

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 Baldassarro, 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:
 - o July 27th (PC @ 6:30pm @ EJRP): Michael, Jason & Christine
 - o August 1st (SB @ 7:30pm @ 81 Main): Max, Andy & Betzi
 - o August 1st (EWEC @ 6:30pm @ EHS Library): Jason & Erika
 - o 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:
 - o 1-1: edits
 - o 1-3.1: edits to operation of contracts
 - o 1-3.8: edits
 - o 1-3.20: who is the “host community”? Ok to “strike out”
 - o 1-3.23: add in “power to hire and terminate”
 - o 1-7: Composition – simplify to state number of Board members
 - o 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)
 - o 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

MINUTES SUBJECT TO CORRECTION BY THE RECREATION GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE. CHANGES, IF ANY, WILL BE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE.