

**RECREATION GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
June 8, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Smith, Raj Chawla, Christine Packard, Lori Houghton, Kim Maiberger, Erika Baldasaro, Max Levy, Betzi Bilodeau, Theresa Fletcher.
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 UNIFIED 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.

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