

AGREEMENT TO FORM A REC DISTRICT



Goals of Tonight

- Overview of process
- Present contents of Agreement
- Request feedback on Agreement
 - ▣ Feedback evaluated by RGSC on 8/10, 6:30p.m., ADL

This is Just the Beginning....

- Many questions to be answered
 - ▣ Four months until the vote
- Will work to provide information prior to vote
 - ▣ Public forums this fall
 - ▣ Will develop a budget this fall
 - No reason to expect significant increases in recreation spending due to forming district
- Developing Agreement is first step
 - ▣ Framework/big picture now

A Brief Overview

- Like Village/Town government & schools, the Recreation District will...
 - ▣ Have same checks and balances
 - ▣ Be governed & regulated by 5-member elected board
 - Will be directly accountable to the voters
 - Will have regularly scheduled public meetings
 - Will be required to follow all open meeting & transparency laws
 - ▣ Budget voted on by Australian ballot by community annually (like schools)
 - ▣ Finances will be independently audited each year
 - ▣ Bonds must be approved by voters

Our Recreation Departments

- We have 2 great recreation departments!
- Essex Parks & Recreation
 - Operated by Town of Essex
 - \$1.32M operating budget
 - \$61K capital budget
 - \$748K tax support
 - 4 FTE's
 - 18 parks & facilities
- Essex Junction Recreation & Parks
 - Operated by Essex Junction School District
 - \$2.24M operating budget
 - \$109K capital budget
 - \$745K tax support
 - 12 FTE's
 - 3 parks & facilities

Who Are We?

Recreation Governance Study Committee (RGSC)

Board Representation

- Max Levy – Selectboard
- Lori Houghton – Village Trustees
- Michael Smith – Prudential Committee
- Jason DiRosa – Prudential Committee

Community Representation

- Erika Baldasaro – Village
- Betzi Bilodeau – Town (o.v.)
- Raj Chawla – Village
- Theresa Fletcher – Town (o.v.)
- Kim Maiberger – Village
- Christine Packard – Town (o.v.)

How Did We Get Here?

- 2013-present: Spirit of collaboration, consolidation, unification
- Nov 2015: Communities voted to consolidate school districts
- Feb 2016: Selectboard & Trustees agree to form joint municipal survey committee to study recreation
- Mar 2016: Committee identified
- Apr 2016: Committee begins to meet

Committee Goals

- Maintain or enhance quality
- Explore all avenues
- Engage the community
- Affordability in mind, fiscally responsible
- Consensus by mid June

Summary of Work

- 12 meetings April 5 – August 10
 - ▣ Publicly warned, held in public places, minutes taken & posted
 - ▣ Public opportunity to speak & participate
- Informational video
- Info on web & in community
- Community survey
- Evaluated 7 governance options

Union Municipal (Rec) District Option Selected

A new municipal entity created to perform a governmental service, activity, or undertaking

- Statute allows two municipalities to form a municipal district
- District will be an independent municipality
- Governed by 5-member elected Board
- Budget voted by Australian ballot

Why This Option?

- Unites rec under one umbrella
- One budget, voted by community
- Independent budget
- Increased transparency
- Greater oversight
- Reduced complexities
- Equal starting ground
- Community decision
- Eliminate redundancies
- Potential for cost savings
- Long-term stability
- One-stop shopping
- Equity in community
- Ability to “house” other initiatives
- In line with recent consolidation efforts

The Agreement

- 1st step in forming District is to write Agreement
 - ▣ This is what voters are saying yes or no to enter into
- Task of the study committee (by statute)
- Agreement developed on statutory requirements in 24 VSA § 4862:
 - ▣ Duration
 - ▣ Organization
 - ▣ Purposes
 - ▣ Selection of officers
 - ▣ Means of establishing a budget
 - ▣ Terminating/amending the Agreement
 - ▣ Withdrawing from the District

Name

- Essex Community Parks & Recreation

Purpose

- Provide diverse year-round high quality & affordable recreational opportunities for all age groups
- Maintain variety of public recreation facilities & community spaces
- Create affordable & accessible opportunities for physical activity
- Maintain aesthetic beauty of parks & open spaces
- Provide health, fitness, quality of life & well-being

Composition

- Board of Directors consisting of five (5) elected members
- Serve three (3) year, staggered terms
- File a petition with signatures from 30 voters to be on ballot
- Reside in Essex

Selection of Directors

□ Initial Board

▣ Appointed:

- 1 member by Selectboard (2 yr)
- 1 member by Trustees (2yr)

▣ Elected (by all):

- 1 member from Village (3 yr)
- 1 member from Town outside Village (3 yr)
- 1 member at large (1 yr)

□ Subsequent Boards

▣ Elected (by all):

- Members at large (3 yr terms)
 - April 2018 – 1 member
 - April 2019 – 2 members
 - April 2020 – 2 members

Budget & Tax Rate

- Annually presented to Board
- Board holds public hearing
- Board reviews and approves
- Australian ballot by voters in April

Financials

- Board must annually conduct an independent audit of finances
- May borrow money (with voter approval)
- May establish a sinking fund (for retirement of debt)
- May establish a capital reserve fund (for public improvements)

Withdrawal of a Municipality

- Requires a community wide vote
- Cannot happen for first three years
- Cannot happen if District votes to bond for improvements (per statute)

Addition of a Community

- Board of District must vote yes
- Voters of District must vote yes
- Voters of the community wanting to join must vote yes

Dissolution of the District

- In first 3 years:
 - ▣ Approved by Selectboard, Trustees & District Board
 - AND
 - ▣ Approved by voters of District at special meeting
- Year 4 and beyond:
 - ▣ Vote by Board of District
 - AND
 - ▣ Majority of voters of District at special meeting

Amending the District Agreement

- Petition by five percent of the voters
 - OR
- Affirmative vote by the Board
 - AND
- Majority of voters at special meeting

Developing a Charter

- Plan for new Board to develop Charter for District
- Charter will have to be adopted by:
 - ▣ Board
 - ▣ Voters of District
 - ▣ Legislature
- Preserve District in event of merger
- More easily allow District to bond for debt
- Make amendments more challenging to accomplish

Community Support

- UU School Board resolution commitment to spirit of cooperation (8-1)
- CCSU Superintendent stands ready to support
- Municipal Manager stands ready to support
- PC prepared to continue pre-k at Park Street School (5-0)
- PC supports forming Union Municipal District (5-0)
- Trustees support creation of Union Municipal District (5-0)
- Selectboard supports concept of Union Municipal District pending further details (4-1)

Timeline & the Vote

- Default option if no action
- November vote sought, but impossible
- March vote next best choice but...
 - ▣ Too short of transition period
 - ▣ Town, Village, & school budgets already developed to include recreation
- December special meeting vote identified
 - ▣ Allows maximum transition time
 - ▣ Allows boards to develop budgets knowing outcome of vote
 - ▣ Only one transition

Important Dates

October 8, 2016	Petitions available for candidates for Rec District Board
November 7, 2016	Petitions due for candidates for Rec District Board
November 2016	Selectboard (11/7) & Trustees (11/8) warn special meeting
November 23, 2016	Absentee ballots available
December 13, 2016	Agreement is submitted to voters & election of Rec District Board
January 2017	Rec District Board takes seats, begins holding meetings
April 11, 2017	Rec District budget vote
July 1, 2017	Rec District commences

Next Steps

- Aug 4: Public hearing on Agreement (6:30p.m., EMS, 60 Founders Rd)
- Aug 10: RGSC reviews feedback, considers changes, adopts final agreement (6:30p.m., ADL, 104 Maple Street)
- Aug-Oct: Transition Team prepares operational details
- Aug-Dec: Information & outreach
- Dec 13: Both communities vote on whether or not to join the District
 - ▣ Each community must vote “yes” by majority
 - ▣ Village voters may vote on question for Village and for Town



Questions, Comments, Suggestions