

Approved 10/12/05

**MERGER TASK FORCE
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION
MEETING MINUTES
October 5, 2005**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Hugh Sweeney, Chairperson, Hans Mertens, Alan Overton, Rene Blanchard, Irene Wrenner, Alan Nye, Linda Myers, Deb Billado and John Lajza.

STAFF PRESENT: Patrick Scheidel, Town Manager, Charles Safford, Village Manager, Todd Odit, Assistant Town Manager.

OTHERS PRESENT: Chuck Lloyd, Joyce Stannard, Willis Racht, Bob Marcotte, George Tyler, Tim Jerman, John Alden, Chris Halpin, Bernard Lemieux, Jon Houghton, Lori Ernst.

Mr. Sweeney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

BUSINESS AGENDA

Public Input on Agenda Items

Ms. Stannard stated she would like to comment on the name of the community and seat of government. Ms. Stannard said that she has heard members from the past audiences and comments from members of the Task Force that they wonder why the public was not more involved in their meetings. Ms. Stannard felt that it was because the Committee has not given them anything to talk about. Ms. Stannard suggested, most importantly and most urgently either that night or very soon that they name the community, hopefully the City of Essex Junction, and name the seat of government which can be referred to as City Hall and to get the community talking.

Mr. Sweeney, with no other public input, moved the discussion to the next agenda item.

Approve Minutes of September 28, 2005

MR. NYE MOVED AND DEB BILLADO SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2005 WITH THE FOLLOWING CHANGES.

Line 65: Replace 'facility' with 'community'. Line 44 and Line 65: Replace 'Meyers' with 'Myers'. Line 129: Replace 'thye' with 'they'. Line 142: Replace 'sometime' with 'some time'. Line 148: After 'Mr. Sweeney' delete ','. After '207A' add ','. Line 154, Line 160, Line 174, Line 176: Replace 'Meyers' with 'Myers'. Line: 199: Replace 'wass' with 'was'. Line 267: After 'approval' add 'of the Trustees'. Line 316: Replace 'that\$500' with 'that \$500'. Line 322: Replace 'objectionn' with 'objection'. Line 325: Replace 'roll' with 'role'. Line 333: Replace 'in that' with 'that'. Line 359: Replace 'and BMr.' with 'B. Mr.'. Line 369: Replace 'pre' with 'pro'. Line: 392: Replace 'state's' with 'Board's'. Line 517: Replace 'conferred' with 'concurred. Line 651: Replace '840that' with '804 that'. Line 666: After 'of a' add 'single'. Line 692: Replace 'confirmedMr.' with 'confirmed. Mr.' Line 760: Replace 'LAJZA' with 'NYE'. Line 359 and Line 397 and in general: Replace 'Section 208A and B', with 'Section 208

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48 (a) and (b)'.
49

49 **MOTION PASSED 8-0-1. (Mr. Blanchard abstained)**
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51 Ms. Billado thanked the Recording Secretary and stated she was impressed with the content of the
52 minutes.

53

54 Mr. Sweeney questioned the date of approval on the minutes on the bottom of each page, and Mr.
55 Odit replied that it was a mistake and was carried over from the last format and will be changed.

56

57 **Charter Review- Continue Charter Review by Section Using Updated 1999 Charter**
58

58

59 Mr. Sweeney noted that the Task Force received an updated Charter with the changes they
60 discussed. Mr. Overton added with one or two that they did not discuss. Mr. Sweeney agreed.

61

62 Mr. Sweeney stated that at the last meeting, there was a discussion on Section 207 (a) Holding
63 Other Office. During the discussion Mr. Blanchard was not present, and there was a request to
64 table that discussion to when Mr. Blanchard returned.

65

66 Mr. Blanchard replied that he appreciated the fact that the Committee waited until he returned. Mr.
67 Blanchard read the minutes and commented on the lengthy discussion about his return. Mr.
68 Blanchard clarified that he strongly believed of the thought or the idea about making holding office
69 more available if members held only one seat. Mr. Blanchard stated that since it has become such a
70 contentious issue within the Committee with two sitting Board positions who are against it, as well
71 as a member of the Trustees who holds dual office, he felt that it was a red flag, and he agreed that
72 he does not want anything in the Charter that would hold up the process at any point along the way.
73 Mr. Blanchard suggested deleting the section restricting the holding of multiple offices and move
74 forward with the Charter review.

75

76 Mr. Overton clarified that in Section 207 (a), Mr. Blanchard would like to strike "**Except where**
77 **authorized by law, no council member shall.....**" and will simply say "No council member shall
78 hold any other city office or employment during the term....."

79

80 Mr. Sweeney asked why it was underlined. Mr. Safford replied that this section was all part of the
81 Prohibition section that was from the Village Charter. Mr. Sweeney summarized that the non-
82 bolded section was added from the Village Charter and the Task Force Staff agreed added the
83 bolded sentence. Mr. Nye in response to Mr. Blanchard's opinion expressed his support for quality
84 people who find the time and are willing to represent the community in Montpelier and through
85 election in the community. Mr. Nye felt he understood Mr. Blanchard's intent to try to get more
86 participation in government but that in his opinion, if they continued with the restriction, it would
87 not allow the community to elect who they want regardless of what other position the official held.
88 Mr. Sweeney asked whether there were any other comments and if the Board agreed to remove that
89 line or if there should be a vote.

90

91 **MR. BLANCHARD MOVED AND MR. OVERTON SECONDED IN REGARDS TO SECTION**

92 207 (a) HOLDING OFFICE TO STRIKE “ EXCEPT WHERE AUTHORIZED BY LAW, NO
93 COUNCIL MEMBER SHALL HOLD ANY OTHER ELECTED PUBLIC OFFICE DURING
94 THE TERM FOR WHICH THE MEMBER WAS ELECTED TOT HE COUNCIL.”
95

96 **THE MOTION PASSED 9-0.**
97

98 Mr. Mertens asked two questions. The first was in regards to an e-mail and when it should be
99 discussed on the Agenda. Mr. Sweeney responded that it would be discussed at the end of the
100 meeting. Mr. Mertens agreed. Mr. Merten's second question was when they were going to discuss
101 Ms. Stannard's comment about the name and location of City Hall. Mr. Mertens wondered if it was
102 a good time to discuss these issues with the good attendance in the audience that evening. Mr.
103 Sweeney recalled that the committee told the public it would be advertised first, so he preferred
104 having it on the Agenda and scheduling a time so the public could be notified.
105 In regards to Section 401, Mr. Sweeney recalled that the section was deleted, and that the
106 committee's intent was to put language in which said we want to create a zoning board and planning
107 commission as we have now, but to have the option to go to a DRB without a Charter change. Mr.
108 Overton and other members agreed. Mr Odit, referred to the September 28 minutes when Mr.
109 Sweeney stated “suggested using the language from the state law.” and remarked that the easiest
110 way to do that is to be silent on this issue in the Charter and let the State law control, and they
111 would have that authority. Mr. Odit offered that he could copy the State law and paste it in to the
112 Charter. Mr. Sweeney summarized the State law as saying that the Town can have a zoning board
113 and a planning commission or it can have a DRB. Mr. Odit confirmed what Mr. Sweeney said, but
114 Mr. Sweeney added that he would like to see the City Council or Selectboard have the option to
115 exercise their decision without having another Charter change. Mr. Odit confirmed that without
116 any language in the Charter saying there is a planning commission or there is a DRB, the Charter
117 could default to the State law. Mr. Sweeney suggested they should be clearer with the language.
118 Mr. Lajza suggested using language to refer to the statute. Mr. Odit stated that was an option, and
119 Mr. Safford and Mr. Sweeney agreed that it would be important to make it clear to avoid any
120 confusion. Mr. Overton agreed, and stated he did not want to default to state law on the two issues
121 of planning and zoning. Mr. Overton summarized three ways to address this issue. One being what
122 Mr. Odit suggested, to leave it out and default to the State's statute, two, to have a planning
123 commission and a zoning board and leave out anything about DRB because the statute states a DRB
124 can be established at anytime, or third, it could read there will be a planning commission, a zoning
125 board or a DRB. Mr. Safford described a discussion with the Trustees about a DRB and because
126 the Charter in the Village states 'planning commission' only, they would have to have a Charter
127 change. Mr. Safford commented that if the committee wants the flexibility of changing to a DRB
128 without Charter change, he would recommend inserting the State law's language to reiterate that
129 option. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Safford whether he would advise adding a Section 403 that says
130 something like ' we have a planning board, a zoning commission and if the municipality chooses, it
131 may have a DRB. Mr. Safford suggested putting it all in one heading and say 'In lieu of this, the
132 Selectboard by legislative act may approve a DRB'.
133 Mr. Sweeney summarized that the Board would start with zoning and planning as they have now
134 but give the flexibility to the new Board to create a DRB without having a Charter change.
135 Members agreed. Mr. Mertens asked what the DRB does that the other two don't. Mr. Sweeney

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136 stated that the DRB would hear the current Zoning Board hearings, which are basically appeals and
137 variances. It would also function as the planning commission for subdivision approvals while the
138 planning commission would focus on planning. Mr. Overton confirmed that the planning
139 commission does both functions. Mr. Sweeney stated that right now in the Town, they have a
140 zoning Board that does all the appeals and variances, etc. and the Planning Commission does
141 planning and site plans, subdivision, etc. and they are very very busy. Mr. Sweeney added that
142 many communities have gone to the DRB concept, which combines the Zoning Board and Planning
143 Commission hearing part, while the Planning Commission is purely planning. The Town had a
144 discussion about this issue a year ago, and the Selectboard decided that the system was working
145 well and would continue as it was. Mr. Mertens confirmed that they had a planning and zoning
146 without the DRB so that in this discussion a DRB is just an option to be determined by some future
147 council. Mr. Sweeney reported to Mr. Mertens that there is a new State law, which summarizes this
148 issue, that was adopted last year. Mr. Nye added that part of the concern at the Selectboard level
149 was that when there is a planning commission that only does planning and they do not have to
150 implement the document, then they loose the connection between the planning and how the
151 planning will be implemented. Mr. Nye stated that the Selectboard believed it better to have those
152 that are establishing the plan implement the plan in the development review process. Mr. Overton
153 stated that there are adjacent communities that have DRBs and suggested observing their process
154 and any mistakes they make to learn from first, especially if the current system of Planning and
155 Zoning is working. Mr. Overton added that the issue was not up to the committee to decide but the
156 new council.

157
158

159 Mr. Odit suggested adding a Section 403 that states, “Not withstanding Sections 401 and 402 of the
160 Subchapter, a Development Review Board may be established and its powers and obligations and
161 operation shall be under and in accordance with Vermont Statues Annotated, as they may be
162 amended from time to time hereafter.” Mr. Sweeney said that on the surface it seemed acceptable
163 and Mr. Mertens asked the staff to bring the language back to the Committee. Mr. Safford
164 suggested titling the heading as Planning, Zoning and DRB. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Safford how
165 the structure is in the village. Mr. Safford responded that the Village has Planning and Zoning
166 without a DRB which is the same process that the Town uses.

167 Mr. Sweeney asked if there were any other changes or comments up to Subchapter 9. Mr. Mertens
168 commented that he thought he understood why the Recreation discussion was moved but wanted to
169 know their schedule. Mr. Sweeney stated next week it is on the Agenda to speak with the
170 Recreation Directors and they still need to schedule a comeback meeting of the School personnel to
171 talk about Recreation. Mr. Mertens also inquired about the follow-ups from library and fire, etc
172 and asked if there was a schedule of responses from them. Mr. Scheidel explained that the Library
173 members were meeting next Monday in the morning at the Brownell Library and are diligently
174 working on the follow ups. Mr. Mertens confirmed there were a couple follow-ups from the fire
175 department and Mr. Scheidel remarked that he did not know of that status

176 In regards to Section 901 Appointment and Removal, Mr. Sweeney summarized it as saying it
177 addresses city employees and their appointment and removal by the City Manager. Mr. Sweeney
178 felt the section was non controversial and asked for comments. Mr. Overton agreed and stated that
179 the same was true for Subchapters 9, 10 and 11. Mr. Nye asked who was “the responsible

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180 administrative officer” identified in the last line of Section 901. Ms. Billado stated this was straight
181 out of the Town Charter and asked the Town who they interpret that to be. Mr. Scheidel believed
182 that the responsible administrative officer might be a joint responsibility. The police department, in
183 respect to training and fitness and certain performance duties, are self-regulated. The ultimate
184 administrative officer for appointment and removal would be the Town Manager. The Town
185 Manager appoints the Fire Chief but the Fire Chief then manages the fire department for safety,
186 training and insurance compliances, etc. Mr. Sweeney commented that it could be different people
187 depending on the situation.

188 Mr. Sweeney stated that the same situation is not true for the Village, such as in the case of the fire
189 department and Mr. Safford added that the officials in the Fire Department were elected and make
190 decisions themselves. Mr. Sweeney believed that the new community should be the way it is in the
191 Town and the Charter. Mr. Safford suggested putting a period after “manner”. Mr. Overton
192 mentioned that he always thought “responsible administrative officer” meant any of the
193 administrative officers, and that the Town Manager would be secure of their services, but he does
194 not see any harm in taking it out. Mr. Sweeney pointed out to Mr. Nye that the first line says all
195 removals by the City Manager. Mr. Nye agreed but that the last part of that sentence seemed to
196 complicate the other part. Mr. Safford suggested striking “in such manner as to insure that the
197 responsible administrative officer may secure efficient service. Mr. Sweeney agreed and asked if
198 staff saw any problem with this. Mr. Scheidel stated he did not at the moment. Mr. Sweeney asked
199 for the staff to return this language to the Committee and Mr. Scheidel stated he wanted to find out
200 more information as to why the language is there. Mr. Sweeney suggested it was more of a
201 justification statement and Mr. Scheidel agreed. Mr. Safford commented that it also could be there
202 to make sure that those people perform their duties but the language is not clear. Mr. Nye did not
203 want it to be used as a justification in a court case, and Mr. Safford agreed it could add create a
204 debate down the road.

205

206 Mr. Sweeney asked whether they could end the discussion on Section 901 and move on to Section
207 902 Personnel Rules and Regulations. Mr. Mertens asked for what reason the first sentence in the
208 section was needed. Mr. Mertens felt the paragraph read well without that first sentence. Mr.
209 Sweeney read the first sentence in Section 902 (a) The city manager or city manager's appointee
210 shall be the personnel director.” As a Manager, Mr. Safford felt it was necessary language to
211 reaffirm that the Manager is the first administrator and personnel function of the municipality, and
212 that the departments need to refer to the Manager and work as a municipality, not individual
213 departments. Mr. Scheidel added that the City Manager may also appoint a personnel director and
214 the ability to delegate those has to be described as a power of the manager by Charter.

215

216 Mr. Sweeney asked whether there was discussion about Section 902 (b) which he summarized as
217 rules and regulations. There was no discussion, so he moved to the topic of Section 903
218 Prohibitions.

219

220 Mr. Safford explained that Section 207 from the Village Charter was labeled Prohibitions as well
221 and suggested changing the name or moving it because both are titled Prohibitions. Ms. Myers
222 stated she thought Section 207 should be named something else and felt Section 903 should be
223 Prohibitions. Mr. Mertens suggested moving Section 903 under Section 207. Mr. Overton

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224 supported that change. Mr. Scheidel suggested changing the heading to Administrative
225 Prohibitions and Ms. Myers agreed with this name change for Section 207. Mr. Scheidel clarified
226 that he meant Section 903 and members agreed. Ms. Myers felt that another word should be added
227 on each Section before Prohibitions.

228

229 Mr. Safford suggested putting Section 207 as a second paragraph in Section 901 because it all deals
230 with appointment and removals. Ms. Myers clarified that the first paragraph could be (a) and the
231 second paragraph in Section 903 could be (b) and Mr. Safford stated that 901 and 902 could be (b)
232 if they wanted. Mr. Overton clarified if they meant 902 (a) and 902 (b) would have that. Ms.
233 Myers replied no, "All city employees..." in Section 901 would become (a) and then take out 903
234 and rename it 901 (b).

235

236 Mr. Odit commented that 207 is under Subchapter 2 Officers, whereas Sections 901, etc are under
237 Subchapter 9. Personnel so they are addressing different topics and suggested keeping them
238 separate. Mr. Scheidel recommended since 902 is titled Personnel Rules and Regulations that 903
239 could be retitled Personnel Prohibitions. Members agreed. Mr. Overton clarified that they would
240 add the word 'Personnel' before 'Prohibitions' on 903. Mr. Mertens supported Ms. Myers
241 suggestion to create 901 (a) and (b). Ms. Myers made an exception to the idea because 901 is titled
242 Appointment and Removal whereas 903 does not have anything to do with appointments and
243 removals. Mr. Safford and Mr. Scheidel agreed. Ms. Myers stated to Mr. Sweeney that changing
244 the title in 903 to Personnel Prohibitions solves the problem. Mr. Mertens asked whether it was
245 needed since it is under Subchapter 9 Personnel. Mr. Sweeney stated that it would be just using the
246 same language as in 902. Mr. Sweeney confirmed that the Committee delete the last half of the last
247 sentence in Section 901, pending the staff review and renamed the heading of Section 903 to say
248 Personnel Prohibitions.

249

250 Mr. Mertens felt the committee may be singling out one item in 903 and wondered if that was
251 customary or if they should be covering any kind of misconduct under this section. Mr. Scheidel
252 felt the other prohibitions were sufficiently addressed under Section 902 Personnel Rules and
253 Regulations. Mr. Mertens asked whether taking money was not covered under Section 902. Mr.
254 Safford explained that in the Village, they have an ethics policy as part of the personnel regulations
255 that includes all employees and officers and to have it in a Charter is adding emphasis to it, and for
256 some reason, the previous Committee felt that clause was particularly important to delineate. Mr.
257 Safford commented that he did not think it was meant to be limiting and **that the legislative body**
258 could cover other areas as well through policy if it so desired. Mr. Safford stated the Village has
259 hiring procedures that may not go to the Board. Mr. Sweeney suggested that the ethics policy may
260 be one of those procedures that may cover 903 or not. Mr. Sweeney asked whether this section was
261 in both the Town and Village Charters. Mr. Safford stated it is not in the Village Charter that he
262 recalls but they do have some ethics language, and the Village felt they were much better able
263 address ethics in a policy format than in the Charter. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Safford and Mr.
264 Scheidel if they were satisfied with how Section 9 read, and Mr. Safford responded that it was an
265 important principal. Mr. Sweeney asked if everything is being addressed in these sections and Mr.
266 Safford agreed that it is addressed either through policy or a Charter. However if it is in the Charter,
267 then if the Board wants a change, there would need to be a public vote. Ms. Myers did not see why

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268 the Board would consider changing it anyways, and Ms. Billado agreed and stated that it was taken
269 out of the Town Charter and there must have been a reason why it was inserted and does not see
270 any issue with it. Mr. Overton stated it was in the 1999 Charter and was not sure why. Ms. Billado
271 confirmed it was in the Town Charter.

272

273 Mr. Sweeney asked whether there were any comments to Subchapter 10, Section 1001 Laws
274 Governing, and there were no comments.

275

276 Mr. Sweeney charged on to Section 1101 Severability, and there were no comments from the
277 Board.

278

279 In regards to Section 3 Transitional Provisions (a), Mr. Sweeney stated the transition period shall be
280 a minimum of one year long. Mr. Overton felt that to truly understand the section it is necessary to
281 read all of it. Mr. Lajza suggested striking the entire section and writing a plan of merger. Mr.
282 Overton felt it was necessary for a transitional process but Mr. Lajza did not feel the need for a
283 Transition Committee. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Lajza whether he read it and Mr. Lajza replied that
284 he has read it in the past. Mr. Overton defended his position that he believed there should be a
285 transitional period, and a transition committee because there are certain details that need to happen
286 and need specific attention. Specifically, Mr. Overton referred to (e) Zoning and Planning where it
287 says there will be joint board members from each of the communities and they are going to come
288 with a mutual plan. Mr. Overton stated that there should be a transitional committee of Trustees
289 and Selectboard, three of each, to monitor the progress of other transitioning committees such as the
290 merged Planning Commission and Zoning Board. The Transitional Committee would work
291 independently on finances and contracts and specifically manage and make sure there are not any
292 conflicts in (i) which states "all assets and obligations formerly owned or held by the town and
293 village shall become the assets and obligations of the city upon the effective date of the charter."

294

295 Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Lajza if he thought there should not be a transition period at all. Mr. Lajza
296 replied no that he felt that the functions of the Transitional Committee that Mr. Overton mentioned
297 could be directed by the Managers. The Managers would have administrative expertise to put
298 towards the management of those issues. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Nye if he understood the transition
299 timing. Mr. Overton explained that the transition period is a year long, not later than July 1,
300 following the approval of the Charter by the Legislative. It then returns to the community and the
301 Trustees and the Selectboard need to create a Transition Committee. Mr. Sweeney believed that
302 Mr. Lajza is saying he wants the current Boards to act as the Transition Committee. Mr. Lajza
303 agreed. Mr. Overton clarified that the argument is simply with the make-up of the Transition
304 Committee. Mr. Lajza and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Ms. Billado asked at what point is the new City
305 Council merged. From other transition mergers he has read, Mr. Lajza believed this seemed to be
306 accomplished before the formal merger including the finances so the day of the new municipality,
307 everything is in place. Mr. Safford noted that with the other mergers, they all have a set date they
308 merge and the Charter talks about doing a lot of the work before that date. There are other ways
309 Villages merge with Towns, where everything is already in place in the Town and the Village just
310 gets folded in with little transition needs. In some situations it is a bonus if the two regulatory
311 documents are merged and in other situations, they officially merge then run the town side by side

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312 until they eventually reach the transition phase. Mr. Safford asked whether the Board wants to
313 address everything during a transition period or would they prefer to leave that for the new
314 municipality once they are merged.

315

316 Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Safford for his thoughts and it occurred to him what an interesting point
317 when he heard Mr. Safford say that the government becomes the Transition Committee. Mr.
318 Mertens offered a thought that during the seven or eight weeks that they have been together, they
319 have said on numerous times that they have passed on decision making to the new government.
320 Mr. Mertens stated that if they have a Transition Committee he felt they might say the same thing,
321 no we can't make that decision, let's let the new government make it. On the other hand, if this new
322 City Council is the Transition Committee that hesitancy won't be there. They are the new
323 government. Mr. Nye argued that there needs to be a new budget for the year the new community
324 exists. Some committee needs to prepare a budget proposal to present to the taxpayers of the
325 community. Mr. Lajza disagreed and argued the budget can be created after the communities are
326 merged and present it to the public.

327

328 Mr. Nye clarified Mr. Lajza's opinion that the Selectboard and the Trustees would be the Transition
329 Committee. Mr. Lajza replied yes in this case. Mr. Safford confirmed that the one fundamental
330 thing that needs to get done is the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, and summarized Mr. Nye's
331 comments as meaning that both managers would prepare a unified budget that would be approved
332 by both legislative bodies **brought to the voters**. Mr. Lajza replied yes, exactly. Mr. Mertens asked
333 Mr. Nye if there were any legal drawbacks to this. Mr. Nye replied that there are other items that
334 need to be functional on day one of the first of July.

335

336 Mr. Overton addressed Mr. Lajza as not understanding why he does not want a Transition
337 Committee. Mr. Overton clarified the Transition Committee is defined at least in the '99 Charter,
338 with three Selectman, three Trustees plus a seventh person, not a Selectman or a Trustee. From
339 past discussions, at that time, the two Boards had difficulty getting along, therefore they decided on
340 this structure for the Transition Committee with specific responsibilities. Mr. Overton stated that
341 the Transition Committee will not have to decide issues for the Fire Department, Library, etc. but
342 will have to be an integral part of the transition with Planning and Zoning as well as the assets, the
343 obligations, the contracts, the easements, etc. that Mr. Nye was referring to. This plan would be
344 created so that one year after the start of the process from July 1 to June 30 and then start a town
345 and move it forward with almost everything in place. Mr. Overton recapped, with reference to
346 Section 3 (b), to first get the Charter passed, second, right away start a Transition Committee with a
347 year to get the work done and then finally have the first annual City meeting that "shall occur in the
348 March preceding the July 1 effective date of the Charter." Mr. Overton asked why Mr. Nye does
349 not like this idea. Mr. Nye responded that he sees the Transition Committee that Mr. Overton
350 described as already having members from the Board and Trustee, so why not just keep it as it is,
351 with the exception of the Planning Commission which he thought should be addressed by the new
352 government.

353

354 Mr. Overton argued that there needs to be time allotted to iron out differences that exist along
355 common boundaries. Then a year later, there is a redone plan and zoning ordinance for the new

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356 government to operate as of the July 1 and the year following, the new government is ready to take
357 action. Mr. Overton and Mr. Nye argued the interpretation of the Charter in Section 3 (e) On the
358 effective date of this charter, the former town plan and village plan, and the former town zoning
359 bylaws and subdivision regulations and the village zoning bylaw and subdivision regulations... shall
360 become the plan of the city. Prior to the effective date of the charter.....” Mr. Overton recapped
361 his argument by saying that it leaves the Planning members from both towns, who know most about
362 it, to work out an overall, sensible plan. It allows the Zoning of both towns, three members each,
363 to work out the details of zoning ordinance. The Transition Committee would be supervising the
364 efforts of the varying departments who, depending on their nature, will complete the process
365 anywhere from three weeks to one year. Mr. Sweeney summarized the discussion as being the
366 existing Selectboard and the existing Trustees would effectively stay in existence for any
367 transitional period. Mr. Overton and Mr. Lajza argued that the Selectboard and Trustees are going
368 to be in existence because the merger would not be completed yet and the Boards are still in
369 existence. Mr. Safford interjected into the discussion whether there needs to be another committee
370 or let the Boards continue.

371

372 Mr. Sweeney appreciated the clarification that the Boards would still be in existence, and then there
373 would be this third Board that is a combination of the other two Boards. Mr. Overton stated Mr.
374 Sweeney used one wrong word and argued yes there would be a Selectboard, a Board of Trustees
375 because they still have their separate municipalities to govern. Mr. Sweeney added to the sentence
376 'during the transitional year' and Mr. Overton agreed at least a year, but then there would be a
377 transitional committee, and it included everyone from the two Boards, fine. Mr. Sweeney
378 mentioned that Mr. Lajza is suggesting there not be a third committee. Mr. Lajza concurred. Mr.
379 Overton explained that the former Boards created this third committee because there is enough
380 responsibility of the two Boards as it is. Mr. Sweeney admitted that he did not understand why
381 there was this creation of the third committee and Mr. Overton said that it is important to read the
382 entire transitional section and understand the timing before understanding the transition process. In
383 defense, they felt that a smaller committee, evenly balanced with one specific purpose such as this
384 Committee, which has a specific purpose of drafting a Charter and presenting a transition plan. A
385 Transition Committee made up of those Boards would have the purpose of making sure the entire
386 transition process for all departments is moving down that tract so by March of the succeeding year,
387 things are in place. Mr. Sweeney stated he understood. Mr. Nye commented that it seemed to be
388 redundant and unnecessary. Mr. Billado agreed that members from the two Boards are going to be
389 on the Transitional Committee anyways. Mr. Overton agreed and stated if they wanted to make it
390 five members from each, make it five. Ms. Billado stated that she sees some logic in what Mr.
391 Lajza is saying.

392

393 Mr. Safford asked how much the Committee wanted to decide before the merge that needs to be
394 decided. Many plans of merger that state all the ordinances will be merged and the new council
395 will delete them if they find it necessary or appropriate and the Planning and Zoning will sit side by
396 side and when the community catches its breath, the new council can move forward with a
397 comprehensive plan. So how much does this committee want to tackle prior to the effective date of
398 merger. Mr. Overton agreed that the mandate of this committee is to draft a charter and present a
399 plan for merger. It is not to decide whether there should be a zoning board or a DRB, which is for

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400 the new legislative body to decide. If this committee decides the Transitional Committee should be
401 comprised of both Boards, then fine. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Lajza what his model looked like,
402 two Boards or one Board of all ten people. Mr. Lajza preferred that the decisions should be made
403 by the Managers then brought to the Board for their approval. Mr. Sweeney pointed out that there
404 would still be issues in his view that are going to need correction and decision by a legislative body,
405 so would there be two or one body. Mr. Blanchard said one. Ms. Myers responded that, with all
406 due respect to Mr. Safford and Mr. Scheidel, they are hired. They have no say in the overall
407 general running of the community, which should fall to the Selectboard and the Trustees.
408 Therefore, a transition group should definitively be comprised of those people who have the final
409 word on the running of a community and who has been part of the process all the way through the
410 day of the final merger, whether it is three and three or the entire Boards along with the help of the
411 Managers. Ms. Billado felt Ms. Myer and Mr. Lajza were expressing the same idea that the
412 suggested transition committee should be the Selectboard and the Trustees and what a sweet way to
413 end the "Tale of Two Cities", finishing off the process working in concert with the management.
414 Mr. Lajza suggested having a joint meeting every two months and approve whatever needs to be
415 approved. Mr. Overton has no problem with this idea of including all members. Mr. Mertens
416 stated he felt more comfortable with this new idea because the model in the Charter as it stands
417 means that there still needs to be approval of the Transition Committee from both Boards. Mr.
418 Mertens proposed a solution that perhaps the entire Transition Committee are the two Boards and
419 they make the decision without deferring and from that perspective, he liked what Mr. Lajza said.
420 Mr. Lajza added that he did not see the Board's function as creating but rather approving.

421

422 In reference to paragraph (d) Mr. Overton does not mind what members are included in the
423 Transition Committee but that a Transition Committee is necessary. He also made reference to
424 looking at paragraph (c).

425

426 Mr. Safford stated that it is interesting why other communities do not have a transition committee.
427 Mr. Overton said exactly and understands why. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Safford how those
428 communities manage the merger. Mr. Safford responded that the Village merges into the Town so
429 all the decisions have already been made Mr. Safford added that the Committee may want to let the
430 Village union agreement expire so it is a not an issue when it is time to merge two union contracts
431 or have to merge personnel regulations, etc., that have two separate types of documents and instead,
432 keep one for the same department. It may be that much is already in place and does not need to be
433 reinvented. Mr. Overton reiterated that the Charter states that there is a year following passage by
434 the legislature to do the transition work. It is very specific as to when it needs to be done. Mr.
435 Safford responded most of the communities set a specific date assuming a date that it would be
436 approved by the legislative. Mr. Safford suggested that the Committee may want to take into
437 account the date of the Village union agreement to expire before setting a date. Mr. Sweeney asked
438 the date of expiration. Mr. Safford responded it was December 30, 2007 and stated there may be
439 some value in allowing that to happen. Mr. Sweeney clarified Mr. Safford is suggesting that the
440 Village union agreement should expire before the effective date of merger and Mr. Safford said yes
441 it may be easier to merge that way. Mr. Sweeney asked whether the effective date should be July 1
442 because that is start of the fiscal year. Mr. Safford advised July 1, 2008 would be the start of the
443 fiscal year so what would need to be approved by both bodies is a budget and everything else could

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444 be done side by side. Mr. Mertens questioned whether this situation, like most situations, was also
445 the Village merging into the Town. Ms. Billado stated it was not. Mr. Safford said it is possible
446 that in effect the Village would integrate into the Town's organizational structure potentially. Ms.
447 Myers said that if Mr. Mertens wanted the Village to integrate into the Town, then that could
448 happen in two days. Mr. Lajza stated that was not possible because the Charter cannot be dissolved.
449 Mr. Overton stated he was not sure about that.

450

451 Mr. Mertens commented that Mr. Safford indicated there is a certain path to follow when the
452 Village integrates into a Town and asked Mr. Safford whether this was a fairly routine easy path to
453 follow. Mr. Safford confirmed that it takes a lot of debate out of the administrative decision
454 making in the future. Mr. Mertens said he liked that and asked what are they doing wrong. Mr.
455 Safford stated that the Committee is essentially using the Town Charter and in regards to union
456 agreement and personnel regulations, trying pull together people who work under two different
457 unions in the same department which is a herculean task. Mr. Mertens commented this was a very
458 important detail. Mr. Safford suggested starting to work with the Town's union agreements, its
459 personnel system, and its accounts because it is a much larger organization from a personnel and
460 budgetary standpoint and easier to integrate the Village into rather than to start from fresh. There
461 will be work for the new city council to redo some ordinances but right now the Town already
462 adopts all the Village ordinances. There may be some policies that they and the Village may want
463 to integrate as well, but the planning and zoning stands side by side most often in other cases. This
464 can happen right up front or take more time. The two largest issues under this format to decide on is
465 to have the budget approved by both legislative bodies and any physical plant renovations approved
466 from both Boards, which could be done through the Town budget, particularly if there was a lead
467 time with the effective date of merger. The Town, however, could pass a bond to do whatever
468 needs to be done. Mr. Mertens felt that explanation was helpful and asked whether the Transition
469 Committee could in fact be the two governments given that it adopts in some part or all of some of
470 these agreements; somewhat like company A and company B becomes NEWCO but carries forward
471 all of the covenants of company A.

472

473 Mr. Overton responded by stating paragraph (h) "All contracts, agreements, trusts, and other
474 binding written documents affecting the town or village shall remain in effect on the effective date
475 of the charter (the year after it has been passed), and the city shall assume all the responsibilities
476 formerly belonging to the town and village." Then in paragraph (i) Mr. Overton read "All assets
477 and obligations formerly own or held by the town or village shall become the assess and obligations
478 of the city upon effective date of the charter." Mr. Overton argued that these areas need attention to
479 make sure that there are no conflicts, and that the Transition Committee would be the body of
480 legislature to address those conflicts. Mr. Overton spoke of what happened in Waterbury where
481 they were in the transitional process subject to the voter's approval, and it did not happen. Mr. Nye
482 stated they had a counter vote. Mr. Nye pointed out that the Town government in Waterbury was
483 going to be the government of the new community and then someone in the Village decide they did
484 not want that and they had another vote. Mr. Overton reminded the Committee that they are making
485 a Charter that is hopefully palatable, and it takes time to make it acceptable to all members of this
486 Committee before imposing the transition process. So it is not the Town becoming the Village or
487 the Village becoming the Town. Mr. Overton argued that what Mr. Safford stated was untrue, that

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488 when that 1999 Charter was drafted and Mr. Overton was the Chair of that committee, they relied
489 on the Town Charter, but they also relied on the Village proposed Charter at the time and five or six
490 other Charters that they looked at carefully. The process has brought some of the best pieces of the
491 Village and the Town Charter and certainly a lot of good pieces from the 1999 Charter and that this
492 Charter is a workable document. Mr. Overton concluded with a recommendation to delete Section
493 3 (c).

494

495 Mr. Sweeney felt they had not finished the discussion of the Transitional Committee and wanted to
496 finish that discussion before moving on with Mr. Overton's recommendation.

497

498 Mr. Sweeney stated that Mr. Lajza suggested it be five and five and Mr. Lajza confirmed and Mr.
499 Sweeney recapped that the major job of the Transitional Committee, which is stated in the Charter,
500 is to prepare a budget for adoption by the voters for the year of the implementation of the new
501 charter. Then there are additional duties in the zoning and planning as well. Mr. Sweeney asked if
502 there were other major items.

503

504 Mr. Overton added the overseeing of the other transitioning departments, the budget and contracts,
505 finances, etc. Mr. Nye argued that the budget involves more than just the budget. In going through
506 the budget, the Transitional Committee is going to be dealing with all of the departments and how
507 they are going to be functioning in that first year of transition. Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr. Overton
508 stated that if Mr. Lajza made a motion for five and five, he would second it. Mr Overton clarified,
509 two Boards and a Transition Committee. Mr. Sweeney questioned whether it made a difference
510 that there were three or five members from the Board to be on the Transition Committee, and Mr.
511 Overton felt it did make a difference. Mr. Mertens added that if this three, three, and one Board has
512 to go back to the five and five, they skip a step. Mr. Overton stated it was not really designed for
513 that to happen and defended that the three, three and one pushes the transition process along and at
514 end of the year, the two current Boards disappear. Mr. Sweeney clarified that the problem is not at
515 the end of the year, as Mr. Nye said the budget would be developed. Now, a Board of Trustees,
516 Selectboard and a third committee that will be defining what will happen with all these departments
517 and it seems complicated. Mr. Overton agreed to go with five members from each Board. Mr.
518 Overton clarified that the former committee was just trying to save some work for the members.
519 Ms. Billado asked for clarification. Mr. Overton replied five Selectman, and five Trustees.
520 Members agreed just five and five and no other member.

521

522 **MR. NYE MOVED AND MR. OVERTON SECONDED THAT THE TRANSITION**
523 **COMMITTEE SHALL BE MADE UP OF JOINT LEGISLATIVE BOARDS, THE**
524 **SELECTBOARD AND TRUSTEES.**

525

526 Mr. Sweeney clarified with Mr. Overton that he seconded and Mr. Overton replied yes.
527 Mr. Overton asked if there should be a vote and Mr. Sweeney wanted to put it up for discussion
528 first. Mr. Overton wanted Mr. Sweeney to call a vote. Mr. Sweeney said he would and asked if
529 there was anyone else who would like to discuss this one item. One member clarified just this
530 item. Mr. Sweeney responded just that one item, making the three to five.

531

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532 Mr. Scheidel asked Mr. Lajza whether the intention is to include the managers in the Transitional
533 Committee's administrative matters. Members said this was stated in the Charter. Mr. Billado said
534 she could not imagine that process happening without the managers.

535

536 **MOTION PASSED 9-0.**

537

538 Mr. Lajza agreed with Mr. Scheidel that the manager's input would be necessary. Mr. Overton
539 wanted to correct something he said. The section of City Council was based on the idea that it
540 would be two districts and when he said strike it, he meant he does not advocate as it is written
541 because on the number of districts that are decided on. Mr. Blanchard suggested revisiting that
542 paragraph and Mr. Sweeney confirmed. Ms. Billado asked what changes were made and Mr.
543 Sweeney said he felt one change was made but that the committee needs to revisit the entire section
544 on Transitional Provisions.

545

546 **Discussion of Future Agenda Items**

547

548 Mr. Sweeney stated that currently next week; they are meeting with the Recreation Directors.
549 We also do not have a date with the School Board to discuss recreation and would like to do that
550 before the end of the month. Mr. Sweeney asked if Mr. Scheidel made any contact with the Board.
551 Mr. Scheidel said he talked with Mr. Donahue who said the consolidation committee's schedule
552 became very full and it might take longer to schedule. Mr. Sweeney asked if Mr. Scheidel could
553 formally ask them to set a date to meet by the end of October. Mr. Scheidel said sure. Mr. Mertens
554 asked Mr. Scheidel if they had responses from the Recreation Department and Mr. Scheidel said
555 no, they are still meeting between the two directors and Mr. Donahue from the Superintendents
556 Office and he thought they are trying to work with the Charter and respond specifically to the
557 questions.

558

559 Mr. Sweeney asked if there were any other departments that they viewed might have potential
560 problems, such as Public Works. Mr. Sweeney summarized that Police seemed to be simple in that
561 we already have one Police Department. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Scheidel if they should schedule
562 some time with Public Works as he commented on some possible problems and are there any other
563 departments the Committee should look at. Mr. Scheidel said that Public Works and Police are the
564 two big departments in the budget, consuming 80% of the operating budget. There is some
565 information from Mr. Lutz that Mr. Safford and Mr. Odit need to see and asked if the beginning of
566 November would be a good time. Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Scheidel agreed that it was unnecessary to
567 meet with the Police but necessary to meet with Public Works. Ms. Billado asked if the Police
568 were under the same union as the Town's employees and Mr. Scheidel stated that it was different
569 union. The Police have the Police Association and the employees are under **AFSCME**.

570

571 Mr. Mertens asked what questions there would be for Public Works and felt the managers should
572 develop those. Mr. Lajza agreed. Mr. Sweeney felt it was the same questions they had for the
573 library and fire department. Mr. Scheidel suggested an organizational chart. Mr. Nye felt that they
574 needed to look at several things. There are some enterprise funds that are run for the sewer and
575 water in both towns and in the plan of transition, there needs to be some thought of whether to keep

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576 those funds separate or not. Mr. Mertens liked Mr. Safford's model to adopt the Town's procedure
577 on some of these or adopt the Village and the managers could make recommendations. Mr. Mertens
578 added that he personally would not find any information from the Public Works Director about the
579 enterprise fund meaningful. Mr. Mertens questioned that the Committee could address these issues
580 appropriately. Mr. Sweeney stated he did not want to discuss this at this time but asked should
581 there be a session with Public Works as they had with the library, fire and recreation departments.
582 Mr. Overton reiterated that Public Works should be presented to us by the managers. Ms. Billado
583 concurred. Mr. Safford asked whether there are two separate water/sewer districts or one that this
584 committee may need to decide in a Charter or in a transitional provision. Mr. Mertens asked why
585 they would not put it as one. Mr. Safford did not recommend that they be different, but that there
586 may be different viewpoints. Mr. Safford stated he has not had the chance to talk to Mr. Scheidel
587 and Mr. Odit. Mr. Sweeney did not want to discuss the issue but what to schedule. Mr. Scheidel
588 suggested that the managers give them summarized information about recommendations and then
589 after reading, they can decide whether they want to schedule a meeting with Public Works.
590 Members agreed. Ms. Myers, along the same line, suggested Mr. Scheidel and Mr. Safford present
591 the information at a meeting but if they want to put it on paper instead, then fine. Ms. Billado
592 reminded the Committee that the managers are on the Agenda in the future. Mr. Sweeney stated
593 that at the end of getting all these questions answered, he felt it would be appropriate for Mr.
594 Safford and Mr. Scheidel to present their recommendations on organization and structure. Mr.
595 Lajza stated he would like to see the managers put together the pros and cons of merging or not
596 merging the departments. Mr. Sweeney agreed and asked Mr. Scheidel and Mr. Safford to contact
597 the documented follow-ups with the fire and library and that next week they would be speaking
598 with the recreation departments.

599

600 Mr. Sweeney suggested they pick a date for the discussion of the name of the community and the
601 location of the government. Ms. Myers said we have the recreation department next week and that
602 Mr. Nye will not be here on October 19. Ms. Myers asked whether other members would be out in
603 the future. Ms. Sweeney advocated picking a date. Mr. Myers recommended that the press
604 advertise it. Mr. Overton asked whether it would be a good time to talk about districts as well. Mr.
605 Mertens felt that if the final discussion is not until the end; let us not make a big deal that
606 everybody has to be here. Ms. Billado confirmed the date as October 26, regardless of who is here.
607 Ms. Myers stated that it is not a question of whether everyone is here, but that it is a publicized
608 clear agenda that on a date certain, they are going to discuss the naming, etc. Mr. Mertens felt the
609 Committee was being too sensitive about this issue and to just do it. Members decided on a
610 location at the Maple Street Room, High School or ADL to accommodate a larger crowd. Ms.
611 Myers suggested that this Committee submit a letter to the Editor of the Essex Reporter advertising
612 the meeting and inviting public input. Mr. Sweeney asked Ms. Wrenner to help them with that
613 since she was the publicist. Ms. Wrenner responded yes and members agreed to this idea. Mr.
614 Sweeney asked if Ms. Wrenner was still creating and circulating posters around town. Ms.
615 Wrenner stated she did a couple of them but that color printing was expensive and there were not
616 any solid dates. Mr. Sweeney said this meeting would be an important one to get the public
617 involved. Ms. Myers asked if the Chairs wanted to review what Ms. Wrenner proposes. Ms.
618 Wrenner felt they should look at it. Mr. Sweeney suggested Ms. Wrenner e-mail it to everyone for
619 comments.

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620

621 Mr. Mertens asked whether districts should be added to that meeting. Mr. Sweeney felt it should be
622 left out and districts discussed at a separate time. Mr. Mertens felt it should be discussed regardless
623 who was there. It was not an issue of importance to him and wondered if everyone being there was
624 holding up the decision to talk about it. Mr. Sweeney believed it was a key discussion to have and
625 they should move forward with discussing the other current agenda item. Mr. Mertens commented
626 on the e-mail they received and could not remember what to do with correspondence and he did not
627 fully understand its meaning. Ms. Myers explained that the parents were concerned that the Town
628 programs allowed children who are potty trained versus the Village. Mr. Mertens asked if this was
629 the School program and Ms. Myers said no, it was the Recreation program. Ms. Myers stated that
630 the parents may be concerned that the Town programs might be eliminated in the course of the
631 merger. Mr. Sweeney felt this was good discussion to have with the Recreation Department next
632 week and then return to the Transitional Discussion.

633

634 **Public Input-General Comments**

635

636 Mr. Lloyd, in regards to the third committee that was discussed, stated that the ground rules for this
637 committee for a majority vote of 8 out of 10 has proven to be quite successful in helping people
638 work together and behave as one community as opposed to two wars. Mr. Lloyd would like to see
639 this carried over to the Transition Committee because it would probably be appropriate based on
640 the success of this group.

641

642 Mr. Houghton stated that in regards to the two Agenda Items, the name of the town and location of
643 the City Hall, he did not feel the name mattered too much. As far as the role of the Task Force
644 regarding the municipal office location, he felt that it should be kept within the traditional historic
645 downtown unless there is a compelling reason to relocate it outside of the downtown. As a former
646 member of the Downtown Steering Committee, Mr. Houghton believed there was a fair amount of
647 work in this area, and their findings should be revisited if anyone has not read through them again.
648 Mr. Overton acknowledged his comment and asked Mr. Houghton to attend the October 26
649 meeting.

650

651 Mr. Marcotte recommended on October 26 to also talk about the district issue and not to have it on
652 a separate meeting. He talked about those three major issues that the public is concerned about, to
653 let them have an opportunity to voice their comments. Mr. Marcotte would not like to discuss this
654 at a separate meeting and supported advertising to the public so they can discuss it.

655

656 Mr. Racht voiced a concern with the location of the town administration in proximity of five
657 corners due to the increased congestion with the Town's added population to the Village. Mr. Racht
658 asked if there had been any discussion about this as he certainly hoped. Mr. Sweeney responded
659 that they had not discussed this as a Committee but planned to do that on October 26, and he
660 encouraged Mr. Racht to go to that meeting. Mr. Mertens added that about a year ago, there were a
661 series of articles that talked about pros and cons about location and how to develop the downtown
662 of the new community to give a good first impression for potential businesses and diplomats. Mr.
663 Mertens reported that he learned that by putting in a government center, it fosters renewal and

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664 revitalization of a community, even though it may be a larger community and that it is a positive
665 result. Therefore while congestion may or may not occur, he suspects there is still a lot of empty
666 usable space and invited Mr. Racht to look in to that information.

667

668 Ms. Stannard asked Mr. Safford to confirm that the Village just won a downtown designation. Mr.
669 Safford responded it was a village center designation. Mr. Stannard asked if Mr. Safford would
670 explain what that means. Mr. Safford said it was in recognition of its historic downtown and it
671 gives the Village priority with locating consideration for state buildings and priority for
672 consideration for certain grants, and that tax credits are available to private property owners that
673 renovate the historic buildings in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's standards for historic
674 rehabilitation. Mr. Safford explained that the State is making efforts to encourage redirection of
675 public resources to revitalize the community because they feel it is important to the character, social
676 health and economical being of the State. Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Safford to talk about Senator
677 Leahy's efforts in this process. Mr. Safford said Senator Leahy obtained a 1.5 million dollar Essex
678 Junction Redevelopment Grant through ISTEA, which is federal transportation money to continue
679 with revitalization efforts of the Village Center area.

680

681 Mr. Jerman pointed out the Waterbury experience as a cautionary one because they had completed
682 the process and at the very end there was a group of people from the Town part of Waterbury who,
683 from his understanding, without prior knowledge saw that their taxes were going to go up slightly
684 and went out and lead a recall. The recall attracted a lot fewer people and it resulted in no merger.
685 Mr. Jerman cautioned that there was going to be short-term tax consequences to the merger and that
686 the Committee should make these public. Mr. Jerman appreciated the process with the support
687 from the Town and commented there will still be simple money questions that the public will need
688 to know and understand.

689

690 **ALAN NYE MOVED AND JOHN LAJZA SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

691

692 Mr. Sweeney felt that based on Mr. Marcotte's suggestion that the October meeting is going to be
693 advertised and well attended; it may be a good idea to get input on the districts. Members agreed.
694 Mr. Sweeney asked Ms. Wrenner to include those three items on the advertisement. Ms. Wrenner
695 and other members had no objection.

696

697 **THE MOTION PASSED 9-0.**

698

699

700 **Respectfully submitted,**

701 **SARAMICHELE STULTZ**

702

703 *Saramichelle Stultz*

704 Recording Secretary

705

706

Approved 10/12/05

MERGER TASK FORCE

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707

708 (THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE NEXT MERGER TASK FORCE

709 MEETING)

Approved 10/19/2005
**MERGER TASK FORCE
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION
MEETING MINUTES
October 12, 2005**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7 **MEMBERS PRESENT: Hans Mertens, Chairperson, Hugh Sweeney, Alan Overton, Deb**
8 **Billado, Linda Myers, George Boucher, Alan Nye, Rene Blanchard and John Lajza.**

9
10 **STAFF PRESENT: Patrick Scheidel, Town Manager, Charles Safford, Village Manager.**

11
12 **OTHERS PRESENT: Christy Moore, Meagan Ryan, James E. Van Orden III, Diane**
13 **Clemens, Pete Selikowitz, Brian Donahue, Mark Berry, Wendy John, Tim Jerman, Chuck**
14 **Lloyd, Bridget Meyer, Bernie Lemieux.**

15
16 **Mr. Mertens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.**

17
18
19 **BUSINESS AGENDA**

20
21 **Public Input on Agenda Items**

22
23 Mr. Mertens welcomed the public to the tenth Merger Meeting, informed the public of the Agenda
24 and invited them to make comments on the Agenda Items. There was no public input.

25
26 Mr. Mertens asked the Committee whether there were any objections to talking about the Channel
27 17 request. There were no objections. Mr. Mertens explained that Channel 17 would like to present
28 a summary of progress to date and list the important issues and discussions. Mr. Mertens told
29 Channel 17 it sounded like a good idea and that it would help get the word out to the public. Mr.
30 Mertens stated he would like to give Channel 17 some feedback from the Committee in regards to
31 the rules, the parameters, the timing, etc. and asked if any members had any ideas. Mr. Overton
32 suggested the two Chairs arrange a meeting with Channel 17 to decide the details, and Ms. Myers
33 agreed. Mr. Lajza commented that although it was a great idea, he felt it may be a couple of weeks
34 premature and should wait until more of the discussions are complete. Mr. Mertens mentioned that
35 another Committee member communicated to him a similar feeling to Mr. Lajza's about the timing
36 of the summary. To Mr. Mertens, it seemed as though the Committee felt the summary should be
37 scheduled after the completion of the Charter and after the October 26th meeting. Mr. Mertens
38 asked if the Committee was comfortable with Mr. Lajza's suggestion that the Chairs have a three-
39 way phone call with Channel 17 to work through the necessary details. Mr. Overton agreed with
40 Mr. Lajza, and stated that the Committee is very close to completion of the Charter along with the
41 Transitions section and the summary should be scheduled just after that process is complete. Mr.
42 Sweeney agreed, that it would be nice to be able to have the Charter complete and ready for
43 questions.

44
45 Mr. Mertens requested that Mr. Sweeney talk about the poster. Mr. Sweeney responded that Ms.
46 Wrenner was not present that evening, and reminded the Committee that they had asked her to help
47 publicize the October 26th meeting with a poster. Mr. Sweeney reported that Ms. Wrenner

48 produced a poster, and she wanted feedback from the Committee before circulating it around town.
49 Mr. Overton suggested spelling out "number" as opposed to the abbreviation. Ms. Myers added that
50 there should be a comma after Wednesday. Mr. Mertens stated that the traditional meeting is at
51 7:00 and lasts two hours. Mr. Mertens explained that it has been suggested to extend the meeting
52 time to accomplish what is on the Agenda, Ms. Myers suggested they change the meeting time
53 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., which adds another hour for discussion. Mr. Lajza suggested starting
54 the meeting at 6:30, and Ms. Myers felt that was too early for people as it was normally dinnertime
55 and may prevent them from coming to the meeting. Mr. Mertens asked if members agreed and
56 confirmed that the meeting time for the October 26th Merger Meeting would be from 7:00 p.m. to
57 10:00 p.m.

58
59 Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Sweeney whether he would like to talk about the districts issue and Mr.
60 Sweeney agreed. Mr. Scheidel noted that Mr. Odit was not present that evening due to a minor
61 injury. Mr. Sweeney explained that Mr. Odit was gathering examples of two districts that were not
62 the Town or the Village as an alternative to look at. Mr. Sweeney recalled that at the last meeting
63 there were some members in favor of having a three-district map available as well to refer to at the
64 October 26th meeting. Mr. Sweeney is in favor of having maps as a visual for everyone at the
65 October 26th meeting. He asked Mr. Scheidel if Mr. Odit prepared the two-district map of the
66 Town/Village. Mr. Scheidel responded that he made a two-district and a three-district map. Mr.
67 Sweeney stated that the two-district map that Mr. Odit sent him was for east-west, half and half.
68 Ms. Myers added that this was the original map. Mr. Sweeney asked the Committee whether they
69 support having a three-district map prepared, and whether there were any other district examples
70 that the Committee should request from Mr. Odit. Mr. Sweeney favored Mr. Odit's computer-
71 generated format that can be e-mailed, put on the website and can print hard copies.

72
73 Ms. Billado asked Mr. Sweeney whether the Committee is revisiting this issue because she thought
74 there was a 6-2 vote already that was put in the Charter. Mr. Sweeney agreed. Ms. Billado asked
75 since it was already voted on and in the Charter, whether the Committee is revisiting issues
76 randomly. Mr. Sweeney replied no, but he stated that at the last meeting several people mentioned
77 that the district issue should be discussed at the October 26th meeting. Mr. Boucher asked whether
78 these were the same people who voted against it. Mr. Sweeney replied no. Ms. Billado wondered
79 what the protocol was and if the Committee is randomly revisiting topics. Mr. Sweeney reminded
80 Ms. Billado that at the end of the last meeting, there was a discussion that the Committee would put
81 the district issue on the Agenda at the meeting of October 26th. Ms. Billado wanted to clarify the
82 process and asked whether the committee, after they finish the Charter, are going to revisit it. Mr.
83 Sweeney stated if the district issue is in the Charter with six votes to support it, his opinion is that
84 the Committee should try to get more than six votes. He reiterated that at the end of the last
85 meeting, there was a discussion of whether or not we should discuss the district issue on the 26th of
86 October. Mr. Sweeney thought the consensus was that the Committee agreed and asked Ms.
87 Wrenner to add it to the list on the poster.

88
89 Ms. Billado said she was trying to understand the process. Mr. Overton explained to Ms. Billado
90 that he believed that the location of the new government, the number of the voting districts and the
91 name of the merged community are essential elements of what they will be presenting to the voters.
92 Mr. Overton did not see any problem with revisiting important issues at any time during this
93 process. Ms. Billado stated that she was agreeable to revisiting issues at any time. Ms. Billado

94 asked if there was a new vote at the October 26th and someone did not like it that night, would they
95 revisit it again or stay with the majority vote. Mr. Overton felt the Committee should discuss how
96 they will address public input at the October 26th meeting, and he believed there was nothing
97 stopping the Committee to having new votes where needed. Mr. Overton reassured Ms. Billado
98 that he feels the same on these issues, but would listen to any input within reason. Mr. Overton
99 stated they need to decide how they will respond if, on the October 26th meeting, there was a lot of
100 public input. Mr. Overton concluded that he has learned from public input that these are the three
101 issues the public wants to discuss. He stated that his goal is to have the best Charter that has the
102 best chance of passing. Ms. Billado stated that she does not have any issue of revisiting the points
103 and pertinent issues in the Charter, but wondered if they are going to rehash issues every week.
104 Mr. Sweeney told Ms. Billado he thought there was consensus at the last meeting that they would
105 add this item to the discussion list for this meeting and argued that it was not random but agreed
106 upon at the last meeting. Ms. Billado agreed.

107
108 Mr. Sweeney asked the Committee whether they want visual aides or not. Ms. Myers and Ms.
109 Billado supported this. Mr. Sweeney recapped that they have two maps from Mr. Odit, a three-
110 district map and a two-district map that are not the Town or Village. Mr. Sweeney asked whether
111 the Committee wants visual aids from Mr. Odit and if so, which ones. Ms. Billado felt visual aids
112 were important for everyone, both the Committee and the audience. Mr. Sweeney asked if they
113 wanted any other examples of district maps. Mr. Nye referred to the six-district map from Mr.
114 Marcotte that they should try to transpose on the Town map. Mr. Nye also recalled someone who
115 had suggested at one point in time, a map that was close to the Village boundaries or outside the
116 Village boundaries as one of the options. Mr. Safford suggested reproducing the original map. Mr.
117 Sweeney said that Mr. Odit could put them on the computer and have him print them out for the
118 meeting. Mr. Safford suggested communicating to the public that any boundaries and number of
119 districts is possible, and the Committee is giving some examples of what it could look like. Mr. Nye
120 suggested putting the maps on the wall for everyone to view if there is a place on the wall at the
121 next meeting. Mr. Lajza suggested a projection on the wall. Mr. Sweeney clarified that Mr. Nye
122 suggested the six-district map that Mr. Marcotte submitted and another two-unit district that was
123 primarily Town and Village. Mr. Overton confirmed that the latter was the original map that the
124 Committee voted on initially. Mr. Sweeney confirmed that it was the map that was in the Charter.
125 Mr. Sweeney asked whether there was consensus to ask Mr. Odit to prepare these maps for the
126 October 26th meeting. Mr. Overton agreed that all examples should be looked at. Mr. Mertens
127 wanted to clarify whether the purpose of drawing the maps is to see how many districts can be
128 carved out in the community or whether it is to make a recommendation about boundaries at some
129 point in the future. Ms. Myers felt that once the Committee had the opportunity to look at the maps
130 and get public input, a final decision could be made that night or in the near future. Mr. Overton
131 corrected Ms. Myers that it would be a final recommendation, not a final decision, and Ms. Myers
132 agreed. Mr. Mertens confirmed that the Committee would recommend more than its two districts
133 and decide on the boundary lines.

134
135 In summary, Mr Mertens suggested that the Committee would like Mr. Odit to produce maps of the
136 Town in a number of different districts. Mr. Overton suggested two maps with two districts, a
137 three-district map and a six-district map. Mr. Mertens asked whether there were any other district
138 divisions to propose. Mr. Scheidel asked if the Committee wanted these for the next meeting or for
139 the October 26th meeting. Mr. Mertens said either way would be fine, and Mr. Sweeney agreed.

140 Mr. Nye in reference to the last meeting, clarified that it was the public input that drove the
141 discussion of having the districts put on the Agenda for the October 26th meeting. Mr. Mertens
142 thanked Mr. Nye and asked for any other comments on this issue or on any other issue. There were
143 no other comments.
144

145 **Approve Minutes of October 5, 2005**
146

147 **HUGH SWEENEY MOVED AND DEB BILLADO SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE**
148 **THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 5, 2005 WITH THE FOLLOWING CHANGES:**
149

150 **Line 71: Replace “that” with “who”. Line 116: Replace “City Council” with “Charter”.**
151 **Line 136: Replace “here” with “hear”. Line 137: Delete “,” after “function”. Line 140: Add**
152 **“.” after “etc”. Line 147: Add “,” after “issue”. Line 172: Add “meeting” after “were”. Line**
153 **210: Replace “administrative” with “administrator”. Line 212: After “departments” add “.”**
154 **Line 266: Replace “Mr.” with “Ms.” Line 273: Replace “not” with “no”. Line 308: Replace**
155 **“Charters” with “regulatory documents”. Line 388: Replace “Mr.” with “Ms.” Line 442:**
156 **Delete “in a capital plan” after “side”. Add “.” after “side”.**
157

158 **MOTION PASSED 8-0-1. (Mr. Boucher abstained)**
159

160 Mr. Overton asked if the Charter could be corrected at this time and Mr. Mertens suggested waiting
161 because there were guests ready to give a presentation and to wait until they continue with the
162 Charter discussion.
163

164 **Town and Village Park and Recreation Department**
165

166 Mr. Mertens welcomed Mr. Selikowitz, Mr. Donahue and Mr. Berry. Mr. Mertens explained that
167 they had developed a series of questions several meetings ago with the intent to help the Committee
168 think through how the various dual functions in the Village and Town might better serve the
169 community in a merged setting. One of the more involved departments that would be affected by
170 the merger were the Recreation Departments. Mr. Mertens stated that tonight would be the
171 discussion with both Recreation Departments in regards to these questions and their responses. Mr.
172 Mertens confirmed that the Recreation Departments were aware that members from the Education
173 Boards were here several weeks ago to address some of the issues and asked Mr. Selikowitz, Mr.
174 Donahue and Mr. Berry to give the Committee additional information to help them with their
175 mission. Mr. Mertens asked whether they had a formal presentation prepared and to make
176 introductions to the Committee. Mr. Pete Selikowitz introduced himself as the Director of the
177 Essex Junction Recreation Department, Mr. Brian Donahue introduced himself as the Chief
178 Operations and Finance Officer for Chittenden Central Supervisory Union, and stated he has the
179 chief responsibility to oversee Recreation and Parks in the City of Essex Junction, and Mr. Mark
180 Berry introduced himself as the Director of Parks and Recreation for Essex.
181

182 Mr. Donahue stated he worked with both Directors to prepare information for the committee in
183 response to their questions, and he circulated that information for all Committee members. In
184 regards to the information, he pointed out that the outline addresses specifically the questions that
185 were presented to the Directors. The questions asked them to address what the current organization

186 funding mechanisms are for the two organizations, what the programmatic differences were if any
187 existed, the strengths and weaknesses operating a parks and recreation via a school system or the
188 strengths and weakness operating a parks and recreation via a municipal government, a vision of a
189 merged department and a transition time line.

190
191 Mr. Berry explained the vision of Essex Town, and stated that their vision was to “Advance Parks
192 and Recreation efforts that enhance the quality of life for the Community of Essex.” In brief
193 history, the Town Recreation Department started in 1971 as a summer playground program. By the
194 summer of 1972, it had grown to a part-time department and had its first full-time director in 1979.
195 Since then, the Department has grown considerably and now undertakes six areas of responsibility
196 including the senior bus, Sandhill Park and Pool, cemetery maintenance, recreation and the
197 Extended School Program. They serve both communities, Essex Town and Essex Village, although
198 they do not maintain any of the parks in the Village. The first expenditure for the Town Recreation
199 was in 1969, and between 1969 and 1997, the Town spent approximately \$715,000 on recreational
200 facilities. The current value is \$3.8 million. In the past five years, the Town has spent \$400,000
201 making improvements to the Parks and Recreation facilities, including \$45,000 to Tree Farm. Mr.
202 Berry stated they have been quite successful in obtaining grants over the years so that the latter
203 figure is not the actual amount the Town has paid for because much of the costs were covered by
204 grants. In carrying out their mission, the Essex Town Department in 2004, sent out a
205 comprehensive recreation needs survey inclusive of the entire Essex Community, and the survey
206 was used as the foundation for making decisions and developing a five-year plan.

207
208 The Essex Parks Department is a small department. There are only four full-time employees, but
209 the number grows considerably during the summertime when we work closely with and depend a
210 lot on organizations and volunteers to help run the programs. Since the year 2000, the number of
211 programs has increased from 60 to over 200. Revenues have increased from \$65,000 to \$238,000
212 as of 2005 in order to meet the constant rising needs of the community. Essex was the first
213 municipality in the State to have on-line registration which began in September, 2005. The survey
214 results showed 86% of those participating in programs felt that the quality was very good or good,
215 and 89% felt the service they received was excellent.

216
217 In regards to the Essex Town Budget information, Mr. Berry clarified that the Program Revenue
218 was the budget revenue not the actual revenue, which was higher. Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Berry if
219 the actual revenue was for '04. Mr. Berry responded that it was for both '04 and '05. Mr. Mertens
220 asked what the fiscal year was, and Mr. Berry replied it was July 1 to June 30. Mr. Overton
221 clarified that Mr. Berry said that \$238,000 was the actual number, and the actual number and the
222 budgeted number are not the same. Mr. Mertens asked why there was such a large increase of
223 Program Revenue from '04 to '05. Mr. Berry responded that they are constantly adding programs,
224 and their summer camps are getting bigger all the time.

225
226 In regards to the organizational structure, Mr. Berry pointed out the four squares that were gray and
227 explained that those symbolized full-time employees. There is a full-time Director, Office
228 Secretary, Program Coordinator and Parks Supervisor. Mr. Berry asked whether there were any
229 questions from the Committee regarding the organizational structure. Mr. Boucher stated that the
230 Village Parks and Recreation budget is separate from the municipality budget ;and asked whether
231 the Town's Parks and Recreation budget is derived from a general fund, and Mr. Berry said yes.

232 Mr. Nye added that funding also comes from program dollars. Mr. Scheidel asked what percentage
233 of the programs are self-sustaining. Mr. Berry stated that their goal is to have all of their programs
234 self-sustained, but it is not always possible. The senior programs typically don't break even, the
235 teen programs don't break even, and obviously all the parks they manage do not generate enough
236 money to cover the costs. Mr. Overton clarified that anyone in the Town or Village can take part in
237 the Essex programs, and Mr. Berry replied yes that they are all considered Essex residents. Mr. Nye
238 clarified that the full-time staff was in gray, and asked how many part-time staff there were such as
239 the senior bus drivers. Mr. Berry responded that there are four senior bus drivers that drive
240 between nine and sixteen hours a week. Mr. Nye asked if the paid staff grows over the
241 summertime, and Mr. Berry replied well over 100. Mr. Berry added that it is actually larger than
242 that all year long if you include all of the instructors for all of the programs. Ms. Billado asked if
243 the value was 3.8 million and included Indian Brook, and Mr. Berry replied yes. Mr. Berry added
244 that he did not know the actual value of Indian Brook, but that he felt it was priceless. Ms. Billado
245 asked whether the Essex Parks gets aide from any Federal grants, and Mr. Berry stated he did not
246 have an exact figure, but suggested \$60,000 in the last five years.
247

248 Mr. Overton asked Mr. Berry why the cemeteries fell under the organizational structure of the
249 Parks and Recreation. Mr. Berry replied this has been the structure for the last six years that he has
250 been Director. Mr. Boucher asked who owned the cemeteries, and Mr. Berry replied the Town
251 owns the cemetery. Mr. Blanchard asked whether the increase from '04 to '05 of Program Revenue
252 was related to the number of programs that they are running and whether they ask for more tax
253 dollars. Mr. Berry replied no, but that he asks his staff to work a little bit harder to offer more
254 programs. Mr. Nye commented that when a program is being added, they begin to look at how this
255 program is going to be paid for. The first step is to see if participants will pay for the program. Mr.
256 Blanchard agreed and confirmed there are fees for certain programs. Mr. Nye and Ms. Myers stated
257 that every program has a fee. Ms. Myers reminded Mr. Blanchard that every year there are salary
258 increases, benefit increases, etc. and usually equipment needs that are expensive as well. The
259 increases are mostly generated by the staff increases in salary and benefits for the full-time
260 employees. Mr. Blanchard assumed that part-time employees are not getting benefits. Ms. Myers
261 confirmed this, but added that the salaries increase for all employees. Ms. Billado asked whether
262 Mr. Berry what percentage of the budget is salaries and benefits. Mr. Mertens asked whether it
263 was okay to move on while Mr. Berry was looking for this figure in his information.
264

265 Mr. Selikowitz informed the Committee that he and Mr. Donahue would be making a presentation
266 together for the Village Parks and Recreation Program. Mr. Selikowitz spoke of the Village
267 mission which states "Our mission is to provide quality recreation programs, facilities and parks to
268 meet the needs of the Essex Junction community." Mr. Donahue stated he has only been with this
269 organization since 2000, and he recognized that in the room there were a number of people who
270 predate his knowledge of Essex Junction Recreation. Mr. Donahue and Mr. Selikowitz' knowledge
271 of the history begins with the Prudential Committee in the beginning of the 1970s. Over time, the
272 organization has progressed. Maple Street Park continues to be a signature location for the
273 Recreation Program. The aquatics have been central to Recreation. Since about 2000, they have
274 taken a major expansion in the history of the operation to a more full-year approach and full
275 contingency of programs in the same way the Town has. Mr. Donahue explained that the
276 Recreation budget has grown from \$400,000, when he began his work with the finances of the
277 Parks and Recreation Program, to a recent \$1.1 million dollar budget. As program expenditures

278 have increased, there has been an attempt to reduce the dependency on tax dollars. The amount of
279 money coming from tax revenues as opposed to program receipts has been decreasing over time.
280 They were successful in FY'06 to complete a budget and create a level tax rate for the third year in
281 a row. A number of years ago, the Prudential Committee made a decision that due to the size of
282 the physical plant and the stewardship of the parks, they would introduce to the voters a special one
283 cent article that was voted on separately. That one cent goes directly to capital, and for the first
284 number of years they saved money to put towards paving the parking lot at the Maple Street Pool.
285 Currently, they are saving to address other issues in the infrastructure of the recreational
286 community.

287
288 Mr. Donahue explained the financial picture and budget for Essex Junction by stating that at FY'04,
289 they started to create that level tax approach where the Prudential Committee recognized the Parks
290 and Recreation as a separate stand-alone budget, separately voted through Australian ballot and is
291 on the municipal grand list not the educational grand list. Therefore, it is always operated with a
292 high degree of independence on it's taxes and then separately, it is listed on our itemized tax bills so
293 people can see the recreation tax. In the modern day of that \$916,000, there were \$490,000 coming
294 from the tax revenues, the rest were program receipts, and similar to the Town, there are some
295 programs that cannot be self-sustaining, but are community demanding, such as the Fourth of July.
296 The residents of Essex would not go without a Fourth of July celebration and the Recreation
297 Program would never charge admission for a program that joins the community in celebration. As
298 a result, other programs may have to make additional receipts in subsidizing non-charging
299 programs. The Prudential Committee, in the time that Mr. Donahue has been present, has been
300 really direct with Recreation in saying that it wants to lower that tax burden, ensure that level tax,
301 expand programs and have programs be self-sustaining in an aggregate, not in isolation. This is
302 because there are some programs that if you charge, you won't serve the population you are trying
303 to serve. At the same time, there are other programs with the demand and capacity to produce
304 revenue.

305
306 In reference to the organizational chart, Mr. Selikowitz stated there are four full-time employees
307 and that the shaded areas on the Chart do not mean they are all full-time positions. The full time
308 positions are Director, Administrative Secretary, Assistant Director and a Program Supervisor
309 which is a new position that was just added about eight weeks ago as a result of demand. Mr.
310 Selikowitz pointed out the other shaded areas which represent interns who share learned
311 experiences, and a half-time Department Secretary who works in the morning because of the need
312 during those times. Mr. Selikowitz explained that there are similar types of programs as in the
313 Town such as programs for seniors, young adults and preschool. Mr. Boucher made an inquiry as
314 to the new position. Mr. Selikowitz explained that the new position was a Program Supervisor,
315 which was filled by Megan Ryan from Fairfax. Mr. Donahue added that the Village also
316 experiences the same personnel inflation in the summertime, and there are probably about 260 W2s
317 for Parks and Recreation not including the volunteers. For example, this summer soccer season
318 there are 648 children participating and there are about 50 volunteers. Mr. Selikowitz does a
319 similar soccer program and also has volunteers. Mr. Selikowitz believed that the demand is high for
320 recreation programs of all ages.

321
322 Mr. Donahue pointed out that the assets of Parks and Recreation are owned by the Village. The
323 Prudential Committee has the stewardship responsibility over those lands currently and maintains

324 them. Therefore, they use shared services from the high school, augmented by groundskeepers,
325 which are utilized highly in the summer to maintain the lands. The recent construction of the pool
326 has a recent municipal bond and as of 12/31/04 the total outstanding balance was just below 1.6
327 million dollars in remaining debt. That issuance was given on July 22, 1999, and it is in the name of
328 Essex Junction School District and goes out to 2019. Mr. Overton asked how that was amortized.
329 Mr. Donahue stated it was through the bond bank, so it is on a declining interest municipal bond
330 rate. There are increments of five years, and they have \$105,000 annual payment and then a
331 \$96,000 principal for a total of just under \$200,000 a year. Mr. Mertens asked what the rate was on
332 the bond. Mr. Donahue replied that the average rate across the life of the bond is 4.225. Mr.
333 Mertens asked whether that was a tax rate. Mr. Donahue responded that it is through the bond bank
334 so it is the tax rate and people purchase it. Mr. Mertens asked about the last few years that were low
335 interest rates. Mr. Donahue said there were a number that were recalled, but that this one was not.
336 There was a Westford bond that was recalled and a couple of others that were higher. It was not so
337 much in 1999, as some of the other renovation bonds that were issued earlier. Mr. Donahue stated
338 that they did not have the authority to recall under the bond bank regulations. Mr. Overton clarified
339 his question as whether the source of funding the amortization comes from the Village, the school
340 budget or from revenue. Mr. Donahue replied it was from Parks and Recreation revenues and a
341 separate recreation tax. He explained that first, they try to construct the financial picture of
342 recreation, take those tax receipts and have them paid for the pool debt and administrative
343 overhead. Then financial concept is that the taxes are buying the opportunity to have the facilities,
344 the administration and the opportunity for the Recreation and Parks to occur. Then beyond that if
345 you want to participate in programs and camps and classes and workshops, then that is the program
346 receipts and those need to be self-sustaining. Mr. Nye asked whether the recreation capital penny
347 was included in the revenue structure they are presenting. Mr. Donahue stated that they operate the
348 recreational even though it is a municipal entity, under Title 16, a school governance bend. So
349 they went to the taxpayers and established a formal capital reserve contingency fund for recreation
350 and parks, similar to the Prudential Committee tax. Each year, this tax goes to a vote to continue
351 funding it. Part of the obligation to this fund is to publish a capital plan that shows how the money
352 will be spent, and that capital plan is the document of the Board, not the administration. Mr.
353 Mertens asked what is the balance of that plan. Mr. Donahue stated it was low at the present time
354 because its purpose was to do the paving of the parking lot. Off a penny, they estimate about
355 \$63,000 to \$65,000 on a grand list basis. During the past few years, they saved enough to be able
356 to complete the paying project. In '06, there are enhancement and infrastructure projects to be done
357 that include new playground equipment, picnic tables, the basketball courts and the tennis courts.
358 Mr. Mertens asked what the current balance was. Mr. Donahue responded that the current balance
359 would be approximately \$63,000 to \$65,000. Mr. Sweeney asked if that was the figure that was
360 raised per year and Mr. Donahue replied yes. The grand list is 6.2.

361
362 Mr. Blanchard asked if the equipment came out of their budget. Mr. Donahue replied that there is a
363 shared cost between the Recreation and the schools. There are two independent school districts, an
364 incorporated school district with a Prudential Committee and a Union School District. When they
365 were one, they had the services of trades and grounds. When they became two, they started using
366 shared services a lot. Union 46 has all those gross costs in their budget and then they receive
367 revenue from Essex Junction for services that they have previously received, always working one
368 year in the rears. The Prudential Committee charges the Recreation Department, based upon the
369 same algorithm money, and they receive money for shared services. It contracts from the High

370 School but Recreation consumes. It is a process to make sure that the school district, all of sudden
371 in losing a shared service, does not have the budget capacity to pay for those services any longer. If
372 Essex Junction Recreation Department became separate from U46, they would have to find the
373 money and resources for these shared services such as electricians, mechanics or inspectors. Mr.
374 Nye confirmed with Mr. Donahue that they charge for a year and then gets paid back from the
375 school district the next year. Mr. Donahue said yes and gave an example that when they go to
376 budget, there were this many hours of service and the materials are usually implanted into the
377 budget for the project for the capital funds. The office would be paid for in budget all materials, the
378 labor would catch up in subsequent fiscal year. It is done to achieve a given rather than a variable
379 because variables are very difficult to deal with in appropriations budget with large expenditures.

380
381 Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Berry how the Town Recreation Department manages capital expenditures
382 when needed. Mr. Berry stated that the Town develops a capital budget and he makes a request.
383 The funding for that request can come from many different places such as Recreation fees, grant
384 money or capital penny. Mr. Nye confirmed with Mr. Berry that the Town Recreation also had a
385 capital penny and Mr. Berry answered just for Community Recreation. Ms. Myers commented that
386 the Village Recreation budget is twice the amount as the Town Recreation budget. She asked what
387 it was that the Junction is providing that the Town is not or how do you explain that. Mr. Donahue
388 explained that first, the capital debt needs to be stripped from the sum, which is about \$200,000 and
389 that it is not comparable. **The Town does not obligate this recreation program service, but absorbs**
390 **it, except Indian Brook.** Mr. Nye commented that Indian Brook is not identified in the recreation
391 budget. Mr. Donahue stated that the \$200,000 is one of the capital payment issues that would
392 create a material difference. Mr. Selikowitz added that the licensed childcare was a huge financial
393 piece as well, they took over from the YMCA five years ago. Mr. Mertens asked if it was self-
394 supporting, and Mr. Selikowitz stated yes and then some. Mr. Mertens asked for some sort of a
395 equivalent number or cost per capita or per user. Mr. Selikowitz clarified that he was asking about
396 comparing the two towns and said that was something they have not done. Mr. Scheidel stated they
397 could prepare the information. Mr. Mertens suggested to put that aside for the moment and believed
398 that Ms. Myers asked a good question as to what is the difference. Mr. Sweeney asked whether
399 there was a high level pie chart to show what percentage goes to what function. He would be
400 interested in learning what percentage goes to the preschool, versus school age, versus adult, versus
401 the senior and how that compares between the Village and the Town.

402
403 In response to Mr. Sweeney, Mr. Donahue explained that the outcome of the pie chart would show
404 some differences, but not a night and day between the Village and the Town. He referred to the
405 information on Programmatic Differences and stated that the licensed childcare is a definite
406 difference. He explained that there is an intensity to licensed childcare that is different. Mr.
407 Donahue added that they also provide preschool and non-licensed preschool programs. Mr.
408 Sweeney asked if the preschool was daycare. Mr. Donahue stated it was fully licensed childcare
409 which is subsidized through state reimbursement and is open to the general public. Mr. Blanchard
410 questioned if it was year round, and Mr. Selikowitz stated that it was. Mr. Donahue continued his
411 presentation on Programmatic Differences with the Festival Series. The intensity of the Festival
412 Series is also a difference. The cemetery and the Senior vans are also big differences between the
413 communities. He added there was no transportation available in the Village other than Senior trips.
414 The Park Land Stewardship is a big difference in that the Village has nothing compared to Indian
415 Brook and Saxon Hill in Essex. Mr. Donahue was hesitant to give a per user number because in the

416 school world they are always trying to figure out that per pupil number, and there are so many
417 definitions to uncover before getting to the most exact number, but he agreed to work on the pie
418 chart.

419
420 Ms. Myers wondered who maintains the cemeteries in Essex Junction. Mr. Safford noted they were
421 all private in the Village. Mr. Nye asked for a ballpark figure for how much licensed childcare runs
422 in the budget. Mr. Donahue said it would be easier for him to give the revenue generated from
423 licensed childcare. Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Donahue whether he could confirm that the per pupil
424 charge is not being subsidized by taxes. Mr. Donahue stated that it very possibly could be, but it is
425 their philosophy as they build the budget that they look for those tax dollars to take care of those
426 core infrastructure items and the administrative overhead. Some of the programs are incredibly
427 susceptible to weather, so the revenue is susceptible. Therefore, there could be times where there is
428 excess revenues and less demand on any tax dollars, but there are times, for example, that it is wise
429 for them on a safety basis to have a higher ratio of instructors to kids based upon what they are
430 doing. In this case, the decision will be made on a safety basis as opposed to whether that one
431 program is going to be self-sustaining. The licensed childcare programs bring in about \$211,000
432 out of \$1.1 million. Mr. Nye suggested that if you take that amount and the debt amount for the
433 Village, the two Recreation budgets become more closely aligned. Mr. Mertens suggested they
434 discuss Strengths and Weaknesses.

435
436 Mr. Donahue recapped the question they addressed as being “what are the strengths and
437 weaknesses to the program if operated via the school system.” He clarified the question as being
438 not the strengths and weaknesses to the community or to the entity that operates them, but the
439 strengths to the program. First, they felt that the school relationship provides a “sense and respond”
440 programming opportunity aimed at the school age population, which is the majority of the
441 population served in Essex Junction right now. Mr. Selikowitz added that it was 83%. Secondly, a
442 separately voted on budget creates insulation from outside pressures. It is not competing with
443 resources with the net silo, but does compete against tax resources or the tax burden. Mr. Donahue
444 stated that thirdly, there is access to shared services presently managed by the school districts such
445 as custodian, maintenance and trades. Fourth, there is access to grant dollars normally directed
446 exclusively to school districts such as English Language Learners. Fifth, there is access to
447 specialized experts in the area of special education, child nutrition and curriculum. There is not
448 access to the dollars to support children with special needs, but to the expertise from specialists
449 hired by the schools.

450
451 Mr. Mertens asked whether the access to these services is easier than perhaps the Town because the
452 Recreation Department is under the umbrella of the school system. Mr. Donahue replied that
453 currently the Prudential Committee pays an assessment to the Supervisory Union that together
454 create the economic opportunity to hire a Special Education Director, Superintendent, Food Service
455 Director and Curriculum Coordinator. Recreation pays a portion of that assessment. They pay
456 access to an in-house attorney, an HR Director and a Curriculum Coordinator, so they have access
457 to that type of expertise. However, Mr. Donahue stated that if there was a high need in an after-
458 school program, he believed that Terrance Keating, the Special Education Director of Essex Town
459 would certainly help out. In regards to Essex Junction Parks and Recreation it is within the
460 assessment and resources that the Prudential Committee has already paid for. Mr. Mertens
461 suggested there may be opinions from people who may see dollars being shifted from the Education

462 budget to the Recreation budget to pay for positions, and that there is very little benefit to that
463 Recreation Department and the people who have paid for that Recreation Department and that it is
464 really a way to level out the education payments. He asked Mr. Donahue what his explanation
465 would be. Mr. Donahue responded that he would look at what are the services that are being
466 consumed by Recreation that we're concerned are dollars flowing to the school system. Mr.
467 Mertens asked for the sake of discussion would Mr. Donahue say about 5% of this position is being
468 paid for by the Recreation. Mr. Donahue stated no, it would not be that. Mr. Mertens suggested
469 1%. Mr. Donahue stated that the Recreation Department pays 10% of Essex Junction's assessment,
470 10.1% of the assessment, of the annual report cost, the School Board costs, etc. These are
471 considered the shared services. At 10%, Recreation is paying 36% of the overall assessment so it is
472 10% of 36%. Mr. Mertens asked if it was a little under 4%. Mr. Donahue stated that in some of
473 those areas, such as special education, there is a considerably less amount of service, so they do not
474 pay for the entire amount, they net some of that out. Mr. Mertens asked whether it was 2%. Mr.
475 Donahue stated he would be happy to return to the Committee prepared with numbers to be more
476 exact.

477
478 Mr. Donahue suggested starting with the obvious and then talk about the more obscure. The
479 obvious is that Recreation does not have any facilities or ability to do its own business services. Its
480 assessment that it pays to the Prudential Committee is put to the Supervisory Union and allows
481 Recreation to get paid, have a budget, a bank account, treasury services, cash banking services and
482 those functions. It also allows them to be audited and be included in the financial statement and
483 audit financial statement. They are also included in a publication of an annual report that is
484 produced by the Central Office which satisfies some of their Title 24 requirements. Mr. Donahue
485 asked the Committee to recognize that their assessments are charged based on an algorithm of not
486 time spent but are based upon FTEs and starts off with comparing all the teacher FTEs, then it looks
487 at Recreation that does not have any teacher FTEs and they convert the 260 W2s which includes the
488 mandatory training, mandatory reporting, harassment, bullying, which are all laws by the State of
489 Vermont, that Recreation has to adhere to as part of a school district. Mr. Donahue thought it would
490 be a simple task to prepare that information having the question to refute what some one might feel
491 is a transfer of dollars and whether they are really getting that value. What they would find is that
492 perhaps not all the dollars necessary for the services received are going to it. There is probably no
493 charge happening right now on a per check basis for payroll coming out of the Recreation program.
494 Payroll service would be an aggregated service that they charge to that department.

495
496 Mr. Mertens asked whether Mr. Donahue was saying that it is actually less costly to do business if
497 you are not associated with the school, so that it is less costly in the Town than in the Village. Mr.
498 Mertens explained that he thought Mr. Donahue said that there is a number of obligations for
499 bullying, etc. that the Prudential Committee adheres to. Mr. Donahue was not sure if he had put
500 those obligations into an economic impact. They were obligations that were there and that they
501 have the services that are paid for already that provide them that opportunity. Mr. Donahue
502 suggested Mr. Mertens may have misheard when I said that it was more costly.

503
504 Mr. Nye asked whether the 10% of the budget was a curing charge. Ms. Billado reiterated that it
505 was 10% of the 35% assessment goes to the Recreation Department. Ms. Billado asked what that
506 would be in dollars. Mr. Donahue stated that the Parks and Recreation Program in the FY'06
507 proposed budget taken with the Supervisory Union assessment is \$79,000. Therefore, for that

508 \$79,000 Parks and recreation is afforded all its payroll and human resource services, access to the
509 in-house council, to the Chief Executive Officer of the Superintendent, the Assistant
510 Superintendent, the Chief Financial Officer, Business Officer, Accountant, Payroll Clerk, Treasurer
511 and Special Education when that expertise is required. Ms. Billado reiterated that those were the
512 services provided for the \$79,000 budget and asked whether any services were charged a year later.
513 Mr. Donahue stated that currently they are in the process of developing a draft budget for FY'07 at
514 the Supervisory Union level. That would go to a tentative basis where it would be not to exceed SU
515 assessment. Each entity can stretch through their budgeting. That is the number that is then
516 divided by 10.1% and that will change based on what happens with FTE council. If they had a
517 major influx of new teachers or a major reduction of teachers, the percentage of FTE comparison
518 would change.

519
520 Mr. Overton suggested moving the discussion on to the more important part of their presentation.
521 The information they are giving is extraordinarily interesting and very well presented, but much of
522 their discussion should be for the new Council and would like the committee to hear the issue of
523 what a pseudo-merger would look like and what would be their recommendations. Mr. Mertens
524 thanked Mr. Overton as he and Chair Sweeney were just considering the time and discussion at
525 hand.

526
527 In regards to the next slide, Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Donahue and the Directors as to why it states
528 "Best Model for Administration per Essex Town" and not the merged community. Mr. Donahue
529 stated that the question that was asked was "What do you believe to be the best model?". He felt
530 that in discussions with Mr. Scheidel and Mr. Berry that they could speak very clearly and
531 articulately about what they believe the best model is. However, Mr. Selikowitz and Mr. Donahue
532 are not in the position to speak to what they believe is the best. They feel they need to leave that to
533 the governing Board and the Prudential Committee. Mr. Mertens asked if they were able to meet
534 with the School members to get feedback for this presentation. Mr. Donahue stated he left that
535 question to them and their ability to answer it. Mr. Sweeney clarified the question as being "If we
536 recommend merger of the municipality, what is their recommendation of the structure that they
537 should consider adopting, whether it is a good model or not. Mr. Sweeney stated that the other
538 departments such as the Library and Fire Department are non-standard and emphasized that they
539 need recommendations and time to discuss the Recreation Department as it is a different situation.
540 Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Selikowitz and Mr. Donahue whether they had a recommendation if the
541 communities merged and whether the merged drawing was a joint recommendation. Mr. Donahue
542 responded that he completed this drawing based on the request from the Committee to present what
543 it would look like if the communities merged. Mr. Mertens asked whether there was a joint
544 recommendation, and Mr. Donahue responded not this evening. It was confirmed by Mr. Donahue
545 that the drawing was the work of Mr. Selikowitz and Mr. Berry. Mr. Mertens confirmed that it was
546 from both park Directors, but was not a joint recommendation. Mr. Donahue stated that Mr.
547 Selikowitz and he are not in the position to recommend that model. Mr. Donahue stated that in his
548 position as an administrator, and not as an elected official, he could not make that recommendation.

549
550 In regards to the Best Model slide, Ms. Myers asked what other Recreation Department was
551 managed by a school district other than Essex Junction. Mr. Berry replied Montpelier. Mr.
552 Selikowitz added that out of 251 communities in the State of Vermont, 33 have Parks and
553 Recreation Departments. Three of those do not have full-time Directors, 30 of them do. Out of

554 those 32, Essex Junction and Montpelier are under the school administration.

555
556 Mr. Donahue pointed out that on the Organizational Chart there were two gray areas that they felt
557 would be necessary personnel to add if there were a merger. These positions needn't be full-time
558 full-year but some type of support positions. Mr. Mertens asked for Mr. Donahue to explain why.
559 Mr. Donahue responded it was because of the concentration and focus of the pools and the
560 magnitude of managing those resources and serving more people. In a merged community, there
561 might be an influx of participants in either town's programs. The management of two pools and the
562 number of water safety people and training and oversight because of the nature and liability made it
563 important to have a Head of Aquatics position. Mr. Sweeney asked if there were any reductions as
564 there may be overlapping services in a merger, such as the Director position. Mr. Donahue felt that
565 the structures that they do not house themselves but require externally are duplicate right now.
566 Much of the services they house themselves as departments is not overly redundant. There would
567 not need to be two HR departments. Mr. Sweeney questioned the need for additional people in the
568 merger with two exceptional Recreation Departments. Mr. Donahue stated that based on the
569 discussions with the two Directors, the Town assessment and the early findings from Mr.
570 Selikowitz five-year-plan, there is not a shortage of expectations for high quality services. What
571 they are seeing in the surveys and demand curves is that these organizations are forever changing in
572 high demand. They believed a merger would create a synergy that would attract more demand, not
573 create a status quo demand. Mr. Sweeney believed that those increases would be created by
574 demand not merger. Mr. Mertens commented how much work is generated for two different
575 programs than for one. Mr. Nye commented that the two programs do not have competing
576 programs and have participants from both Towns. Mr. Sweeney agreed, but felt there were still
577 some redundancy to reduce. Mr. Donahue stated that the goal of the Recreation Departments is to
578 run programs and meet demands. He added if the merged program were staffed this way, it would
579 serve the community well. It also recognizes a concept of a recreational center that has currently
580 been identified as well as a potential need for a Teen Center and a Senior Center. In that day-after
581 vision, a Community Recreation Center would require more staff and a necessity for some
582 integration at that point in time. In regards to the Cemeteries, a merger may be a time to create new
583 opportunities and a new division of tasks. Mr. Sweeney clarified to Mr. Donahue that this structure
584 would be what they recommended, and whether he recommends one department. Mr. Donahue
585 stated he is not in the position to recommend one department. Mr. Sweeney clarified with Mr.
586 Donahue that if it was decided that the community go to one Recreation Department, whether this is
587 the joint recommendation for the structure. Mr. Donahue replied that given that reality, this is how
588 they would structure it. Mr. Berry added that this was just a draft. Mr. Donahue agreed that there
589 was no community input, and that it was done in isolation.

590
591 Mr. Berry wanted to address the suggestion that if the two departments are put together, there
592 would be a savings. He explained that the Directors wear a dozen different hats during the course
593 of the day, tackling a variety of tasks throughout the day. There is not one person doing brochures,
594 for example, and they could eliminate one position. Mr. Berry believed that the Essex Community
595 wants the same level of service, and they are already maxed with responsibilities. By putting the
596 two departments together is not going to decrease the amount of work but actually increase it. Mr.
597 Boucher asked who was in charge of payroll and finances. Mr. Donahue stated that in the Village,
598 the time sheets are completed at the Recreation main office and then they are transported to HR at
599 Central Office. Mr. Berry stated that the Human Resources person for the Town is responsible and

600 she wears a couple of different hats by also working in Community Development. The time sheets
601 are passed into the Recreation Department and then passed to the payroll person. Mr. Boucher
602 suggested that payroll would be an area that would provide a savings with a merger. Mr. Donahue
603 reiterated that each department has some external factors, and there would be a reduction in
604 operating costs as opposed to personnel. Mr. Boucher said there would not be two different people
605 needed to do time sheets and Mr. Donahue agreed.

606
607 In reference to the Organizational Chart, Ms. Billado asked whether each box represents a body.
608 Mr. Donahue replied up until the four boxes that represent the two Program Coordinators, the
609 Aquatics Coordinator and Parks Maintenance Coordinator, the boxes are more thematic and have a
610 number of different employees dependent on the nature of the program and the time of year. Ms.
611 Billado noted the maintenance boxes representing maintenance personnel and clarified that they
612 would not all be needed in the wintertime. Mr. Donahue agreed. Ms. Billado added that they might
613 be part-time equivalent, and Mr. Donahue added that right now the Pool Maintenance worker is the
614 Rink Manager at the High School so sometimes seasonal work webs together. Mr. Mertens asked
615 whether it was fair to say that outside of releasing some office space there are no facilities involved
616 in the merger ideas that are being presented. Mr. Donahue said it would be great if the merger
617 coincided with some construction of a Community Recreation Center that housed a combined set of
618 offices. He believed there was not any extra room at either current facility, but if charged, they
619 would do what needed to be done.

620
621 Mr. Mertens, in regards to the time line, clarified that they are suggesting a merger could be
622 complete overnight but preferably longer. Mr. Donahue responded that the overnight approach is to
623 make it look merged on the outside and then the other aspects of the merger are completed when
624 there is time. He referred to this as the merger and acquisition approach to business. Mr. Donahue
625 pointed out the enormous amount of detail involved in a merger that includes policies, tax ID
626 numbers, bank accounts and store accounts, etc. that would certainly need more manpower in the
627 transitional phase due to the sheer volume of work produced from the merger.

628
629 Mr. Mertens commented on the difference between the mission statements for the Town and
630 Village; It states that the Town serves "the community of Essex" and the Village serves the "Essex
631 Junction Community". His impression from meeting with the other departments was that they really
632 worked as one and asked whether Recreation Departments do as well. Mr. Berry and Mr.
633 Selikowitz responded that they do. Mr. Lajza added that was why there are no duplicate programs,
634 and Mr. Berry agreed. Mr. Mertens asked whether they work hand in hand, and Mr. Berry replied
635 yes.

636
637 Mr. Overton wanted to confirm his summary of the discussion so far. He felt both departments
638 looked at the merger very carefully, knew what the budget is now and have an idea of what future
639 budgets would be, have mutual respect and work well together, and if merger was the order of the
640 day, it appears they could do it within a reasonable time. Mr. Berry agreed. Mr. Sweeney clarified
641 this summary was under the assumption of the presented structure. Mr. Donahue reiterated if the
642 task of the day was to merge, then they have the relationship, the ability and skill to develop a final
643 draft that would have gone through a process of public input and advisory council input. Mr.
644 Donahue did not see any impediment in the skills of the people employed in achieving the goal of
645 merger. Mr. Overton stated that if the merger occurred, there would be a transition committee that

646 would be there to encourage the work be done. Mr. Overton pointed out that the problem is that in
647 the Village the school is running the Recreation programs and in the Town, it is the municipal
648 government. Mr. Overton's questioned whether they need to disturb the present structure and
649 instead suggested a Charter that states if they do merge, the two entities continue as separate with
650 mutual respect and collaboration until the Prudential Committee decides to divest itself of the
651 Village Recreation Program. Mr. Overton asked if Mr. Donahue had any comment on this remark.
652 Mr. Donahue felt it would be a fascinating conversation to hear the Task Force undertake. Mr.
653 Overton believed the Committee did not have any jurisdiction over what the Prudential Committee
654 does with its Recreation Department, and that they have not given us a merger task. Mr. Sweeney
655 argued that the Trustees gave the merger task and they have jurisdiction. Mr. Safford clarified that
656 the Village owns the parks, and it delegates its administration by ordinance. Mr. Safford reported
657 that in the Charter for the Essex Junction School District, they have the authority to provide
658 recreational programs. Mr. Safford commented that it is interesting that even if you merge the
659 programming on those parks and recreation in the community, the school still can continue to
660 provide recreational services potentially. Mr. Overton argued that the Committee has not been
661 charged to design a recreation program, and asked what Mr. Donahue's comment was if it just
662 stayed the way it is. Mr. Donahue thought that this Task Force has created an opportunity in a
663 week or so to ask that question to the Prudential Committee. Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Donahue for
664 relaying his information.

665
666 Mr. Blanchard stated that if the Committee's charge is to merge two communities into one
667 exclusively, how can they not ask them to become part of the merger and allow them to go their
668 separate ways and not other departments. Mr. Overton responded that there was no doubt that the
669 Recreation is included in the merger efforts, but they can not legislate how the Village handles its
670 recreation, that it is for the Trustees or the Prudential Committee or in the case of one community,
671 the new Council. Mr. Mertens told Mr. Overton that he would like to focus on questions to the
672 guests, but that there will be a discussion about this issue in greater detail and asked if there were
673 any other questions for Mr. Selikowitz, Mr. Donahue or Mr. Berry as he wanted to invite public
674 input as well. Ms. Billado asked what would be lost if the recreation departments became one and
675 were under the municipality not the school. Mr. Donahue began to question the request for a pie
676 chart, and Mr. Mertens reassured him they would put out a formal request for that. Mr. Mertens
677 rephrased Ms. Billado's question as to what the impact would be on the schools if the Recreation
678 Departments merged under the Town Government. Ms. Billado confirmed and said for example,
679 the Recreation Department has recently bought a lawn mover for \$7,000 and believed this was
680 shared equipment. Mr. Donahue stated it was just for the recreation department. Ms. Billado asked
681 whether there were any other impacts related to equipment or services. Mr. Donahue felt there
682 would be some economic impact because Essex Junction would not be receiving some revenues
683 such as 10% of its annual report, producing, printing and mailing that is paid for by recreation.
684 Another impact would be from legal entities like the Department of Education that would not look
685 upon these changes favorably.

686
687 Mr. Sweeney mentioned that he asked earlier for a pie chart to help us make sense of the numbers
688 and asked if there were any other follow-up requests from Committee members. Mr. Mertens stated
689 that the Committee needed to address the issue related to the Prudential Committee, but it should be
690 done separately with the Prudential Committee. Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Selikowitz, Mr. Donahue
691 and Mr. Berry for their time and information.

692

Discussion of Future Agenda Items

693

694 Mr. Sweeney suggested they have a specific item on the Agenda to talk about the meeting of
695 October 26th and how it would be handled.

696

697 Mr. Mertens commented that he thought there were a few follow-ups from departments to hear next
698 week as well. Mr. Scheidel suggested talking to Mr. Dan Overton since he was present. Mr.
699 Mertens explained to Mr. Overton that next week they want to have a discussion about the follow
700 ups from various departments, and asked if he could give them some feedback by next week about
701 what the Prudential Committee has discussed in regards to the Recreation issues and follow-up
702 questions and any other matters that they want to address. Mr. Dan Overton stated he thought they
703 could do that and that if he were not present, another member would be. Mr. Mertens propose that
704 Mr. Dan Overton or his designee be added to the Agenda for next week for a quick update.
705 Members agreed. Mr. Sweeney wanted to make sure all the departments were scheduled. Mr.
706 Sweeney stated there was a tentative date for the Fire Department in November. Mr. Safford
707 remarked that they have not heard from the Library. Mr. Mertens commented that it was just the
708 library and the Committee may not even have to see them, just get written feedback. Mr. Sweeney
709 also suggested just written feedback from the Fire Department would be needed and Mr. Mertens
710 suggested to discuss this next week. Mr. Mertens asked if there were any other Agenda items for
711 next week to be discussed before the Charter. There were none.

712

Public Input-General Comments

713

714 Mr. Lemieux asked where next week's meeting was located and Ms. Myers replied at the Town, 81
715 Main Street. Mr. Scheidel added that the meeting of October 26 would be held at the Maple Street
716 Pool.

717

718 Mr. Lloyd remarked on the upgrades on the pool and felt some of the operation was very good and
719 some was not. Mr. Lloyd, in hearing about the growth in the Recreation Departments in preschool
720 and senior programs, raised concerns about increased spending. He wanted to make sure it gets
721 looked at closely so they head in the right direction.

722

723 Mr. Mertens responded to Mr. Lloyd that Mr. Donahue certainly gave them their wish list, and they
724 will consider that along with Mr. Lloyd's comments as well.

725

726 **MS. MYERS MOVED AND MR. NYE SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

727

728 **THE MOTION PASSED 9-0.**

729

730 **Respectfully submitted,**

731

732 **SARAMICHELE STULTZ**

733

734 *Saramichelle Stultz*
735 Recording Secretary

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(THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE NEXT MERGER TASK FORCE MEETING)

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Approved 11/2/2005

**MERGER TASK FORCE
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION
MEETING MINUTES
October 19, 2005**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Hugh Sweeney, Chairperson, Hans Mertens, Linda Myers, Rene Blanchard, George Boucher, Alan Overton, Irene Wrenner.

STAFF PRESENT: Patrick Scheidel, Town Manager, Charles Safford, Village Manager, Todd Odit, Assistant Town Manager.

OTHERS PRESENT: Kevin Barber, Linda Waite-Simpson, Pauline Manning, Dan Overton, Bob Marcotte, Chris Halpin, Chuck Lloyd, Bernie Lemieux.

Mr. Sweeney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

BUSINESS AGENDA

Public Input on Agenda Items

There was no input from the public.

Approve Minutes of October 12, 2005

HANS MERTENS MOVED AND RENE BLANCHARD SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 12, 2005 WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS:

Line 62: After “at” insert “the”. Line 86: Replace “Irene” with “Ms. Wrenner”. Line 109: Replace “Todd” with “Mr. Odit”. Line 198: Replace “parts” with “parks”. Line 242: Replace “2.8” with “3.8”. Line 474,475,476: Strike “In discussing these percentages, Mr. Mertens was trying to understand the level of access and what that means and the use and contrast that to the Town may seek those same resources and get the without a budget impact to him. He added he does not assume this is a true statement or not.” Line 498: Replace “says” with “said”. Line 580: Replace “day after” with “day-after”. Line 613: Replace “equivalence” with “equivalant”. Line 677: Replace “Mr. Donahue” with “Ms. Billado”.

MOTION PASSED 7-0.

Discussion With Prudential Committee Representative Regarding Recreation

Mr. Sweeney invited Mr. Overton and members from the Prudential Committee to the discussion. Mr. Dan Overton introduced himself as the Chair of the Prudential Committee, introduced Mr. Kevin Barber, as a member of the Prudential Committee and as a representative from the Prudential Committee to the Recreation Advisory Council and introduced Ms. Linda Waite-

MERGER TASK FORCE

October 19, 2005

48 Simpson as a member of the Prudential Committee. Mr. Sweeney welcomed Mr. Overton, Mr.
49 Barber and Ms. Waite-Simpson.

50
51 Mr. Dan Overton asked how he should proceed. Mr. Sweeney recapped last week's meeting
52 discussion, which Mr. Dan Overton attended. He summarized that the Recreation Directors gave
53 a very thoughtful presentation and recommended a structure should there be a merger but the
54 Directors along with Mr. Donahue felt they were not the ones to make the decision whether the
55 Departments should merge. Mr. Sweeney asked for any inputs or updates from Mr. Dan Overton.
56 Mr. Dan Overton felt the Directors did a great job answering questions regarding if they were to
57 merge, what the model would look like. Mr. Dan Overton referred to his handout that listed some
58 of the highlights as to what they believe are the advantages of the School District administering
59 the Recreation Department. The Prudential Committee still believed that the current format was a
60 proper format that worked well for them.

61
62 Mr. Mertens reminded the Committee that the Prudential Committee visited with the Task Force
63 about a month ago. At that time, the Prudential Committee had not had enough time to discuss this
64 issue. Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Dan Overton what deliberations had occurred since that time and
65 whether they had visited with Essex Town and Westford or others. Mr. Dan Overton clarified that
66 although he was a member of the Unification Study Committee, he was not at the meeting tonight
67 as their representative. He stated that there was supposed to be a Unification meeting last
68 Thursday, but it was canceled so they had not yet debated this issue. Mr. Dan Overton stated he
69 was there to discuss only the Prudential Committee, which was the Village Schoolboard, and their
70 recommendations in regards to the Recreation Department Merger issue. Mr. Dan Overton
71 explained that just prior to the last meeting, about a month ago, there was a special meeting of the
72 Prudential Committee where they took a straw poll. The results of the poll showed that they felt
73 the Recreation Department fit well with the School District and communicated this result to the
74 Task Force at the meeting a month ago. Since then, they had a Board meeting where they
75 discussed it again and had another warned meeting the night before with the Recreation Advisory
76 Council to seek their input. In addition, the Prudential Committee met after the meeting with the
77 Advisory Council and developed the handout, which they would present to the Task Force that
78 evening.

79
80 Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Dan Overton who was on the Recreation Advisory Council. Mr. Barber
81 replied that it was a committee that had been created to help with the Recreation Program so that
82 they were not acting solo. The group acted as an advisory group to help them with programming
83 ideas and enhancements like the playground renovation. Mr. Barber stated that he was a member
84 of the group from the School Board and would report any discussions to the Prudential
85 Committee. The Advisory Group did not make decisions, but advised Mr. Selikowitz, the
86 Director of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Sweeney confirmed that the School Board appointed the
87 group, and Mr. Dan Overton responded yes, it was within their policy to form one. He explained
88 that the Recreation Advisory Council was a cross-section of the community and consisted of
89 parents, residents, seniors, a member of the Prudential Committee and a member of the Village
90 Trustees. Mr. Mertens suggested there were 6-8 members, and Mr. Barber and Mr. Overton
91 replied it was close to that and that the group met every six weeks. Originally, they were
92 organized to help with the facilitation of the major Maple Street Park renovation and had stayed in
93 place ever since.

94
95 Mr. Mertens asked how the Prudential Committee intended to proceed with the Unification Study
96 Committee. Mr. Dan Overton stated that he was going to share with the Unification Committee
97 the same document he would present tonight. He stated that he was not going to be in town at
98 their next meeting nor was this issue on their Agenda. Therefore, it would be another three weeks
99 before the Unification Committee would be able to discuss this issue. He stated that he would
100 make the same recommendation to them as he was to the Task Force, which was recommending
101 that the Task Force should leave the Recreation Department Merger issue as an open issue to
102 explore during the Transition period in order to seek out the best model. He noted that the next
103 Unification Meeting he would be able to attend would be the first week in November.
104

105 Mr. Dan Overton presented some of the highlights in their handout "What are the Advantages to a
106 School District Having a Recreation Department." He stated that there were similar missions
107 between educational and athletic opportunities at schools administered for children. He stated that
108 the Prudential Committee believed the Recreation programming was closely connected to the
109 educational programs and that they supplemented and complemented each other. Some concerns
110 that the Prudential Committee raised was that as school resources decline, there needed to be
111 unique and imaginative opportunities for solutions to help explore things that they may lose, such
112 as athletic programs. The Prudential Committee believed that the Recreation Department
113 programs offered the schools an outlet. Mr. Dan Overton stated that Mr. Barber, who was an
114 Assistant Principal in Burlington, had a perspective in regards to a Recreation Department that
115 was part of a municipality, such as Burlington. Mr. Barber felt that with the latter model there
116 was a huge communication break-down. For example, in Burlington with the intramural program
117 for basketball, there were five different groups that needed to meet to facilitate this program,
118 which resulted in a big scheduling headache. Mr. Barber felt that with a Recreation Department
119 that was affiliated with a school district, the program would transfer more smoothly, having a
120 convenient facility and a program run right through the schools. In Burlington, for example, the
121 program had to go through the Parks and Recreation and the schools, so that there were two
122 governing bodies dealing with one issue. Mr. Barber felt also that the communication between the
123 people who worked with the students during school and those who worked with children after
124 school needed to be much better. As the Assistant Principal, he has talked with the Director of
125 Parks and Recreation in Burlington probably twice, and he felt this lack of communication was
126 because there were two different governing bodies.
127

128 Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Barber whether there would be the same challenge as in Burlington
129 because there might be two school systems or two communities depending on the results of the
130 merger. Mr. Barber answered yes the plan had challenges. He felt though that recreation could be
131 run by school personnel through the Recreation Department, as opposed to the municipality. Mr.
132 Barber felt that with 83% of the Recreation Department clientele being children, then the people
133 in the business of childcare, should run the programs. Mr. Barber stated that the municipality was
134 not in the business of childcare and the whole topic of merger and unification added many more
135 challenges than he could answer. Mr. Mertens expressed, with respect given to Mr. Barber, that
136 the example of the basketball program was probably not the best example. There was a similar
137 system in Essex Junction because the schools ran the Recreation Department, but other school
138 kids participated and programs were open to the whole community, and somehow it was working
139 with multiple entities involved. Mr. Mertens believed that it would not matter where the

140 Recreation Department was housed because there would be the similar challenges as in
141 Burlington. Mr. Barber pointed out that he was not saying the municipality could not do it,
142 because he thought the Town program ran well, but Mr. Barber felt strongly that the people who
143 know child development should logically be in charge of their care. Ms. Myers commented on
144 Mr. Barber's example of the breakdown of communication in Burlington and pointed out that this
145 was a function of the organization of the Recreation Department who should anticipate those
146 kinds of issues and manage it more efficiently. Mr. Barber agreed and stated that one way to
147 handle that was to be a part of the school department, but he emphasized that he was not there to
148 talk badly about Burlington, that they have a great Recreation Program, but was just using it as an
149 example. Ms. Waite-Simpson added that the Advisory Council, which was a model of
150 administration that works well in the Village, would probably work well in other communities,
151 too.

152
153 Mr. Mertens summarized the discussion so far as having been as long as the Recreation
154 Department was organized well, it would not matter who was the administration. Ms. Waite-
155 Simpson agreed with this statement in terms of the administration, but felt there were other issues
156 such as policies that school districts abide by in dealing with children that the Town may not.
157 There were some serious issue with people dealing with children that she felt the school district
158 could address and the Prudential Committee saw this as a glaring issue that they would like to see
159 addressed, and one way this could be done was to have School Districts very involved in the
160 Recreation Programs. Mr. Blanchard raised a concern when he realized the preschool was under
161 the Recreation Program and stated he was having trouble with the separation of preschool from
162 education. Mr. Blanchard asked whether the preschool teachers were trained teachers. Ms. Linda
163 Waite-Simpson stated that she did not think they had to be certified teachers. Mr. Dan Overton
164 explained that this was not a program within the schools, it was a program administered at the
165 Recreation Department. Ms. Waite-Simpson explained to Mr. Blanchard that there were two
166 different preschool programs. There was an Early Essential Education Program(EEE) that was
167 within their school system as well. Mr. Dan Overton stated those were licensed teachers
168 primarily. Mr. Dan Overton clarified that the EEE did not have anything to do with the
169 Recreation Department and that the preschool program at the Recreation Department charged the
170 community for childcare for children aged 3, 4 and 5. Mr. Dan Overton explained that EEE was
171 the early education for children identified with special needs.

172
173 Mr. Dan Overton expressed the main point as being that schools were in the business of dealing
174 with children, and 83% of the Recreation Department clientèle were children. If there was an issue
175 with a child in our community, the support at the School District level was a tremendous resource.
176 Mr. Dan Overton felt that would not be the case in a municipality-run Recreation Department,
177 where the municipality did not specialize in childcare. Mr. Dan Overton pointed out that the
178 question was who was more qualified to deal with the Recreation Program issues, those that dealt
179 with it as part of their business everyday or a municipality. Mr. Dan Overton argued that even
180 though there were only two Recreation Programs that were managed by school districts in
181 Vermont, the Prudential Committee and their Charter was unique because it specifically allowed
182 them to administer Parks and Recreation. He doubted that there were many school district
183 charters among the other communities that allowed for that. Ms. Myers asked when their Charter
184 stated this because she had been aware that the Parks and Recreation was under the municipal
185 government in the Village in the early 1970s. She questioned what was in the Charter when the

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186 District took over the Recreation Department. Mr. Dan Overton said that at that time, he thought
187 the Charter did have the allowance to administer Parks and Recreation. Mr. Dan Overton stated
188 that he planned on suggesting to the Unification Study Committee that they recommend to the
189 Commission of Education that a merged unified school district be allowed to administer Parks and
190 Recreation.

191
192 Mr. Dan Overton reported that last night at the Advisory Council meeting, it was discussed that
193 the Task Force should seriously consider a model that separated Parks and the management of
194 Parks from Recreation programs. They believed that the municipality was as qualified or maybe
195 even more qualified than the school district to manage the Parks, such as Indian Brook and
196 Cascade Park, because of departments linked to it like Public Works. Mr. Dan Overton stated that
197 the Prudential Committee and the Advisory Committee believed the schools could administer and
198 manage the recreation-type programs for the betterment of the children. Ms. Myers asked whether
199 they believed the schools are better equipped to manage the adults and seniors. Mr. Dan Overton
200 believed that the Town, if there was a merged committee, should be responsible for the senior
201 busing that it presently does through its Recreation Program, as well as the cemeteries. He argued
202 that 83% of the Village Recreation participants were children. In addition, he had spoken with
203 seniors recently within the Village who were very happy with the way the school districts
204 managed the Parks and Recreation and have said that they saw it as an opportunity for them to get
205 more involved with the schools than they would otherwise. Ms. Waite-Simpson commented that
206 there was such a crossover with all of the facilities anyways that to her it seemed that it could
207 work either way. She noted that to have a Parks service that did not have the Recreation
208 programming attached to it, seemed like a model that would please everybody, and she hoped that
209 the Committee would at least entertain this idea that could potentially be a workable model for
210 this community. Mr. Barber wondered if they had answered the Committee's question and
211 summarized that the mission statements of many school districts were for children to become life-
212 long learners and what better role model to set for them than to have a recreation department that
213 promotes life-long learning, and that it was a great message to send to children and seniors
214 throughout their lives.

215
216 Mr. Dan Overton began to present the conclusion to the Prudential Committee's
217 recommendations. Mr. Dan Overton pointed out the first two pages were the highlights he had
218 just discussed, but that in their written version they had a little more detail. In reference to the last
219 page on Recommendations, Mr. Dan Overton stated that the merger Task Force had the unique
220 opportunity to be creative and imaginative as to the best Parks and Recreation model for a merged
221 community. A model should be explored wherein the municipality manages Parks and
222 Grounds(park service) and schools manage Recreation(programming). The Prudential Committee
223 felt this was a great opportunity because the Prudential Committee had the ability in its Charter to
224 manage Recreation and Parks. He also hoped to convince the Unification Study Committee to add
225 this as part of the recommendations to the Commissioner so that this model could be completely
226 unique to this State. Mr. Dan Overton reiterated what was stated last night at the Advisory
227 meeting that it was not one way or the other but what was the best way. He believed the best way
228 was for the municipality to manage the Parks and Grounds and the schools to manage the
229 Recreation.

230
231 Mr. Mertens confirmed that if they followed this model then the basketball program would be

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232 under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Director. However, if someone had to shovel snow around
233 this building or clear the tennis courts, then it would be done by the Parks. Therefore, parks would
234 shovel the snow, put lime on the field, etc., but the Recreation would organize the teams and set
235 the schedule, etc. Mr. Dan Overton replied that it was not different than what the Prudential
236 Committee received for services through the High School. Currently, they paid the High School
237 maintenance employees to take care of all the sidewalks, etc., and then the schools handled the
238 athletics, etc. Mr. Dan Overton concluded that the merged Recreation Department model that the
239 Task Force saw last week, was not related to their current suggestions, and as a result, there would
240 have to be a new model created.

241
242 Secondly, the Prudential Committee believed a separate vote on the recreation budget was a huge
243 issue for the community to consider. Keeping recreation under the school district would ensure
244 the ability to both separately tax and budget for recreation programs. If recreation became part of
245 the municipality, there was no question that it would be part of the whole budget and any money
246 that was made in recreation who be unaccounted for. Right now, their recreation program made
247 money and then went back into the recreation program. Ms. Myers stated that this was the same
248 for the Town Recreation program. Mr. Dan Overton argued that it was not as clear where the
249 money was going. Ms. Myers reiterated that it depended on organization and money that came in
250 from recreation should go back into the Recreation Department and anything else was bad
251 managing of funds. Ms. Myers did not see any value or overvalue with the fact that the money
252 went to the schools versus the municipality's recreation fund. She explained that when the budget
253 was created, the Recreation Director told us what the anticipated revenues was, what the
254 anticipated expenditures was, and we knew exactly that those revenues were going to go back into
255 that program. Mr. Dan Overton argued that one advantage in the Village was that for the last
256 three years they have maintained a level tax rate and programs have generated enough revenue so
257 that they have not had to tax the community anything more for the recreation that they provide to
258 them. He challenged them to explain how they would do this based on a budget that incorporates
259 every other service that was provided by a municipality. Mr. Dan Overton believed that if the
260 Village Recreation Department was a part of the Village budget, it would almost double it. He
261 believed that the Village viewed it as a gem and an opportunity to see what the recreation budget
262 was and could vote on it separately.

263 Mr. Mertens asked whether there was any prohibition for the Town who was in a separate school
264 district to contribute to a separate recreation tax. Ms. Waite-Simpson replied that it was based on
265 a municipal grand list rather than the State. The taxes went to a different grand list for Recreation
266 and Schools. Mr. Mertens clarified that Ms. Waite-Simpson was saying that the grand list for the
267 Village would be added to the Town grand list and asked whether that would be legal. The
268 members of the Prudential Committee replied that they did not know. Ms. Waite-Simpson
269 suggested there would be one municipality, and Mr. Mertens clarified that there would still be two
270 school districts. Ms. Waite-Simpson argued that the recreation budget was a separate budget and
271 a separate tax and would get voted on separately. Mr. Mertens argued that it was voted on only by
272 the Essex Junction School district.

273 Mr. Dan Overton explained that the Prudential Committee was asking that the Task Force explore
274 a model that would have the Town Recreation Department with the same grand list as the school's.
275 Mr. Mertens suggested a scenario that if you were getting 10 cents now, and the grand list was
276 doubled, then you would go to five cents, roughly, and he asked if that was the vision they were
277 suggesting. Mr. Dan Overton confirmed that it was combining programs, but Mr. Mertens argued

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278 that there would not be twice as much money. Ms. Waite-Simpson referred to the model of a
279 separate Parks department from a Recreation department. Mr. Mertens replied that it was more
280 complicated because the people shoveling snow would be Parks people and the people running the
281 program would be Recreation, and that the costs of each were unknown at the time.
282

283 Ms. Myers mentioned that Mr. Mertens brought up a good point in that if they were a merged
284 community but not a merged school district, and the Recreation Department was under the Village
285 Schools, then how could the Town residents be taxed to pay for that portion of the Village School
286 budget. Mr. Dan Overton clarified that it was not the Village School budget, but the global
287 Recreation budget, and Ms. Myers agreed. Mr. Odit suggested that there could be a municipal
288 district that would be just a recreation district that encompassed the entire town and then every
289 district would be taxed. Mr. Dan Overton stated that presently, they assess residents a U46 school
290 tax, a Prudential Committee tax, a Recreation tax so that this was not impossible. Mr. Dan
291 Overton suggested that these types of questions should be explored more fully by qualified people
292 to find the best model, and that they did not support just looking at one way or the other.
293

294 Mr. Mertens asked whether the Prudential Committee could provide the Task Force with any
295 objective data to help support their arguments as he guessed they did not have any concrete
296 benchmarks to help the Task Force make a decision. Mr. Mertens stated that he liked what he
297 heard, but as a business person he would need some concrete objective reasons to show why their
298 suggestions would work, not just that it would be good for the children. Mr. Mertens asked
299 whether there was anything they could refer to that showed data that supported a direction they
300 should take. Mr. Dan Overton responded that they did not have this information, but he hoped
301 that during the transitional period, the Trustees and the Selectboard would be provided some
302 assistance from a Transitional Committee to research which would be the best practice. Mr. Dan
303 Overton referred to the fourth point in the handout which recommended that the Charter reads that
304 Parks and Recreation “may” be administered by the new municipality rather than “shall”. The
305 Prudential Committee recommended allowing the Transitional Team to figure out what the best
306 model would be and what it would look like.
307

308 Mr. Sweeney, under the assumption that a merged community existed without the school as an
309 issue, asked the Prudential Committee how important it was in their minds to have a consistent
310 approach. The last time the Prudential Committee was before the Task Force, they recommended
311 keeping the Recreation Programs the same which was interpreted as, in the Town everything was
312 under the municipality and in the Village everything would be under the schools. Mr. Sweeney
313 asked if the Prudential Committee now suggested they consider a model that would be the whole
314 community managed the same way. Mr. Barber confirmed that there would not be a Town and a
315 Village but one new municipality, and Ms. Myers replied yes. Mr. Sweeney stated that the vision
316 they had would be one community. Mr. Barber felt it should be consistent and believed that
317 whatever the model, it should be done the same way throughout the community. At the same time,
318 he felt that it gave the new community the opportunity to research and find the best model for
319 their community.
320

321 Mr. Sweeney asked whether the Prudential Committee had spoken to the Town School Board
322 about the issue and whether they had an opinion. Mr. Dan Overton responded that he had spoken
323 to the Chair of the School Board. Mr. Sweeney asked what the chances would be for both entities

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324 to provide the Task Force with a model that they both supported for a merged Recreation
325 department. Mr. Dan Overton stated that he needed to attend the Unification meeting and would
326 try to sell their vision there first. Mr. Sweeney mentioned that in his mind, it was two issues.
327 The Unification Committee could take one position, but it might not pass and Mr. Dan Overton
328 agreed. Mr. Sweeney questioned whether the Two School Boards could agree, regardless of the
329 Unification Committee, and provide the Task Force with a model that they both supported under a
330 merged community. Mr. Dan Overton stated he felt uncomfortable arguing to the Chair of the
331 School Board that his model worked best when the Town believed their model worked best. Mr.
332 Sweeney explained that in the end, the Task Force was making a recommendation to the Trustees
333 and the Selectboard who could then modify it for a vote. Mr. Dan Overton clarified whether it
334 was the Task Force's belief that they had to decide one way or the other, and Mr. Sweeney felt he
335 would like to recommend a model the new municipality should follow and believed if there was
336 one merged community, then it should be consistently one merged Parks and Recreation
337 Department. Mr. Sweeney explained that the library and Fire Departments have already made a
338 merged model for their departments and asked whether the School Boards and Recreation
339 Departments could do the same and that he was not inclined to pass this off to the Transitional
340 Committee. Mr. Dan Overton understood and stated it made sense for the Task Force to
341 recommend one merged Parks and Recreation Department with one Director, but he felt it was so
342 important that it needed to be explored further as the budget would double the size of the Village's
343 budget presently. He questioned whether the Task Force had the experience or the time to figure
344 out what model worked best for the new community and reiterated his opinion that it should be
345 given to the Transitional Committee for an extensive study. Mr. Dan Overton felt strongly that he
346 did not want to debate this issue with the Town School Board as they did with the Unification
347 Study over which school district was better. He felt it was not up to the School Boards, but the
348 Transition Committee to determine the best model in a merged community. Mr. Mertens asked
349 Mr. Dan Overton what the Transitional Committee should base that decision on. Mr. Dan
350 Overton felt they should seek input from the Prudential Committee, the CCSU, Recreation
351 Directors, etc. Mr. Dan Overton clarified whether the Task Force felt they should formulate a
352 model, and Mr. Sweeney stated they were hoping to as they have with the other departments.
353 They asked the Library and the Fire Departments to work together to provide the Task Force with
354 a combined model for the new community, and they had both accomplished that. Mr. Sweeney
355 had hoped that they could use the same process for the Recreation.
356 Mr. Mertens remembered the first meeting with the School Boards and that the Task Force did not
357 care what the recommendation was at this point, but that they wanted them to work together and
358 give them their best thoughts on this issue before the next step would happen. Mr. Mertens
359 hoped for a seamlessness in the community as opposed to "bumps in the road" with different
360 jurisdictions, which in his judgment did not serve the community as well as it could. Mr. Mertens
361 agreed with Mr. Sweeney in that the School Boards and the Recreation Departments should judge
362 what model would work best and through discussion they should develop some objective way to
363 reach a conclusion other than how each entity felt about the situation. Whatever the solution they
364 offered should be a joint recommendation and assuming it was a great product, he suspected the
365 Task Force would love to endorse it. Mr. Dan Overton said he would try even though the Town
366 believed that their model worked well for them and did not want a change, but that the result
367 might be that the entities have different opinions.

368
369 Mr. Sweeney asked why the Transition Committee would be any more able than the Task Force to

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370 resolve the issue. Mr. Mertens suggested that once the Prudential Committee brought their best
371 ideas, the Task Force ought to be able to support them. Mr. Sweeney stated that either way, they
372 would look at the recommendations. Mr. Sweeney stated the Directors came last week with
373 a unified recommendation for the Task Force. Mr. Dan Overton disagreed and stated that last
374 week's merged Department drawing was based on assumptions the Task Force asked them to
375 make which was under a merged community, under one department and what that would look
376 like. He stated that last week's drawing of a merged Recreation Department was not Mr.
377 Selikowitz' or Mr. Donahue's recommendation. Mr. Sweeney understood, but stated that the
378 question that was answered by the Recreation Directors at last week's meeting was under the
379 premise of whether the communities merged and what they would recommend as the structure for
380 the Recreation Department. Mr. Dan Overton disagreed and said that the Task Force told them to
381 assume a merged community, assume one district and then asked how they would accomplish this.
382 Ms. Waite-Simpson stated that the other assumption the Task Force asked them to make was that
383 Parks and Recreation fell under the municipal supervision. Mr. Mertens suggested that the Task
384 Force did not ask that. Mr. Dan Overton and Ms. Waite-Simpson argued that they did. Mr. Al
385 Overton referred to the handout from Mr. Donahue last week and said the request was in the
386 handout verbatim, and Ms. Waite-Simpson agreed. Ms. Waite-Simpson added that this was the
387 reason for why last week's model was presented, and Mr. Donahue did a great job pulling two
388 people together who passionately believe their way was the right way. She added that Mr.
389 Selikowitz was part of the process of that model, but it was not his recommendation.

390
391 Mr. Sweeney clarified that he was referring to the question "Please explain your vision for
392 providing park and recreation services in a merged community including where you believe parks
393 and recreation is best administered by the schools or local government". Mr. Dan Overton stated
394 that the second part of that question, which was asked by Mr. Sweeney repeatedly last week, was
395 not addressed by Mr. Donahue. Mr. Sweeney stated he was just making clarification about the
396 question. Ms. Waite-Simpson remembered the discussion from the meeting a month or so ago,
397 and believed it was determined that the request from the Task Force was to make these two
398 assumptions. Mr. Sweeney repeated that the assumption was a merged community, and Ms.
399 Waite-Simpson finished the sentence saying, and that Parks and Recreation would fall within the
400 local government. Mr. Al Overton recalled from last week that the question they answered was
401 "In a merged community with a merged department, what would the structure, programs and
402 budget look like." Mr. Sweeney pointed out to Mr. Al Overton that he was making reference to
403 Mr. Donahue's document not the Task Force's document. Mr. Al Overton understood, but wanted
404 to summarize what he recalled happened last week. Mr. Mertens explained to the Prudential
405 Committee that no one on the Task Force had reached a conclusion about last week's model. Ms.
406 Waite-Simpson stated she felt that was assumed.

407
408
409
410 Mr. Mertens commented that the Town School Board may have some objective data, which he
411 hoped for, that supported their way and that if any data came to light in their discussions, it would
412 help the Task Force with its deliberations. Ms. Waite-Simpson asked for clarification on what
413 objective data Mr. Mertens was referring to. Mr. Mertens responded that he had the feeling that
414 six people might have a warm fuzzy way of describing what they feel, but if asked, would not be
415 able to support why they felt this way, even though it was a part of the process. Ms. Waite-

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416 Simpson believed it was a huge part when dealing with children. Mr. Mertens agreed, but stated
417 as Ms. Myers pointed out, that in the community, there were not just children, but other needs.
418 He was cognizant of the fact that there were seniors who had needs and deserved to be served as
419 well as other needs. He questioned whether the Recreation Department through the Prudential
420 Committee stops at grade eight and asked about the high school population, such as the Teen
421 Center who were not part of Recreation or schools. Ms. Waite-Simpson recalled in the discussion
422 last night that the Teen Center raised a concern that there was not a closer connection to the
423 schools. Mr. Mertens felt this information was very important and what the Task Force was
424 looking for. Ms. Waite-Simpson stated that the Prudential Committee had talked to a lot of people
425 and had done some outreach to the community and that what they presented to the Task Force that
426 evening was a great model. She stated that if it were to happen that there was one merged
427 community and two school districts, she felt it would be an administrative nightmare to try to deal
428 with one Parks and Recreation Program with two school districts. Ms. Waite-Simpson added that
429 the proposed ideas from the Prudential Committee that night might help the Task Force write the
430 Charter and move forward.

431
432 Mr. Sweeney asked whether the Prudential Committee currently managed the High School
433 programs. Mr. Barber responded that any programs, even the senior and adult programs, was run
434 through the Parks and Recreation and managed by the Prudential Committee. Mr. Sweeney
435 clarified if any of the programs for High School-aged kids are managed by the Prudential
436 Committee, and Mr. Barber confirmed that it was those programs that are through the Parks and
437 Recreation Department. Mr. Mertens stated he did not know of any programs at the High School
438 level, and Ms. Waite-Simpson brought up that the High School does such a fabulous job on its
439 own through clubs and athletics, that the need was not there. Mr. Barber verified with a public
440 member that photography was offered through the Parks and Recreation Department.

441
442 Mr. Barber gave the example of the Advisory Council having members that help with decisions
443 and asked the Task Force whether there were any members from the Town Community not
444 employed directly through the Recreation Department that would could meet and discuss these
445 issues about the Recreation Department. Mr. Mertens asked whether Mr. Barber was suggesting
446 the creation of a small Task Force to reach a resolution. Mr. Barber clarified that from what he
447 was understanding the Task Force was asking that there be someone who could verify that the two
448 entities have met and developed their best solution. Mr. Mertens was not sure a Task Force was
449 the suggestion. Mr. Barber was not sure either, but stated that he did not think the School Boards
450 were the right place to start in the process because the School Board did not manage the
451 Recreation in the Town. He felt that the Fire Departments were able to merge more easily
452 because they were two similar entities running two similar programs. Mr. Sweeney added that
453 they had essentially already merged. Mr. Barber remarked that in the Parks and Recreation,
454 there were two similar programs run by completely different entities so it was harder to come up
455 with the solution.

456
457 Mr. Al Overton felt this was the essence of the difficulty and raised the difference between the
458 Fire, Library and Recreation Departments. He believed that it was clear there was some good
459 information presented from both Recreation Departments, that they had a good deal of respect for
460 each other working hand-in-hand without overlapping services and that both communities thought
461 their Recreation Departments were excellent and did not want it in any way, to be

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462 “compromised”. Mr. Al Overton added that he was convinced from the conversations from both
463 communities that there would not be a compromising of the Recreation programs and that no loss
464 of programs had been discussed whatsoever. However, the Town and Village perspectives on
465 how to manage Parks and Recreation was very different. Mr. Al Overton felt differently than Mr.
466 Mertens and Mr. Sweeney, and supported the suggestion that the Task Force adopt a belief of a
467 good recreational structure, but if necessary after completing the Charter, the Transitional
468 Committee, who were now going to be the Trustees and Selectboard, could decide on the actual
469 method or operation of the new Recreation Department. He felt that the fundamental idea of
470 whether a Recreation Department should be run by the School or Town was a very fundamental
471 question. He suggested stating in the Charter that they “will have” a Recreation Department and
472 perhaps the manager should appoint that Recreation Director. Mr. Al Overton was convinced the
473 two departments could work together and make a joint recommendation. He liked the idea of
474 separating the Parks from the Recreation and felt it made a lot of sense. Mr. Al Overton stated he
475 lived in the Town and had participated in both Town and Village Recreation programs. He
476 defended the Village Recreation Department and said that in his experience, they had been very
477 mindful of the needs of adults and seniors, too. Mr. Al Overton summarized that the Task Force
478 should not feel bad because they were a bit stymied with this particular problem in this unique
479 dual structure. Mr. Mertens in reference to a “hung jury” told the Prudential Committee that they
480 did not want to pass off these decisions to the Transitional Committee because if that was the
481 case, the Task Force was no help, and the Transitional Committee had a huge job to fill. Mr.
482 Mertens felt that some of what the Prudential Committee said made sense, but that they had not
483 deliberated long enough. He wanted to see more discussion between the two School Boards
484 because they seemed to get along very well and may find a possible solution to this. Mr. Dan
485 Overton confirmed that the School Boards worked harmoniously at the meeting with the Task
486 Force a month or so ago, and he hoped he did not give a different impression.

487
488 Mr. Boucher requested the pros and cons of both programs to be evaluated and make a decision.
489 He agreed that the two School Boards were the experts and that even though the Town felt they
490 work well already, that they might approve some changes as well. He added that between the two
491 entities, they could decide which was the best. They needed the best program they could have
492 regardless of other communities. The Prudential Committee agreed. Mr. Boucher recommended
493 an evaluation process with perhaps an outside evaluator to help. Ms. Waite-Simpson remarked
494 that it was hard to do the pros and cons without the cons becoming a criticism of the other
495 program, so they tried to stay away from that. Mr. Boucher argued that in this situation, it was
496 necessary to have this information and that maybe an outside source would be helpful to complete
497 the evaluation process. Ms. Waite-Simpson agreed and stated that was what she meant when she
498 said that having people in the trenches do the work, made it difficult to be visionary as they are
499 invested in their jobs. Mr. Boucher commented that without this information, it was difficult for
500 the Task Force to move forward and that there must be something different between the programs
501 that made one program better than the other. Mr. Sweeney believed it would be very powerful if
502 the two School Boards and the Recreation Departments were able to get together and come
503 forward with a recommended model that everyone supported. Mr. Sweeney commented that he
504 had not made up his mind but wanted the best program. In hearing the final recommendation for
505 what the School Boards believed was the best model in a merged community, he would have a
506 hard time not supporting it and thinking he knew better. Ms. Waite-Simpson recalled there was a
507 lot of discussion the night they met with the Task Force last, and that a number of people had

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508 given them direction about what should be considered. At one point in the meeting, she
509 remembered they were told to consider two assumptions. Mr. Sweeney agreed that the
510 assumption was to have a merged community, but he did not recall any member who stated that
511 they want the Recreation Departments and their respective administrators to assume the merged
512 department was under a municipality.

513
514 Mr. Al Overton agreed that it would be wonderful if the Prudential Committee and the Town
515 School Board could meet and agreed on a joint recommendation in a month or two as the Task
516 Force would probably be done. However, he felt that it would not be a problem if they presented a
517 split decision having learned a lot in the process and then explained this to the Transition
518 Committee.

519
520 Mr. Sweeney asked why the Task Force could not do it now and at least make a recommendation.
521 Mr. Sweeney asked what that magic data was and suggested that Task Force take the time to
522 complete this recommendation. Mr. Al Overton thought the Schools and the Recreation
523 Departments could do it for them, but if they couldn't, it did not mean the Task Force would be
524 lost. It was possible that because it was such a serious subject, that they would not have the
525 benchmarks that Mr. Mertens referred to, by the time the Task Force was through with their work.
526 Mr. Al Overton confirmed with the Chairs that they did not want to delay their work while they
527 waited for the Schools to progress. He felt they needed to move forward. Mr. Dan Overton told
528 Mr. Mertens that he would find out if there was a hung jury and report back to the Task Force.
529

530 Mr. Mertens explained to Mr. Dan Overton that the Task Force has to present a charter to the
531 voters and if there is uncertainty about Recreation when they do so, it might sway the votes. He
532 felt the more information that was more solid, the more inclined voters would be to make an
533 informed decision.

534
535 Mr. Dan Overton thought they were being asked what the Prudential Committee's opinion was,
536 and Mr. Mertens agreed. Mr. Dan Overton suggested that there was another question on the table
537 and they would try to address this question, but would need time. Mr. Boucher added that they
538 may have the best program in the State and everybody else would change and asked for the
539 Prudential Committee to give them the reason why they were the best. Mr. Dan Overton stated
540 that if the Task Force was open minded, he would do the work. Mr. Sweeney repeated that if the
541 two entities returned with a joint recommendation, it would be powerful.

542
543 Mr. Al Overton asked whether they would address the question that Ms. Myers commented on in
544 regards to taxes. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Al Overton to clarify his question. Mr. Al Overton
545 asked what the effect was of running a separate Recreation Program. He believed it could be run
546 without setting up a new district or overlapping districts of some kind but he does not know what
547 effect this would have on taxes. Mr. Mertens suggested having Mr. Safford and Mr. Scheidel
548 explore the answer to this question. Mr. Safford agreed. Ms. Waite-Simpson stated that right now
549 the recreation tax was based on the municipal grand list. Mr. Safford agreed that it was based on
550 the municipal grand list and that the Village tax payers paid about 10 cents for \$100 of assessed
551 value. The question became with one model would the Town agree or would the Village
552 taxpayers pay an additional tax and that the goal was to reconcile that. Mr. Safford referred to
553 what Mr. Odit said in that if people in the merged Town were going to be taxed, in legal terms,

554 there needed to be an amendment to the Charter to create a district if the schools were not going to
555 be merged. Mr. Safford asked if Mr. Scheidel had anything to add. Mr. Scheidel responded that
556 he had a lot of experience in how Parks and Recreation services were paid for, both 100% through
557 a municipality and 100% through a Parks and Recreation district. He explained that in the suburbs
558 of Chicago, the Parks and Recreation Department was completely void of any municipal
559 management. In this model, they had one representative in each community as part of their
560 “district” that served as a body, with special taxing powers, bond power and management of all
561 forms of Parks and Recreation as well as Conservation. Therefore, he believed there were a lot of
562 models that could be explored, but he would not like to recommend a model at this point in time.
563

564 Mr. Mertens recommended to the Prudential Committee that Mr. Selikowitz and Mr. Berry figure
565 out how much money was Parks and how much money was Recreation if they were going to
566 explore this model in order to help the Task Force see it more clearly.
567

568 Mr. Dan Overton informed the Task Force that the Unification vote had been delayed and that it
569 would not happen during the same time period as the Merger vote. Mr. Dan Overton wondered if
570 they had already discussed the timing of the vote, and Mr. Myers and Mr. Sweeney responded that
571 they did not have a time period. Mr. Dan Overton mentioned that he had heard people talk about
572 the Merger vote taking place this spring some time. Ms. Myers replied no, that was not
573 necessarily true as they also talked about it possibly happening in November. Mr. Sweeney and
574 Ms. Myers asked about the timetable for the Unification Study Committee. Mr. Dan Overton
575 wanted to let them know that their vote had been delayed until the fall of next year, roughly. Mr.
576 Sweeney confirmed that it was for a vote, and Mr. Dan Overton said yes, for a vote on unification.
577 Mr. Dan Overton added, with implementation not to occur until June, 2008. Mr. Sweeney
578 explained that the Task Force had discussed that date as well because Mr. Safford made the
579 recommendation to wait until the Village labor contracts expired. Mr. Dan Overton added that it
580 was a year longer than what was originally thought. Mr. Sweeney asked if their Charter had to be
581 approved by the legislature like the Merger Charter. Mr. Dan Overton responded that the
582 Unification Charter had to be approved by the Board of Education. Mr. Sweeney explained that
583 there were many steps for the approval process of their Charter once it is complete. First, it would
584 go before the Selectboard and Trustees who would make adjustments, then it would go to Public
585 Hearing, then there would be a town-wide vote and finally, it may be put to the legislature for
586 approval. Mr. Dan Overton said they had to have a vote and if that passed, it had to be approved
587 by the Board of Education and that the legislature was a hoop they did not have. Mr. Mertens
588 suggested to the Prudential Committee that if Unification went forward, it would make one of
589 their proposals stronger than the other. Mr. Dan Overton stated that it helped to know that the
590 merger implementation would not be until June, 2008. Members told him they had not decided
591 yet, but Mr. Dan Overton felt they had more time to figure out how to implement the best model
592 instead of rushing into it. Mr. Sweeney asked whether there were any more questions and thanked
593 the Prudential Committee for their time.
594

Discuss Agenda/Format for 10/26 Meeting

595
596
597 Mr. Sweeney asked whether anyone had any comments about what should be the format or the
598 Agenda for next week's meeting. Mr. Overton asked if anyone knew who was going to be there
599 and whether Mr. Nye and Ms. Billado would be there next week. Mr. Mertens said that the last

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600 time they polled, everybody said they would be present. Members agreed. Mr. Scheidel believed
601 that Mr. Nye stated last week he was not going to be present this evening. Mr. Sweeney
602 remembered that he was going to be out this week, that was why they scheduled the Public Input
603 for next week because everyone could be there and members agreed. Mr. Sweeney asked for
604 input on the structure for next week's meeting.

605
606 Ms. Myers suggested that they open the meeting to public comment on one question at a time
607 without a dialog with the Task Force. She would prefer to hear the public comments and then
608 take the opportunity to take notes and then when they had heard from everyone on all three issues,
609 had time to digest everyone's input, then they would discuss it at another meeting and make a
610 decision. Mr. Overton added that he believed Chair Mertens should open the meeting with a very
611 brief summary of the process so far on the Charter. He recommended that Mr. Mertens should
612 then explain the three areas that have been brought up on many occasions, and that the Task Force
613 was anxious to hear public input on these three questions as Ms. Myers stated. Mr. Overton
614 thought the meeting was going to be two hours and members reminded him they extended it to
615 three hours. Mr. Overton suggested they limit the time to each question to perhaps 40 minutes
616 each and then if there is time at the end, they could use it to discuss further. He disagreed a little
617 bit on the dialog opinion from Ms. Myers. He felt that there might be some questions from the
618 public, and that the Chairs would handle these questions or may want to defer to other members.
619 Ms. Myers did not have an issue with the questions, she had an issue with a debate. Mr. Overton
620 agreed. Mr. Sweeney felt if the question was a factual question, they could answer, otherwise, he
621 agreed with Ms. Myers that if they did not engage in debate, there would be more time for the
622 public to speak and members would accept input.

623
624 Mr. Boucher suggested having a brief one minute comment from each member about the issue,
625 but members disagreed. Mr. Sweeney agreed with Ms. Myers because he would like to hear the
626 public input and learn something new and then they could have the discussion afterwards. Mr.
627 Overton recommended that Mr. Mertens announce that the Task Force would not be making any
628 decisions that night, but would hear the public input, digest it and perhaps if time, decide on it
629 next week. Mr. Mertens agreed that handling one topic at a time was a good idea, but he thought
630 some healthy discussion should be encouraged as he did not expect a debate to happen and that a
631 discussion would help the process move along. He mentioned that if it did head towards a debate,
632 the Chairs could promise to help redirect the discussion. Ms. Myers did not feel that the Task
633 Force should be put on the spot by the public if they begin to make demands because it then
634 becomes a confrontational situation and not an information meeting for the Task Force. Mr.
635 Mertens understood and he stated that he could live with the format they are suggesting which is
636 to listen and then discuss it at the next meeting. Frankly, he remembered a discussion that they
637 were going to vote on it that night, but he does not have a problem with the current idea. Mr.
638 Sweeney expressed that this meeting had been well publicized and he looked forward to allowing
639 a lot of time for the public to talk. If it was over in two hours, then they would have time to
640 discuss it that night if they chose. He believed there would be a lot of people attending the
641 meeting and he would like them to feel they have enough of an opportunity to speak to the Task
642 Force. Mr. Mertens synthesized the format as being first, the ground rules, which were to take
643 each topic, take input, not necessarily engage and that there would not be a vote this week. Mr.
644 Sweeney felt it would be okay to say they are going to take all the input and if there is time, they
645 would have a discussion. Mr. Sweeney liked Ms. Myers suggestion that they may want to digest

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646 the information for a while, but he did not think they had to declare upfront that action wouldn't be
647 taken. Mr. Sweeney suggested that they could always have a discussion if time allowed and
648 decide to vote on it next meeting, but he recommended not making this statement in the opening
649 remarks. Mr. Mertens referred to Mr. Boucher's suggestion about stating their opinions at the
650 meeting and that he felt comfortable doing this and valued the voluntary input that night from
651 other members to help his decision. Mr. Sweeney reminded Mr. Mertens of Ms. Myers' point to
652 not put members in the position of being asked by the public about their opinion. He felt this
653 Public Input meeting should be for public input and that they would have time to discuss it and
654 time to express their views later. Ms. Myers also felt they should not make a statement at all
655 because this meeting was not for what the members thought but what the community thought.
656 She added that she did not want to color what the public thought with an upfront opinion from
657 each member and stated that she thought Mr. Blanchard felt that way also.
658

659 Mr. Boucher stated that the following week, he would not be there to discuss the public input so
660 he would like to put his opinion in writing if he is not at the following meeting. Mr. Sweeney
661 reiterated that he had always said that on these three questions, they should have everyone present
662 for the vote and he still believed that. Mr. Overton asked if, for example, Mr. Marcotte should
663 have a comment and he would like to verify Mr. Marcotte's meaning, that he would like to be able
664 to ask questions in a dialog fashion. Ms. Myers agreed that a matter of information or explanation
665 would be fine. She did not want to engage with the public about agreement and disagreement, and
666 Mr. Blanchard agreed. Mr. Overton stated that Mr. Mertens should let them know that they will
667 have a turn to speak and then if members need clarification, they would ask questions. Mr.
668 Mertens felt that would be under the ground rules. Mr. Overton added that a brief history should
669 be included in the opening remarks, and Ms. Myers and Mr. Boucher agreed. Mr. Mertens
670 understood.
671

672 Mr. Scheidel stated that at a previous meeting Mr. Nye wanted copies of the various district maps
673 in a 3x4 ft. size, and that they planned on putting these up. He asked whether there were any other
674 show and tell items they should provide for next week's meeting. Mr. Overton asked where the
675 maps were, and Mr. Blanchard said he would like to see them before the meeting. Mr. Scheidel
676 believed that the Chairs told them they could just put them up, and Mr. Overton disagreed. Mr.
677 Sweeney suggested circulating them via e-mail, and Mr. Scheidel agreed. Mr. Sweeney asked
678 which maps they decided they were going to use, and Mr. Scheidel responded that it was decided
679 from the Task Force to use the ones that currently exist, plus Mr. Marcotte's six district map. Mr.
680 Overton recalled that it would be 2 two-district maps, a three-district map, and a six-district map
681 and stated he would like to see them, and Mr. Blanchard agreed. Mr. Sweeney asked if it would
682 be possible to send the maps via e-mail to the Task Force members. Mr. Odit informed the
683 members that they had to make some adjustments to make them more accurate and once they were
684 updated, they would be sent out. Mr. Overton questioned whether they would receive these soon.
685 Mr. Safford asked the Committee whether they would like copies of the Charter, and Mr.
686 Blanchard said no. Mr. Safford asked whether the current amended forms were on the website,
687 and Mr. Odit stated not yet because they were not complete. Mr. Safford asked whether the
688 Charter to date with corrections should be put on the website, Mr. Sweeney asked members if they
689 agreed, and Ms. Myers said yes. Mr. Blanchard asked how big the maps were that would be hung
690 up at next week's meeting, and Mr. Scheidel responded 3x4 ft. Mr. Overton suggested using
691 Power-Point. Mr. Safford commented that there was nothing about the issue of naming the new

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692 community in the Charter and that there were two districts in one section and in the later
693 Transitional section, it talked about the Village and Town so it had not been reconciled in the
694 Charter. Mr. Overton suggested printing some copies to circulate, and Ms. Myers disagreed. Mr.
695 Sweeney asked whether it would be acceptable to just have it on the website and staff confirmed this
696 could be done, and members agreed. Mr. Sweeney stated it would be nice to put the Charter with
697 big letters that stated, Draft, Ms. Myers agreed, and Mr. Scheidel suggested Draft To Date. Mr.
698 Overton wondered what order the questions would be presented. Mr. Overton suggested that the
699 question of the name be first, government center be second and districts be third. Members
700 agreed. Ms. Myers confirmed it should be name, district and government center. Mr. Boucher
701 suggested the order should be the order they have discussed the issues. Mr. Mertens confirmed
702 name, district and government center. Mr. Overton recalled it as being name, government center
703 and district. Mr. Boucher confirmed he said name and where the government was going to be.
704 Mr. Blanchard asked how Ms. Wrenner printed them on the poster. Ms. Wrenner said name,
705 districts and location because the location was a question of if you even had the right to talk about
706 it. Ms. Myers agreed and confirmed it was the way it was printed on the poster. Mr. Sweeney
707 confirmed this and agreed. Mr. Overton asked for confirmation that it was name, districts and
708 government. Ms. Myers said yes.

709
710 Mr. Sweeney proposed that the minutes be postponed, especially if a lot of people attend, but
711 suggested including the approval of the minutes if time, and Ms. Myers and Ms. Wrenner agreed.
712 Mr. Mertens summarized that the meeting would begin with a status of deliberations to date, and
713 Ms. Myers agreed, and he stated that he would touch upon having met with Fire, Library,
714 Recreation, etc. Mr. Sweeney suggested a progress to date, as there are some misconceptions out
715 there with e-mails from a public member who thinks they are setting up different tax districts. Mr.
716 Sweeney summarized that Mr. Mertens would give a five-minute summary to begin with, then
717 public input on the name, districts and the government center and then discussion if time. Mr.
718 Mertens added he would talk about the status and ground rules. Mr. Scheidel offered that the
719 order be the same way it was advertised, and Mr. Sweeney and Ms. Myers thought they
720 understood this and members agreed. Mr. Mertens asked if someone wanted to make a comment
721 on the Recreation Department or the Fire Department, how it would be handled. Mr. Sweeney
722 and Ms. Myers suggested letting that person know if there was time at the end, they could
723 comment on a different issue. Mr. Overton asked what was just said and Mr. Sweeney reiterated
724 that if some one wanted to make a comment on something else other than the three questions it
725 would be done at the end and Mr. Overton agreed. Mr. Overton suggested thinking about the time
726 and believed it should be 20-30 minutes on each question at first and then any issue and then
727 revisit for further comments. Mr. Sweeney stated that he did not want to cut people short on their
728 comments. Mr. Overton asked how many people would attend, 20 or 30. Mr. Safford responded
729 that when the public entered would be a good indicator as to how much time should be allotted to
730 each question. Members agreed. Mr. Overton asked whether the Recreation Center was the
731 location for the meeting. Mr. Sweeney summarized that they would start off with ground rules,
732 then a summary to date of progress, and Mr. Overton suggested summary-to-date first then ground
733 rules, and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr. Sweeney continued with, then a discussion of the name,
734 districts and government center and then any other input from the public and then if time left, a
735 committee discussion. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Mertens whether he would inform the public that
736 these issues had been discussed extensively already and this was the chance to hear what the
737 public thought. Mr. Mertens agreed. Mr. Overton wondered what names would be brought up

738 and he personally liked Essex Junction. Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Safford whether he could provide
739 him with the various permutations that were the same size as the district maps. Mr. Safford
740 understood that the proposed names were City of Essex Junction, Town of Essex Junction, Town
741 of Essex and Essex Junction and asked for clarification if these were the four they wanted along
742 with a question mark at the bottom. Mr. Boucher asked whether it was possible to have the name
743 be just Essex Junction without city or town. Mr. Sweeney stated yes and Mr. Safford added, as
744 long as it was passed by the voters and the legislature. Mr. Blanchard stated anything goes if
745 passed by the legislature. Mr. Overton asked whether the Recreation Department room had a
746 stage, and Mr. Safford said no, but they were getting a microphone system and chairs. Mr.
747 Overton asked if the Committee would be at the front of the room. Ms. Myers asked whether
748 there was a divider, and Mr. Safford said there was a divider, but it would not be closed so they
749 had the whole room. Mr. Safford said he thought 50 people could fit on each side and suggested
750 a T-formation and that he and Mr. Scheidel could sit to the side. Mr. Overton suggested taking a
751 break after an hour and a half with refreshments, and Ms. Myers stated no it would be too difficult
752 to manage. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Overton if he had more questions before moving on to Future
753 Agenda Items.

Discussion of Future Agenda Items

754
755
756
757 Mr. Sweeney updated the Committee on the upcoming return meeting with the Fire Department
758 on November 9 and believed the Library was on November 4. Mr. Safford corrected Mr.
759 Sweeney and confirmed that the Library visit was on November 2 and the Fire Department was on
760 November 9, so that the next three meetings had Agenda Items. Mr. Overton assumed that the
761 Library and the Fire Departments would be short presentations and asked whether there was any
762 way they could caution them to keep their presentations to 20 minutes so they could do some
763 other work. Mr. Safford confirmed that this was a request for both the Library and Fire
764 Department. Mr. Scheidel commented that he felt the answers to the questions would take as long
765 as they would take to answer to their degree of satisfaction, but they would certainly caution them
766 to not repeat themselves. Mr. Sweeney asked if there was any other business to discuss before
767 opening the discussion to the Public.

Public Input-General Questions

768
769
770 Mr. Lloyd commented that as a taxpayer he became concerned and confused by the information
771 that was presented on the Recreation Departments. He recalled a few years ago when the new
772 structures on Maple street were put in place and he received a bill for a fee on his taxes, that the
773 ground rules changed enough that Green Mountain Steppers was displaced from the use of the
774 school, and he was forced to buy a car to get to his practices. If the Recreation budget which
775 passes easily, at least more easily than the school budget, was doing as much school work as was
776 described in several of the comments, that left him uneasy because most of his taxes, and other
777 people's taxes, go into schools. While he believed strongly in education, Mr. Lloyd stated it
778 offered some opportunities for creative budgeting which displeased him. Mr. Lloyd was
779 disheartened with the fact that the happy long-standing relationship between Green Mountain
780 Steppers and the Educational Center was ended due to restrictions related to the basketball
781 program, and he felt this was not fair. He did get confused by the shared relationship with the
782 schools and recreation which looked to him as a very fragile description of responsibility and
783 management and stated that it deserved careful attention before deciding on the best model. He

784 added that there were a lot of agendas going on in a lot of areas during these discussions and
785 hopefully, this attention to this issue could remain as positive as in these meetings.

786
787 Mr. Lemieux explained that a dozen years ago, there were thoughts about moving the Recreation
788 Department back to the municipality and at the time, the Village Manager who was not Mr.
789 Safford, did not support this change. He believed that in the past there was not as much co-
790 mingling between the Recreation Department and the School District and that in the past, they
791 acted as separate entities. Mr. Mertens responded that it was the reason the Committee was
792 interested in some objective data if at all possible that would explain why it should be endorsed.

793
794 Mr. Marcotte asked that in addition to what Mr. Odit would present at the next meeting, whether it
795 would be permissible for him to present a draft of a six-district map. Mr. Sweeney and Mr.
796 Scheidel reassured Mr. Marcotte that they were using his district map, and that Mr. Odit and Mr.
797 Scheidel were instructed to work from his map. Mr. Scheidel asked Mr. Marcotte if he changed
798 his map from the last time he circulated it. Mr. Marcotte stated no, but that Mr. Odit changed it,
799 and he had not had a chance to look at it. Mr. Marcotte asked if Mr. Odit was going to use the
800 changed version, and Mr. Odit responded that he was going to use the most accurate one, which is
801 an edited version of Mr. Marcotte's original six-district map because there were numbers missing
802 when that map was made. Mr. Sweeney stated that Mr. Odit might have had to make some
803 changes to make the districts equal, but they basically asked for Mr. Marcotte's proposal. Mr.
804 Marcotte wanted to look at it so it can be reconciled by this Friday, and Mr. Safford confirmed
805 that he was asking for it by this Friday, and Mr. Marcotte stated, if that was possible. Mr.
806 Sweeney stated that it was going to be prepared for the meeting on Wednesday and that they
807 wanted to use his map as they could not find a better one. Mr. Marcotte expressed concern that
808 the redraw seemed to take away more representation from the Village and gave more to the Town
809 and wanted to make sure it there was no other configuration possible. His goal was to get the
810 maximum amount of districts or people that could be represented by the Village only. Mr.
811 Scheidel and Ms. Myers argued that Mr. Odit did not edit the map to give the Town more
812 representation. Mr. Overton reassured Mr. Marcotte that they would look at the maps closely
813 when they are finished and suggested that he speak with Mr. Odit about it. Mr. Marcotte added
814 that although he felt it important for the Recreation Department to have a relationship with the
815 schools, he supported the Recreation Department being under the management of the municipality
816 because he felt it would be easier and less complicated.

817
818 **MR. SWEENEY MOVED AND MS. MYERS SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

819
820 **THE MOTION PASSED 7-0.**

821
822
823 **Respectfully submitted,**
824 **SARAMICHELE STULTZ**

825
826 *Saramichelle Stultz*
827 Recording Secretary

828
829

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830 (THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE NEXT MERGER TASK FORCE
831 MEETING)

Approved 11/2/2005

Approved 11/2/2005

**MERGER TASK FORCE
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION
MEETING MINUTES
October 26, 2005**

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MEMBERS PRESENT: Hans Mertens, Chairperson, Hugh Sweeney, Deb Billado, Irene Wrenner, Alan Nye, John Lajza, Linda Myers, George Boucher, Rene Blanchard, Alan Overton.

STAFF PRESENT: Pat Scheidel, Town Manager, Charles Safford, Village Manager.

OTHERS PRESENT: Becky Arnold, Charles Keeler, Marge Gaskins, Steve Gaskins, Wendy Johnson, Diana Morgan, Ruth Morgan, Jeffrey Harton, John Keene, Joan Carr, Jaquie Carr, Paul Fronz, John Fitzgerald, Brian Chaffer, Mike Schultz, Patricia Bailey, Thomas Bailey, Betsy Chase, Chris Halpin, Carl Wermer, Martha Houghton, Robert O'Neill, Lilianne Lemieux, Bernie Lemieux, David Stifler, Dave Willey, Chris Loso, Suzanne Levine, Ann Wadsworth, John Alden, Sara Benevento, Vince Benevento, Bob Marcotte, George Clapp, Amy Bond, Fred Norton, Jean Norton, Carole Ann Greig, Willard Bickford, Elise Bickford, Eva Clough, Bob Willey Tim Jerman, Chuck Lloyd, Leah Pastel, Angie Chapple-Sokol, Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, Bob Stannard, Joyce Stannard, JJ Casazza, Ed Evans, Deb Evans, Jan Peterson, Tom Torti, Mary Post, Bruce Post, NJ Faunce, Nick Meyer, Bridget Meyer, Jim Overfield, Sue Overfield, Mike Sullivan. Lori Houghton, Jon Houghton, Sherry Haggerty, Marla Durham, Dave Clough, Bob Abell, Chuck Barry, Paula Duke, Hubie Norton, Linda Simpson, Tim Kemmerer, Jeff Carr, Tom James, Charles kehler, Gwen Pastel and Marilyn James.

Mr. Mertens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

BUSINESS AGENDA

Summary of Merger Committee Accomplishments-Hans Mertens

Mr. Mertens introduced himself and made introductions to the Public for people in elected positions who included Mr. Tom James, the president of the Selectboard, Mr. Tim Jerman from the Trustees and legislature, Ms. Myers from the Selectboard and legislature, Mr. Lajza and Ms. Billado from the Trustees and Mr. Nye and Mr. Torti from the Selectboard. Mr. Mertens added that the public should feel free to share their views with any of the elected officials as they would play a very large role in the adoption of the Merger.

Mr. Mertens introduced the Task Force members as Mr. Sweeney, Co-Chair, Ms. Myers, Ms. Billado, Ms. Wrenner, Mr. Boucher, Mr. Nye, Mr. Overton, Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Lazja. Mr. Mertens stated his appreciation for Mr. Safford, the Village Manager and Mr. Scheidel, the Town Manager, who had attended the meetings and had been a wonderful resource for all the members of the Task Force.

Mr. Mertens explained that the meeting would have an open format, but that there were ground rules to be followed. He asked the Public to be ready to speak by coming forward, waiting in the aisle one behind the other, and to speak into the microphones.

48

49 Mr. Mertens summarized the Merger Committee Accomplishments. He reported that the first
50 accomplishment has been the fact that the ten Task Force members and the management have met
51 faithfully since July 20 with a unity of purpose and respect for each others' opinions that was more
52 better today than it was in the beginning. He stated that the group had worked very well together
53 and they had accomplished a lot, as comments from the public could judge at the end of the
54 meeting. Specifically, the Merger assignment that they received from the elected officials was to
55 compose a plan of merger which included seven items. On the top of that list was to review current
56 personnel services, which involved labor contracts and many other related details, to recommend a
57 government structure, which they had a preliminary recommendation already, to develop an outline
58 for a plan and transition, basically how to get from where they are to where they need to be, to
59 prepare and recommend a Charter, and lastly to recommend a name for the new community, which
60 was one of the items for public comment that night.

61

62 Mr. Mertens summarized that the Task Force has looked at the Town and Village Charters and
63 integrated the best elements of each and added them into the 1999 Charter. Mr. Mertens explained
64 that in the course of the process, the Task Force had met with the Fire, Library and Recreation
65 Departments individually and they had future meetings planned. The Task Force challenged each
66 department to offer a plan of merger for their organizations. The results of these meetings were
67 very productive, very positive in attitude and very promising for the community at large. Mr.
68 Mertens reported that more work would need to be done, but expressed that much work had been
69 accomplished. He explained that the Task Force had also agreed to involve the community as much
70 as possible and as broadly as possible in the process, and as a result, they were holding this three-
71 hour meeting, with the understanding that as more progress was made, more meetings like this one
72 would be scheduled. The three items to be discussed that evening were first, the name of the
73 merged community, second, considered options for voting districts, third, the location of the new
74 government center.

75

76 **Ground Rules for Public Input Session**

77

78 Mr. Mertens explained that each of the topics were to be addressed individually with forty minutes
79 roughly for each topic. Given the excellent attendance that night and in the interest of time
80 management, they would like to the Public to hold their comments to about two minutes. He
81 asked the Public to forgive them if they interrupt them but they would like to be able to hear what
82 everyone had to say and it seemed like a way to achieve that and hoped the Public agreed. After
83 everyone had the opportunity to voice their views, he noted that there would be some open time at
84 the end of the meeting for comments on any topic. The role of the Merger Task Force members was
85 to listen to comments and ask clarifying questions if needed to understand the comment and gather
86 the important facts of your comments. Mr. Mertens pointed out the exhibits that would be
87 described by Mr. Scheidel and stated that he hoped the Public had a chance to look at them before
88 the meeting or during a break and use them as they see fit.

89

90

91 Mr. Scheidel explained that there were four exhibits that evening that represented potential voting
92 districts that had been discussed by the Task Force. On the far left of the audience, he pointed out
93 a map that represented six different potential districts that was proposed by Mr. Bob Marcotte to the

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94 Task Force. They were color coded so there were six corresponding different colors. On each of
95 the four maps, there is also the districts for the state representatives, therefore there would be 6-1,
96 6-2, 6-3 on all four. But tonight, the discussion was related to the local electoral districts that are
97 being proposed for their consideration. The map on the other side is a two-district map and has
98 two corresponding colors. The next map has three proposed districts and the one on the other side
99 is another variation of the two district map, with two different colors. The intent was to have the
100 districts a little bit different than the existing, corresponding boundaries of the municipal entities.
101

102 Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Scheidel and told the public to feel free to add their own suggestions. Mr.
103 Nye recommended another option that was not presented which was one district, the community
104 voting on the Board as a whole. Mr. Mertens confirmed that was one more option.
105

106 Mr. Mertens explained that Mr. Safford developed a poster with some typical names for the new
107 community so as the public was considering names, there were some of the leading candidates on
108 the poster and to feel free at some point to hand write in ideas that they preferred.
109

110 Mr. Mertens asked whether any Task Force members had anything to say before moving on to the
111 topic Public Input-Name of the Merged Community. He invited the Public to comment on how they
112 feel about the name of the new community, what should the name should be and why.
113

114 **Public Input-Name of Merged Community**

115
116 Ms. Joyce Stannard- 5 Warner Avenue, Essex Junction
117 -

118 Ms. Stannard preferred the name The City of Essex Junction for the following reasons. The first
119 reason was that there is only one Essex Junction in the whole world . She researched this question
120 while working for the Village a few years ago. The City of Essex Junction would be truly unique.
121 There a whole number of communities in the United States and in the World named Essex or Town
122 of Essex. The second reason for her preference was that the community was in fact a junction of
123 railroads and vehicles, such as the Five Corners. Many years ago, the postal service had designated
124 all addresses, both Village and Town as Essex Junction, with the exception to this rule being post
125 office boxes which have an 05453 zip code. Keeping the name of Essex Junction would have a
126 positive impact on the transition to a merged community. Some businesses and residents would
127 have to change their letterhead and business cards, etc., but for the majority, there would be no
128 changes needed. She worked for the Village of Essex Junction for nearly 19 years in the Village
129 Manager's office and she stated she could honestly tell that probably 50% of calls received were
130 from new residents who did not know where they lived, whether it was the Village or the Town.
131 The confusion stemmed from having an Essex Junction address but not living in the Village. This
132 would be more reason to choosing the name Essex Junction. In Ms. Stannard's opinion on Town
133 versus City, she preferred City because it sounds better and also related to her comments in regards
134 to the seat of the government topic.
135

136 Mr. Mertens invited any other to come forward and asked that they feel free to stand in the isle
137 while waiting.
138

139 Mr. George Clapp- Representative and President of the Essex Community Historical Society

140

141 Mr. Clapp noted that the Board of Directors of the Essex Community Historical Society asked him
142 to speak for them about their positions in regards to the topics. Mr. Clapp explained that the Board
143 was unique because half the Board was from the Junction and half from the Town. Mr. Clapp
144 explained that the Board felt that the name of Essex has served them well for 242 years, many
145 changes have happened within the boundaries of Essex, for instance the Junction has gone through
146 changes from Hubbells Falls to Painseville to Essex Junction and in following that logic, they
147 would go on to Drury, IBM. On the other hand, in Essex Town, they have constantly searched for a
148 center of town and they are still looking for that center in regards to Lang Farm. They supported
149 that Essex was unique, that it has withheld the test of time for 242 years, regardless of the changes
150 that have happened within and it was another 129 years after that Essex Junction was formed. He
151 stated that Essex Junction was a Village and Essex was a township and was connected with
152 Chittenden County. Mr. Clapp pointed out that in the original Charter on June 7, 1763, they were
153 formed and approved by the King of England, were part of the 14th nation to join the Union after
154 the original 13 colonies and that this was something to be proud of. Mr. Clapp stated that the
155 Board also wanted to convey that they wanted the integrity of both communities upheld and
156 cherished.

157

158 Mr. Clapp stated that he could not stay for the whole meeting as his wife just returned from the
159 hospital so he wanted to comment on the other topics now. In regards to a structure within the
160 township or city, based on size, the Town being 9 square miles left 27 square miles unaccounted
161 for. But if you take the Village based on size, it would accommodate six to seven hamlets or wards.
162 On the other hand, in regards to population, both communities are almost equal, then perhaps
163 creating two burroughs, Essex Junction being one, maintaining their status and Essex Center being
164 the second.

165

166 Mr. Mertens clarified that Mr. Clapp's comments on hamlets and burroughs was related to how the
167 lines should be draw and Mr. Clapp agreed. Mr. Mertens asked what he favored. Mr. Clapp replied
168 that he suggested that if one looked at Essex Junction in geographic size, they might go in one
169 direction and if one looked at the issue in regards to its population, which both communities are
170 equal, they might go with two sections to the new Town or City.

171

172 Mr. Mertens clarified that Mr. Clapp was urging the Task Force to support the name Town of Essex
173 and Mr. Clapp replied, or Essex. He added that Essex was the main ingredient of all the names and
174 did not have preference to Town or City but that it maintains its status. Mr. Mertens clarified to
175 Mr. Clapp that any of the names on the poster were acceptable. Ms. Myers replied, no. Mr. Clapp
176 stated that as an organization, they are not committed to one or the other and that whatever the
177 community at large decided, the organization would support it. In regards to the districts, Mr.
178 Mertens clarified that Mr. Clapp was in favor of two or six districts or was open and just giving
179 options. Mr. Clapp agreed and suggested there were two ways of approaching this matter. One
180 would be to compare the geographical size of each community and the other way would be to
181 compare their populations, which would be another way of maintaining their credibility and
182 integrity of both communities.

183

184 Mr. Bruce Post- 1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

185

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186 He stated that his mailing address was Essex Junction and his geographic location was Essex. He
187 thanked the Task Force as he moved to Essex 14 years ago and heard stories about the relationship
188 between the Village and Town. There are a lot of people who have moved here from Bosnia and
189 Croatia and wondered how did they get into a horrible situation and forgot what they were fighting
190 about. It may sound silly some of things that go on, but he believed it is getting beyond fighting
191 and appreciated what the Task Force was doing. He hated talking about name as it seemed so
192 small of an issue. The objectives are elements of preservation and tradition and elements of
193 change. He lived in North Dakota for awhile and had to lobby the legislature in trying to change
194 the school districts and one representative said to him, everybody wanted progress, nobody wanted
195 change. He agreed with the previous speaker in that the essence of the whole community is in the
196 name Essex and it did not make a difference to him if there were other Essex' in other parts of the
197 world or country and would like to see Essex whether it is City or Town. He felt that the Essex
198 formulation preserved and also promoted some change to the community.

199

200 Ms. Mary Post- 1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

201

202 Ms. Post would like to maintain the name of Essex for the similar reasons that Mr. Clapp gave,
203 even though it may not have been his conclusion. She agreed with Mr. Clapp that, in regards to the
204 history she would like to maintain the name of Essex. She was opposed to using City as she has
205 lived in cities in the past and left them to live in Vermont and would not like to be associated with
206 living in a city in Vermont and hoped they maintained the name of Essex.

207

208 Mr. Mertens encouraged people to step up to comment on this issue before they moved on to the
209 next topic.

210

211 Mr. Chuck Barry-118 South Street, Essex Junction

212

213 Mr. Barry supported the City of Essex Junction and he hoped that the merger was successful. If the
214 merger occurred, the Public needed to understand that the new community will be the second
215 largest city in the State of Vermont, with Colchester being number three. Secondly, he valued the
216 fact that Essex Junction was well known and that there was no other Essex Junction in the world,
217 which was the reason why he stayed living here. He did his own research as well and also found
218 out that there was no place in the world called Essex Junction and supported the City of Essex
219 Junction.

220

221

222

223 Mr. Wermer- 24 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction

224

225 Mr. Wermer suggested to ask for a show of hands at the end of each session to see if there were a
226 general preference if one existed.

227 Mr. Mertens thanked him for that suggestion.

228

229 Mr. Mike Sullivan-36 Orchard Terrace, Essex Junction

230

231 Mr. Mertens apologized to Mr. Sullivan for interrupting but asked Mr. Wermer whether he had an

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232 opinion on the current topic at hand. Mr. Wermer responded that he preferred Essex Junction
233 whether it were a City or Town.

234

235 Mr. Sullivan preferred the word Town over City as he grew up in a city. Town was much more
236 aesthetically pleasing to him and Essex Junction would be nice as well.

237

238 Mr. Keeler-22 Alderbrook Road, Essex Junction

239

240 Mr. Keeler liked the City of Essex Junction as he liked the idea of a city as a form of government
241 for a combined community and also expressed that he liked the six-district format.

242

243 Mr. Mertens mentioned that one item was out of order but thanked Mr. Keeler.

244

245 Ms. Duke-Living Road, Essex Town

246

247 Ms. Duke disagreed that the name had to do with the form of government as well as the concept of
248 a city. Regardless of the fact that we would be the second largest community in the state, there are
249 many, many towns across the country that are much larger than that. She did not move to Vermont
250 to live in a city. She stated that her preference was for Essex Township, the definition or tradition
251 of town ships not the government of townships was an area with a number of different villages or
252 parishes within it and she felt that described them. She would prefer Essex Township but would be
253 willing to live with Essex Junction Township.

254

255 Ms. Carol Ann Greig- Towers Road Extension, Essex Town

256

257 Ms. Greig was born in the Village of Essex in 1933 and left the Village in 1939. There were
258 discussions and arguments then from her father, who was also born here, regarding the Junction
259 separating from the Town. So this is not a new issue. She moved away from Rhode Island where
260 her parents were and came to Essex Junction and moved into Indian Acres in 1962 and raised her
261 family. Then she moved and built a home in the Town of Essex where she now lived on Towers
262 Rd. The home she was born in is still located on Grove Street in the Village and her family is
263 buried in the cemetery. She hoped that if she moved to the Town that she would not be forbidden
264 to come back and she was so excited that merger is off the ground as it feels like it has been
265 forever. Personally, she did not like the name being called a city. As a grassroots Vermonter, she
266 liked the Township idea. She liked several villages or corners and in reference to the e-mail she
267 sent today, she put forth the name Community of Essex Corners. Ms. Greig stated that four
268 districts might be appropriate, one being the Five Corners, one the Center corners in Essex Center,
269 one maybe at Susie Wilson Corners and One at Butlers Corners. She felt that if the old junction
270 town lines are blurred and blended by population into different districts so that they do not form the
271 lines that we now see between the Village and the Town, but were new divisions and new lines and
272 that they are spirit-filled as a true community should be in the name of the Town of Essex or Essex
273 all by itself.

274

275 Mr. Mertens reminded Ms. Greig that they were trying to address one topic at a time because they
276 did not want to miss the importance of her message and that even though they understood her
277 points, he encouraged her to speak again during the discussion for the districts topic.

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278

279 Mr. Mertens asked the Public if there was anyone else who would like to speak in regards to the
280 name topic and then they would go on to the other topics.

281

282 Ms. Jan Peterson-3 Winterlane Circle, Essex Town

283

284 Ms. Peterson lived in her first home in Essex Junction for eight years and then moved to Essex the
285 last 24 years. In respect to the history of both the Town and the Junction, she liked the Town of
286 Essex Junction because it respects the history of both and if they were going to be one big family,
287 they should all feel good about it. She did not think the community was a city and that anything in
288 Vermont would not be looked at as a city so she really felt very strongly that the Town of Essex
289 Junction is a step forward.

290

291 Mr. Mertens recalled a suggestion by Mr. Wermer in regards of a straw poll and suggested that at
292 some point tonight make a tally mark as to the name you prefer or write in a candidate and
293 reminded them one vote per person as an informal survey that would help the Task Force give some
294 information.

295

296 Mr. Chuck Lloyd-51 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction

297

298 Mr. Lloyd mentioned a saying he referred to at Church called KISS, which stands for Keep It
299 Simple Stupid. The postal service recognized the entire merged community as Essex Junction. The
300 signage did not include the Town or Village in general, as he understood, and Junction could
301 probably be added to the signs that said just Essex, so that they would not necessarily need to make
302 new signs. The postal service was already happy, let us keep it simple. If you chose, City or
303 Village or Town, that could be in the Charter, but whether it needed to be plastered all over the
304 place was questionable and people would just short cut it anyways.

305

306 Mr. David Stifler-57 Bixby Hill Rd, Essex Town

307

308 Mr. Stifler asked whether the name would be put up for a vote and Mr. Mertens replied that the
309 Task Force had not decided that but it was certainly suggested to have a vote. Mr. Stifler stated that
310 he felt that would be a great idea and that to Keep It Simple Stupid, he supported Essex as the name
311 of the new community.

312

313 Ms. Jackie Carr-29 Maple Street, Essex Junction

314

315 Ms. Carr expressed that some people might refer to Essex Junction as just another suburb and stated
316 that she disagreed with the statement Keep It Simple Stupid and felt that this community was not a
317 city. She explained that she moved here a year ago from California where there are too many cities,
318 growing up too fast and felt that the sense of community was rapidly being lost. She believed much
319 importance was in a name and she was opposed to city but in favor of Essex, Essex Town or Essex
320 Junction, although Essex was her favorite one. She questioned how the new community would be
321 looked upon by the outside world if they used the term, city, and was very much opposed to the
322 idea of having the word city anywhere in the name.

323

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324 Mr. Mertens stated that unless there was a new idea, he would like to end the discussion on the
325 topic of the Name of the Merged Community.

326

327 Mr. Hubie Norton- 9 Maple Lawn Drive, Essex Junction

328

329 Mr. Norton stated that just like Island Pond was in Brighton, White River Junction was in Hartford,
330 Jeffersonville was in Cambridge, Essex Junction and Essex Center would always be places within
331 this new municipality. He suggested taking a piece of both existing municipalities, Essex Junction
332 and Essex Town and simply calling it Essex. He felt that deciding between the use of, city or town
333 in the name was academic as we did not call Burlington, the City of Burlington or Rutland, the city
334 of Rutland, or Hinesburg, the Town of Hinesburg. Instead, he suggested people would simply say
335 Burlington, Rutland or Hinesburg without using its counterpart city or town. He added that people
336 would only say Essex Junction or Essex and would not refer to it as a city or town. He commented
337 that choosing city or town was merely academic and gave Vergennes as an example questioning
338 whether it really was a city. Mr. Norton expressed that given the marker of city or town, the new
339 municipality would be the places found in Essex or Essex Junction. Regarding the post office and
340 the Federal government, Mr. Norton remarked that he did not agree that they had done much right
341 lately anyways, so he did not believe this was a factor in the decision.

342

343 Ms. Gwen Pastel- 18 Essex Highlands, Essex Town

344

345 She was in favor of the City of Essex because Essex was the common name between the two as
346 there was no Junction in the Town name and did not find value in the fact that it would be the only
347 Essex Junction in the world. She stated that Five Corners would no longer be the center of the
348 community and added that she felt Lang Farm was also emerging as a center. Ms. Pastel reiterated
349 that she was in favor of the City of Essex.

350

351 Mr. Bob Marcotte, 5 Pinewood Plaza, Essex Junction

352

353 Mr. Marcotte preferred the name Essex Junction because it stated Essex Junction and not Essex on
354 the State of Vermont maps. He also felt it was important for the Village to retain their identity in
355 this process. Mr. Marcotte was concerned with the impact of not keeping the name Essex Junction
356 would have on Village residents in voting for the merger and recommended that the Task Force
357 keep this in mind when making the decision. Mr. Marcotte stated that he supported the name Essex
358 Junction since everyone's address would remain the same and since Essex Junction already had an
359 existing center as a focal point in the community.

360

361 Mr. Mertens felt that much ground had been covered thus far and that it was evident through this
362 discussion the many viewpoints people can have even on one topic, and that the public could see
363 the kind of debates the Task Force Committee had been undertaking these past weeks. Mr. Mertens
364 introduced the next topic of discussion- the Voting Districts.

365

366 **Public Input-Options For Voting Districts**

367

368 Mr. Mertens asked whether anyone had any opinions or thoughts, which the Task Force would
369 welcome, as to the design and number of voting districts for the new community.

370

371 Based on some of the e-mails the Task Force had received, Mr. Sweeney suggested that there may
372 be some misunderstanding of the nature of the district topic and wanted to clarify the meaning of
373 this topic for the public. He stated that the Task Force initially decided the form of government
374 would be a Council-Manager, which currently existed in the Village and Town, with seven elected
375 officials. He clarified that the discussion about voting districts was really how the new
376 municipality would elect those seven people. Mr. Sweeney noted that several people in the
377 community favored one district, which as a result, would leave all seven officials elected at large.
378 He explained that in a two-district format there would be three elected officials per district plus one
379 at large. In a three- district format, there would be two people per district with one at large and
380 finally in a six-district option there would be one elected official per district and one at large. Mr.
381 Sweeney added that there would not be any difference in tax rates between these different options,
382 that everything else would be the same theoretically and that the important topic he wanted
383 addressed was how to elect these seven officials.

384

385 Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Sweeney for his information and clarification, as it was helpful. Mr.
386 Mertens explained that some of the issues that the Task Force was struggling with included the
387 different scenarios of each district option. If there were one huge district, it could mean that a
388 particular area might not be represented if they did not vote. If there were very tightly formed
389 districts, it could potentially mean that a lot of people in that area would have the same interests as
390 far as sidewalks, etc. and the corresponding representatives would be attuned to those issues. If
391 there were long districts, there might be sidewalks issues for example on one-end and sidewalk
392 issues on the other end. Each option had pros and cons but what would be best in our community
393 was what the Task Force was trying to determine and invited any comments from the public.

394

395 Mr. Mike Sullivan-36 Orchard Terrace, Essex Junction

396

397 Mr. Sullivan felt the district issue was not as important as the fact that he supported that the districts
398 be drawn in a way that the boundaries between the Village and Town disappear.

399

400 Mr. Bruce Post- 1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

401

402 In preserving the geographic identity of the two existing communities, Mr. Post offered an option to
403 keep the two existing boundaries for voting purposes, have two officials representing each district
404 and have three officials at large to represent the community as a whole entity. At the same time, the
405 total of four elected officials in the two districts would be more parochial, which he felt was neither
406 good nor bad. Mr. Post offered this option as a way to hopefully create a spirited race for the three
407 officials at large who would then have to reach out to the whole merged community. Mr. Post did
408 not believe in one district at large or six-districts which he referred to as a “salamander” option and
409 wanted to provide an alternative solution.

410

411 Mr. John Keene- 6 Athens Drive, Essex Junction

412

413 Mr. Keene made a suggestion that the Selectman choose three members and the Trustees choose
414 three members to form a new council. This new council would be empowered to appoint the first
415 mayor, who he believed would come from the Junction, where he felt was the majority of the

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416 population. Mr. Keene realized that this was a melding of two or three proposals, but felt it was
417 much simpler and wanted to put this proposal out for consideration.

418

419 Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Keene and wanted to express that there was a lot of information that the
420 Task Force had reviewed, but in the interest of time, was not able to share all of it that evening.

421 Mr. Mertens explained that one issue the Task Force had talked about was a transitional
422 government. Mr. Mertens stated that Mr. Keene's suggestion was in fact part of the transitional
423 plan, which would be a moving force in the merger process.

424

425 Mr. Sweeney clarified that the form of government that the Task Force had decided upon did not
426 have a mayor, but had seven council members. Mr. Keene argued that a mayor system could still
427 be a choice. Due to the fact that some of the public did not hear his comment, Mr. Sweeney
428 reiterated that the form of government the Task Force decided so far did not have a mayor, just
429 seven counselors as the new community government. Mr. Boucher added, "and the Manager", and
430 Mr. Sweeney agreed.

431

432 Mr. Keene supported, at first, to keep the districts as a Town and a Village, three members from
433 each.

434

435 Mr. Chris Halpin-37 School Street, Essex Junction

436

437 Mr. Halpin felt that the work in deciding the districts would be the most important piece of work
438 thus far and that in order to sell the merger, it must be sold to the Village of Essex Junction. 46%
439 of the people of the Town of Essex population lived in 12% of the Town land area. According to
440 the 2003 census, the school district make-up for the Town of Essex was more than 20% higher per
441 household than for the Village. The Village as an interest was unique, and it was important that the
442 interests of everybody be represented. He commented that the district options were fine exercises
443 but the districting could stay the same as the current boundaries. The more we spoke about districts
444 for voting and electing representatives and town council, the Village lines would disappear because
445 of the one-person, one-vote constitutional requirement. . Mr. Halpin referred to the town and
446 village district map that included the Pinecrest area in the village and that that way was closest
447 to the Town and Village lines and preserved one-person, one-vote. He recommended that the Task
448 force consider the language in the Charter for changing boundaries in the future. He believed it was
449 a political decision in how those numbers would be drawn to decide those boundary lines. He felt
450 that in order for the Task Force to sell the idea of the merger to the Village, there needed to be
451 multiple districts.

452

453 Ms. Caroline Greig-Towers Road Extension, Essex Town

454

455 Ms. Greig suggested there be four districts, with one elected official from each district and two
456 members at large. She strongly believed that the lines needed to be blurred between what was now
457 the line between the Village and the Town, and she felt this was extremely important to have a
458 good-spirited working community government.

459

460 Mr. Hubie Norton-9 Maple Lawn Drive, Essex Junction

461

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462 Mr. Norton suggested that the Task Force not get directly involved with the issue of creating
463 districts, but instead supported them to make recommendations for the new municipal governing
464 body. He felt that the Task Force Committee should engage in a collaborative effort with an
465 independent group from outside the region to crunch all the demographic information available,
466 which he felt should be plentiful. All that information could be available to develop the district
467 plan that was based on the purest forms of representative government and absent of political
468 gerrymandering and past history influences that could easily creep into this process. Mr. Norton
469 stated that there could be talk about resolving boundaries and other issues, but he felt that they
470 needed to ask themselves who and how did the current boundaries fall into place. He added that
471 there needed to be some real independent work on that issue. Mr. Norton felt that the final
472 districting did not have to happen overnight as there was already discussion about an interim
473 transitional arrangement. Mr. Norton believed that the Transitional Committee could work on
474 something similar to what was already mentioned, three for the Village, three for the Town and one
475 at large on an interim basis until the dust could settle a little bit. He proposed three to four years of
476 a plan to develop the final district boundaries and proposed letting the dust settle after the
477 demolition of both of these existing municipal governments. Mr. Norton added that he believed
478 any district plan should also have a mechanism for future adjustments that were not political, but
479 provided for a strong independent vote. Mr. Norton stated, "Let us not be like Texas".

480

481 Mr. Mertens pointed out that in 2010 there would be a new census which would drive new
482 districts. Mr. Mertens responded to Mr. Norton by stating that the Task Force had decided on
483 developing a proposal for districting, but recognized that the new government would be involved in
484 just a couple of years after that.

485

486 Ms. Joyce Stannard-5 Warner Avenue, Essex Junction

487

488 Ms. Stannard referred to the two district map and offered a different perspective on this issue. She
489 felt the Village merging with the Town was parallel to a marriage. She recently attended a wedding
490 in which the bride and groom each promised to respect each other's individuality while building on
491 their commonality. She hoped that in the marriage of the Village and Town, one partner would not
492 want to erase the other's individuality or identity for the sake of marriage. She did not favor one
493 district for a merged community because the representation would be unbalanced with the council
494 members originating from anywhere in the community, and she felt that specific needs might not be
495 addressed with an unbalanced council. At the same time, she felt that six districts would be very
496 confusing as she did not feel that they were such a large community that they needed to be sliced up
497 in six ways. Ms. Stannard offered that three districts might work, but she favored two because the
498 Village and the Town each had specific issues and needs. In reference to the map, Ms. Stannard
499 explained that on one hand, the Village was a compact, industrial area with concentrated population
500 and had a well defined commercial center, different traffic issues from the Town, had sewer/water
501 systems in place, more miles of sidewalks than roads and a definitive downtown with many historic
502 buildings in the vicinity. Furthermore, the Village had just earned the Village Center Designation
503 from the State. On the other hand, the greater part of the Town outside the Village was rural with
504 some dirt roads, had many septic systems, had greater dispersment of population and varying
505 needs, had industrial parks, had Indian Brook reservoir and Saxon Hill Reservation area, and it was
506 going through a process of developing a new Town Center. She realized that corporate boundaries
507 would vanish through a merger, but believed that either individuality must not. However, with two

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508 districts, Ms. Stannard felt they could each be part of the larger whole and still maintain their
509 identities. The creation of the merger task force was the first time that the Village and the Town
510 had come to the table as equals. She felt that having two districts for the merged community would
511 further strengthen that equality. Ms. Stannard stated that if in future years the community felt it
512 needed more districts, then a new Charter could be created. Ms. Stannard urged the Task Force to
513 please not try to abolish the Village, but instead to respect it for what it was. Ms. Stannard stated
514 that if people wanted a merged community, one partner must not ask the other partner in the
515 relationship to go away, but instead they should respect each other's individuality while building
516 among their common knowledge, and she stated that was the way to start.

517

518 Ms. Paula Duke-34 Lavigne Road, Essex Town

519

520 Ms. Duke was concerned with multiple districts because it was more difficult these days to find
521 people who were willing to volunteer the time it was necessary in fulfilling the elected positions
522 which were mostly volunteer jobs. She questioned whether the pool of interested parties would be
523 as good if they had more districts.

524

525 Mr. Mertens clarified that whether there were two or six districts, there would still be seven council
526 members and wanted to make sure that was understood by the public.

527

528 Ms. Duke responded, members that would be from specific areas, the more districts they had, and
529 Mr. Mertens agreed.

530

531 Ms. Marla Durham-11 West Hillcrest Road, Essex Junction

532

533 Ms. Durham referred to Ms. Stannard's comment about marriage. She and her husband had a
534 blended family who all get together for holidays and even though they all started out as individuals,
535 they have merged into a blended family. Her hope was that this community would not work as the
536 Village versus the Town and that somehow they would try to get them merged as one as soon as
537 they could. As much work as Mr. Marcotte did on the six-district map, she felt that six were too
538 many. If just two districts, the Village versus the Town mentality would keep that divided attitude
539 alive. Since they were working on merging, she hoped they would consider three districts and
540 perhaps have a consultant to help with this decision. She added that with three districts, they would
541 have two members in each district and then one at large. Ms. Durham's other concern was in
542 regards to seven people at large. She explained that as she had served on one Board for 11 years,
543 she had found that even if there were different people with different goals on a school board or a
544 municipal board, eventually with the right team effort, they all started to work towards the same
545 goal. She felt both communities had individual traits, but that her dream was that they would be
546 one community working for the same effort, which was to build their economic base and to keep
547 their kids happy in school and in the community.

548

549 She apologized for being late and would like to contribute to the name topic and stated she would
550 like to see City of Essex Junction or Town of Essex Junction. She did not want to lose her address
551 and wanted to encourage people to go shopping.

552

553 Mr. Mertens reminded the public that they could vote on a name by making a mark next to their

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554 favorite name on the poster and also noted that Mr. Todd Odit, Assistant Town Manager, worked
555 very hard in balancing the populations on the maps and through the colors was a one person-one
556 vote configuration.

557

558 Mr. Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, 52 Beech Street, Essex Junction

559

560 Mr. Chapple-Sokol favored six districts because he thought it would truly create one community
561 and that the best way to do that was to break down the existing boundaries. Essex Junction was
562 never going to disappear. The Five Corners, the center, was always going to have an identity and
563 its own life regardless of what went on around it, but that in order for them to be one municipality,
564 they needed to think as one municipality. He liked the idea of six districts because it reinforced
565 more locally to think about their issues and let people vote. Those elected officials found
566 themselves on several Boards within the community and he felt they really needed to encourage
567 more people to run for positions. He believed one way to do this was to bring that voting to local
568 areas rather than be at large which encouraged the same people to run. Mr. Chapple-Sokol stated
569 that in truth people vote for the name they knew.

570

571 Ms. Mary Post-1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

572

573 In regards to the comment from Ms. Durham about shopping, Ms. Post believed that there was
574 already enough shopping and that in the Town they were losing a lot of their green spaces. She
575 stated that Boot Hill was never going to become the Town Center, that it was not Vermont. In
576 regards to another comment about how hard it was to get people to run for office, she felt that this
577 merger was a great opportunity for the new community to start over again. She believed that some
578 people were afraid to run for office because others had been in the position so long that they had
579 name recognition and that the feeling was that it would be impossible to compete. She did not know
580 how she wanted the districts to be formed, but she had the sense that if they had the Junction and
581 Town as divided districts it would remain the same. Ms. Post stated that she would like to be one
582 family with local representation from however they decide to do it, agreed with Mr. Post's idea of
583 three members at large and then two elected officials in each district.

584

585 Mr. Mertens commented that the public could see the challenge the Task Force faced in feeling
586 strongly both ways, which was similar to what they were hearing from the public.

587

588 Mr. Marcotte-Pinewood Plaza, Essex Junction

589

590 Mr. Marcotte pointed out the philosophy behind the six-district option. He explained that the aim
591 was to address Village concerns about the Town taking over the whole community and about
592 Village residents not having an option to be part of the community. By creating a six-district map,
593 Mr. Marcotte believed it would give districts one and two, which were totally within the Village
594 itself, a guaranteed two votes. The third district consisted of 80% Village residents and the other
595 20% were from the Town. The other three districts were from the Town. Mr. Marcotte believed
596 that his model would guarantee three votes for the Village on the new Board and perhaps four if the
597 member elected at large were from the Village. It also extinguished the boundary lines, which he
598 felt was very important to accomplish to have the merger completed successfully. Mr. Marcotte
599 referred to the Citizen Charter draft, and pointed out one of the paragraphs which talked about these

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600 six districts and one at large and felt it would be a good idea to put this district topic in the Charter.
601 He felt the seventh member at large was almost necessary to ensure that the Village had a level of
602 comfort and still retained their identity. Then after five or six years, he suggested putting a clause
603 that would state that the voters could then elect a five-member district instead of seven. Mr.
604 Marcotte, in talking with towns like South Burlington and Colchester, learned that they believed
605 seven members was too cumbersome and those towns had moved to a five-member representation.
606 Mr. Marcotte agreed with this, but felt it was necessary to start with seven to ensure that the Village
607 retained their identity. Afterwards it could go to vote for a five-district membership. He added that
608 by putting a clause in the Charter as he proposed, would avoid the need for an amendment.

609

610 Ms. Gwen Pastel-18 Essex Highlands, Essex Town

611

612 Ms. Pastel agreed with Mr. Marcotte and stated that the idea of two districts would enable the same
613 split there was currently between the Town and Junction and would counteract the goal of merging
614 together. She was also concerned about the three districts as she did not feel it accurately
615 represented the different needs of the community for example where she lived, which was out near
616 Jericho had very different needs than those of Lang Farm or Pinewood Drive. Ms. Pastel agreed
617 with the six-district model as it most accurately represented the needs of the community.

618

619 Mr. Mertens stated that in seeing no one else approach the microphones, he felt they were ready to
620 move on to the third topic which addressed the question of Government Center. He explained that
621 this was a two-part question-1) Was it important enough that the Task Force Committee should
622 make a recommendation on the Government Center? 2) If yes, where should that Government
623 Center be? If no, why?

624

625 Mr. Sweeney agreed it was an important question, but stated that the issue to him related to the
626 charge they received from the Selectman and Trustees. He explained that the Task Force
627 Committee was an Ad Hoc committee, which meant they were not elected by anyone but were
628 created by an agreement with the Selectman and Trustees, and they were given a written charge to
629 answer certain questions but that this question was not on the list, even though it was important. He
630 clarified the question as being, Should the Committee address it, and if so, what was the scope of
631 how they should address it? He felt that on one end, they could make a recommendation that the
632 eventual new Board locate in the Five Corners area. On the other end, they could hire an architect
633 and design a building and determine the costs, etc. He agreed that the second part of the question
634 was important, but stated that the fundamental question was the question of scope and whether it
635 should be part of the job they had been charged to do. Mr. Sweeney added that this would
636 eventually be a discussion that the Board would have after public input.

637

638 Ms. Paula Duke-34 Lavigne Road, Essex Town

639

640 Ms. Paula Duke had an understanding that part of the question was whether or not it should go into
641 the Charter and asked whether Mr. Sweeney was saying that if the Committee pursued it, then it
642 would go into the Charter or whether he was saying it was being pursued because it was important
643 and needed to be addressed.

644

645 Mr. Sweeney replied that it was one of the questions before the Task Force and that if they made a

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646 decision, should it be in the Charter, the transition plan, or somewhere else?

647

648 Ms. Duke said she did not think it should be in the Charter and Mr. Mertens asked her to hold that
649 question for a moment as there were still some important clarifying questions to be addressed
650 before taking input, and Ms. Duke agreed. The Task Force received a Charge as Mr. Sweeney
651 stated which was seven items. One of the items was to develop a Charter. Mr. Mertens asked
652 whether the Town Center or government center be part of the Charter and stated that it could be or
653 it does not have to be. The seven items including a plan of transition and a number of other items
654 that they had been specifically asked to address and collectively was called a plan of merger. As
655 they produced a Charter for approval by the elected officials, they would also present to them a plan
656 of merger. The plan of merger would include the Libraries, Fire Departments, possibly the
657 Government Center, which he asked whether the Public thought it was important enough. Mr.
658 Mertens commented that some people may say they needed to understand the cost of merger and
659 they would like to know the cost and from that perspective, perhaps it needed to be there. Other
660 folks would say that the Transition Committee should figure that out. Mr. Mertens wanted to know
661 what the public was more comfortable with and asked whether there were any other members from
662 the Task Force that would like to add to that description.

663

664 Ms. Billado asked whether the public understood the question and clarified that the question was
665 whether it was appropriate for this Task Force Committee to discuss the location of the government
666 center and if so, where would you like that government center to be? Mr. Nye added that there was
667 a “catch all” section in the Charter that did allow the Task Force Committee to address “other items
668 that need to be addressed”.

669

670 Mr. Carolyn Greig-Towers Road Extension, Essex Town

671

672 In regards to the location of the new government, she felt that due to the economic crisis that some
673 of residents find themselves in now because of the things that were in their lives that were costing
674 much more money, that the Task Force Committee should look at a location of the center being in
675 an existing building that could accommodate and an historic place which may very well be the
676 Lincoln Hall. Other entities such as the Police Department and Fire Department could be in some
677 of these other districts that were suggested where they could get in and out easily and free up the
678 government building for persons inquiring about their government business. She felt it was an
679 economic issue and that with the lines blurred and the mission of this merger between the Town and
680 Village, it would seem that it would not be quite an impact to people's emotions. Ms. Greig felt the
681 importance would be the accessibility and parking.

682

683 Mr. Mike Sullivan-36 Orchard Terrace, Essex Junction

684

685 Mr. Sullivan stated that he thought the Task Force should definitely address this provided they
686 agree with what he wanted. He felt very very strongly that the new government should be located
687 in Village of Essex Junction. He was surprised with the idea that Mr. Marcotte developed that was
688 published in the Essex Reporter a year ago or so directly related to this issue. He summarized that
689 the main idea of the article was to use Lincoln Hall and relocate the Essex Junction Fire Department
690 and use that space for the municipality. He thought it was a great solution as the buildings already
691 existed and that the relocation of the Fire Department, in his opinion, would not be that expensive.

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692

693 Ms. Myers appreciated the comment by Mr. Sullivan, but mentioned that there were also two other
694 tenants in that building, the Senior Center and the Teen Center and asked Mr. Sullivan what he
695 proposed would happen with these tenants. Mr. Sullivan agreed that those two programs were vital
696 to the community, but he felt there was enough space by using the Fire Department building as it
697 was huge with parking available, and it was located adjacent to an historical building, Lincoln Hall.

698

699 Mr. David Stifler-57 Bixby Hill Rd, Essex Town

700

701 Mr. Stifler would like to encourage the Task Force to put the first and third topics up for a vote.
702 Mr. Stifler stated that the logical, practical center of Town was the Village as it already was the
703 Center with the Village and Town government already located there which made sense. Mr. Stifler
704 felt that logically everything could stay in the same building, with perhaps the Police Department
705 being able to house the two other tenants, the Senior Center and Teen Center. However, Mr. Stifler
706 emphasized that it was important for the Task Force to make the decision and that it should go to
707 vote. He supported the Town of Essex having the center in the Village.

708

709 Mr. Bruce Post-1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

710

711 Mr. Post stated that he was Governor Snelling's Planning Director when he was Governor the
712 second time around. The day Mr. Snelling died, Mr. Post was meeting with people to begin
713 planning the regulations to implement the growth control office. The two issues they were dealing
714 with were growth centers and preserving judicial buildings, and it was going to be tough to do, but
715 he did not get a chance to do it. He felt that without a doubt that there was a beautiful building in
716 the Village and had heard from the Trustees about beautification of the Village. He thought that the
717 defeated vote by Essex and the Junction in regards to the proposed new center building was a
718 message to the Selectboard to get on with the merger. He did not think they could dodge this and
719 that the Task Force should address this issue. Mr. Post wholeheartedly supported keeping the
720 center of government in Essex Junction.

721

722 Mr. Fred Norton- Osgood Hill Rd, Essex Town

723

724 Mr. Norton explained that he used to live in the Village and knew the advantages and the pleasures
725 of living in both locations. He used to joke that the Berlin Wall would fall before the Village and
726 the Town merged. He was very glad to see that this process was taking place and complemented
727 the Task Force for their work. He had been involved in scouting and most of the principles in
728 scouting were related to using resources, and he thought that the Village had a tremendous resource
729 in the center with the Five Corners. Mr. Norton stated there were three points that were
730 magnificent- the new veterans Memorial, which was very significant in light of the recent statistics
731 and added a lot to the Village, Lincoln Inn, being a classic location and the Bank on the opposite
732 corner, which was a refined and good architectural building. He would like to see the entire Five
733 Corners become a magnificent center as he felt it could be. He suggested taking the existing
734 Lincoln Hall and transforming it in the same manner that the Pavilion Hotel was transformed in
735 Montpelier into a Government Center. Mr. Norton had a written proposal and gave it to the Task
736 Force.

737

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738 Ms. Billado asked whether Mr. Norton felt the Task Force should deal with this issue and Mr.
739 Norton replied, it certainly should. One member asked what the question was and Ms. Billado
740 repeated, should the Task Force deal with this issue? Mr. Norton repeated yes, but he did not know
741 whether it was necessary for it to be part of the Charter and that they should research how other
742 Charters were set up. Mr. Norton thought that it certainly should be addressed as part of the merger
743 plan.

744

745 Ms. Mary Post-1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

746

747 Ms. Post believed that they should keep the Center in the Junction as it had historically been a
748 Center. She added that in the spirit of family coming together and trying to get along, if the Town
749 gave the Village the Center, maybe the Village would keep the same momentum of history by
750 letting the Town have the name of Essex.

751

752 Mr. Phil Kolvoord- Main Street, Essex Junction

753

754 Mr. Kolvoord felt it was tremendous that the Task Force had worked so hard on this merger and
755 wanted to applaud the Task Force because he stated it was not easy and took a lot of their time. He
756 explained that he came that evening very particularly to talk about this topic about whether or not
757 the Town Center should be in Essex Junction. When he first came to Essex Junction it was 1956
758 and back in the old days, next to his office at five corners was the First Secretary of State's office
759 for the State of Vermont. There were a number of other monumental situations in Essex Junction
760 that stand out in history and he thought it was very important to remember this, and that it was key
761 for this Task Force Committee to address this issue because it was very much in the minds of the
762 people in the Village as to whether or not they really wanted to go forward and merge. He felt that
763 the Selectman had done a wonderful job and deserved a great deal of credit as does the Village, but
764 he felt it was very important that they a) address the issue and b) that the town center be located
765 somewhere in the Village as there was absolutely no reason why it could not be as far as physical
766 space. Many architects would be perfectly willing to take their money to draft a plan that would
767 accommodate that and certainly the police and fire needed to be located where it was accessible to
768 main roads. He congratulated the Task Force, but urged them to take this issue and make a
769 reasonable recommendation. He felt there were a number of items, such as the name, that they
770 could simply put on the ballot and let the people vote to make the decision. All of this could be
771 changed, but he wanted them to take a look at how it affected the future generations and the future
772 community, and he felt it should be designed in a workable manner. Mr. Kolvoord reiterated that
773 they should a) put the names and districts on the ballot b) take it up the location of the Government
774 Center as an issue.

775

776 Ms. Marge Gaskins- 23 Forest Rd, Essex Town

777

778 Ms. Gaskins urged the Task Force Committee not to put the location of the Town Center in the
779 Charter as she did not think it was a correct purpose for the Charter. She had no objection with the
780 location being in the Junction and added that it would be nice for it to be accessible, which
781 sometimes Five Corners is not. However, she had no objection if it was in the Village as she had
782 been in the community for 49 years and had happily lived within the Junction as well as the Town.
783 However, she urged them to please not put the Town Center in the Charter as it would prohibit any

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784 discussion once it was in the Charter. She felt it should be something they could change if the need
785 arose without going to the legislature to do so.

786

787 Ms. Paula Duke-34 Lavigne Road, Essex Town

788

789 Ms. Duke agreed with Ms. Gaskins and did not want them to do something that should be reversed.
790 She did not have a problem with the Town Center being in the Village, but she felt it was smarter to
791 leave it out of the Charter because then, as Ms. Gaskins said, if a change needed to be made at some
792 point down the road, they would not have to go through the legislature.

793

794 Mr. Dave Clough-42 Brigham Hill Rd, Essex Town

795

796 Mr. Clough supported the Town Center being located in the Town, but more specifically, he felt
797 that the Task Force Committee should make a recommendation. The recommendation Mr. Clough
798 suggested was to not specify location. He believed the new structure should be made from scratch and
799 be designed for what the current needs were, looking to the future, in a visible location, with
800 parking available and adaptability for the future. He stated, "Don't create something like 81 Main
801 Street has turned into".

802

803 Ms. Marla Durham-11 West Hillcrest, Essex Junction

804

805 Ms. Durham encouraged the Task Force Committee to not put this issue in the Charter, but did
806 agree that the Committee should make a recommendation because she wholeheartedly agreed that
807 the reason they were here tonight was due to the vote of the new building. She thought that the
808 community was pressed economically at the moment. In addition, Ms. Durham stated that based on
809 what she had heard, there were concerns about parking availability at Lincoln Hall, and she stated
810 that whether they used the Fire Department or other building, she felt the time had come to consider
811 a parking garage and different ways of doing business. Ms. Durham stated that as land sold in the
812 surrounding area, there was no reason why a creative Board of Trustees and Selectpeople could not
813 have a fund balanced to keep-on-hand for capital real estate that could purchase areas for the future.
814 The other concern that she heard was the dislocation of the Teen Center and the Senior Center, and
815 she wanted to remind the Task Force Committee about the availability of the Park Street School.
816 She explained that the Park Street School was put out to vote a couple of years ago about whether
817 to renovate or not. The Village wholeheartedly agreed that it had been put off being renovated
818 because the Union High School Board wanted a one-campus plan. Whatever happened in the
819 merger, Ms. Durham requested that the Task Force not forget that they did have other buildings that
820 are available to use in the Village.

821

822 Mr. Marcotte-Pinewood Plaza, Essex Junction

823

824 Mr. Marcotte believed that the people wanted the Government Center in the Village and not in the
825 outskirts of the community. He felt this was the reason why the vote was very strong in support of
826 keeping it in the Village Center. He agreed that this issue should not be put in the Charter, but that
827 the Task Force should make some kind of commitment that would indicate that it would be
828 somewhere in the center of the growth for the whole community, whether that was Lincoln Hall or
829 the Fire Station etc., but that the center should be in the Village. Mr. Marcotte believed in regards

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830 to parking from the Fire Department point of view, he felt it would make sense to move the Fire
831 Department towards the West more because there would be one on Sandhill Rd and one here. He
832 stated that the Fire Station would be more accessible if it was located near the Fairgrounds because
833 then the fire engines use West street and go South, but that currently when there is a fire, Five
834 Corners immobilized, which was not very practical from a long-term point of view. Mr. Marcotte
835 proposed adding a floor in the middle of the Fire Station building to create office space and keep
836 the Senior Center and Teen Center in the same vicinity. As far as parking, Mr. Marcotte stated that
837 it was possible to create more spaces right behind the Fire Station by putting a three-floor elevated
838 story parking garage. Mr. Marcotte repeated his request to not put this topic in the Charter, but for
839 the Task Force to make a commitment of putting the Town Center in the growth center of the
840 community.

841

842 Ms. Betsy White- 41 Cedar Street, Essex Town

843

844 Ms. White made a comment in reference to the vote of the construction proposal for the Town
845 offices. She commented that the reason given to the public about why the vote did not pass was that
846 the preponderance of the voters wanted the offices to be in the Junction, and she wanted the people
847 in the audience to take note that many in the community voted that proposal down because it was a
848 bad proposal, not because they were particularly committed to having the offices in Essex Junction.
849 She did not have a problem with the location in the Junction, but did have a problem with access.
850 When her children were younger, she remembered trying to maneuver around Five Corners and
851 that it was difficult, although that was something that could be worked on. She urged the
852 Committee to be mindful that the proposal of the construction of new town offices was a bad
853 proposal and that that was the reason why many of the voters did not support it.

854

855 Mr. John Alden-3 Mason Drive, Essex Junction

856

857 Mr. Alden did not think the Task Force should have the location in the Charter because it did not
858 belong there, but that they should definitely put it in the plan of merger because the whole
859 community would like to know what will happen with the center of government. He had
860 researched the buildings at Five Corners to accommodate both the Town and Village municipal
861 needs. There were 65 parking spaces in that vicinity shared with the Library, which was exactly the
862 number of parking spaces that were in the Town office proposal last year. There were a number of
863 other facilities around Five Corners and the Village area that were under the control of the School
864 System for the Villages, the Town or the municipal governments. He recommended listing all of the
865 available buildings and deciding what was appropriate for the future community. He suggested
866 developing a plan that made sense. He stated that he would be happy to work with the Merger
867 Committee at any time and would share the research he had done with them at any point they would
868 like. Mr. Alden stated that the Village was a very deserving location for the municipal government
869 seat as the Downtown Steering Committee last year wrote a number of articles that were published
870 in the Essex Reporter that addressed the different reasons for this idea, planning-wise. Some of the
871 questions should be what the community should look like and where these services should be
872 delivered from. He recommended that afterward that the question was where to put the seat of
873 government, and that it should be where they wanted it, not where it happened to be available and
874 that it should be purposefully located. Mr. Alden personally thought that Lincoln Hall would be a
875 good location and that there were a number of options for the parking spaces. The Village had

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876 received a grant to enhance the parking, the sidewalks, beautification, etc. and there were dollars
877 there to be spent to enhance the Village and that all together the money could be put towards one
878 comprehensive plan to create a winning result.

879

880

881

882 Ms. Dianna Morgan-10 Murray Road, Essex Junction

883

884 Ms. Morgan commented about two other towns, Colchester and South Burlington, that she did not
885 feel had a genuine center. She stated she would like to see the new municipality have a center that
886 really looked like a historic, genuine, old Vermont center not strip -ville average suburbia.

887

888 Mr. Tim Kemmemyr-12 Hillcrest Road, Essex Junction

889

890 Mr. Kemmemyr supported the Task Force considering this issue and making a recommendation as
891 to the location of the Town Center as long that they did not think it would take a lot more time than
892 it has already taken as he was excited to get to the end results of this merger. He recommended to
893 the Task Force to keep things simple as he liked to walk as a mode of transportation and wherever
894 the location, he suggested putting it where the most people have walkable access to it as in the
895 Village. In regards to the districts, he supported the six-district option given the total population
896 and distribution and supported keeping the name simple and calling it Essex.

897

898

899

900 Ms. Joyce Stannard-5 Warner Avenue, Essex Junction

901

902 Ms. Stannard felt the Task Force Committee should address the issue of the seat of government, if
903 not in the Charter, then definitely in the plan of merger. She felt the Village residents were waiting
904 for them to do just that. She also agreed that the seat of government should be at Lincoln Hall. At
905 one time Lincoln Hall did house both the Town and Village municipal governments simultaneously
906 so she felt it would be a natural transition. She added that because Lincoln Hall was only a quarter
907 of a mile from the Town's current municipal offices, she believed it would not be much of a
908 transition for the Town of Essex residents to go to the Lincoln Hall. She asked that the Task Force
909 address the issue.

910

911

912

913 Mr. John Fitzgerald-Ira Allen Drive, Essex Town

914

915 Mr. Fitzgerald explained that when he came to Essex a long time ago, he bought a house in one day
916 over on Ira Allen Drive. His children went to school seven miles away past several schools and it
917 was quite shock to him. He still cannot drive from the Village to the Town on a street, but he can on
918 a numbered highway, just not on a street. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that government was going to
919 change in the process and that he would like to know his representative, his senator and his local
920 government better. He did not care whether they make it six, seven or a dozen districts, but he
921 would like to know somebody to call who had his interests at heart. Mr. Fitzgerald did not think the

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922 Center should be in the Charter, and he stated that it would migrate to where most of the people
923 wanted it without spending a lot of money suggested by a few of the School Board members that
924 evening.

925

926 Mr. John Keene, Essex Junction

927

928 Mr. Keene firmly stated that he did not think the town Center topic should be in the Charter. He
929 felt the location would end up wherever people wanted it to be. He asked what was the Center, was
930 it the place where the Selectman or the Trustees or new council met? He did not think this was an
931 important use and suggested that they could meet over at the Lincoln Inn over lunch. He would
932 look at the Center as being where Mr. Safford or Mr. Scheidel would be based or where the City
933 Clerk would be located and did not know what the rationale would be for putting it in the Charter.

934

935 Ms. Lori Houghton-11 Juniper Ridge, Essex Junction

936

937 Ms. Houghton stated that she moved here three years ago from Washington D.C. where she lived
938 for 10 years, with war everywhere, separate Centers and no one talked to each other. She lived in
939 Cleveland Ohio for a couple of years where it was the East side versus the West side, no one talked
940 to anyone else and no one ever considered moving from one side to the other. Then she moved here
941 and was excited to move to this great community, but then heard about the Town versus Essex
942 Junction and she became concerned. However, she did feel it was a good and unique community. It
943 was still small enough to have one large community, but what she loved was the Center in the
944 Village. She added that there was so much to do with the Town such as more recreation, but the
945 Village was unique as it drew people in and made them come back, and she felt that the center
946 should stay located in the Village.

947

948 Public Input-Other Topics

949

950 Mr. Mertens stated that there was extra time to discuss other items not on the agenda and invited
951 the Public to speak on any other issues they would like to discuss.

952

953 Ms. Mary Post-1 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

954

955 Ms. Post asked if the Town and Village merged, whether they would be starting over. Mr. Mertens
956 said that perhaps that was for the public to decide. Ms. Post suggested that she discuss her idea and
957 the Task Force could let her know if it would make sense, and Mr. Mertens agreed. Ms. Post stated
958 that she would be very interested in having a style of government where there would be a
959 referendum by the people if they disagreed with the decisions by the local government in which the
960 Public could develop a petition with enough signatures to communicate a desired vote for an issue
961 from the community as opposed to just the decisions from a few elected officials. She asked
962 whether this was possible to put a clause in the new Charter that supported a referendum system of
963 government. Mr. Mertens stated that he would refer to his co-chair to give more information, but
964 said that one of the additions that they were working into the Charter was a recall petition for
965 elected officials, which was a new item. It was not in the former Charters but it was being
966 discussed for the current Charter and referred this question to Mr. Sweeney. Mr. Sweeney
967 responded that he was not the expert, but stated that most of the members' instruction was defined

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968 by state law, which he was not sure about. Mr. Nye added that it was in State statute that Ms. Post's
969 suggestion could be done now, as long as there were the correct number of signatures on the
970 petition for it to be put on the ballot. Ms. Myers disagreed. Ms. Post replied that she had asked
971 specific questions to the Secretary of State about this, and the Secretary of State had said no they
972 absolutely could not pass a petition around. The Secretary of State told her that it was a political
973 issue and if the public did not like the way things were going in a town, they had to vote for a new
974 official to change things. Ms. Post felt that instead of voting somebody out, she would prefer to
975 have the whole town vote on a certain issue. Mr. Sweeney suggested that it would be helpful if Ms.
976 Post expressed her idea to them in writing and they could form an opinion because he did not feel
977 they could answer her question that evening. Mr. Mertens agreed with Mr. Sweeney's suggestion,
978 but also asked Mr. Safford to remind him about the issue of sidewalks at the Village meeting and
979 whether that was the type of relief that Ms. Post had in mind. Ms. Myers stated, no. In reference to
980 Mr. Nye's comment, Mr. Safford explained that as long as there was support by 5% of registered
981 voters, they could petition to undo an ordinance passed by the Selectboard. There was no
982 provision in state law to recall local officials in the middle of their term as Mr. Mertens stated, but
983 there was some specific of the legislative body that are not subject to referendum and that may be
984 what the Secretary of State was referring to. So it depends specifically what you are talking about
985 and whether you want the "referendum" to be received.

986

987 Mr. Mertens asked her to please accept the invitation to put her request in writing to the Task Force
988 Committee and introduced Mr. Blanchard, a former legislator. Mr. Blanchard suggested what Ms.
989 Post was referring to was perhaps initiative, where Trustees and Selectboard were not ordered to
990 create a new ordinance, but citizens would get a petition and create the new ordinance. Ms. Post
991 replied that it could be a part of what she was envisioning, but she was really talking about when
992 she disagreed with her leaders and there was no alternative instead of feeling like she had to go with
993 what they said, she wanted to have an alternative outlet at least to put to vote. Mr. Mertens
994 recommended to Mr. Blanchard that the Committee wait for her request in writing.

995

996 Ms. Carole Ann Greig-Towers Road Extension, Essex Town

997

998 Ms. Greig wanted to make a positive statement about the merger and some of the advantages it
999 could bring to the whole community, more than government, such as new recreation, social
1000 activities, intergenerational activities and facilities. She referred to someone who spoke earlier
1001 about available spaces and agreed that there were spaces available in Essex Junction. She stated
1002 that the Town of Essex was desperate for space. She had been active on the Memorial Hall
1003 Committee for several years where they had to stretch to justify its use versus now where there was
1004 no room anymore for all the activities going on in the community, such as this meeting. She did not
1005 feel the Village was much further away for Town residents, as the community was relatively small.
1006 The Colonial building that used to be a Theater in the 1920s had a Teen Center that showed movies
1007 upstairs in what is now Lincoln Hall. She felt there were so many things that could be revitalized
1008 again by this merger and facilities provided for everybody when the boundaries were erased. She
1009 felt it was going to be fantastic and thanked the Committee for their work.

1010

1011 Ms. Marla Durham-11 West Hillcrest Road, Essex Junction

1012

1013 Ms. Durham thanked the Committee for the opportunity to ask some questions. She had missed

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1014 some meetings. She asked to clarify the discussion about whether or not the Selectboard or
1015 Trustees should be on the new Board that would be developed. Then the second question was to
1016 explain the plan for transition.

1017

1018 Mr. Mertens stated that the transition was not decided yet and that they would be premature to
1019 disclose any findings. In regards to the Council-Manager format, Mr. Mertens stated that part of
1020 the plan was to have each of the Trustees and Selectboard choose members that would sit upon the
1021 new elected Council and then on a three-year basis, new members would be added by the
1022 electorates. The existing elected officials would appoint members and then certain seats were open
1023 for election. He explained that the very next year, the appointed seats would become open for
1024 election and so on and that this was part of the transition government plan.

1025

1026 Ms. Durham asked what would happen during the transition year. Eleven years ago when she
1027 became a member of the School Board, the Union High School was formed and that year of
1028 transition when the Union was developed, there was a vote electing the Board members during that
1029 same meeting. For the schools, there was a small team working for Transition. They still had the
1030 Prudential Committee that had to form the k-8 schools and it was a lot of work. It was a lot of
1031 work, changing over financial records, payrolls and it gave it a year with a transition Board, the
1032 Union High School Board, to not have voting but only give opinions at the meetings, but they were
1033 not having to make some hard decisions where people were mad at them and it gave them a year to
1034 get to know each other and learn how to work as a team. She recommended based on the work she
1035 thought Mr. Safford and Mr. Scheidel would have, considering a transition Board that would
1036 develop things and work in conjunction with the Selectboard and Trustees or elect them at the time
1037 of merger. Her assumption was that when the Selectboard and the Trustees put the merger to vote
1038 that they would have the members on the ballot already. That was why she was a little concerned
1039 about the Selectboard members and the Trustee members assuming that they were going to be on
1040 that Board. She would prefer that they run for election. She believed they had name recognition
1041 already and were going to get on the Transition Board if they did a good job.

1042

1043 Mr. Mertens wanted to sort through the terms. He explained that there were existing Trustees and
1044 existing Selectboard, each with five members. The Merger Task Force had ten members, some
1045 being Trustees and some being Selectboard. When the Task Force was finished with their work and
1046 gave recommendations, they would be giving those recommendations to the Transition Board. The
1047 recommendation for the Transition Board was to include all five Trustees and all five Selectboard.
1048 The Transition Board then had to approve it and so forth and so on. The elected Council, which
1049 was the new government, would be self-selected in part by several members that were from the
1050 Trustees and several members that were from the Selectboard and others that were elected. Then
1051 on an election cycle, people would be replaced. Mr. Mertens concluded that the topic was more
1052 complicated than needed to be discussed that evening.

1053

1054 Mr. Overton felt that the information should be accurate and therefore, it should be explained. Mr.
1055 Mertens expressed that none of the decisions were firm. Ms. Durham understood and brought up
1056 the difficulty in the process of merging the two governments and departments within both towns
1057 and asked how they were going to work together without a tie vote, and someone to break the tie.
1058 There were 10 members, and she felt there needed to be another to break the tie.

1059

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1060 Mr. Sweeney stated that they were trying to set an example and hopefully they would set an
1061 example of a positive working relationship for the next phase of this process. Ms. Durham replied,
1062 okay. Mr. Overton stated that technically what would happen was that when the Charter was
1063 finished and the Task Force handed over their work to the Trustees and to the Selectboard, then
1064 they had to decide what they liked and what they did not. He explained that the Trustees and the
1065 Selectboard, by law, had to approve a Charter through joint efforts. Mr. Overton explained that the
1066 way it was presently in the Transition section of the Charter, it stated that the Selectboard and
1067 Trustees would act as the Transition Board, but that this was only a draft. At one time the Charter
1068 said only some of the members from the Selectboard and Trustees would be a part of the Transition
1069 Board, but more importantly that the Transition Committee would exist after the vote in the Town
1070 and Village and after the legislative had given approval. The Transition Committee would then
1071 have very specific goals in the transition process, for example Zoning and Planning which would
1072 take a lot of work over the course of a year. However, there would not be any issues about whether
1073 they could or could not do something. He added that probably the people who had the most
1074 experience in the government work would be those members of the Trustees and Selectboard. In the
1075 latest version, which was only a draft, the Transition Committee would comprise of members from
1076 the Selectboard and Trustees who would have a very different role than they have had in the past
1077 few years.

1078

1079 Ms. Durham clarified Mr. Overton's statement as saying that it wouldn't be another vote causing the
1080 process to be overturned. Mr. Overton replied that you never know. Ms. Durham added that she
1081 felt much of the transitional work would fall and rely upon Mr. Safford and Mr. Scheidel. Mr.
1082 Mertens reiterated what Mr. Sweeney stated which was the Task Force was trying to set an example
1083 when they reached conclusions and that they strove for a 10-0 vote on most issues. For the most
1084 part, he felt that they were accomplishing just that, but appreciated Ms. Durham's input and asked
1085 whether she had any more questions. Ms. Durham responded, no and thanked the Task Force for
1086 all the work they had done.

1087

1088 In regards to the name of the community, Mr. Overton expressed to the public that he had the
1089 feeling that some had a preference for Town of Essex and some had a preference for Essex
1090 Junction, some city, some town, but that he sensed that issue was not a make or break deal. He
1091 wondered if they proposed a Charter that was livable and merged the communities appropriately,
1092 whether the name would cause one to vote against the Charter? No one voiced an opinion.

1093

1094 Mr. Chris Halpin-37 School Street, Essex Junction

1095

1096 Mr. Halpin expressed that he has had a wonderful time attending the Merger meetings on
1097 Wednesday nights as he had been to almost every one. He believed one of the greatest
1098 achievements was when they talked about districting and how to get people in the government and
1099 how to represent all of the town of Essex. In reference to a previous Task Force discussion of a
1100 possible Manager-Council form of government, Mr. Halpin wondered whether there could be a
1101 mayor with veto power versus the legislative body deliberating out conflict. Democracy was
1102 conflict and compromise, it was not cheap and easy. It took courage, diversity and breadth of
1103 participation. He questioned the possibility of parties and compensation for the members. Mr.
1104 Halpin suggested that perhaps members could be compensated to the extent that everyone would be
1105 enabled to run without concerns of financial burdens. He urged the Committee to make

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1106 participation broad as he was not convinced that what was happening through this committee would
1107 succeed. Mr. Halpin felt that in order to succeed, the plan had to be radically different in some ways
1108 than what they had now and districting was the first step in that direction. Mr. Halpin stated that he
1109 heard Mr. Mertens speak of being almost done and almost having something to present to the
1110 Trustees and Selectboard, but he thought their work had just begun. He hoped that more resources
1111 from the Town and the Junction would be dedicated to this Committee and urged the Task Force
1112 Committee to take their time, seek the resources necessary to do their job and asked them to
1113 encourage democracy and broad education.

1114

1115 Mr. Mertens thanked Mr. Halpin and noted that both Mr. Halpin and Mr. Marcotte had been at most
1116 of the meetings and found it interesting that Mr. Marcotte was telling the Committee to hurry up
1117 and Mr. Halpin was telling them to slow down.

1118

1119 Mr. Sweeney responded to Mr. Halpin about his request for the Task Force to use more resources
1120 and stated that they have had excellent support from the Town and Village staff and that everything
1121 they had asked for they had received in a very timely manner, and he believed that they were not
1122 lacking for resources in any way at all.

1123

1124 Ms. Suzanne Levine-4 Cindy Lane, Essex Town

1125

1126 Ms. Levine came to this meeting in support of the merger and from this discussion had become less
1127 comfortable with the idea and hoped that they could answer her questions. She raised concern
1128 about size of the community. She liked the rural nature of the outer parts of the Town and the small
1129 Town flavor of Essex Center. She enjoyed going to Town meetings, elections at large and
1130 wondered what would happen with the Town meetings, whether they would have them or not.
1131 They liked their Town plan that showed the division and what would happen to that and was the
1132 plan for Essex Junction similar? She was also concerned about naming it a city as she wondered
1133 whether this would urbanize the community, and she would not like to see that happen. She had
1134 questions about sewer capacity and wondered about the growth of sewer capacity from the merger.
1135 Ms. Myers responded that most of her questions would be available to the entire community before
1136 the vote, not the nuts and bolts of zoning, etc., but that they would have a good idea about the
1137 impacts from the merger. She stated that the Task Force could not go to the legislature until the
1138 members of the community told them to go to the legislature and that they have to tell the people of
1139 this community what they plan to do before they ask them to vote. Ms. Myers reassured Ms.
1140 Levine that there would be multiple public hearings before the vote, where all of her questions or at
1141 least most of her questions would be answered in some way or other, but told her to not hesitate to
1142 write to the Task Force members about her concerns or questions. The Task Force would discuss
1143 those concerns and questions and respond to her with an answer.

1144

1145 Ms. Joyce Stannard-5 Warner Avenue, Essex Junction

1146

1147 Ms. Stannard had been following how some departments have appeared before the Task Force and
1148 had expressed an interest in merging, particularly the Fire Department and Libraries who seem to
1149 not have a problem with the merger. However, she sensed a hesitation on the part of the Recreation
1150 Department. She understood that the Essex Junction Recreation Department was under the purview
1151 of the school department, however under a merged community she felt that if they were going to

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1152 merger other departments, this too had to be merged and she encouraged the school department to
1153 give up the Recreation Department and let it merge fully under a merged community. She also
1154 wanted to make a comment in regards to Mr. Halpin's remarks. Ms. Stannard was very pleased that
1155 this committee had chosen a Council-Manager form of government, and believed that it served
1156 them well in the Town and the Village and as far as she was concerned, "If it ain't broke, don't fix
1157 it."

1158

1159 Mr. Mertens invited further comments on any particular issues, but if there were none, they would
1160 take a five minute break to decide how to proceed that evening.

1161

1162 Mr. John Fitzgerald-15 Ira Allen, Essex Town

1163

1164 Mr. Fitzgerald agreed with Ms. Stannard that the Recreation Department should be taken away
1165 from the School District and given back to the Village, and that both the Town and the Village
1166 Recreation Departments should be merged.

1167

1168 Mr. Mertens asked for further comments and there were none. He stated that they would take a five
1169 minute recess and welcomed the public to stay.

1170

1171 After the five minute break, Mr. Mertens explained that they had decided to end the meeting and
1172 that there would be more meetings in the near future and welcomed anyone to attend. He thanked
1173 the public for their input that evening as it would be very helpful to the Task Force members.

1174

1175

1176 **Respectfully submitted,**

1177 **Saramichelle Stultz**

1178

1179 *Saramichelle Stultz*

1180 Recording Secretary

1181

1182

1183

1184 (THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE NEXT MERGER TASK FORCE
1185 MEETING)

1186