

RED Study Committee
Essex High School Library – Essex Junction, VT
June 18, 2015

Attendees: Adam Sollace (EJ), Tom James (ET), Heidi Coppola (Westford), Linda Costello (EJ), Marla Durham (EJ), Brendan Kinney (ET), Jill Tarule (ET), Tom Thompson (ET), Bob Bouthillier (EJ), Martha Heath (Westford), Keeley Schell (EJ), Wes McClellan (EJ), Samantha Gilliam (ET), Amy Chess (EJ), Kim Gleason (ET), Cathy Printon (ET – arrived at 7:30 p.m.),

Absent: Kim Kedzierski (ET), Gary Kling (ET), Mitchell Stern (ET), Brian Donahue (EJ)

Facilitator: Brian O'Regan

Others: Mark Andrews (Essex Town Superintendent), Ben Dickie (CCSU – Minutes), Chris Leopold, Grant Geisler, Vince Gonillo

Brendan Kinney called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Visitors to be Heard

None

Approval of Minutes from June 9, 2015

Martha Heath motioned to approve the minutes from June 9, 2015, Marla Durham seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Articles of Agreement

- Brian O'Regan and Chris Leopold facilitated a conversation about the [potential Articles of Agreement](#), with a hope of agreeing on the language in each one that the committee discussed
 - This wouldn't constitute as a final approval of each article, as that will take place at the June 30 meeting when all committee members can be present
 - Brian reminded the committee that outside of the first two articles, any recommendations that this committee makes can be changed when the new RED School Board is formed
- **Article 3:**

- The new RED Board would only have two choices concerning this article
 - Negotiate new agreements or honor the current ones
- Both CCSU and ETSD are on a compatible cycle right now and their current deals wouldn't carry on past the first official date that the RED would be formed
- The transition period between the formation of a new RED Board and July 1, 2017 would be the time frame when new contracts would be negotiated
 - If the new RED Board can't successfully agree on a contract by July 1, 2017, then the previous contracts that each were previously under would continue
- There was a question about where would new hires fit?
 - That would be up for the new board and/or the association
- This is one of the top priorities for the new RED Board once they are formed under state law
- Chris will look to see if there is a need for more explicit language that needs to be added
- The committee approved the article
- **Article 4:**
 - There was a lot of discussion around this article and if language was needed that said no school buildings would be closed
 - Chris said that language concerning not closing any of the current schools wouldn't fit in this article, but could be added in a separate article
 - Chris added that the point of this article is to let the voters know that no new buildings would be required to be built if a RED was formed
 - If this committee decides that it wants to form a RED, an article around the idea of not closing a school would have to be included, but if the committee wants to form under Act 46, the provision doesn't need to be included and you wouldn't want it as part because it wouldn't be enforceable
 - Chris added that if a RED was formed, then by state statute a school couldn't be closed for at least four years
 - The committee agreed that they approved of the current language, but wanted to revisit the school closing topic in another article
- **Article 5:**
 - The committee agreed that they could outline this article more thoroughly in the report/preamble that they put together with a little more background and approved the current language
- **Article 6:**
 - Each supervisory union in the state currently has this obligation
 - Martha Heath was concerned with language when it mentions only 'Supervisory Union' even though Essex Town is a school district
 - Chris said that language could be altered

- 88 ○ The committee approved this article with the edit
- 89 • **Article 11:**
- 90 ○ Brian mentioned to the committee to not focus on the date for this
- 91 article, as we can come back to that
- 92 ○ There was a suggestion to add a comma after 'less' in the second to last
- 93 sentence
- 94 ○ Chris mentioned that if the committee decided on the 'at-large' method
- 95 for filling new board seats, then the language would need to be slightly
- 96 modified
- 97 ○ Those running for the new board seats would have to file with a town or
- 98 village clerk who is currently in place since there won't be a new clerk for
- 99 the RED at that time
- 100 ○ The committee approved the language in this article if they end up
- 101 recommending proportional representation
- 102 • **Article 13:**
- 103 ○ All districts involved currently approve their budgets by Australian Ballot
- 104 ○ Chris mentioned that the committee not have a date listed in this article
- 105 in case of emergency and the new RED Board did have to go back to the
- 106 current school boards and ask for money in terms of transitional costs
- 107 ○ This article was approved by the committee as is
- 108 • **Article 14:**
- 109 ○ Chris said that audits would need to be completed/approved by the
- 110 former school boards/directors if a RED is formed
- 111 ○ The sooner you end the responsibilities of the old boards, the sooner
- 112 they can cease to function
- 113 ○ The committee asked Grant Geisler from CCSU if it's feasible to finish
- 114 audits by December 31?
- 115 ▪ He thinks it's possible, but the schedule would need to be
- 116 bumped up because there are only a limited amount of auditing
- 117 firms available
- 118 ▪ CCSU's audits are usually finalized in January currently
- 119 ○ If Westford is advisable, then the language wouldn't need to be changed
- 120 in case they voted against joining the RED
- 121 ○ The committee approved the article with the qualifiers
- 122 • **Article 18:**
- 123 ○ The date in the article needs to be changed from 2015 to 2017
- 124 ○ Chris said that this article is present because it's required under the RED
- 125 language, also over the last 10 years this has frequently been one of the
- 126 concerns that communities have had
- 127 ○ The committee approved the article
- 128 • **Article 17:**
- 129 ○ Chris mentioned that if the committee plans on forming a RED, the
- 130 information in this article needs to be addressed

- It gives families/guardians some stability to know that at least for one year things won't change
- The article should read after the 'first year of operations' and that date would be July 1, 2018
- There were discussions around common sense exceptions, and the board would still have the ability to effect these
- The committee looked at flexibility vs. stability
- Chris said he can add language centered towards giving the board authority, based upon the individual needs of a student, to assign a student to a different school
 - But he also warned the committee that they wouldn't want to open school choice out of the gate
- The committee agreed to the language with the clarification of July 1, 2018
- The committee will come back to this article as further conversation is needed, as well as input from the current administrators
- **Article 12:**
 - Brian told the committee to ignore the current bolded language
 - The more time the new board has to address the factors in this article, the better
 - There was a question of if CCSU needed to be mentioned along with each of the other districts?
 - Chris will look into that further to see if it's appropriate
 - The committee agreed to the language in the article with that qualifier
- **Article 2:**
 - Once the new board is formed, it would have to look at opportunities for PreK students and how services are offered across the board
 - The committee approved the article

Tax Rate Modeling

- Grant Geisler explained a [set of graphs](#) that he put together, looking at tax rate modeling
- He explained the graphs, as he took a look back at the actual tax rates from FY'12-FY'16 for Westford, Essex Junction, and Essex Town, as well as what it would look like if the three had merged with no incentives, and if the three had merged with the potential tax rate incentives
- Grant also looked at an income sensitivity model that he created
- In his assumptions around transportation costs, Grant wanted to point out that they would be contracting out bus services, not buying buses
- Grant will look at capital plans at next meeting more in depth

174 **Communications Update**

- 175 • Ben Dickie went through survey results and comments received as part of it with
- 176 the committee
- 177 • The committee talked about writing weekly press releases to let the community
- 178 know what this committee is working on
- 179 • Could potentially approach the Essex Reporter about some committee members
- 180 writing perspective pieces
- 181 • These should come from an internal person on the committee who this affects

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185 **Next Meeting Date and Topic**

- 186 • Thursday, June 25, 6:30 p.m.
 - 187 ○ Continue looking at Articles of Agreement
 - 188 ▪ And what hasn't been addressed in the articles
 - 189 ○ Review finance around assets, liabilities, maintenance plans and fund
 - 190 reserves

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193 The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

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196 Respectfully submitted by Ben Dickie