

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 EJP & 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.

1-22: Committees – Raj asked for clarification.

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.

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.

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.
 - o 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.