

1 **RED Study Committee**
2 **Essex High School Library – Essex Junction, VT**
3 **June 9, 2015**
4
5

6 **Attendees:** Adam Sollace (EJ), Tom James (ET), Heidi Coppola (Westford), Linda Costello
7 (EJ), Gary Kling (ET), Marla Durham (EJ), Cathy Printon (ET), Kim Kedzierski (ET), Brendan
8 Kinney (ET), Jill Tarule (ET), Tom Thompson (ET), Bob Bouthillier (EJ), Martha Heath
9 (Westford), Keeley Schell (EJ), Mitchell Stern (ET), Wes McClellan (EJ), Samantha Gilliam
10 (ET) and Amy Chess (EJ)
11
12

13 **Absent:** Kim Gleason (ET), Brian Donahue (EJ)
14

15 **Facilitator:** Brian O'Regan
16

17 **Others:** Judith DeNova (CCSU Superintendent), Ben Dickie (CCSU – Minutes), Al
18 Bombardier, Chris Leopold, Grant Geisler, Rachel Preston, and Jess Wisloski Martin
19 (Essex Reporter)
20

21 Brendan Kinney called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.
22

23 Grant Geisler provided some updates that the committee had requested

- 24 • He went through slides that showed the 'what if' in terms of if a merger had
25 taken place in FY'12
 - 26 ○ It looked at how the tax rates would have been effected with the five
27 year incentives that are currently available
- 28 • He talked about income sensitivity modeling
 - 29 ○ Merged with incentives and without
- 30 • Grant also fazed the estimated costs and savings for a model, so it didn't appear
31 that everything took place in year one
32

33 **Visitors to be Heard**

- 34 • Al Bombardier shared his thoughts as an Essex Town resident and member of the
35 U#46 School Board
- 36 • He talked about the great work of the curriculum that is currently in place and
37 shared some data about how well students from EHS are performing
- 38 • He also provided factors that he though could affect the tax rate
 - 39 ○ Busing
 - 40 ○ Cash assets on hand for each district with infrastructure needs
 - 41 ○ Touched on the need for communication and more financial data
42
43

44 **Approval of Minutes from June 2, 2015**

45 *Jill Tarule motioned to approve the minutes from June 2, 2015, Cathy Printon seconded*
46 *the motion.*

47

48 Martha Heath requested the following amendments:

- 49 • On line 61 and 62, it should say that “Martha Heath would like to see tax rates
50 for people who pay based on income as well as Homestead property taxes”
- 51 • In the third bullet from the bottom, it should read “the committee asked that
52 incentives be applied to five years of known expenditures and revenues to get a
53 better graphical”

54

55 *The motion passed unanimously with the amendments.*

56

57

58 **Articles of Agreement**

- 59 • Chris Leopold took the committee through a rough draft of a set of [articles of](#)
60 [agreement](#)
- 61 • He looked at the differences between a RED and what is defined in H.361
62 ○ The new legislation is an accelerated model (H.361) and includes the
63 following:
 - 64 ▪ Need to have at least 900 students
 - 65 ▪ The model features tax incentives of \$0.10, \$0.08, \$0.06, \$0.04,
66 and \$0.02
 - 67 ▪ Requires that a community must vote no later than June 30, 2016
- 68 • The articles that the committee looked at were a combination of language from
69 both a RED and H.361
- 70 • There was discussion around if Westford would be listed as ‘advisable’ or
71 ‘necessary’
 - 72 ○ Essex Town and Essex Junction are both ‘necessary’ because both have
73 students that attend the Essex High School
- 74 • The committee then went through each of the articles
- 75 • Articles number 1 and 2 cannot be changed once approve, this is a state statute
- 76 • There were discussions around contracts and collective bargaining agreements in
77 Article 3
 - 78 ○ Agreements have to be honored through their termination dates
- 79 • There was a question about provisions possibly being added around the closing
80 of a school
 - 81 ○ Martha Heath talked about the importance of mentioning something in
82 the first two articles about not closing a school, because it’s a big fear for
83 Westford residents
- 84 • While discussing Article 7, Martha Heath thought it would be good to have any
85 deficits or surpluses available to share with the public

- 86
- 87
- 88
- 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
- 124
- 125
- 126
- 127
- 128
- On Article 8 there was discussion around property and Martha Heath mentioned that it is already an issue in Westford and she had questions concerning the language in the article
 - Chris Leopold looked at potential considerations that could be included
 - There was conversations from the committee on the wording of this article and Chris Leopold and Brian O'Regan will look at it further
 - Martha Heath requested that the committee have access to the capital plans for all the districts so that they have a sense of what is coming up and what is needed
 - What does each district own?
 - What outstanding bonds are there?
 - She would like this information all in one place
 - In Article 9, Chris Leopold showed the predominate weighted model that most schools in the state use in terms of forming school boards, but there is also an option of having an at-large vote
 - Heidi Coppola mentioned some concerns she has, as the Westford School Board has had issues filling each of its current board seats and has had problems with board members not showing up to meetings
 - Chris Leopold mentioned that this would be one of the more important articles going forward, because this is how the new board would be formed
 - In Article 11, if the new RED Board was created though an at-large voting process, than the 30 signatures wouldn't have to be from one town, but could be from any of the towns included
 - In discussions around Article 12, Chris Leopold explained that if a merger is approved by the voters, the articles would then be sent for approval by the State
 - Within 45 days of the State's approval, the first organizational meeting of all the voters would take place and at that point the following would take place:
 - Officers would be sworn in
 - The date of the first annual meeting would be decided on
 - The clerk of the district would be selected
 - The elected school board would then become operational and have the responsibility to conduct business
 - Martha Heath asked if Chris Leopold could provide some examples concerning Article 18 and he said he would at an upcoming meeting
 - There was also discussion around a provision in the Articles of Agreement that the Chittenden East Supervisory Union used, concerning communities who decided originally not to join and their ability to vote again within a year
 - A similar provision could be offered in accordance with H.361, but that community would still have to vote to join prior to June 30, 2016

129

130 **Timeline for Completion of the Study Committee Work**

- 131 • Brian O'Regan mentioned that the communities would have to vote no later than
132 June 30, 2016 in the accelerated model
- 133 • There was discussion of the pros and cons around if a vote should take place at
134 the same time as a presidential election
- 135 • Brian O'Regan walked the committee through a potential timeline and looked at
136 adding additional meeting dates
- 137 ○ The potential new meetings dates were: June 18, 23 and 25
- 138 • The committee would have a formal vote on the articles on June 30 by using this
139 timeline
- 140 • Judith DeNova mentioned that she had spoken with Village Manager Pat
141 Scheidel and they thought having a vote in November, when no other elections
142 were taking place, would be best because the RED would be the one focus and it
143 wouldn't get lost in the shuffle
- 144 • Talked about November 3 as a potential date to have the vote
- 145 • The cost of an election would be approximately \$10,000-\$11,000

146

147

148 **Cost/Benefit Analysis of a Merged School District**

- 149 • Brian O'Regan handed out [cost/benefit analysis information](#) that looked at the
150 efficiencies that could be gained by forming a RED
- 151 ○ This input came from the school personnel at both Essex Town and CCSU
152 who had presented at earlier meetings
- 153 • Brian also provided another handout that looked at [projections from FY'08-FY'15](#)
154 using multiple variables that effect tax rates and spending

155

156

157 **Next Meeting Date and Topic**

- 158 • Thursday, June 18, 6:30 p.m.
- 159 ○ Articles of Agreement

160

161

162 The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

163

164

165 Respectfully submitted by Ben Dickie