EJRP has been advantageous to the Prudential Committee because there were other community members who saw things the Prudential Committee did not. The volunteerism for the annual Easter egg hunt is from the Rec Advisory Council. Dan Kerin added there were young people on the advisory committee who actually participated in the rec programs which was useful. Lori Houghton stressed there is real value to having youth representatives on the advisory council. Jason DiRosa pointed out the advisory council meets with the Rec Director, not the Prudential Committee (so it is not a second tier of oversight).

Sue Cook asked when service equity and expansion from the village to more community centered will be addressed. Lori Houghton stated that was not the charge of the RGSC. George Tyler said it is envisioned the ECPR Board of Directors will do this type of planning. Sue Cook asked if program expansion, such as the childcare program, will be addressed before the vote. Erika Baldasaro said the intention is to expand the program. Jason DiRosa added the goal is for all programs to be equitable. Programs that are not school specific will have equal access. Patrick Murray stated the Transition Team should be focusing on expansion of programs.

Mike Plageman asked if town staff will have input on who will handle what duties within the rec department. Brad Luck listed the individuals from the rec departments, town staff, CCSU and village staff who have been discussing the actual operation of ECPR. Mr. Plageman commented the town is doing ¾ already in some shape or another.

Andy Watts asked who decided on the change in the term of the agreement for a union municipal district from three years to five years. Max Levy said the community does not have to wait five years to dissolve the district, but it takes more board voting and agreement to do this. After five years then the Board of Directors can make the decision. There was suggestion to go to seven years for stability purposes, but it was felt five years is a good number.

Andy Watts asked why the library was dropped from the discussion. Members of the RGSC stated the library was too far outside the scope of work of the study committee. Jason DiRosa noted the framework allows other services, such as the library, to be added in the future. Brad Luck stated Vermont has complex laws surrounding libraries. There has been no legal opinion on whether the library could be included. The senior center and farmers market do not have the same complex laws. Sue Cook commented the library is filling the same kind of roles as rec, same program constituents. Christine Packard stated there are communities with library as part of rec. George Tyler commented the Village Trustees often struggle with committees doing this event or that event so having the rec department handle events would be welcomed.

Marla Durham asked if there were questions from the public on what is meant by “equal ground” listed under the pros for ECPR. Betzi Bilodeau said there was only a question on
where the office would be located. Jason DiRosa said “equal ground” means one community for the district and everyone treated the same with no difference in user fees. Ally Vile added EPR will not become EJRP or vice versa, but a new team will be formed using parts from each that work the best.

Michael Plageman asked for an explanation of “program access”. Lori Houghton said program access means user fees will go away. Space issues have to be worked out for programs.

Andy Watts asked if non-user fees will be in a special fund. Brad Luck said non-resident fees currently go into an enhancement fund that is used for scholarships for village residents and enhancements to the park. With ECPR there may be an amount of money for scholarships, but not enhancements which will have to be in the capital or operating budgets.

Irene Wrenner mentioned wording in the agreement that needs clarification (tax equity between the town outside the village) and that there is no #21 in the agreement. Brad Luck said the Agreement contains the final language approved by the Attorney General.

3. Status Report on Transition Work
Covered in the presentation given by the RGSC.

4. RGSC Date to Dissolve
Mike Smith stated the RGSC expected to dissolve after providing the recommendation on the rec departments, but found the need to remain as a group to pull together information and hold public forums. Budgeting numbers and details on ECPR continue to evolve. RGSC suggests staying intact until after the vote in December.

Marla Durham said the RED Committee had a core group that remained and attended all the public forums to answer questions.

George Tyler spoke in support of keeping the committee as an information source until after the vote. Andy Watts concurred. Mike Plageman said the presentation is changing as more information is available so the group must continue.

Sue Cook asked if there is a way for others to get involved with the committee for diversity of thought. Andy Watts pointed out all meetings are open to the public for comment. Max Levy said RGSC cannot appoint a committee or new members. Lori Houghton said the questions that are being asked by the public necessitate knowledge of being on the committee from the start to answer. All the meetings are open and there have been public forums and input throughout the entire process. Sue Cook agreed there is value in continuity, but said it feels as if there is some exclusion if others are not allowed to join. Max Levy reiterated others cannot join the committee, but can give input. Andrew Brown added there is a defined number of people on the committee and work is still being done by the members. Lori Houghton stated the committee is not changing the decision, but simply providing information on the decision.
Irene Wrenner stated per the statute as to what the committee was held to do the work is now done and the committee should dissolve. If the committee is to continue using town resources then the membership should be opened up to others to be involved. Mike Plageman said someone intimately familiar with the information that went into the decision needs to be in charge in order to answer question. People outside the committee can come to the meetings and give input. Marla Durham pointed out the committee has been taking questions and providing answers. The information is posted on the website. People have access to the information without having to attend the meetings. George Tyler observed people opposed to the recommendation have had ample opportunity to have a voice. Dialogue has been robust and tolerant.

The consensus of both the Selectboard and the Trustees is the RGSC should continue.

5. Transfer of EJRP to Village Government
George Tyler explained if there is a “no” vote on forming ECPR the village government has offered to take EJRP because the unified union school district was not enthusiastic about taking on the rec department and there is not time to enter into negotiations for another option.

Marla Durham explained the unified union school board does not feel their business is parks and recreation because their mission is to educate students. There would have to be a unification with Westford rec if the school district assumed EJRP all while trying to unify the school district. The Prudential Committee also has to figure out the complexities of the Saxon Hill property that is owned by the school district and leased to the town.

There was discussion of the agreement between the village and the Prudential Committee for EJRP and when that dissolves where EJRP will be. George Tyler noted if the independent rec district (ECPR) is created the Trustees and the Prudential Committee bow out of overseeing EJRP after the agreement is established with the new entity. No matter what the outcome of the vote on ECPR the village and Prudential Committee must make a decision on EJRP. Andy Watts said if there is not an automatic transfer then discussion, negotiation, and signatures are needed.

Sue Cook questioned the statement by the Trustees about not pursuing consolidation of the rec departments if the vote is “no” on forming ECPR. George Tyler said the issue is not wanting to put the rec staff and people who depend on the services of the rec program through one transition after another. Lori Houghton added people who use the childcare service are on edge and want to know there is stability with the program. Sue Cook advised the voters should feel if the rec option is not supported then the opportunity to benefit from a unified rec department is not totally off the table. George Tyler assured the Trustees are trying to depoliticize the matter as much as possible. The vote is an opportunity for the town and village to take a big step ahead on consolidation. Sue Cook asked if the rec issue got reprioritized because of the school vote. George Tyler said reason is because many people depended on the services offered by the rec program.
6. Tax Equalization Phase-In Plan
George Tyler explained if the vote passes the voters in the town-outside-the-village will have a fairly significant tax increase in one year. The village is proposing a plan to ease that impact using the total revenues people in the village pay toward rec presently by having the decrease the village taxpayers would see in their taxes to be in five smaller increments rather than one large amount. Details of the tax collection would have to be worked out. The Trustees would support this legislatively.

Jason DiRosa pointed out every village resident is a member of EJRP and also pays for EPR. When the new rec district (ECPR) is formed all are paying the same, village and town. With the phased-in plan the villagers would be paying more and not receiving an added benefit which does not support the goal of the new rec district to be equitable with equal access.

Max Levy said the ECPR Board of Directors can make the decision and the Trustees can enable the plan to be invoked.

Marla Durham said in the spirit of cooperation it is hoped people will understand down the road there is savings and benefit for both the village and town.

Lori Houghton said there has been positive feedback from people in the village who understand the need for a gradual change.

Sue Cook said the issue is service equity and tax equity.

Andy Watts asked if the legal questions have been asked. Pat Scheidel said legal counsel has been consulted, but answers have not yet been received. A general consensus on the phase-in plan is needed for budget preparation purposes. A plan is needed prior to the vote so everyone agrees that is part of the budget. Andy Watts said he wants assurance the phasing is legal and implementable. People should not be given the false impression that the phasing will be done.

Elaine Sopchak stated all the consolidation efforts are benefiting village residents because the goal is tax equity. When the consolidation is complete will be the time when all are paying equal taxes for services.

Following further discussion there was agreement the RGSC presentation should include information on the implications of having the phase-in and not having the phase-in, showing numbers in both circumstances. Any other options should also be considered. Pat Scheidel said any additional information will be available at the next public forum.

3. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
John Sheppard, 55 Greenfield Road, Essex, mentioned the grand list being larger in the town than the village so the town will pay more. Doug Fisher explained the grand list in
the village is 10.8 million and the grand list for the town-outside-the-village is 14 million for a total of 24.8 million. The town will pay more.

Paul Austin, Essex, stated “in the spirit of consolidation” suggests being against consolidation if you vote against the recommendation for rec which is not right. Also, if there is consolidation there should be tax equity, but think carefully about the consequences because if programs have to be expanded taxes will increase.

Robert Bates, Essex (outside the village), said it makes no sense to hold an election in mid-December 12 days before Christmas in the snowiest month of the year. This breeds conspiracy theories and a credibility issue. Perception becomes reality. Holding the election in November was said to be illegal, but now is said to be legal. The information should have been known first. Again, this is a credibility issue. The resolution by the Trustees says in the event of a “no” vote no further efforts to consolidate the rec departments will be pursued. People are concerned about getting the entire story. The vote seems rushed and should be held at town meeting. Members of the committee have “citizen blinder syndrome” and do not hear or see any other possibilities. Marla Durham noted the unified school district budget was based on assumptions and estimation because there were so many unknowns before the vote. Also, the resolution says further consolidation effort will not be pursued “at this time”, but “may pursue consolidation with other municipalities…” which could include the Town of Essex.

Saramichelle Stultz, village and town resident, referred to her letter to the Selectboard, noting some of the letter will be published in the Essex Reporter as well. Ms. Stultz spoke in support of the union municipal district because there would be more equal representation for both communities, there would be one budget, one elected board, and more inclusiveness. The December vote is right. The time is right. The issue is here. People are talking. The committee wanted a November vote, but there was too much to do. The vote is not being staged at an odd time to impact voter turnout. There was risk with the November vote and the timing would not have allowed community discussion. The community has been waiting since 2006 to do this so it is not rushed. The momentum is happening now. If the departments had merged in 2006 money, resources, and time would have been saved. Time, money and resources should not be further wasted. The vote in December should move forward. Regarding the phase-in, it is acceptable to pay a portion, but keep in mind the villagers will be paying off the pool bond and sharing the pool with town residents.

Paula DeMichele, town resident who also lived in the village, said people in the village and town are confused as to why the village cannot make rec a department or merge with the town rec department. The matter feels rushed. Voting at Christmas time is insane and will have a low turnout. Thoughtful Growth in Action group worked differently by getting out information in the beginning. Ms. DeMichele spoke against the vote in December.

Bridget Meyer, former town resident and now a village resident and land owner in the town, asked how long the RED Committee met before the schools were unified. Marla
Durham said the committee met from March to the end of June. The meetings finished on time or early, but committee members put in lots of time on weeknights and weekends outside of meetings. Bridge Meyer asked the amount of the school budget. Judy DeNova said $56 million. Bridget Meyer pointed out the RGSC began in April and has not rushed the decision. Other states have unified rec districts that can be researched so the idea is not unknown.

Irene Wrenner asked if there was an incentive from the state to merge the school districts. Judy DeNova said the district qualified for two $150,000 grants and opportunity for tax incentives to help with the transition (10 cents the first year decreasing by two cents each year thereafter for five years). Irene Wrenner observed the math changes if there are state incentives. Ms. Wrenner said the RED Committee had one option and answered 20 questions. Marla Durham clarified the committee had two options that were complex. An attorney was present at every meeting. Judy DeNova added Act 46 was passed and allowed the creation of the unified union rather than a regional education district. Irene Wrenner observed the RED Committee looked at two options and the RGSC looked at seven option, but spent less than three hours learning about each option before making a decision. Sue Cook pointed out the RED Committee had the benefit of a facilitator. Perhaps it was a disservice not to have a facilitator for the RGSC meetings.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The RGSC meeting adjourned at 9:48 PM.

RScty: M.E.Riordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC FORUM
MINUTES
ESSEX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ESSEX, VERMONT
October 13, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Smith (Chair); Jason DiRosa, Kim Maiberger, Max Levy, Betzi Bilodeau, Lori Houghton, Erika Baldasaro

MEMBERS ABSENT: Raj Chawla, Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher.

ADMINISTRATION: Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec; Brad Luck, EJRP.

OTHERS PRESENT: Marc Wennberg, John Sheppard, Irene Wrenner, John Larkin, J. Thomas, Jerry Fox, John Harnish, George Dunbar, Wendy Johnson, Dan Johnson, Kristin Romick, David Foster, Kay Maloney, Matt Vile, Greg Bostock, Annie Cooper.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:21 PM. Introductions were done. Meeting moderator, Marc Wennberg, was introduced and explained the process to be followed at the meeting. Mr. Wennberg stressed having a respectful gathering to hear information and to have the opportunity to be heard.

2. PUBLIC FORUM
PRESENTATION
A video was viewed on how the two rec departments presently operate. A presentation was given on how the study committee was formed and developed the recommendation to establish a union municipal district called “Essex Community Parks & Recreation” (ECPR) that combines EJRP and EPR. Seven different governance models were evaluated before making the selection for a union municipal district. Articles of agreement were drafted which had to be approved by the Vermont Attorney General and which provide the framework for ECPR. The vote on December 13, 2016 is to decide whether or not to enter into the agreement and form ECPR.

Advantages to forming ECPR were noted:
- Independent budget voted by Australian ballot in April of each year concurrent with the school budget vote as has been done with EJRP and was suggested by the study group.
- Unites community recreation.
- Allows both rec departments and in turn the two communities to come together on equal ground.
- Provides long-term stability.
- Another step forward in tax equity in the community.
- Provides increased transparency with all operations of ECPR, which is overseen by a five member Board of Directors.
Disadvantages to forming ECPR were noted:

- Two small departments are combined into one large department.
- Realizing tax equity will result in an increase for town-outside-the-village taxpayers.
- Adds another elected board and government entity to the community.
- Potential additional administrative costs as two departments move to one independent department.

The five member Board of Directors for ECPR initially will have one Selectboard appointee, one Trustee appointee, one Essex Junction resident, one town-outside-the-village resident, and one at-large resident. Subsequent boards will be five elected at large members. An Executive Director will be hired to oversee operations and appoint a Treasurer. There will be an annual independent financial audit. The budget will be approved by Australian ballot vote. There is the possibility of a Rec Advisory Council.

The Transition Team made up of members of the rec departments, school district, and municipal staff have the goal of creating a seamless transition if the vote passes. The team has been researching and getting answers and wants to ensure existing services are maintained or enhanced. The Transition Team is recommending:

- ECPR handling daily receipts, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and HR.
- Essex Town will provide the Treasurer, check signing, accounting and audit, tax collection, and elections.
- A 3rd party provider will handle payroll, IT support, and legal support.
- Lands and buildings will be leased to ECPR for $1/year and the village and town will retain ownership. ECPR will insure the properties and buildings and name the village and town as “additional insured”.
- ECPR will maintain the spaces and provide capital asset and equipment replacement.
- Parks and rec supplies and equipment purchased by the rec departments will transfer to ECPR and be used by rec staff. ECPR will insure and provide future replacement and maintenance.
- Capital reserves related to parks and rec held by the town will be retained, but the rec district may submit a request for use of the funds. Requests must be authorized by the Selectboard.
- The estimated budget assumes growth of 1% in the grand list, the village assuming debt relief payments on the Maple Street bond, the village proposal to phase out additional tax support for ECPR over five years to ease the burden on the town, and the village no longer budgeting for the block party, farmers market, and train hop.
- The estimate of tax impact of ECPR on a $280,000 house for a resident in the town-outside-the-village is $16 (from $87 to $103). Village residents will see a tax decrease of $11 (from $280 to $269).
- Decisions need to be made if ECPR is formed on a plan for program access, enhancements or changes, finalization of the budget for the April 2017 vote, and agreements related to village and town rec assets.
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
Public Forum
MINUTES – October 13, 2016

- A “yes” vote from Essex at large and the Village of Essex Junction means ECPR is created, members of the Board of Directors are concurrently elected, and the Transition Team continues to work to merge the two rec departments.
- A “no” vote from either Essex at large or the Village of Essex Junction means the Prudential Committee will work with the Village Trustees to transition EJRP to the Village municipality. EPR will stay under the Town municipality.

The complexities of holding a national, state and local election in our community on the same day presented a strong likelihood that the vote would be contested. Thus, the November vote for the local election gave way to a December timeframe. Since a vote is needed before year end to allow all parties to develop budgets for the coming year knowing where recreation will live so Town Selectboard & Village Trustees may warn the special election vote for Dec 13, 2016. Petitions for the ECPR Board of Directors now available and due to the Town Clerk by 11/7/16. If the vote is warned then the village and town can vote on ECPR and the Board of Directors via absentee ballot starting 11/23/16 or at the polls on 12/13/16. If ECPR is created then the vote on the budget will be in April 2017 with ECPR in effect 7/1/17.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
1. Why is RGSC still involved now that the recommendation has been presented?
   - Answer: RGSC will continue to disseminate information about the recommendation and will continue to discuss issues.

2. Where has the money gone that was already paid in taxes to the town for rec?
   - Answer: Funding that has been put aside for rec will remain with the town. The new rec district can request funding which must be approved by the Selectboard.

3. Will a bond pay for a new senior center and will that negate the ability to vote out the rec district in five years?
   - Answer: There is nothing in the works except fund raising for the senior center. The employee paid to operate the senior center is through the rec department and will move to the new rec location. If there is a bond for the senior center that would be under the village and the voters would vote on it.

4. Can more insight be given as to the composition and mission of the Essex Governance Committee?
   - Answer: The composition of the EGG membership would have to be researched, but the committee came up with four recommendations and one was consolidating voting. RGSC is creating new voting, but is suggesting to combine it with voting that is already taking place.

5. What does a resident of the town-outside-the-village get out of this?
   - Answer: A robust, combined rec department with more direct oversight and a separate vote on the budget by Australian ballot as well as resident access to all programs. Also, young people participating in the combined rec program makes combining when they get to high school easier.

6. What are the pros and cons of the other possibilities that were explored?
7. What are the specific drawbacks to the special tax district?
   - Answer: Each option had pluses and minuses. Combining the departments and having shared services was felt to be the best choice. The union municipal district united rec under one umbrella rather than trying to fit one department into the other and department staff are starting on common ground with one budget that is independent of the municipalities and schools and voted by Australian ballot. The budget is the sole responsibility of the rec department. Both communities are passionate about their rec department so rather than having one feeling like they are giving up their department it was felt best to combine both into one new department.

8. What can residents do to stop the proposed vote?
   - Answer: The Selectboard at the November 7th meeting and the Trustees at the November 8th meeting will be discussing whether to warn the vote on December 13, 2016. Input/comment can be given at either meeting.

9. Why does the Prudential Committee have to go away and not continue to perform the function with EJRP?
   - Answer: The unified school district combined school boards including the Prudential Committee. The charter for the Prudential Committee was to focus on the school district, but in the 1970s EJRP was added to the mission at the request of the Board of Trustees at that time. The services the Prudential Committee received were from CCSU and CCSU is also going away in light of the unified school district so the support that was provided is going away.

10. Is the childcare provided by the YMCA by the town in the schools licensed?
    - Answer: Yes.

11. When does the legislature get involved in the process if at all?
    - Answer: On November 7th and 8th the Selectboard and Trustees will decide respectively on whether to warn the vote. The agreement was approved by the Attorney General. The state legislature will only get involved if the new rec board wants a charter.

12. Why can’t user fees be implemented to keep taxes the same for both?
    - Answer: User fees with EPR give money to the department and pay for the expenses of the program.

13. Is the licensed childcare provided by EJRP self-funded or supported by tax dollars?
    - Answer: Revenues and expenses for the licensed childcare fall under one budget code for EJRP and employees, supplies, and equipment come out of that so it is not funded by the taxpayers. There are some other services that other childcare programs utilize (i.e. time from the Rec Director and Finance) and these people and functions are paid by other user fees or tax money.

14. Explain the financial numbers.
15. What increases or decreases will happen after the first five years?
   • Answer: This is not known. It will be up to the new board for the rec district and the voters to decide the budget.

16. Who pays for fireworks now and in the future?
   • Answer: EJRP pays for fireworks now. The new rec district will pay if it is created.

17. Is there an example of a rec service that will be enhanced with the new rec district?
   • Answer: It is hoped the licensed childcare would become a district program housed in the Essex town schools and the extended after school program, enrichment programs would expand to village school locations creating more options as one community. The two department come together now several times a year in collaborative events that are free or for a small charge to the community. If there is one unit it would be smoother to provide these services.

18. Why is it a bad idea for the Selectboard to have the rec department budget as is done with roads?
   • Answer: It is not a bad idea, but having the rec budget by itself means if more money is needed then the voters decide.

19. How much is assumed for increased insurance costs?
   • Answer: The insurance currently paid for each rec department was combined. If the new rec district is formed then formal quotes for insurance will be needed.

20. Why not choose to put the two rec departments under one municipality of Essex?
   • Answer: The option was reviewed, but not chosen.

21. How much additional administrative costs will be contracted compared to current expenses?
   • Answer: IT, payroll, finance, legal, and insurance are estimated at $127,000 in the FY’18 budget. Other services and support in FY’17 were $130,000 (assessment for CCSU, IT, legal, insurance, some maintenance).

22. How can the rec district be covered by VLCT for insurance purposes if not part of the municipality?
   • Answer: VLCT is where the town and village get their insurance (PACIF). The town and village pay a membership fee. The union municipal district can be an associate member of VLCT and use PACIF or seek insurance coverage elsewhere through a commercial entity that provides insurance coverage for municipalities.

23. Do Essex Junction residents get a vote as a village resident and a town resident on the question of a special tax district?
   • Answer: One ballot will be available to residents of Essex Junction asking whether to enter into a union municipal district known as Essex Community Parks and Recreation (ECPR). Another ballot will be available to all residents of the town which includes village residents with
the same question. Each ballot (the one from the village residents and the one from the town residents including residents in the village) will be tallied separately and ECPR will only be formed if both ballots have more “yes” votes than “no” votes.

24. How will the rec district expand programming given limited resources, for example the pool on a hot day?
   - Answer: Maple Street pool has a capacity like all the programs. As demand exceeds supply staff tries to find more supply and has expanded many programs. The pool does exceed capacity and people have to wait. Membership holders are allowed into the pool 15 minutes before the general public. Staff would watch and see if there is need to expand the pool area.

25. If the municipality retains the land and buildings what is the need for the bond?
   - Answer: RGSC has not discussed this. The new rec board and the voters would decide on the bond.

26. If the rec district is passed how can it be terminated in four years if that is what the people decide?
   - Answer: The agreement specifies that prior to five years the rec board needs the Selectboard and Trustees to vote in the affirmative to dissolve the district and prepare a plan of dissolution to present to the voters. After five years the new rec board can decide. After five years a petition with 5% of the voters can be done to ask for a plan of dissolution to go to the voters.

27. Can more be charged for program fees so taxpayers are not taxed for the administrative costs?
   - Answer: The rec fee pays for expenses so tax money is not used. Fees are increased every few years, but not to price people out of the program and have them go elsewhere. The communities for the last 45 years have clearly demonstrated support for rec as a community value and have invested in what is valued. With EJRP the people invest $700,000 and the department generates $1.5 million in revenues. Percentages as a department far exceed the national average in terms of tax revenue supporting the department and the amount of revenues from user fees that support the programs. The residents want user fees to pay for services, but do provide a baseline so the rec offices can exist.

28. Why wasn’t the PU matrix used to present the overall option?
   - Answer: There are lots of decision making models out there and the “pro and con” model was chosen.

29. Why is it necessary to go to the extreme to form a separate municipality to accomplish this task?
   - Answer: There are many pros with a union municipal district including one department not merging into the other and all are on equal ground. There are many communities with recreation as a separate district. Rec is not something that has to be run out of a municipality.

30. In the early 1970s rec activities were started for the village and town. When and why were the two departments formed?
Answer: In 1970 the Board of Trustees hired the first rec director and in 1971 asked the Prudential Committee to take over operations of the rec department. In 1978 the town hired their first rec director. The history of the establishment of the rec departments will be further researched.

There were no further questions or comments. Information will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

3. OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD

John Larkin, town resident, commented if it is not a bad idea to have the Selectboard balance budgetary priorities then why is it listed as one of the pros to have an independent budget.

A gentleman in the audience who said he is an urban guy stated the place is too small to have two governments and there is no need for three governments.

Kay Maloney, former village resident and now a town resident, thanked the committee for the hard work and time, adding the presentation and information is much more polished with each public forum.

George Dunbar, village resident, said he is leaning toward not accepting the new district because there are two organizations with budgets and the proposal is to set up another separate entity with a budget. Mr. Dunbar said he sees this as a setback.

Annie Cooper, former town resident and now a village resident, said she has worked collaboratively with both departments and as a village resident sees collaboration of the two rec departments as a move toward something more, stronger, better, something more Essex. The level of professionalism in answering all the varied questions is appreciated.

John Harnish, village resident, said there are a total of 16 full time positions involved. Mr. Harnish said in his professional career he worked on mergers and not once had a solution that cost more to put two entities together. Mr. Harnish said he has not been convinced the option for a special tax district is better than going under the municipality where a lot of the costs would go away, the tax savings for the people in Essex Junction would be greater, and there would be less of an increase for residents in the town-outside-the-village by not adding costs that do not make for a nicer rec department.

Wendy Johnson, town employee and village resident, made positive comment on both rec departments and was confident the departments will work together.

A gentleman in the audience expressed appreciation to both rec departments and said he is hearing that the direction being taken is because there is no leadership to merge the two departments. This kind of leadership needs to be found to avoid creating three municipalities.
There were no further comments. The next public forum is on 10/18/16 at Fleming School beginning at 6:15 PM.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 7:44PM.

RScty: MERiordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
JOINT MUNICIPAL SURVEY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
FLEMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ESSEX JUNCTION, VERMONT
October 18, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Smith (Chair); Jason DiRosa, Kim Maiberger, Max Levy, Raj Chawla, Lori Houghton, Erika Baldasaro
MEMBERS ABSENT: Betzi Bilodeau, Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher.
ADMINISTRATION: Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec; Brad Luck, EJRP.
OTHERS PRESENT: Marc Wennberg, Judy Dow, Darryl Koch, Paula Rose, Deb Carlin, Adam Sollace, Samantha Quinn, Damon Clark, Dawn McGinnis, Mitch Lefevre, Casey Carmolli, Amy Lefevre, Darcy Brouillette, Kay Maloney, Allison Wermer.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:16 PM. Introductions were done. Meeting moderator, Marc Wennberg, was introduced.

2. PUBLIC FORUM
Marc Wennberg explained the process to be followed at the meeting and stressed having a respectful gathering to hear information and to have the opportunity to be heard.

A video was viewed on how the two rec departments presently operate. A presentation was given on how the study committee was formed and developed the recommendation to establish a union municipal district called “Essex Community Parks & Recreation” (ECPR) that combines EJRP and EPR. Seven different governance models were evaluated before making the selection for a union municipal district. Articles of agreement were drafted which had to be approved by the Vermont Attorney General and which provide the framework for ECPR. The vote on December 13, 2016 is to decide whether or not to enter into the agreement and form ECPR.

Advantages to forming ECPR were noted:
- Independent budget voted by Australian ballot in April of each year concurrent with the school budget vote as has been done with EJRP and was suggested by the study group.
- Unites community recreation.
- Allows both rec departments and in turn the two communities to come together on equal ground.
- Provides long-term stability.
- Another step forward in tax equity in the community.
- Provides increased transparency with all operations of ECPR, which is overseen by a five member Board of Directors.

Disadvantages to forming ECPR were noted:
Two small departments are combined into one large department.
Realizing tax equity will result in an increase for town-outside-the-village taxpayers.
Adds another elected board and government entity to the community.
Potential additional administrative costs as two departments move to one independent department.

The five member Board of Directors for ECPR initially will have one Selectboard appointee, one Trustee appointee, one Essex Junction resident, one town-outside-the-village resident, and one at-large resident. Subsequent boards will be five elected at large members. An Executive Director will be hired to oversee operations and appoint a Treasurer. There will be an annual independent financial audit. The budget will be approved by Australian ballot vote. There is the possibility of a Rec Advisory Council.

The Transition Team made up of members of the rec departments, school district, and municipal staff have the goal of creating a seamless transition if the vote passes. The team has been researching and getting answers and wants to ensure existing services are maintained or enhanced. The Transition Team is recommending:
- ECPR handling daily receipts, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and HR.
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- Lands and buildings will be leased to ECPR for $1/year and the village and town will retain ownership. ECPR will insure the properties and buildings and name the village and town as “additional insured”.
- ECPR will maintain the spaces and provide capital asset and equipment replacement.
- Parks and rec supplies and equipment purchased by the rec departments will transfer to ECPR and be used by rec staff. ECPR will insure and provide future replacement and maintenance.
- Capital reserves related to parks and rec held by the town will be retained, but the rec district may submit a request for use of the funds. Requests must be authorized by the Selectboard.
- The estimated budget assumes growth of 1% in the grand list, the village assuming debt relief payments on the Maple Street bond, the village proposal to phase out additional tax support for ECPR over five years to ease the burden on the town, and the village no longer budgeting for the block party, farmers market, and train hop.
- The estimate of tax impact of ECPR on a $280,000 house for a resident in the town-outside-the-village is $16 (from $87 to $103). Village residents will see a tax decrease of $11 (from $280 to $269).
- Decisions need to be made if ECPR is formed on a plan for program access, enhancements or changes, finalization of the budget for the April 2017 vote, and agreements related to village and town rec assets.
A “yes” vote from Essex at large and the Village of Essex Junction means ECPR is created, members of the Board of Directors are concurrently elected, and the Transition Team continues to work to merge the two rec departments. A “no” vote from either Essex at large or the Village of Essex Junction means the Prudential Committee will work with the Village Trustees to transition EJRP to the Village municipality. EPR will stay under the Town municipality.

The complexities of holding a national, state and local election in our community on the same day presented a strong likelihood that the vote would be contested. Thus, the November vote for the local election gave way to a December timeframe. Since a vote is needed before year end to allow all parties to develop budgets for the coming year knowing where recreation will live so Town Selectboard & Village Trustees may warn the special election vote for Dec 13, 2016. Petitions for the ECPR Board of Directors now available and due to the Town Clerk by 11/7/16. If the vote is warned then the village and town can vote on ECPR and the Board of Directors via absentee ballot starting 11/23/16 or at the polls on 12/13/16. If ECPR is created then the vote on the budget will be in April 2017 with ECPR in effect 7/1/17.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Who will retain ownership of the parks with the merger?
   Answer: Each municipality will lease their parks to the new district for $1 per year. The village will retain ownership of the village parks and the town will retain ownership of the town parks.

2. Are there any examples of how a service will be enhanced?
   Answer: The licensed childcare that happens with ECPR as a whole and enrichment programs in the town added to village schools are examples. As well co-sponsored community events would be done as one.

3. Are the additional administrative costs made public?
   Answer: For services such as IT, payroll, finance, and legal the numbers are not yet public. It is hoped to have a line item budget posted soon. The numbers will be $24,000 for IT, $12,000 for payroll, $50,000 for finance, and $15,000 for legal for a total of $101,000.

4. Where are the answers to questions from the first meeting?
   Answer: www.essexrec.org and hardcopies are available at each meeting.

5. Will the current Rec Director become the Executive Director?
   Answer: Not necessarily. The new board voted on in December with the new rec district will conduct a search and hire the Executive Director.

6. What was the rate of growth of the grand list in the most recent year known?
   Answer: For the town the estimate is 1% growth though typically growth has been greater (1.5%). For budget purposes 1% is used. The village follows the same budgeting process.

7. Is information available that describes why the five consolidation options were rejected?
   Answer: The website (essexrec.org) in the FAQ section has information on the options.
8. Is it true that when people vote on the proposal the village resident vote counts as two to every one vote outside the village?
   - **Answer:** There are two ballots for the December 13th vote, one available only to residents of the Village of Essex Junction and one for all residents of the town including the village. Each ballot question is tallied separately and ECPR is formed only if both ballots have more “yes” votes than “no votes.

9. How much is the facilitator costing and how is that cost being paid?
   - **Answer:** Total cost for all the forums is $2,275 and the Essex Junction School District is covering the cost.

10. When will the decision to hold the vote take place?
    - **Answer:** Essex Selectboard will discuss warning the vote on December 13th at their meeting on November 7, 2016 and the Trustees will formalize their decision to put the vote on the ballot for December 13th at their November 8, 2016 meeting.

11. List some of the programs in the village that contribute to the $192 increase over the town and will these be maintained?
    - **Answer:** The $192 is the amount the average household pays in property taxes to support EJRP. The budget sheet shows total amount of tax dollars currently to support EJRP at $743,000. Property tax money is taxed off the grand list. The grand list in the village ($11 million) is smaller than the grand list in the town ($25.5 million) which means a larger tax base to generate tax money. Total amount of taxes is almost identical between the two rec departments, but they are taxed from two different grand lists.

12. What is the biggest downside to keeping the status quo?
    - **Answer:** There is no status quo for EJRP because the department has to go somewhere due to the formation of the unified union school district. If the vote is approved to form a union municipal rec district then that will move forward. If the vote is “no” then the Prudential Committee decides what to do and may engage the Trustees in deciding the future of EJRP.

13. Who is on the Rec Governance Committee?
    - **Answer:** Ten members with two from the Prudential Committee, one from the Board of Trustees, one from the Selectboard, and six members from the community (three from the village and three from the town-outside-the-village).

14. Explain why the town-inside-the-village has a tax increase of $1 in FY17 compared to $167 in FY18.
    - **Answer:** Payment of the last three years on the bond will transfer over to be paid by the village and no longer by EJRP because EJRP will not exist. Also, the Trustees publicly acknowledged to phase the tax implications of the formation of the rec district. In Year 1 that is five cents on the dollar. The village would collect the taxes to give to the rec district. Taxes for the rec district ($96) are the same for residents in the town-inside-the-village or outside-the-village. Taxation for those in the town-outside-the-village goes up slowly about $12/year and down for residents inside-the-village by $11 to $43 per year once the bond is paid off.
15. Why wasn’t there consolidation into one entity under town government?
   - Answer: The pros and cons list is on the website. Consolidating under one town government would have identified one rec department over the other. Also, EPR is not familiar with offering childcare services so that would be a difficult transition, and the budget is contained within the town operating budget and not as a separate article and is passed via voice vote by a much smaller portion of the population voting on the budget as compared to Australian ballot. In addition, village residents fought to have EJRP under the school district and not the local municipality so there is lack of community support for going under the town government.

16. Is it still an option to merge the two departments and have it administered under the Town of Essex?
   - Answer: If there is a “no” vote by one of the communities or the vote is not even warned then the decision falls on the Prudential Committee. The Trustees have agreed to take on the rec department and keep it as a separate, independent budget from the municipal budget, and try to keep it as an Australian ballot measure. If the vote fails the Trustees would not seek further consolidation efforts because this is a stressful process and lots of people rely on childcare and the after school programs so the Trustees want to ensure they have stability and staff has stability. The decision needs to work the first time.

17. What should motivate town taxpayers to support a merger when it will cost an increase in taxes?
   - Answer: A big part of the merger for residents of the town-outside-the-village is program access and no longer paying nonresident fees.

18. Since this is a merger why aren’t the administrative costs going down instead of increasing?
   - Answer: Currently EJRP is assessed by the school district for the services received. The amount paid for IT, payroll, finance, and legal in FY17 was $99,500. The amount to be paid in FY18 with the consolidated budget is $101,000. The money has been paid historically for the services, but won’t be paid to the school district any longer (the money will be paid to other entities that have been identified to provide the services).

19. Will the parks be retained?
   - Answer: The Transition Team talked about the town retaining town parks and the village retaining village parks, but both municipalities leasing the parks to the new district to use for $1 per year.

20. Will there be jobs lost with the merger?
   - Answer: The new board for the rec district will make the decision on staffing. There is no intention of anyone losing their job. There may be job titles that are similar, but the work needs to be done and there is no intention for that to happen with fewer people than there are today.

21. There is concern the Y program will be lost with the merger.
   - Answer: After school licensed childcare in the village is provided by EJRP. The same childcare is provided by the YMCA in the town schools. At this point the unified union school district has indicated that they will at
least continue the program into next school year, but it is not certain how the Superintendent or the school board will address this in the future. From discussions that have been held it would make sense with one school district serving all that there be one after school provider so there is one place to call and one place to pay the bill and one place to work with for the extended day and enrichment programs. It is reinvesting back into the community. There has been no discussion as yet with the union school board and the YMCA. Regarding equity, the program pricing for the town after school YMCA program five days a week is $478 more than those in the village who go to the childcare program five days a week.

22. The village is paying for the train hop and farmers market. What is covered in the town?
   - Answer: Today the train hop, farmers market, and block party are in the village budget paid by Essex Junction residents, not town residents. The Trustees have discussed whether the municipality should or should not be responsible for these community events. If the rec district board agrees then the budget for those three events would be moved to the new rec district so the cost is shared by all and the rec district would facilitate the events. EPR budget includes $7,500 for the Memorial Day Parade. This also would fall under the same community events bracket.

23. Essex Town school district contributes revenue for after school and summer programs, but where is that shown in the rec budget?
   - Answer: EPR has an agreement for a secondary priority with Essex Town school district in using the facilities. EPR does not pay a facilities fee to use the space during the week, but does pay for weekend use. All the programs are self-sustaining from program money that is collected. Both rec departments have the agreement with the two school districts. There is nothing wrong with the Y program. There just has not been discussion with the unified union school board on the transition, but interest has been indicated in that opportunity. Finances related to the school budget are not shown in the budget numbers. The parks and rec budget and municipal services are shown.

24. Will the school budget go down since rec costs are moving?
   - Answer: It is confusing because the rec district in the junction falls under the auspices of the school district. The budget is separate and taxed on the municipal property tax. School finances work differently. There are rebates and income sensitivity guidelines and other things that do not apply to rec taxes in the village. The rec taxes are like municipal taxes and based on the assessed value of property. There are no rebates, pre-bates, or income sensitivity. The school will lose some of the revenue paid by EJRP to the school district (some direct costs that will go away and some indirect costs that will still exist). The schools are also discussing unifying next year so there is a whole lot going on. The school district will lose the revenue stream from EJRP because they are no longer providing the services.
25. How will the town assist the tax loss for low incomes when budgets are no longer covered under school budgets so there are no longer the tax rebates?
   - Answer: Pre-bates and income sensitivity comes off school taxes. Many people take advantage of that. Rec dollars, after school dollars, summer camp dollars do not factor into that. For a licensed childcare provider like EJRP and the Y there is childcare resource money that families can apply for which are completely separate from school property taxes, rebates, pre-bates. A pre-bate should one be received for property taxes related to schools should not be impacted, but there is no support from the district budgets of EJRP or EPR. The answer will be further researched and clarified and then posted on the website.

26. What is the compelling answer to the downside for keeping the status quo?
   - Answer: The status quo of EJRP under the school is not a possibility because the Prudential Committee will not be in existence as of July 2017 and that is the governing body for EJRP.

27. What is the largest expense line in the EJRP budget today?
   - Answer: Salaries and wages.

28. Why are people against the proposal and where is the opposition coming from when it seems like a win-win situation?
   - Answer: Those who oppose the proposal need to be asked. RGSC feels the proposal is good and that is why the recommendation was made.

29. The list of questions submitted to the Selectboard in a document dated 9/6/16 will be addressed and the answers posted on the website.

There were no further questions or comments. Information will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

3. OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD
Amy Lefevre, village resident, thanked the committee for the work that has been done. Ms. Lefevre noted she has children in the rec programs and knows Brad Luck and Ally Vile well and thinks consolidating makes sense. Ms. Lefevre said she is glad to hear there are no job losses and excited to hear programs will be continued and enhanced.

Darryl Koch, resident of the town-outside-the-village, spoke in support of both rec departments and is looking forward to the enhancements that will occur with the merger of the two groups. Mr. Koch said it will be a “tough sell” for residents of the town-outside-the-village seeing their assessment for parks and rec almost doubling so everyone is urged to “sell” the enhancements.

There were no further comments. The next public forum is on 11/16/16.

4. ADJOURNMENT
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 7:30PM.
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Municipal Survey Committee

Meeting Minutes: November 3, 2016

Essex Town Offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT

RGSC Present: Michael Smith, Jason DiRosa, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldassaro, Betzi Bilodeau, Raj Chawla, Andy Watts (SB alternate), Lori Houghton

RGSC Absent: Max Levy, Theresa Fletcher, Christine Packard

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec

Others present: John Sheppard, Dylan Giambatista, Irene Wrenner

Call to Order: Michael Smith called meeting to order at 7:34pm

Agenda additions or changes: None

Public to be heard: None

Approval of recent meeting/forum minutes:

Amendments: Members went through for small corrections:

- Sept. 28 (forum @ EMS): Mary & Evan MacEwan’s names was misspelled on a few pages. Page 2 paragraph “The five member board...” had a misspelling that reoccurred on each set of minutes reviewed.
- Sept. 29 (forum @ ADL): Page 2 paragraph
- Oct. 6 (RGSC mtg): None
- Oct. 10 (joint mtg): Pg. 4, 5, 9 – small edits
- Oct. 13 (forum @ EES): Pg. 2 paragraph
- Oct. 18 (forum @ Fleming): Pg. 2 paragraph
- Motioned by Lori, 2nd by Raj. Approval with amendments: 7-0-1 (Andy abstained because of 10/10 minutes as joint meeting)

Public Forums Review

- Meet the candidates?
  - Brad asked the RGSC if they wanted any opportunity set aside at the next two forums. Ally listed who had pulled petitions. Jason and Erika both indicated they didn’t feel the purpose of the RGSC forums was to include this as part of the format. Jason and Mike mentioned if so candidates wanted to speak during public to be heard at the next forums, they would be allowed to do so.
- Mike offered to send an email to the candidates once they were confirmed.
- Jason asked if the Transition Team had new information to add to the presentation at this time. Brad and Ally didn’t have anything new.
- Nov. forum: Kim will handle logistics; Jason asked for the cafeteria and gym for spaces. Erika and Betzi will be presenting that night.
- Dec. forum: Ally will work with EHS on cafeteria and CTE preschool classroom for spaces, along with technical needs
- Brad confirmed he will get sound help scheduled for both remaining forums.
- Betzi and Lori talked about added slides/info relating to the ballots and list of candidates. Lori said the Trustees will take out an ad describing the ballot format. Ally & Brad will get the sample ballot information for the presentation.

**Review of forum question responses/response plan**

- Erika prepared remaining questions to be answered and assigned them to committee members to answer. Erika asked everyone to complete their assigned questions by Monday and to send directly to her. Erika and Betzi will make sure all information on the website.

**Task Updates**

- **Public outreach opportunities:** Mike asked if there were any additional opportunities to be present. Lori suggested to have FB forum events posted, FPF posts. Lori let the RGSC know that she and George Tyler had their monthly Channel 17 “interview” (Lori filled in for Max Levy) and today’s topic was the upcoming vote and overall information re: the RGSC/ECPR topic. She will let everyone know when it is going to air on TV.
  - **Places to be with flyers:** Raj asked for flyers to go home in Friday Folders. Erika and Raj talked about changing the flyer format to update it to be based on the warning, candidates and ballot sample. Lori will call the SOS office on 11/4/16 to ask about Campaign Finance Law. RGSC will look to have an updated flyer for 11/30/16 for 12/2/16 Friday Folders.
  - **Presentations – Lions, PTOs, etc.:** ETSD PTO continually lists RGSC information in their weekly emails.

- **FPF & Essex Reporter outreach:** Erika has been sending the FPF posts to the Reporter regularly in case they have room to add in to an edition. Raj suggested rewording the information so it wasn’t the same message as seen on FPF.

- **Web Updates:** Under the “Vote” tab, voter registration, early voting, absentee voting, etc. is listed. Betzi added that the FAQ page reflects Cheryl Mooney’s memo clarifying the chosen vote date.

- **Web Inquiries:** Betzi mentioned a lot more inquiries have been coming in based on grand list, amendments to the Agreement, pie chart on video, etc. All have been answered.

- **Final Info Sheet/Q&A:** two options were reviewed and Erika will consolidate them into one, concise, reformatted sheet.

- **Presence at the polls on 11/8:** Lori asked for members to volunteer at polls with a sign-up sheet. Members will post for volunteers on social media with an online sign-up sheet. Betzi wanted to make sure there was no specific selection of volunteers and that the process stays as neutral as possible. Raj suggested to draft an email for the group.

- **Promoting early & absentee voting:** Lori suggested a letter to the editor be submitted

- **Videos:** Brad said that Kayhl is working on the final two videos that will be shared for edits; the goal is to have them ready for the next two forums.
- **Postcard**: rough estimate on postage is $1500. Betzi, from work experience, is that the response rate is really low; however, it has been requested/suggested at open forums. Kim offered to mock something up for review. Betzi asked about a budget and who would pay for this option. Brad asked if the committee really wanted to do. Everyone felt it was the right thing to do. Brad will get firm numbers/amounts and deadlines based on a December 5th drop date.

- **Sharing information about candidates for ECPR Board**: Jason and Erika do not think it is the job of RGSC to be involved with. Sample ballot may be only piece to list candidates (if allowed).

**Identify next meeting date/time**: November 16, 8pm – after Public Forum at FMS.

**Adjournment**: Meeting adjourned at 9:06pm
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
JOINT MUNICIPAL SURVEY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
FOUNDERS MEMORIAL SCHOOL
ESSEX, VERMONT
November 16, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Smith (Chair); Jason DiRosa, Kim Maiberger, Max Levy, Raj Chawla, Lori Houghton. Erika Baldasaro, Betzi Bilodeau.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher, and Andy Watts (alt.).

ADMINISTRATION: Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Rec; Brad Luck, EJRP.

OTHERS PRESENT: Marc Wennberg, Kay Maloney, Mike Yandow, Adriane Martin, Andy Suntup, Linda Suntup, Mary Brooks, Dan Brooks, Pat Scheidel, Margaret Smith, Candace Morgan, Leah Pastel, Carmelle Terborgh, John Terborgh, Dylan Giambatista.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA
Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 6:16 PM. Introductions were done. Meeting moderator, Marc Wennberg, was introduced.

2. PUBLIC FORUM
Marc Wennberg explained the process to be followed at the meeting and stressed having a respectful gathering to hear information and to have the opportunity to be heard.

A video was viewed on how the two rec departments presently operate. A presentation was given on how the study committee was formed and developed the recommendation to establish a union municipal district called “Essex Community Parks & Recreation” (ECPR) that combines EJRP and EPR. Seven different governance models were evaluated before making the selection for a union municipal district. Articles of agreement were drafted which had to be approved by the Vermont Attorney General and which provide the framework for ECPR. The vote on December 13, 2016 is to decide whether or not to enter into the agreement and form ECPR.

Advantages to forming ECPR were noted:
- Independent budget voted by Australian ballot in April of each year concurrent with the school budget vote as has been done with EJRP and was suggested by the study group.
- Unites community recreation.
- Allows both rec departments and in turn the two communities to come together on equal ground.
- Provides long-term stability.
- Another step forward in tax equity in the community.
- Provides increased transparency with all operations of ECPR, which is overseen by a five member Board of Directors.
Disadvantages to forming ECPR were noted:

- Two small departments are combined into one large department.
- Realizing tax equity will result in an increase for town-outside-the-village taxpayers.
- Adds another elected board and government entity to the community.
- Potential additional administrative costs as two departments move to one independent department.

The five member Board of Directors for ECPR initially with have one Selectboard appointee, one Trustee appointee, one Essex Junction resident, one town-outside-the-village resident, and one at-large resident. Subsequent boards will be five elected at large members. An Executive Director will be hired to oversee operations and appoint a Treasurer. There will be an annual independent financial audit. The budget will be approved by Australian ballot vote. There is the possibility of a Rec Advisory Council.

The Transition Team made up of members of the rec departments, school district, and municipal staff have the goal of creating a seamless transition if the vote passes. The team has been researching and getting answers and wants to ensure existing services are maintained or enhanced. The Transition Team is recommending:

- ECPR handling daily receipts, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and HR.
- Essex Town will provide the Treasurer, check signing, accounting and audit, tax collection, and elections.
- A 3rd party provider will handle payroll, IT support, and legal support.
- Lands and buildings will be leased to ECPR for $1/year and the village and town will retain ownership. ECPR will insure the properties and buildings and name the village and town as “additional insured”.
- ECPR will maintain the spaces and provide capital asset and equipment replacement.
- Parks and rec supplies and equipment purchased by the rec departments will transfer to ECPR and be used by rec staff. ECPR will insure and provide future replacement and maintenance.
- Capital reserves related to parks and rec held by the town will be retained, but the rec district may submit a request for use of the funds. Requests must be authorized by the Selectboard.
- The estimated budget assumes growth of 1% in the grand list, the village assuming debt relief payments on the Maple Street bond, the village proposal to phase out additional tax support for ECPR over five years to ease the burden on the town, and the village no longer budgeting for the block party, farmers market, and train hop.
- The estimate of tax impact of ECPR on a $280,000 house for a resident in the town-outside-the-village is $16 (from $87 to $103). Village residents will see a tax decrease of $11 (from $280 to $269).
The town and village can vote on creation of Essex Community Parks & Recreation (ECPR) and elect the initial board members via early voting or absentee ballot starting 11/23/16 or at the polls on 12/13/16. All participating residents of the Town of Essex, both inside and outside the Village of Essex Junction, will receive a ballot that asks: “Shall the Town of Essex enter into an agreement for the formation of a Union Municipal District to be known as “Essex Community Parks & Recreation”? Voters will have the opportunity to vote for three directors for the ECPR Board of Directors. Residents in the Village of Essex Junction will receive a separate ballot with only the question: “Shall the Village of Essex Junction enter into an agreement for the formation of a Union Municipal District to be known as “Essex Community Parks & Recreation”?

A “yes” vote from Essex at-large and the Village of Essex Junction means ECPR is created, members of the ECPR Board of Directors are concurrently elected, and the Transition Team continues to work to merge the two recreation departments.

A “no” vote from either Essex at-large or the Village of Essex Junction means the Prudential Committee will work with the Village Trustees to transition EJRP to the village municipality. EPR will stay under the town municipality.

If the community votes to form ECPR there are several decisions outside the scope of the Rec Governance Study Committee’s work that will need to be made including but not limited to:

- Hiring an Executive Director.
- Determining the plan for program access, enhancements and/or changes.
- Continuing the work on agreements related to village and town recreation assets.
- Finalizing the budget for a vote in April 2017.

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

1. After the December 13\textsuperscript{th} vote the process will start and it is hoped there will not be a gap in childcare or preschool services. Would Act 166 apply to preschool without licensing and would there be a gap?
   - Answer: The preschool needs to be licensed to qualify for Act 166 which is a state mandate for assistance for public preschool ages three and up.

2. Are taxes used to pay for EJRP childcare programs?
   - Answer: No, the programs are self-sustaining.

3. Will town only residents have equal access to programs during the tax equity transition including childcare and daycare?
   - Answer: Yes, everyone in the community would come as a resident. Part of the transition work is making sure there is similar, equal programming throughout the community so all have the same opportunities to programs at the same prices, same staffing, same training, same expectations, and aligning all these so there is consistency throughout the community. Space in schools is limited. Location is based on capacity and how needs can be fulfilled while keeping a safe environment for everyone.

4. What are the terms for election of board members for ECPR?
• Answer: The terms are staggered three year, two year, one year positions so new members are not elected every year. After the first term of each position the new election will be at-large members. The initial board will have a Trustee appointee, a Selectboard appointee, and village and town outside-the-village members.

5. Will village members vote twice as a town member and a village member?
• Answer: There are two separate ballots. One ballot is available to residents of the village and asks if the village should enter into an agreement to form a union municipal district known as ECPR. The other ballot is available to all residents including those in the village and asks if the town should enter into an agreement to form a union municipal district known as ECPR and a second question that is the vote for the five board members. Even if the union municipal district is not formed the board members will be elected.

6. What programs or functions are to be added or anticipated to be added to the new district – Senior Bus? Library?
• Answer: It is possible to add other services. This will be a decision of the new Board of Directors.

7. Is the total combined budget of both entities as they exist today expected to decline after merger in future years?
• Answer: Figures for overall parks and rec spending show there are multiple entities that spend money on parks and rec (town, village, EJRP). The figures show total spending FY17 and anticipated expenses FY18. A 4% increase is anticipated based on the preliminary budget that was presented.

8. Will the Train Hop and Block Party continue after the merger?
• Answer: The Train Hop and Block Party today are run by the village municipal office and are expected to continue provided people continue to attend the events and there are volunteers to assist. The Trustees have discussed putting these programs under the new rec department because the programs should be run by a rec department.

9. Will all events be located in Essex Junction (i.e. fireworks) at a larger venue?
• Answer: That is a decision the new larger rec staff will look at and with a new set of eyes because it will be the entire community. Right now both work in isolation. When EJRP makes a decision only village property and village parks and village budgets are considered. When EPR is making decisions they are making decisions on behalf of the whole community, but are respectful of another neighboring rec department serving the village area. EPR only manages the parks outside the village. There will be an administration that now has the purview of the entire community for all events and with one budget. The types of decisions the department looks forward to discussing – new opportunities to move, add, combine in a more effective and efficient ways.

There were no further questions or comments. Information will be posted on the website as it becomes available. Next public forum is 12/6/16 at Essex High School.
3. OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD
A resident from the town-outside-the-village said he is happy with the programs by both departments and is on the ballot as a perspective board member and wants to hear the comments of the people.

A woman from the town expressed concern about the possibility of all the board members being residents of the village. Merging the town and village would solve the issue. Another concern is the major tax impact down the road.

Kay Maloney, town resident for 18 years and now a village resident, announced she is on the ballot for the member at-large position and is happy to listen to the people.

Erika Baldasaro announced she is on the ballot for the one year at-large position on the ECPR Board and feels she will be a strong voice for rec in the new combined entity.

Betzi Bilodeau announced she is on the ballot for the town-outside-the-village position on the new board and looks forward to talking to the people outside of a committee setting.

John Terborgh, village resident, expressed appreciation to the rec departments for the services provided and looks forward to this continuing. The effort by all the volunteers to make this possible is also appreciated.

4. BUSINESS MEETING
RGSC business meeting commenced at 7:34 PM.

5. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA
Pat Scheidel asked to clarify a statement made at the June 22, 2016 RGSC meeting relative to the election date of November 8th being “impossible”. The record should reflect that according to Mr. Senning from the Secretary of State’s Office there is agreement with the guidance of the Town Clerk that a local election within a federal election would not work. Mr. Scheidel pointed out the word “impossible” was not used.

6. APPROVE OF MINUTES: 11/3/16
MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Kim Maiberger, to approve the minutes of 11/3/16 as presented. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

7. PUBLIC FORUMS REVIEW
There was a discussion about the public forums. All agreed the format would continue for the final forum.

8. FORUM #5 & #6 RESPONSE PLAN
Questions from Forum #5 will be answered online. Questions from Forum #6 will only be answered in person that night.

9. TASK UPDATES
Tasks related to public outreach opportunities, Front Porch Forum, the Essex Reporter, web updates, web inquiries, the Essex Balloteer, the final information/q&a sheet, promoting early & absentee voting, videos, the postcard, and information about candidates for the ECPR Board were all discussed.

10. ADJOURNMENT
With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

By tape, RScty: MERiordan
RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING
Joint Municipal Survey Committee
Meeting Minutes: December 6, 2016
Essex High School, 2 Educational Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452

RGSC Present: Michael Smith, Kim Maiberger, Lori Houghton, Erika Baldasaro, Raj Chawla, Betzi Bilodeau, Jason DiRosa, Max Levy

RGSC Absent: Christine Packard, Theresa Fletcher,

Administrators present: Brad Luck – EJRP, Ally Vile – Essex Parks and Rec, Marc Wennberg - Moderator


Call to Order: Michael called the meeting to order at 6:16pm.

Welcome: Michael introduced the moderator: Marc Wennberg. Marc gave an overview of the agenda and process.

Presentation: A 5-minute video was shown: “Parks & Recreation Services in Essex Explained.”

Betzi Bilodeau and Jason DiRosa presented the findings of the Recreation Governance Study Committee.

Question & Answer: Members of the audience submitted written questions. The questions were collected, read aloud by the moderator, and answered by members of the committee or recreation staff.

Responses to questions were provided by: Lori Houghton, Erika Baldasaro, Raj Chawla, Betzi Bilodeau, Jason DiRosa, Max Levy, Brad Luck, and Ally Vile.

Opportunity to be Heard: Marc Wennberg explained the process for the opportunity to be heard. He reviewed the ground rules. Members of the audience were given the opportunity to speak once, for up to one minute.

During the opportunity to be heard, the following individuals provided comments: Bridget Meyer, Matt Deming, Tim Fagnant, Richard Braten, Linda Waite-Simpson, Mindy Bero, Rich Downing, John Sheppard, Michele Peliel, and Melinda Hemelis.

At the conclusion of the Opportunity to be Heard, there was a short break.

Business Meeting: At 7:43p.m. the meeting reconvened for the business portion.

Public to be Heard on Items Not on the Agenda: none.

Approval of November 16 & December 6 Minutes: Jason DiRosa moved approval of the November 16 and December 6, 2016 minutes. Raj Chawla seconded the motion. The minutes were approved 8-0.
Dissolution of Recreation Governance Study Committee: Erika Baldasaro moved to dissolve the Recreation Governance Study Committee. Raj Chawla seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.

Adjournment: Michael Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:52pm.