

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

**RED Study Committee**  
**Essex High School Library – Essex Junction, VT**  
**May 5, 2015**

**Attendees:** Heidi Coppola (Westford), Jill Tarule (ET), Adam Sollace (EJ), Tom James (ET), Samantha Gilliam (ET), Brian Donahue (EJ), Amy Chess (EJ), Gary Kling (ET), Kim Kedzierski (ET), Martha Heath (Westford), Linda Costello (EJ), Marla Durham (EJ), Kim Gleason (ET), Cathy Printon (ET), Wes McClellan (EJ), Keeley Schell (EJ), Tom Thompson (ET), Bob Bouthillier (EJ), and Mitchell Stern (ET)

**Absent:** Brendan Kinney (ET)

**Facilitator:** Brian O'Regan

**Others:** Mark Andrews (Essex Town Superintendent), Judith DeNova (CCSU Superintendent), Ben Dickie (CCSU – Minutes), Vince Gonillo (CCSU Exec. Director of Technology), Grant Geisler (CCSU), John Alberghini (CESU), Michael Marks (CESU), Liz Subin (U#46 School Board Member), and Jessica Wisloski (Essex Reporter)

Brian O'Regan called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes from April 27, 2015**

*Martha Heath motioned to approve the minutes from April 27, 2015, Jill Tarule seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**Committee Updates**

- Martha Heath mentioned that she was at the State House last week and talked with a few people there with concerns around the income sensitivity/Homestead rates that were brought up at the last meeting

**Chittenden East SU Presentation**

- John Alberghini and Michael Marks discussed the similar process that the Chittenden East Supervisory Union went through
- John provided some background on the process and highlighted the information on their [website](#)
- John and Mark took questions from the committee concerning the following:
  - What were the major concerns of residents?
    - Loss of control
    - Benefits were over stated or at best unproven
  - How did you communicate with the public?
    - Make your work public and visible
    - Press releases

- 45                   ▪ Interviews
- 46                   ▪ Public forums
- 47           ○ When did you engage the community?
- 48                   ▪ Word of mouth from the start
- 49                   ▪ Public outreach when the committee could answer questions
- 50                   ▪ Community forums
- 51           ○ Could you demonstrate that you could save money?
- 52                   ▪ They were able to say they could, but couldn't quantify the
- 53                    savings
- 54           ○ Did you engage staff?
- 55                   ▪ Kept union leadership informed and shared why they thought this
- 56                    was good for students, staff and the community
- 57                   ▪ Didn't put teachers in a position to come out publically
- 58                    • Kept staff informed, but wanted to make sure they didn't
- 59                    feel pressured
- 60           ○ What changes were immediate after the merger?
- 61                   ▪ Unified budget and tax incentives
- 62                   ▪ Ability to share more resources across schools and have flexibility
- 63                    in staffing

- 64
- 65   • **Suggestions they offered**

- 66           ○ Highlight that the merger would be beneficial to not only students, but
- 67            tax payers as well
- 68           ○ Hold the vote as part of a general election, which tends to produce higher
- 69            turnouts, instead of a special election
- 70           ○ For the committee to take a stand if they believe it's the right thing to do
- 71                   ▪ Also important for the individual school boards to voice their
- 72                    backing
- 73           ○ Change is hard and you must communicate up front as much as possible
- 74           ○ Hold community forums at least once at each of your schools
- 75                   ▪ Some of these were supported by the committee, while others by
- 76                    individual school boards
- 77           ○ Before voting on the articles, CESU held a forum so that the public could
- 78            have input prior to producing a finished product and they thought this
- 79            was very important
- 80           ○ Communication is critical with all stake holders
- 81                   ▪ It was the small interactions that made the biggest differences

82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88

The committee took a five minute break starting at 8 p.m.

89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123

### **Community Engagement**

- U#46 School Board member Liz Subin talked with the committee about potential communications efforts
  - Identified her work with Heart and Soul of Essex
    - Education is the most important community value
- Looked at ways to communicate
  - Thin – kiosks at athletic events
  - Thick – community forums
  - Continued use of the RED website
  - Answering feedback received on the site
- The four local school boards formed a Communications Task Team to assist the RED Study Committee
  - There was discussion on where the communications should be developed
    - The committee thought that the Communications Task Team could help develop overall strategies, but the information needs to come from the Study Committee to avoid public confusion
- Need to identify stake holders in the community that the committee needs to engage
  - Building trust is key
- There was discussion around avenues to communicate with the community including: surveys, Front Porch Forum, social media, etc.
- Discussion around including communications to students

### **Next Meeting Date and Topic**

- Tuesday, May 19, 6:30 p.m.

*Kim Kedzierski motioned to adjourn the meeting, Kim Gleason seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Ben Dickie