

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

**APPROVED**

**MERGER TASK FORCE  
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION  
MEETING MINUTES  
December 7, 2005**

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

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Chuck Lloyd, David Willey, Bob Marcotte, Jeff Hartin, George Tyler, Chris Halpin, Tim Jerman.

Mr. Sweeney called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**BUSINESS AGENDA**

**Public Input on Agenda Items**

Mr. Halpin wanted to thank the Task Force for giving him the time to respond. He apologized that he would not be present at future meetings. Mr. Sweeney reminded him that it was time for comments on the Agenda Items only. Mr. Halpin understood and said he was going to speak on an Agenda Item. He informed the Task Force that he was being laid-off at the end of the month so would not be able to attend future meetings and wanted to let the Task Force know that he had researched the topic of districts that they would be speaking of that night. He stated that he called the 20 most populous municipalities in the state to survey the number of districts each had. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Halpin if he was commenting on the Agenda that night. Mr. Halpin asked if the Task Force was going to address districts that night, and Mr. Sweeney agreed that it was on the Agenda, but explained to Mr. Halpin that there would be another time later in the night for his input regarding the topics. Mr. Halpin confirmed that comments could not be made on topics before deliberations, and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr. Halpin stated that he would comment on the districts later that night, and Mr. Sweeney thanked him and asked if there were any other comments on the Agenda for that night.

Mr. Marcotte wanted to distribute the Citizen's Charter to the Task Force for the district discussion and urged the Task Force to give the Citizen's Charter serious thought in their deliberations. He felt the more closely aligned the Task Force became with the Citizen's Charter, the more public support there would be in favor of the merger. Mr. Overton clarified that Mr. Marcotte wanted the Task Force to put a discussion about the Citizen's Charter on the Agenda, and Mr. Marcotte was not sure. Mr. Overton clarified that he wanted them to discuss the Citizen's Charter, and Mr. Marcotte agreed.

Mr. Nye, in regards to Mr. Halpin's discussion with Mr. Sweeney, stated he believed that the Public Input on Agenda Items was a period of time for the public to be able to comment on Agenda Items that may affect the members' decision-making process. He stated that because the Task Force might

48 make a decision some time that evening, he felt comments should be heard. He stated that if they  
49 waited until the end of the evening to hear comments, the Task Force would not have utilized the  
50 opportunity to hear the public, first. He believed that if districts were to be discussed that night,  
51 Mr. Halpin should be allowed to comment on the district issue. Mr. Sweeney stated that he had  
52 understood that period of time to only address the Agenda Items. Mr. Boucher confirmed that the  
53 districts were on the Agenda and if Mr. Halpin spoke after the deliberations, it would not have any  
54 effect on the vote. Mr. Sweeney thought that period of time was allotted for discussion about the  
55 content of the Agenda only. Mr. Overton agreed with Mr. Nye and had always thought that period  
56 of time was for the public to address topics on the Agenda provided for them at the meeting, but  
57 was not too concerned about the sequence. Mr. Sweeney was concerned about the time it would  
58 take to hear public comments in the beginning of their meeting. However he stated that he would  
59 yield to what the Task Force members wanted. One member suggested a time limit. Ms. Billado  
60 agreed to hearing comments if they were within a reasonable period of time. Mr. Overton suggested  
61 a total of 15 minutes allotted for Public Input at the beginning of the meeting, and Ms. Myers agreed  
62 to 10 minutes. Mr. Sweeney invited Mr. Halpin to finish his comments.

63

64 Mr. Halpin stated he learned that out of 20 largest towns in Vermont that he surveyed, 6 towns used  
65 districts to elect members to the Council. He urged the Task Force to take some inspiration from  
66 other communities of similar size and how their districts were designed. He explained that the  
67 designs ranged from 14 councilors in 7 wards in Burlington, to the smallest of 3 wards and 6  
68 councilors in Barre and of those 6 communities that used districts, all had mayors, but one or two.  
69 Those mayors acted with City Councilors and their power varied in each town. Mr. Halpin  
70 informed the Task Force that in Winooski, the mayor sat as a Council Member with full voting  
71 powers, in Montpelier, the mayor only voted to give a quorum or to break a tie. He stated that  
72 Montpelier had four wards. Mr. Halpin requested that the Task Force take inspiration from other  
73 communities of similar size by which would remind them of the their own history. For example, the  
74 government leaders of 1777 borrowed from the Pennsylvania Constitution to create the Vermont  
75 Constitution or when the founders of the Constitution of United States used the Articles of  
76 Confederation, which included the Iroquois Confederation. Mr. Halpin believed that the Town of  
77 Essex Junction would greatly benefit by researching beyond their boundaries and experiencing  
78 what other Towns did with their communities, especially the largest Town in Vermont. He thanked  
79 the Task Force members for their work on the districts.

80

81 Mr. Sweeney asked if there were any other comments and there were none.

82

### 83 Approve Minutes of November 30, 2005

84

85 **ALAN NYE MOVED AND JOHN LAJZA SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE**  
86 **MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 30, 2005 WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS:**  
87 **Line 7: Replace “Hugh Mertens” with “Hans Mertens”. Line 14: Replace “Troupe” with**  
88 **“Troop”. Line 23: Replace “campaign for municipalities” with “municipality for which to**  
89 **campaign”. Line 28: Replace “Troupe” with “Troop”. Line 35: Replace “Troupe” with**  
90 **“Troop”. Line 141: Replace “there” with “their”. Line 287: Replace “three” with “two”,**  
91 **strike “be”, replace “expired” with “expire”. Line 311: Replace “during” with “before”. Line**  
92 **360: Replace “Board” with “Ordinance”. Line 465: Replace “Billado” with “Wrenner”. Line**  
93 **521: Replace “favorably” with “favorable”. Line 524: Replace “members agreed” with “Mr.**

94 **Boucher stated". Line 532: After "looking" add "for". Line 548: After "adjustments" add ","**  
95 **strike "for". Line 687: Replace "hearing public input and had poor thought with respect to**  
96 **the Village was erroneous" with "public hearing or input from the community was**  
97 **erroneous.". Line 701: Replace "tHE" with "THE". Replace capital letters with lower case**  
98 **with parentheses. Line 545: After "exactly that." add "Mr. Boucher stated that in 1980 when**  
99 **the Village President proposed a merger vote, the Village had a \$600,000 surplus in the water**  
100 **district account at that time. The interest from that account payed for a fair portion of the**  
101 **Village water. The Village President disposed of this surplus by sending a check for \$300 or**  
102 **more to every water user in the Village, even if they had not payed their first yearly water**  
103 **statement and that event was the laugh of the Village. The merger vote failed by a 3:1**  
104 **margin."**

105

106 **THE MOTION PASSED 8-0 (Rene Blanchard and John Lajza abstained)**

107

108 **Committee Discussion and Action on Voting Districts and Office Location**

109

110 Mr. Overton wanted to make a motion and also to explain his hand-out that was circulated to  
111 members.

112

113 **AL OVERTON MOVED AND LINDA MYERS SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE AD**  
114 **HOC MERGER COMMITTEE RECOMMEND ONE AT-LARGE DISTRICT FOR THE**  
115 **PURPOSES OF ELECTING THE SEVEN TOWN COUNCILORS. THE AD HOC**  
116 **COMMITTEE FURTHER RECOMMENDS THAT A MECHANISM SHALL BE**  
117 **ADOPTED WHICH WOULD GUARANTEE THREE COUNCILORS FROM THE**  
118 **CURRENT VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION AND THREE COUNCILORS OF FROM THE**  
119 **CURRENT TOWN, OUTSIDE OF THE VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION SERVE FOR**  
120 **ONE, TWO AND THREE-YEAR TERMS BEGINNING JULY 1, 2008 AND THAT THERE**  
121 **WOULD BE ONE AT-LARGE COUNCILOR ELECTED AT THAT TIME.**

122

123 Mr. Overton, in regards to his hand-out, stated that according to his calculation, in March of 2008,  
124 theoretically, there would be a one-year, a two-year and a three-year person from the Village and a  
125 one-year, two-year and three-year person from the Town and one person at-large. The following  
126 year, the person in each community who had a three-year term would then have a two-year term  
127 and the person in each community with a two-year term would have a one-year term and then there  
128 would be two more people at large, with a total of three at large. Then the next year of 2010, there  
129 would be one person left from the old Village and Town appointments and then a total of four at  
130 large with the original one, two, two-year terms and two, three-year terms. Finally, in 2011, all  
131 seven would be at large with three, three-year terms, two, two-year terms and two, one-year terms.  
132 Mr. Nye pointed out that they were not elected, but just had that much remaining on the term. Mr.  
133 Overton and Ms. Myers agreed they were remaining terms and henceforth they would be three-year  
134 terms. Mr. Overton in clarifying his motion, wanted to put forth the idea that there would be three  
135 from the Village and three from the Town, which was a principle he felt all members had agreed  
136 upon regardless of the number of districts, and then a rotation of terms would occur. He explained  
137 that his motion brought the cycle out to 2010/2011 and at that point, there would be one, at-large  
138 district and at that time, the new Council would begin to see the voting pattern. Mr. Overton also  
139 felt this cycle of staggered terms would allow for the Redistricting Committee in either 2010 or

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 7, 2005

140 2011, and Ms. Myers said it probably would not be until the final census numbers in 2011 or 2012.  
141 Mr. Overton said that redistricting should be triggered by the timing of the Decennial Census.  
142 Therefore, if the new town government felt that an at-large district was not working, they could  
143 redistrict. He felt his motion guaranteed representation from both respective communities with  
144 three members each, and then commenced with the rotation of terms.  
145  
146 Ms. Myers asked if Mr. Overton's motion was similar to any of the options prepared by Mr. Odit.  
147 Ms. Wrenner stated it was the same as Option #1 on Mr. Odit's hand out. Mr. Overton, in reference  
148 to his motion, stated that it still did not address whether the Task Force decided to appoint or elect  
149 the members initially, and Mr. Sweeney added that it could be any number. Mr. Overton agreed and  
150 felt that the whether members were elected or appointed should be a separate discussion.  
151  
152 Mr. Sweeney confirmed that Mr. Overton's motion addressed the phasing of members' terms. Mr.  
153 Overton clarified that he addressed the phasing of terms and fair representation from both  
154 communities at the start of the merger. Ms. Billado felt that she had suggested the same  
155 recommendation during the last meeting and asked members to refer to Line 277 of the minutes of  
156 November 30, 2005. Mr. Sweeney felt the recommendation was also the same as Option #1 from  
157 Mr. Odit's analysis, and Ms. Billado agreed.  
158  
159 Mr. Nye wanted the Task Force to realize that Mr. Overton's proposal did not quite meet the  
160 requirement of guaranteed representation for two, three-year terms each. Mr. Sweeney interpreted  
161 Mr. Overton's proposal as guaranteeing a one-year term, a two-year term and a three-year term from  
162 the Town and the Village. Mr. Nye added that at the beginning of the new council, there would be  
163 three guaranteed from the Village and three guaranteed from the Town, but those terms were only  
164 for two and three years. Mr. Sweeney stated he also made an effort to develop a scheme that  
165 guaranteed three three-year terms, but was not successful, due to the other restrictions. Mr. Nye  
166 stated that the only way to guarantee the three-years, was if for the next two elections, you elected  
167 one person from each community. Mr. Sweeney stated that it could be done if they went beyond  
168 three years and Mr. Mertens confirmed, for two cycles. Mr. Sweeney stated that he could not  
169 determine a proposal for a three three-year terms and meet all the other criteria for the rotation of  
170 terms, etc.  
171  
172 Mr. Overton clarified that he did not understand that the Task Force intended to guarantee three-  
173 year terms for three members from each community. Mr. Nye, Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Boucher  
174 reminded Mr. Overton that it was part of a previous discussion. Mr. Boucher added there was also  
175 discussion about two districts, not just one. Mr. Boucher was in favor of two districts and stated that  
176 the community would support the merger more likely with two districts. Mr. Safford stated that  
177 through state law, the Task Force did not have to use the proposed two district maps unless they  
178 chose to do so and he confirmed this with Mr. Odit. Mr. Odit stated that according to the latest  
179 population estimate in 2004, there was less than a 19% variance between the current population of  
180 the Village and the current population outside of the Village. Mr. Mertens wondered about what  
181 the staff recommended. Ms. Billado felt the maps were close enough to this variance, and Mr.  
182 Safford felt the two-district maps met the one-man, one-vote principle. Mr. Mertens verified that  
183 the 19% was the allowed variance, and Mr. Odit stated that it was to the best of his knowledge at  
184 that time.

185

186 Ms. Myers strongly felt that districts, especially one that encompassed a Village line and a Town  
187 outside the Village line, institutionalized separation. She reminded the Task Force that the vote  
188 from the public in April asked the two communities to merge. She felt that Mr. Overton's proposal  
189 at least, gave equal representation in the Town and the Village in terms of districts at the start and  
190 continued dual representation through 2011, which by that time, she assumed people would come to  
191 understand that they were one community in every way. Mr. Boucher felt having two districts  
192 would be more favorable to the public at the time of the vote. He felt that when the merger passed  
193 the voter's approval, the two communities would then be merged, regardless of how many districts.  
194 Mr. Sweeney wanted to know the reason why Mr. Boucher supported two districts. Mr. Boucher  
195 stated that many constituents had expressed to him their concerns about financial and other  
196 differences between the two municipalities. Mr. Sweeney asked if guaranteeing Village  
197 representation on the new Council would address their concerns, and Mr. Boucher agreed. Mr.  
198 Boucher added that the Village residents needed to be reassured that the financial and/or employee  
199 contract issues that may develop as a result of the merger, would be addressed appropriately. Ms.  
200 Billado asked Mr. Sweeney if they could hear from each member about their thoughts on this issue.

201

202 Ms. Billado stated that initially she was in favor of two districts for equal representation with an  
203 understanding that in 2010, redistricting would occur accordingly. However, she stated that she was  
204 flexible and open-minded with regards to other alternatives. Mr. Blanchard stated that he had  
205 understood from reading the minutes that the Task Force was in favor of at-large voting as opposed  
206 to his idea of districting. From the beginning of the Task Force-inquiry process, Mr. Blanchard  
207 believed that when the boundaries between the Village and Town dissipated after the first vote, the  
208 communities would be merged. He felt that it was imperative to support the idea of one merged  
209 community, but by waiting until 2011, he felt, would prolong this end result. Mr. Overton  
210 explained that in his proposal, after the first vote, there would be three members each from the  
211 Town and Village initially and thereafter, everybody would move sequentially through a rotation of  
212 terms to a reach an at-large district. Mr. Blanchard believed that an at-large voting system required  
213 a lot of campaigning for elections. He stated that elections were expensive for the candidates, and  
214 he felt that the smaller the districts, the much easier it was for people to run for election and canvas  
215 the neighborhoods. Mr. Overton agreed that was a valid argument, but he was still in support of his  
216 proposal. Mr. Sweeney asked Mr. Blanchard what his view was on this issue. Mr. Blanchard  
217 clarified with Mr. Sweeney that he was not in favor of an at-large community. Ms. Billado  
218 confirmed that Mr. Blanchard was not in favor of two districts either, and Mr. Blanchard clarified  
219 that he was in favor of three districts. He also noted that two districts still divided the community in  
220 the same way it was at the present time and did not eliminate the old boundaries. Instead, Mr.  
221 Blanchard preferred a smaller three-district version of districting. Ms. Myers stated that she had  
222 already expressed her opinion, but wanted to address Mr. Boucher's comment about the public's  
223 view on this matter. Ms. Myers expressed that she believed that the Trustees and Selectboard  
224 members were men and women of good will, who would be able to collaborate and problem-solve  
225 effectively and with civility any financial or other issues that may arise as a result from the merger  
226 and would be capable of working together for the good of the entire community.

227

228 Mr. Sweeney asked if anyone who had not spoken would like to comment. Ms. Wrenner stated that  
229 she was in favor of one district and liked the plan that Mr. Overton proposed because it "jump  
230 started" the very first council with representation from each community and then through rotation  
231 of terms, reached an at-large community. Mr. Mertens was in agreement with Ms. Wrenner and felt

232 that Mr. Overton's proposal set the tone for what the Task Force was trying to accomplish. He  
233 thanked Mr. Odit for preparing the chart of Options in regards to terms. He saw value in reaching a  
234 consensus with regards to Option #1, but also felt it was important to be sensitive to Mr. Boucher  
235 and Mr. Blanchard's comments. He saw value in dual representation from both communities that  
236 were different in character and accessibility and also saw value in smaller districts in creating a  
237 small town atmosphere. Mr. Mertens liked the rotation of cycles in Option #1 and in Mr. Overton's  
238 proposal, but suggested an amendment to the proposal. He wanted the cycle to continue through  
239 two cycles or until the Redistricting Commission was convened, which he felt was another part of  
240 the proposal. If the Redistricting Commission decided to change the districting sooner than two  
241 cycles, then their decision, being law, would override what the Task Force decided. In summary,  
242 Mr. Mertens explained that ultimately, he did not know what would happen in the future, but that  
243 Mr. Overton's proposal was acceptable to him if it added an additional cycle. Mr. Overton clarified  
244 with Mr. Mertens that he suggested beginning in 2009, at-large representation would exist through  
245 2012, and Mr. Mertens agreed. Mr. Mertens stated that he felt the motive of the proposal was on  
246 target and if the Districting Commission were to convene earlier and make a recommendation that  
247 would be fine. Since they would not hear the results from the Commission until 2011 or 2012, Mr.  
248 Mertens supported extending dual representation for another cycle to simplify the process and to  
249 reach the time of redistricting, with the understanding that it would change automatically from the  
250 recommendation of the Districting Commission. Mr. Mertens in trying to synthesize his idea,  
251 referred Mr. Overton to Option #1, provided by Mr. Odit, and stated that he wanted to add one  
252 more colored layer to the chart. Ms. Myers asked Mr. Odit for his opinion to Mr. Merten's request.  
253

254 Mr. Odit confirmed that with Mr. Merten's amendment the result would be that in 2009 the one-  
255 year terms would become three-year terms and would be elected from a Town district and the  
256 Village district. Mr. Overton, in regards to the same issue, referred to his hand-out and pointed out  
257 that in 2009, instead of having two at large-members, they would be elected as one in the Village  
258 and one in the Town for a three-year term, which would delay the process of becoming entirely at-  
259 large by one year. Mr. Mertens reminded the Task Force that he was willing to support an earlier  
260 decision from the Districting Commission if that occurred and asked if that was possible. Ms.  
261 Myers did not know why the Task Force was considering the Districting Commission. She stated  
262 that the Districting Commission would be reviewing the legislative districts. If the Task Force  
263 decided on districts, the there would be a need for a Districting Commission to look at the census  
264 results as they developed. However, if the Task Force was deciding on eventually one district, then  
265 there was no need for a Districting Commission. Mr. Sweeney pointed out that Mr. Overton could  
266 add a proposal that a future Districting Commission be developed for the town, much like the  
267 Legislative Districting Commission, in case there was a need to redistrict. Mr. Overton stated that  
268 the Task Force could not predict the results of an at-large system. He understood that many  
269 members were in favor of one district but understood Mr. Blanchard's argument as well. Mr.  
270 Overton stated that Mr. Blanchard, along with Mr. Lajza, had expressed the need for people elected  
271 from their perspective towns where they were known and felt this was the strongest argument  
272 against one district. On the other hand, Mr. Overton pointed out that if there was a proper  
273 redistricting process set up that allowed the council at the time to continue with at-large or change it  
274 to districts if needed, then the redistricting process could act as a safety valve because the Task  
275 Force could not predict the needs of the community in the future. He believed that one of the  
276 recommendations from the Task Force should be that the New Council, over the next four to five  
277 years, assess whether there was representation from all parts of the community and then address it

278 as necessary.

279

280

281

282 Mr. Lajza commented that his preference was originally in favor of multiple districts but stated that  
283 if Mr. Overton's motion were to allow time for the new Council to evaluate the success of the at-  
284 large community, then he could support the motion. He believed that if it became obvious that  
285 broader representation needed to happen, then the government at that time would address that issue  
286 and provide the needed number of districts for fair representation. Mr. Lajza liked Mr. Overton's  
287 suggestion, but felt that the Task Force needed to recommend to the new Council that they be  
288 attentive to fair representation with an at-large community.

289

290 Mr. Nye supported Mr. Overton's motion. He commented that that he had spoken previously about  
291 his experience in local politics in Burlington while attending college. He pointed out that the  
292 difference between Essex and Burlington, in respect to politics, was that in Burlington there were  
293 political parties supported by financial contributions that influenced decision-making. On the other  
294 hand, he stated that Essex Board Members were representing communities, not philosophies as in  
295 Burlington. He felt the political atmosphere in Burlington was negative due to the separation of the  
296 community into wards that created competition for their varying needs. He believed that in order to  
297 have a great community, there needed to be leaders that would look at the entire community, fairly  
298 and equitably, as Ms. Myers stated, and who would listen to everyone in the community. Mr. Nye  
299 was concerned that if the community were divided into smaller areas, then it would cause friction  
300 between the districts financially creating met and unmet needs in the various parts of the Town. He  
301 suggested that in an at-large system the public had the opportunity to vote any members off the  
302 Board if they disagreed with their actions. Mr. Nye did not want to see little pieces of the  
303 community working against each other, which would create a separatist attitude similarly to the  
304 current Village/Town split. He confirmed that Mr. Mertens wanted the three members elected in the  
305 second year, 2009 to hold a three-year term. He suggested two members from each community be  
306 appointed and then the remaining three, one from Village and one from Town along with the at-  
307 large member be elected for a total of three, three and one at large. The next year, two people would  
308 be elected, either at-large or one from the Village and Town, as he thought was recommended by  
309 Mr. Mertens. Mr. Nye concluded that he felt the wards in Burlington created a myriad of problems  
310 as opposed to other large communities such as South Burlington and Colchester who were  
311 successfully managing their communities through an at-large system. Mr. Nye believed that if the  
312 Task Force decided on districts or wards, the community would become little villages within a  
313 town, which would defeat the purpose of the merger.

314

315 Mr. Boucher stated that it would be more favorable to the voters to have two districts, or three  
316 districts, if the concern was the original Village/Town boundaries. He stated that he would vote for  
317 two districts. Mr. Sweeney confirmed with Mr. Mertens that he wanted to extend the Village/Town  
318 guarantee to 2012. Mr. Mertens, in reference to option #1, stated that the Task Force would not  
319 know about population until 2012, so he was suggesting that they cover the election for the dual  
320 representation until 2012 and then hopefully the districting commission would address the needs at  
321 that time. Mr. Mertens wanted to use 2012 as the benchmark date and to extend the colors down to  
322 2012 in the chart by either electing the person for a three-year or a five-year term. Mr. Sweeney  
323 and Mr. Mertens discussed the possible outcomes for the varying lengths of terms and elections for

324 three-years and four years from 2009, and Mr. Sweeney concluded that there were two ways to  
325 reach those outcomes. He explained that, with the assumption that the terms repeated in three-year  
326 segments, in the 2009 election, the two one-year terms, would turn into three-year terms and the  
327 phase in would continue. Mr. Mertens asked, as a result, would the first three red boxes go to 2013?  
328 Mr. Sweeney stated that the next election would be 2011, and the cycle would continue three more  
329 years to 2013. Mr. Mertens felt that would be fine, but if that was a problem to other members, he  
330 did not need guaranteed representation until 2013. Mr. Sweeney summarized Mr. Overton's  
331 proposal as being that the Town/ Village guaranteed representation start in the first year, either  
332 elected or appointed members, with a one-year, a two-year and a three-year for each perspective  
333 community, then the guaranteed Town/Village representation would end, and there would be an at-  
334 large election starting in 2009. Mr. Mertens asked if it was possible to go to a four-year term. Mr.  
335 Overton said in his opinion the first year could be repeated. He commented on another option as  
336 being initially, instead of electing a one-year, two-year and three-year, there could initially be a  
337 two-year, three-year, four-year term and an at-large, which he assumed would be a four-year term.  
338 Mr. Nye and Ms. Myers were opposed to a four-year term.

339

340 Ms. Myers, in regards to Option #1, asked Mr. Odit could 2008 and 2009 be repeated and then the  
341 cycle continue from there so the guarantee would be extended for just one more year? Mr. Odit  
342 stated there could be a number of options. He explained that when the one-year terms expired and  
343 were elected, they would have to be elected for three years to be in accordance with the law and  
344 follow the phase-in cycle. If the one-year terms were elected for three years, one person could be  
345 from the Town and one from the Village and then the guaranteed representation would cease at that  
346 time. Mr. Odit explained that when the two-year terms expired, they would be at-large or they could  
347 be extended for two years, one from the Town, one from the Village and then cease guaranteed  
348 representation. Mr. Odit explained that when the three-year terms ended, they would be at-large or  
349 they could be extended for another three years. The result would be two districts until 2013.

350

351 Mr. Sweeney clarified Mr. Odit's explanation as being Mr. Overton's proposal but extended  
352 representation from the Town and Village until 2011. Mr. Overton clarified that Mr. Mertens  
353 would like to see the Village and the Town have an election in 2008, and Mr. Mertens agreed. He  
354 clarified that Mr. Mertens wanted an election again in 2009 and have just one person at-large. Mr.  
355 Sweeney clarified that Mr. Mertens meant in 2009 there would still be the Village/ Town guarantee,  
356 and Mr. Overton pointed out, for that one year only. Then he explained that in the next year, there  
357 would be two representatives from each community, with two at-large and the following year there  
358 would be one representation from each community and five at-large, until 2012 when all members  
359 would be at-large. Mr. Mertens thought his amendment would help vote in favor of Mr. Overton's  
360 proposal and suggested that it might help Mr. Boucher and Mr. Blanchard feel the same way, along  
361 with the safety net of the Districting Commission, and Mr. Overton agreed. Mr. Sweeney was still  
362 not clear on Mr. Merten's amendment. Mr. Overton stated that the amendment was to rewrite 2008  
363 into 2009 and then continue the phase-in to 2012. Mr. Odit asked for clarification. Mr. Overton  
364 stated to Mr. Odit that Mr. Mertens wanted to repeat 2008 and 2009. Mr. Mertens referred Mr.  
365 Odit to his chart of Options and suggested that in Option #1, the red shaded areas would continue  
366 until 2012, the blue until 2011 and the yellow until 2009.

367

368 Mr. Nye summarized that in the first year, 2008, there were seven people. Of those seven, three  
369 would be from the Town, three from the Village and one elected at large and that the Task Force

370 had not determined whether one would be elected from the Village and the Town that year or  
371 whether all three would be appointed. The next year, 2009, there would be an election and in that  
372 election, there would be either two people that year at large or two people elected, one from the  
373 Village, one from the Town for a three-year term. The next year, there would be two seats at-large  
374 that would be up for election.

375

376 Mr. Sweeney stated that in 2009, the two people elected, would continue the Town/Village  
377 guarantee and asked about whether they would continue the Town/Village guarantee in 2010 and  
378 members said no. Mr. Sweeney asked if that was the recommendation from Mr. Mertens and Mr.  
379 Mertens agreed. Mr. Sweeney asked if Mr. Overton would accept the amendment from Mr.  
380 Mertens and Mr. Overton agreed but asked if Ms. Myers who had seconded the motion agreed as  
381 well. Mr. Sweeney summarized the amendment to the motion as being to continue the  
382 Town/Village representation guarantee into the 2009 elections, and Mr. Mertens agreed. Ms.  
383 Myers agreed to the amendment, but stated that the motion was in two parts-the elections and the  
384 districting committee. Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Overton clarified that the districting committee was  
385 not mentioned in the motion, and Ms. Myers understood.

386

387 Mr. Sweeney concluded that the motion on the table was to create an at-large district with phasing  
388 in 2008 and 2009 to guarantee the representation of three people from the Town and three from the  
389 Village. Mr. Overton commented that from 2009, the phase-in would continue, and Mr. Mertens  
390 commented that then the community would become all at-large in 2012. Mr. Overton mentioned  
391 that in 2012 there was also the Redistricting Commission, which was important, and members felt  
392 that was a separate discussion. Mr. Sweeney asked if the Task Force was ready to vote on the  
393 motion. Mr. Odit clarified that the motion was total at-large in 2012, and members agreed.

394

395 Mr. Nye stated that he preferred Mr. Overton's first motion, but would vote in favor to support a  
396 consensus.

397

398 Mr. Sweeney stated that two members opposed the motion and clarified that the other members  
399 voted in favor of the motion, and Ms. Billado asked if she could not take a position. Mr. Sweeney  
400 asked if she voted, and Ms. Billado said no, that she wanted to abstain. Mr. Sweeney stated that  
401 normally abstentions were due to a conflict or some other reason. Ms. Billado voted in favor of the  
402 motion.

403

404 **THE MOTION PASSED 8-2. (Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Boucher opposed)**

405

406 Mr. Mertens clarified with Mr. Boucher and Mr. Blanchard that they wanted multiple districts for a  
407 long time. Mr. Boucher stated no, that Mr. Blanchard wanted three districts, and he felt the number  
408 of districts could change accordingly at three or four years. Mr. Mertens suggested that if the  
409 Districting Commission happened, they would have the ability to return to two districts if  
410 necessary. Ms. Myers corrected Mr. Mertens that the Districting Commission would only have the  
411 ability to recommend. Mr. Mertens felt that part of the plan was for the Districting Commission to  
412 act as a safety net in this process. One member stated that the Districting Commission discussion  
413 had not happened yet, and Mr. Mertens understood.

414

415 Mr. Sweeney stated that he believed this proposal addressed the concern of the people in the

416 Village and in the Town outside the Village about guaranteed representation for some time period.  
417 Mr. Boucher, based on his experience, was concerned about the issue Mr. Blanchard made in  
418 regards to canvassing in one district, especially with the addition of the territory of the Town. Mr.  
419 Sweeney stated that the Town was currently at-large and questioned how it would be different. Mr.  
420 Lajza stated his rationale for voting in favor even though he was a proponent of multiple districts.  
421 He was equally concerned about what Mr. Nye stated, which was how having many districts or  
422 wards could generate little villages in one community. He felt the strongest argument against one  
423 at-large system was trying to get to know all the citizens in such a large community. However, he  
424 felt Mr. Overton's motion and Mr. Merten's amendment was a good compromise in the fact that  
425 there would be several years of guaranteed representation and a couple of years of voting members  
426 at-large. In this way, the new Council would be able assess the voting pattern and whether they  
427 were coming from predominantly one area. Then hopefully, the new Council would recognize it  
428 was not working quite as they hoped and would have the opportunity to alter as necessary. He was  
429 not uncomfortable with having that decision be the business of the new government. Mr. Sweeney  
430 asked if there was any further discussion. Ms. Myers asked if there would be any discussion on the  
431 Redistricting Commission, and Mr. Sweeney suggested moving to the vote of the location of the  
432 government as all members were present, and Ms. Myers agreed.

433

434 **IRENE WRENNER MOVED AND RENE BLANCHARD SECONDED A MOTION THAT**  
435 **THE MERGER TASK FORCE RECOMMEND AS PART OF THE MERGER PLAN THAT**  
436 **ALL MEETINGS OF THE MERGER TRANSITION COMMITTEE TAKE PLACE IN**  
437 **LINCOLN HALL, THAT THE NEW TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE MERGED**  
438 **COMMUNITY WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFINING THE PLAN FOR THE**  
439 **MUNICIPAL BUILDING OR BUILDINGS THAT WOULD MEET THE NEEDS OF THAT**  
440 **MERGED COMMUNITY AND THAT THE MERGER TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS**  
441 **THAT THESE FACILITIES WOULD BE LOCATED AT THE FIVE CORNERS AREA IF**  
442 **POSSIBLE.**

443

444 Mr. Mertens asked if Ms. Wrenner to repeat her motion and she did. She clarified that the first part  
445 of her motion was the Transition Committee, which included the Trustees and the Selectboard. She  
446 clarified with Mr. Mertens that the second part of her motion was referring to the Council that was  
447 elected or appointed in 2008.

448

449 Ms. Billado stated that the third part could not happen because of the second part. She was  
450 confused that if the new Town Council were making the decision of the location, why the Task  
451 Force would recommend it afterwards. Ms. Wrenner explained that in the motion, the Task Force  
452 was urging the new Town Council to consider the Five Corner's area first and to give preference to  
453 them, but believed that the Task Force was not in the position to mandate this action. Ms. Billado  
454 clarified that the Task Force would recommend to the new Town Council the location of the Five  
455 Corners in the second part of her motion. Ms. Wrenner explained that in the second part of her  
456 motion, it was up to the new Town Council to decide, but in the third part of the motion, the Task  
457 Force was recommending that the new Council locate the new government in Five Corners if  
458 possible.

459

460 Mr. Mertens asked if Ms. Wrenner would consider putting the third part as the first part? Ms.  
461 Wrenner stated that the Transition Committee was meeting as the first step in the process. Mr.

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 7, 2005

462 Mertens felt the Task Force recommendation should be first, then the Transition Committee, and  
463 then the Council. Mr. Overton felt that the third part should be first or second. Ms. Myers clarified  
464 that the third part would be changed to the second part and asked Ms. Wrenner to read them again  
465 with the new sequence. Ms. Wrenner repeated her motion that first, the Task Force recommended  
466 that as the plan of merger, all meetings of the Transition Committee would take place in Lincoln  
467 Hall and secondly the Task Force recommended the new merged community would have facilities  
468 located in Five Corners area, but that the new Town Council would be responsible for defining  
469 those exact locations or building them, etc. Mr. Nye asked her to read the third section as she read it  
470 the first time. Ms. Wrenner repeated, "The merger Task Force recommends that these facilities  
471 should be located in the five Corners if possible." Ms. Myers felt the sequence was correct in the  
472 original motion. Ms. Myers asked Ms. Wrenner to read the original motion again. She stated, "The  
473 Merger Task Force recommended as part of the merger plan that all meetings of the merger  
474 Transition Committee take place in Lincoln Hall, that the new Town Council for the merged  
475 community would be responsible for defining the plan for the municipal building or buildings that  
476 would meet the needs of that merged community and that the merger Task Force recommend that  
477 the new Town Council if possible locate the new facilities in Five Corners." Mr. Sweeney agreed  
478 with the sequence as well. Mr. Blanchard felt that by moving the third part to the second part, it  
479 gave the new Town Council more direction, and Mr. Nye and Mr. Overton agreed. Ms. Myers was  
480 in favor of striking the third part of the motion. Mr. Overton added that he felt the wording could be  
481 changed by Ms. Wrenner to create a smoother transition between the first, third and second parts of  
482 the motion.

483

484 Ms. Billado clarified that the result of the proposal would be that the location of government offices  
485 be in the plan of merger. Ms. Wrenner replied, no it would be just the idea, and the new Town  
486 Council would define that. Ms. Billado was not in favor of the motion as it stood. She felt that the  
487 location of the government offices needed to be in the plan of merger and that it should be specified  
488 as being located in Five Corners. She did not want there to be any leeway for the New Council to  
489 locate the government offices outside the Five Corners. Mr. Overton clarified with Ms. Billado that  
490 the entire document would include a Charter and a transition process. Ms. Billado asked if the  
491 transition process was a plan of merger, and Mr. Overton replied that it was in the plan of merger.  
492 He stated it was part of their charge to develop a Charter and suggest a plan as the document and  
493 felt Ms. Wrenner's motion was appropriate in the transition process as a recommendation of the  
494 Task Force. In regards to Ms. Billado not wanting the location outside of the Five Corners, Mr.  
495 Overton clarified that she did not mean this recommendation should be in the Charter, but in the  
496 plan of merger, and Ms. Billado agreed. She stated that in the plan of merger there would be certain  
497 details in the transition process of the two communities merging that would be specifically  
498 addressed. She stated that the Transition Committee, which was defined as the Trustees and  
499 Selectboard, would carry out the plan of merger with the aid of the Town Council.

500

501 Ms. Myers stated that in her opinion, she felt that the decision of the location of the new Town of  
502 Essex Junction government offices should be under the purview of the new elected Town Council.  
503 She felt that the Task Force could recommend that the Transition Committee, which were elected  
504 officials, meet in Lincoln Hall for example, however, she felt that the new community and the new  
505 community's elected officials and their official Board should be the ones to gather the appropriate  
506 information in regards to needed space, cost, etc., and make the ultimate decision about the  
507 location. She stated that now that the Task Force just voted in favor of equal representation in the

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 7, 2005

508 first two years of 2008 and 2009, in addition to one at-large, those people should be the ones who  
509 answer to the public on the decision about the location of the government seat. Mr. Overton did not  
510 think Ms. Myers and Ms. Billado disagreed. Ms. Myers argued that Ms. Billado felt that the  
511 Transition Committee should make the decision. Ms. Billado disagreed and stated that she felt the  
512 Transition Committee, the Selectboard and Trustees, would carry out the plan of merger and in the  
513 plan of merger, the Task Force should specify the location of the government offices. Ms. Myers  
514 stated that those ten people in the Transition Committee should not make the decision; it should be  
515 the seven new councilmen. Mr. Sweeney clarified that Ms. Billado felt that the Task Force should  
516 specify the location of the new town offices and write it into the plan of merger, and Ms. Billado  
517 agreed. Ms. Billado felt that the voters needed to know where the proposed government offices  
518 would be located at the time of the vote. She stated that as Ms. Myers suggested, the taxpayers  
519 would not know where the offices were going to be when they went to vote, unless the location was  
520 in the plan of merger. She stated that after the vote on the plan of merger, the Transition Committee  
521 would execute the plan of merger, which would include the plans for the government office  
522 location. Mr. Overton clarified with Ms. Billado that she did not want the decision of the location of  
523 the government offices in the charter, but in the plan of merger. He understood that she would like  
524 the Task Force to make that decision, but he supported that the Task Force could only strongly  
525 recommend the location and could not mandate this. He noted that if Five Corners were to be  
526 reconstructed in the future, the new Council would be challenged if the location of the government  
527 was specified as Five Corners in the plan of merger. Ms. Billado suspected that if there was some  
528 unforeseen critical issue or if something happened at the designated location of the government  
529 offices, the Transition Committee and the public would address it. Mr. Overton clarified that Ms.  
530 Billado would prefer the motion to say that the Town Government shall be located at the Five  
531 Corners. He stated that he also supported the government seat being at Five Corners, but that in five  
532 or six years, he could not predict whether that location would be the best for the community.  
533 Therefore, he believed that it could be strongly recommended as part of the plan of merger that the  
534 government seat be located in the Five Corners area. He also felt the Government seat needed  
535 definition as he saw three or four buildings eventually making up the government center.

536

537 Mr. Nye asked what Ms. Billado defined as government offices. Ms. Billado defined the  
538 government offices at Five Corners to include the municipal manager and his staff, the Town Clerk,  
539 the vault, the assessor and zoning/planning. Mr. Nye confirmed that Recreation, Police/Fire, public  
540 works and libraries could be elsewhere, and Ms. Billado agreed. Mr. Lajza believed that Lincoln  
541 Hall should be the location of the new town government and be put in the plan of merger. Mr.  
542 Overton asked him how it should be put in the plan of merger. Mr. Lajza shared his vision of  
543 having the historical building be the seat of the government office for the new Town of Essex  
544 Junction and stated that it should be the building of the core government of the new Town and felt  
545 that there should be a determination done to see whether the building would meet the needs of the  
546 merged community or whether it would need expansion. He felt that sometimes it took more of an  
547 investment to revitalize downtowns than it did to build a new building in a field somewhere, which  
548 was a concern to the Villagers and to him. He would also be concerned if Lincoln Hall was  
549 regulated to some secondary use as he felt it needed to be the center of government, unless they  
550 found out that it could not be used. Mr. Overton agreed with Mr. Lajza, but asked how it should be  
551 put in the merger plan that the new Council had to use Lincoln Hall. Mr. Lajza stated that it should  
552 be put in as the new government center location and Mr. Overton asked if he meant forever? Mr.  
553 Lajza stated that nothing lasted forever and even if it were in the Charter, Charters could be

554 amended and changed. He felt there was a lot of sentiment for Lincoln Hall and it was necessary  
555 for the decision to be made for the voters to vote on. Mr. Boucher agreed and stated that Lincoln  
556 Hall was paid for, belonged to the Village and should be utilized as it had been utilized for 100  
557 years. He stated that it was a very solid building and could be upgraded using grant money. He felt  
558 this issue was a “make or break issue” to the residents of the Village and he stated that the building  
559 was historical and could be renovated. He stated that there was additional real estate that could be  
560 used such as relocating the Fire Department and using the Reynolds Building as well and that the  
561 Lincoln Hall area had a lot of growth potential. The location of government offices being at Lincoln  
562 Hall would assure the Villagers that the center of Town would not end up like North Street was to  
563 Burlington at that time. Mr. Sweeney asked whether Mr. Boucher trusted the new Town Council to  
564 make the right decision on this issue. Mr. Boucher replied that he did not know who would be on it  
565 and there had been past elected officials he had not trusted.

566

567 Mr. Sweeney asked if any other member would like to speak on this issue. Mr. Mertens stated that  
568 he liked many parts of Ms. Wrenner's proposal, which captured many of the goals for the location  
569 of the government seat, but he felt it needed more. He stated that he was close to some of the  
570 sentiment that was already expressed, and he felt it was important for the community to know  
571 exactly where the government center was going to be, which was one of the key items that should  
572 be up for public vote. He also felt that the government center was one of the opportunities to show a  
573 merger savings and if they did not do this, the Town clearly would need a new building. In the past,  
574 a new building was proposed with a cost of 4 million dollars, plus lease costs and he was concerned  
575 this cost would be incurred as a result of the merger if they did not utilize an existing asset.  
576 Therefore, he stated that this was an opportunity to provide costs savings to the voters and direct the  
577 Transition Committee by asking, suggesting, recommending, etc., that Lincoln Hall be the  
578 government center, with the understanding that there would be some preliminary costs at first. He  
579 also expressed that he needed to know if there was a savings because if there would not be any cost  
580 savings, he would not support it. However, the preliminary information that he had received as part  
581 of the Downtown Steering Committee, etc. led him to believe that Lincoln Hall, which was an  
582 existing asset and already off the tax rolls would be the logical choice. It had the potential to  
583 invigorate the center, to locate the core offices and create a campus relationship with the other  
584 departments in the area. The arrangement of this relationship he felt comfortable leaving to the new  
585 Town Council. He concluded that the voters would clearly want to understand the main issues that  
586 included the location of the new Town offices and believed that if they identified some costs  
587 associated with this, it would be very compelling argument to a voter if they could potentially save  
588 money for them. He was in favor of Ms. Wrenner's proposal with perhaps changing a few words.

589

590 Mr. Blanchard was in favor of Five Corners being the center of the new Town Council and agreed  
591 with members' comments. Mr. Sweeney and members discussed how to address the motion. Mr.  
592 Sweeney wondered what beyond a recommendation the Task Force could make, and Mr. Blanchard  
593 agreed. Mr. Sweeney asked if he supported Ms. Wrenner's motion. Mr. Blanchard preferred not to  
594 have too many loose ends on this issue but he did not want to be dictatorial about this issue to the  
595 new elected officials, but at the same time, he did not want to give them a whole lot of leeway as  
596 well. Ms. Myers suggested that all meetings of the Transition Committee should meet at Lincoln  
597 Hall and that the Task Force would recommend that the public buildings at Lincoln Hall should be  
598 preserved and used for public purposes for as long as financially possible, but that the new Council  
599 would make any and all infrastructure decisions thereafter. Mr. Sweeney asked if Ms. Wrenner

600 changed her motion due to those who expressed reasons for voting against it. Mr. Nye stated that  
601 with Ms. Billado's definition of town offices, he was more comfortable with some recommendation  
602 being in the plan of merger. He stated that he had been in the building business for 30 years and  
603 through his experience and knowledge, he knew that every square foot of new construction equaled  
604 or exceeded the square foot costs of quality renovation. Therefore, he informed the Task Force,  
605 that the costs would be about the same and stated that the decision would be for the taxpayers to  
606 make at that time. He supported the government seat at Lincoln Hall to include the seat for the  
607 clerk, managers and staff, assessor and possibly planning/zoning. He stated Lincoln Hall renovation  
608 was not a cheap solution and pointed out that when renovation occurred, renting of space was  
609 needed for that period of time for the staff to conduct business, which would be an associated cost,  
610 but he supported encouraging the new Council to support Lincoln Hall as the seat of government.

611  
612 Ms. Wrenner asked members if she added Lincoln Hall into the motion whether it would help reach  
613 a consensus. She read, "The seat of government for the merged community be located in Lincoln  
614 Hall and other downtown locations if possible." She felt this language gave the Town Council some  
615 options but initially, Lincoln Hall was the focal point for everyone and should be a priority. Mr.  
616 Lajza was in favor of striking "if possible". Mr. Overton asked for clarification and understood  
617 some of the members' concerns, but wanted members who were opposed to suggest language to  
618 support their opinions. Mr. Lajza believed the Task Force could put anything they wanted in the  
619 plan of merger and it was up to the Trustees and the Selectboard and the voters to accept or reject it.  
620 At the same time, the two Boards would have the opportunity to edit as well if necessary, but he did  
621 not agree with making just a recommendation. Mr. Lajza would really like to see the Task Force  
622 gather some costs and assess the needs for space, etc. because he was concerned about not  
623 providing new offices until 2012. Therefore, he felt if the Task Force began an inquiry process, it  
624 would give a head start to the Transition Committee who, being members from both Boards, had  
625 the power to bond and tax the entire community. Then as soon as the merger was approved, The  
626 Transition Committee could research further details such as hard costs and relocating the Village  
627 offices and other options. In conclusion, Mr. Lajza felt that Lincoln Hall could be renovated and  
628 ready for the new government to move in by 2008/2009. Ms. Billado suggested not voting on this  
629 issue given the time of the day as she felt more thought and discussion was needed. Mr. Sweeney  
630 said they needed to address the motion on the table.

631  
632 **DEB BILLADO MOVED AND JOHN LAJZA SECONDED A MOTION TO TABLE THE**  
633 **DISCUSSION AND MOTION OF THE LOCATION OF THE NEW TOWN OFFICES TO A**  
634 **LATER DATE.**

635  
636 Mr. Sweeney asked if this motion to table the discussion was until the next meeting, regardless of  
637 who was present and asked whether everybody was going to be present at the next meeting. Ms.  
638 Myers did not think they could table with a motion on the floor. Members agreed they could and  
639 discussed who would be present at the next meeting. Ms. Billado and Mr. Lajza felt there were a lot  
640 of good ideas and good discussion, but the topic needed further deliberations. Mr. Safford  
641 suggested that, in the interim, Ms. Wrenner could e-mail her motion to the members, and Ms.  
642 Wrenner agreed.

643  
644 **THE MOTION PASSED 9-1. (Mr. Sweeney opposed)**  
645

646 **Future Agenda Items**

647

648 Mr. Sweeney suggested for next week's agenda to continue with the discussion of the location of  
649 the government seat and to finish the Charter review of the Transitional Provisions. He asked if  
650 there was any other business for next week. Ms. Myers asked if they were scheduled to hear from  
651 any department. Mr. Scheidel thought they were scheduled to hear from Recreation on December  
652 21. Members were not sure whether this was certain, and Mr. Safford stated that he would call to  
653 confirm with the Recreation Department whether they were ready to return for a presentation for  
654 December 21. Mr. Sweeney asked if there was any other business before proceeding to Public  
655 Input. Mr. Boucher asked Mr. Safford if the water and sewer department should present to the Task  
656 Force. Mr. Safford stated that when the Task Force reached discussion on organizational structure,  
657 the Managers might talk about those other departments in general and get more specific if the Task  
658 Force wished. He did not see much change in wastewater as a result of the merger and offered that  
659 they would need an amendment to the tri-town agreement to change it from a three party agreement  
660 to a two party agreement. He explained that the Town had rights to certain capacity and the Village  
661 had rights to certain capacity and those capacities went to the successor municipal corporation. He  
662 noted that at the present time, the lawyers were reviewing the contracts to see if there was anything  
663 to bring to their attention. He did not see any reason for the wastewater to come to a Task Force  
664 meeting unless members felt differently. Mr. Nye thought that at some point, the members should  
665 talk with the wastewater and public works. Mr. Safford felt it would be addressed in the  
666 presentation by the Managers. Mr. Nye was concerned with the decisions that may be made that  
667 would affect the Village negatively during economic revitalization efforts. Therefore, he felt that  
668 there might be some issues to address to provide guidance to the Transition Committee and the new  
669 government.

670

671 **Public Input-General Comments**

672

673 Mr. Halpin congratulated the Task Force on reaching the decision for a one ward for the new Town  
674 of Essex Junction. He stated that he did not hear a proposal for the discussion on a redistricting  
675 commission and hope that discussion would come forward as he understood Mr. Overton had made  
676 that suggestion in his proposal. He felt that the Task Force might have done the work backwards in  
677 creating one ward, which would probably be the most inaccessible municipal council office to run  
678 for and stated that it would be cheaper to run for the State House than for Essex Junction, and Mr.  
679 Blanchard disagreed. He was thinking and hoping that Mr. Overton's motion for a Redistricting  
680 Committee would come to some fruition and that the Ad Hoc Committee would reach a decision.  
681 He stated that he was sorry that he would not be able to attend future meetings due the loss of his  
682 job and the schedule of his new job. Mr. Nye told him he could always phone members to give his  
683 comments and one member wished him good luck with his new job.

684

685 Mr. Marcotte asked the Task Force how they would convey their decision on the districting to the  
686 public when they went to vote on the merger? He felt it had been postponed so far in to the future  
687 that he may not be alive to see it. He stated that he felt the voting districts decision needed to be  
688 explained to the public in simple terms so they understood and were reassured about the process  
689 before going to the polls. He suggested the Task Force review the Citizen's Charter and refer to it as  
690 well in their deliberations.

691

**MERGER TASK FORCE**

**December 7, 2005**

692 **LINDA MYERS MOVED AND ALAN NYE SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT**  
693 **9:00 P.M.**

694

695 **THE MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

696

697

698 **Respectfully submitted,**

699 **Saramichelle Stultz**

700

701 *Saramichelle Stultz*

702 Recording Secretary

703

704

705

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

708

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

**MERGER TASK FORCE  
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION  
MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 14, 2005**

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

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Chuck Lloyd, Jeff Hartin.

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

**BUSINESS AGENDA**

**Public Input on Agenda Items**

There was no public input.

Mr. Mertens asked members to put a date of 12/08/05 on the Brownell and Essex Libraries correspondence they received in their packet. Mr. Mertens pointed out the Redistricting Provisions hand-out from Mr. Overton that was also included in their packets.

**Approve Minutes of December 7, 2005**

**RENE BLANCHARD MOVED AND ALAN NYE SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 7, 2005 WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS:**

**Line 116: Replace “Counsellors” with “Councilor” Line 117: Replace “Counsellors” with “Councilors”. Line 245: Replace “here” with “hear”. Line 418: Replace “Nye's” with “Nye”. Line 595: Replace “infrastructura” with “infrastructure”. Line 628: Replace “JOHN LAJZA MOVED AND DEB BILLADO SECONDED” with “DEB BILLADO MOVED AND JOHN LAJZA SECONDED”. Line 633: After “to” add “be”. Line 639: Replace “10” with “9”. Line 654: Replace “there” with “they”. Line 687: After “NYE” add “SECONDED”.**

**THE MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

**Committee Discussion and Action on Office Location**

Mr. Mertens recalled that there was a motion on the table from Ms. Wrenner in regards to the location of the government center. Mr. Sweeney had advised him that the proper approach was to have a vote to un-table the motion and when that vote was passed, to have further discussion and to vote on the original motion without amendments. Mr. Sweeney clarified that amendments could be made to the motion and voted upon, and Mr. Mertens agreed.

48 **HUGH SWEENEY MOVED AND ALAN NYE SECONDED A MOTION TO TAKE THE**  
49 **MOTION REGARDING OFFICE LOCATION OFF THE TABLE.**

50

51 **THE MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

52

53 Mr. Mertens stated that the motion was up for discussion. He noted that Ms. Wrenner had  
54 circulated her draft of the motion to members and asked her if she had anything to add, and Ms.  
55 Wrenner did not at that point. Mr. Overton clarified that Ms. Wrenner's motion was in the  
56 December 7 minutes, and members referred him to page 11 in the December 7 minutes. Mr. Safford  
57 offered to make copies for members of the draft Ms. Wrenner circulated, and Mr. Overton and Mr.  
58 Mertens agreed. Mr. Mertens asked if there was any difference between Ms. Wrenner's motion in  
59 the e-mail versus the minutes of December 7. Ms. Myers replied that in the minutes, it stated  
60 "building or buildings" and in the e-mail it stated "municipal buildings". Mr. Mertens asked  
61 members if there was any discussion.

62

63 Mr. Lajza referred to his comments about the location of the seat of government that he circulated  
64 to all the members via e-mail. He stated that after reviewing the minutes of December 7, 2005 and  
65 reading lines 609, 610 and 611, he felt that he and Ms. Wrenner had, in fact, fairly similar language  
66 about Lincoln Hall being the location of the government seat. He felt his e-mail discussed sentiment  
67 that had been expressed by him and other members as to why they felt Lincoln Hall should serve as  
68 the seat of government. He stated that at the last meeting, members had just begun to discuss the  
69 wording of the motion when it was tabled for further discussion. He felt that members were in  
70 agreement about considering Lincoln Hall first and foremost as a feasible location for the seat of  
71 government, which he stated would ultimately be approved by the electorate. He also believed that  
72 Ms. Wrenner's motion included the 5 Corners as an area of preference for the seat of government.  
73 He stated that the difference between the motions was that his motion provided a path for an  
74 accelerated approach to prepare the offices for a merged government. He believed that it was  
75 extremely important to define the location and then provide a way to reach the goal of preparing the  
76 offices for the new Council. Mr. Lajza, in regards to his motion, felt that it was important to provide  
77 information about the proposed costs and a plan for construction to the Essex Town Board, who had  
78 the ability to bond at that time, before the merger occurred. In this way, he argued that the process  
79 could begin in 2007 or early 2008, as soon as there was approval of the merger from the legislature.  
80 He supported having a plan in place for the possible renovation so that it could be implemented  
81 quickly after the approval process.

82

83 Mr. Mertens asked members if they wanted to accept Mr. Lajza's suggestion as an amendment or to  
84 continue discussing the original motion. Ms. Myers stated that she preferred to vote on Ms.  
85 Wrenner's original motion and then recommended if Mr. Lajza made a new motion, to discuss it  
86 thereafter. Mr. Lajza stated that he felt there were some diverse opinions at the last meeting and  
87 was concerned about reaching consensus among the members. Therefore, Mr. Lajza was in favor of  
88 continuing the discussion about his e-mail in order to develop an amendment to Ms. Wrenner's  
89 motion that would hopefully help the members reach consensus. Mr. Mertens confirmed with Mr.  
90 Lajza that the language he would add to the motion was the second and third paragraphs in his e-  
91 mail, and Mr. Lajza agreed.

92

93 Mr. Overton clarified the ideas that Mr. Lajza wanted to discuss as being the two paragraphs in his

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 14, 2005

94 e-mail that began with “Move that we include....” and “If the electorate approves...”, and Mr. Lajza  
95 agreed. Mr. Lajza stated that the paragraph beginning, “If the electorate approves...” ensured that if  
96 a plan was in place, then the funding could be provided prior to the actual merger for adequate  
97 offices for the new Council. Mr. Overton, in regards to the wording, “the Town of Essex  
98 Selectboard would seek voter approval for financing”, clarified that Mr. Lajza chose the Town of  
99 Essex Selectboard because it was the Selectboard for the entire Town, including the Village. Mr.  
100 Lajza agreed and stated that in addition, the Town of Essex Selectboard already had the power to  
101 bond, and Mr. Nye added, for the entire community, and members agreed.

102

103 Mr. Sweeney asked if Mr. Lajza was moving to modify Ms. Wrenner's motion, and Mr. Lajza  
104 replied, yes. Mr. Sweeney asked him to clarify his motion. Mr. Lajza felt his amendment needed  
105 more discussion and asked if other members had any other thoughts to add to the discussion. Mr.  
106 Mertens felt that there were aspects of Ms. Wrenner's motion in Mr. Lajza's motion. He suggested  
107 the members vote on Mr. Lajza's revised motion and then vote on Ms. Wrenner's original motion as  
108 amended. Mr. Sweeney stated that he was not sure that Mr. Lajza was ready to make a motion. Mr.  
109 Mertens stated that he appreciated Mr. Lajza's work, but asked if other members had any alternative  
110 approaches. Mr. Sweeney expressed that he liked Ms. Wrenner's original motion because it  
111 addressed the entire community, and he felt that Mr. Lajza's motion was more of a “piece-meal”  
112 motion. He felt that Mr. Lajza's motion addressed a small piece of the entire new town government  
113 at an earlier stage in the process than he felt was appropriate. Mr. Sweeney said that for him to  
114 support Mr. Lajza's amendment there should be a needs assessment for the entire community and  
115 there should be a plan developed to address all the needs of the entire community. He felt that the  
116 decision of Lincoln Hall should be addressed as part of the entire plan and not addressed separately  
117 as Mr. Lajza suggested. Mr. Sweeney, in regards to Mr. Lajza's revised motion, stated that although  
118 it addressed the Town Manager, the Town Clerk and the Office of Zoning and Planning, he felt that  
119 it did not address any other pieces of the town government. Ms. Billado felt that the Town  
120 Manager, the Town Clerk and the Office of Zoning and Planning were the pieces of the new  
121 government that would need an office. Mr. Sweeney stated that there were other departments in  
122 need of office space as well, such as the Recreation Department and the Public Works Department,  
123 but Ms. Billado felt those departments already had offices. Mr. Sweeney did not know if what Ms.  
124 Billado stated would be true in a merged community and stated that the offices of those  
125 departments, such as Public Works, should be merged together instead of having two separate  
126 locations. Mr. Mertens stated to Mr. Sweeney that he thought Mr. Lajza's revised motion included  
127 the various parts of the town government when it stated, “to include, but not be limited to,”. Mr.  
128 Sweeney replied that he was in favor of the Task Force recommending that a comprehensive plan  
129 for the entire community on the location of the seat of government, which could include Lincoln  
130 Hall, be developed and was in favor of a needs assessment for the new merged community, as he  
131 felt Ms. Wrenner suggested in her motion. Mr. Overton recalled Mr. Nye's question to Ms. Billado  
132 at the last meeting that addressed the definition of town government, which helped him in this  
133 situation to view it as simply the core administrative facility. However, he questioned whether the  
134 decision to develop a plan for funding and constructing the Town offices was under the purview of  
135 the Task Force, which he suggested could only make a recommendation for the administrative  
136 facilities to the Selectman and Trustees. At this point of the meeting, a discussion ensued as to the  
137 location of the various departments in the Town and the Village along with an understanding that  
138 the definition of town government was to be defined as the core administrative facilities.

139

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 14, 2005

140 Mr. Sweeney reiterated that in order to make informed decisions in the process, there should be an  
141 assessment for the entire community of its needs to determine the best solution for space issues for  
142 the offices of the new town government. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Sweeney if he was speaking to the  
143 to the location of the new town offices as was mentioned by Mr. Nye and proposed by Mr. Lajza in  
144 his revised motion and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr. Overton explained that Mr. Lajza, in his motion,  
145 was trying to define "seat of government" and suggested that Mr. Sweeney felt Mr. Lajza's  
146 definition was too narrow. Mr. Sweeney stated that the Task Force should not make a  
147 recommendation in a "piece-meal" fashion. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Sweeney for clarification on  
148 his opinion, and Mr. Sweeney stated that he felt that Ms. Wrenner's motion specified his opinion  
149 clearly when it stated, "that the new Town Council should be responsible for defining a plan for  
150 municipal building(s) that will meet the needs of a merged community." He stated that he agreed  
151 with this statement. Mr. Overton stated that Ms. Wrenner's motion included the location of the  
152 municipal facilities being located in the 5 Corners area. Ms. Myers added, if possible, and Mr.  
153 Overton and Mr. Sweeney understood.

154

155 Ms. Billado, in reference to the statement in Ms. Wrenner's motion that Mr. Sweeney supported,  
156 was concerned that it left a very important piece of work to an unknown committee and left the  
157 taxpayers without a solution to this issue on the day of the vote. She felt that when the public went  
158 to vote on this merger, they would have a couple of questions that needed to be addressed, which  
159 included the location of the seat of government. She believed that the location of the seat of  
160 government was one of the driving forces that brought the Task Force Committee together and was  
161 one of the most important issues along with the cost of merger. She stated that if the Task Force  
162 deferred this piece of work to the Town Council or some unknown committee, she did not see the  
163 Town or Village voters supporting it at the polls. One member did not agree with her statement.  
164 Ms. Billado thought that the language in Mr. Lajza's motion that stated, "but not limited, too"  
165 addressed Mr. Sweeney's concern. Mr. Sweeney clarified that Mr. Lajza's motion defined a process  
166 to be begun as soon as possible and addressed only that piece of government and did not address  
167 the other pieces of government. Ms. Billado replied, only in terms of planning but Mr. Sweeney  
168 noted that Mr. Lajza wanted to have the offices completed for 2007.

169

170 Mr. Lajza asked members where the new government would be, and would the new government  
171 continue to run as a split government? He stated that it was part of the charge of the Task Force  
172 Committee to recommend or put a plan in place on how the new council would address this issue.  
173 Mr. Sweeney supported the recommendation in Ms. Wrenner's motion. He stated that ultimately, it  
174 was the decision of the Selectboard and the Trustees, which was included as well in Mr. Lajza's  
175 motion. Mr. Lajza agreed and stated that his motion also included the approval from the electorate.  
176 Mr. Sweeney stated that both approvals would be the first hurdle in this process and then it would  
177 be the decision of the Transition Committee to locate the seat of government, but Mr. Lajza also  
178 supported Ms. Wrenner's motion that the Transition Committee meet at Lincoln Hall. Mr. Lajza  
179 was uncomfortable with Mr. Sweeney's approach, as he wanted to see the remodeling in process  
180 before the effective date of merger. Mr. Sweeney argued that the location for where the Transition  
181 Committee should meet was the first step and was included as such in Ms. Wrenner's motion. He  
182 stated that then the Selectboard and Trustees as the Transition Committee would review the  
183 recommendations from Task Force along with Mr. Lajza's motion to prepare for July 1, 2008. Mr.  
184 Lajza argued that the Transition Committee should meet at 81 Main Street during the period  
185 between the vote and July 1, 2008 so renovations could be made to Lincoln Hall.

186

187 Mr. Overton confirmed that Ms. Wrenner's core motion included the three paragraphs in her e-mail,  
188 which was the motion presently on the table. Mr. Nye clarified that there was an amendment to the  
189 motion from Mr. Lajza, and Mr. Sweeney stated that Mr. Lajza had not made an amendment yet,  
190 and Mr. Nye understood. Mr. Lajza stated there had not been enough discussion on the motions  
191 yet, so he wanted more discussion first, and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr. Overton agreed as well. He  
192 recommended melding together both Ms. Wrenner's and Mr. Lajza's ideas. He stated that he was  
193 inclined to vote down Ms. Wrenner's motion so that a new motion could be put on the table to be  
194 altered in a way that was more palatable to all the members. Mr. Sweeney noted that Ms. Wrenner's  
195 motion could be amended. Mr. Mertens suggested adding Mr. Lajza's motion to Ms. Wrenner's  
196 motion. Mr. Sweeney suggested that Mr. Lajza add the two paragraphs from his e-mail to Ms.  
197 Wrenner's motion and the Task Force could take a vote. Mr. Overton, wanting to proceed more  
198 easily with the procedure of the meeting, asked if any member would object to voting on Ms.  
199 Wrenner's motion, which could always be made again if member chose, and Mr. Sweeney agreed.  
200 Mr. Mertens did not think it was necessary to take a vote at this time and wanted to continue  
201 hearing comments from other members.

202

203 Ms. Wrenner informed the Task Force of a public comment she received recently from Marilee  
204 Willey, who lived in Essex and could not be present at the meeting that night. She stated that Ms.  
205 Willey had concerns about adequate parking at Lincoln Hall and the costs associated to any  
206 possible renovations to Lincoln Hall. Mr. Boucher stated that he agreed with Mr. Lajza's motion.  
207 He felt the Police Department would remain located at its current location, but that the core  
208 administration should be at Lincoln Hall. He stated that the Recreation Department in the Village  
209 had a new building that could accommodate both the Town and Village Recreation administration.  
210 Mr. Boucher added that there was other available real estate at 5 Corners such as Park Street School  
211 and the Discovery Museum building that could meet the needs for a campus-style government. He  
212 asked Mr. Scheidel about the location of the Essex Town Public Works Department, and Mr.  
213 Scheidel replied that the administrative offices were located in the old original library and the  
214 garage was located on Sandhill road. Mr. Boucher asked Mr. Scheidel about the location of the  
215 Essex Recreation Department and Mr. Scheidel replied that the administrative offices were located  
216 at 81 Main street with some additional space at Memorial Hall. He asked Mr. Safford where the  
217 Village Public Works was located, and Mr. Safford explained that the Public Works Director was  
218 located at Wastewater and that the Road Foreman and the Highway Department was located on Elm  
219 Street. Mr. Boucher noted that in a merged community, the trucks would remain in their perspective  
220 locations, which supported the idea of a campus-style government. He argued that the bulk of  
221 equipment should not be located in the same spot for efficiency purposes, as the Town was a 39-  
222 square mile Town. He argued that the Lincoln Hall location would be adequate to meet the needs  
223 of the core administration for a merged community and if not, other buildings in the 5 Corner area  
224 that were already paid for and in existence, were available even with improvement costs. He was in  
225 favor of using Lincoln Hall for the seat of the government as he felt it was a good starting point in  
226 the process of a merged government.

227

228 Mr. Blanchard was in favor of Mr. Lajza's proposal. Mr. Blanchard questioned whether they had  
229 discussed amending Ms. Wrenner's motion at the previous meeting. He felt that Mr. Lajza's motion  
230 helped the second or third part of Ms. Wrenner's amendment be more explicit. He liked Mr. Lajza's  
231 proposal as it acted as a compass or a guide to the new Transition Committee and he was in favor of

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 14, 2005

232 that action. He was in favor of an in-depth look at the plausibility of using Lincoln Hall as the  
233 location for the seat of government and if Lincoln Hall ultimately was not the solution, then the  
234 decision would go to the new Council.

235

236 Ms. Myers was in favor of voting on Ms. Wrenner's motion as it stood and then if there was another  
237 motion, that motion could be made and seconded and then the Task Force could vote on that  
238 motion. She addressed Mr. Overton's comment that she felt it was more important to be thorough  
239 with the procedure than to make it easier. In regards to Mr. Lajza's proposal, Ms. Myers still had a  
240 concern that the Task Force was beyond their purview in this decision. She felt that by accepting  
241 Mr. Lajza's proposal, the Task Force would be denigrating the new Town Council, which would  
242 include new members and four to six former Trustees and Selectboard members. Therefore she  
243 noted that there would not be seven new people with no experience in dealing with this issue, but  
244 rather some experienced knowledgeable members as well on the new Council. She understood Mr.  
245 Lajza's concern for providing usable office space for the new Council, but questioned the  
246 importance of that argument. Instead, she was in favor of taking time to research this process  
247 thoroughly to ensure that the final result would be solid, efficient and would fulfill the needs of the  
248 entire merged community.

249

250 Mr. Nye appreciated the comments from members on this issue. He reminded members that he had  
251 expressed his opinion on a number of occasions in regards to this issue and supported providing the  
252 Transition Committee and the new Town Council with as much flexibility and opportunity as  
253 possible. At the same time, he understood the varying opinions on this issue from various members.  
254 Mr. Nye was in favor of voting on Ms. Wrenner's motion and proceeding from there. His goal was  
255 to ensure that the new government had enough flexibility with respect to operational activities,  
256 financial responsibilities and service to the citizens, so that the new Town Council did not fail in  
257 any one's perceived mind in the first year or two of the merged community. He understood that Mr.  
258 Lajza and Ms. Billado both had arguments that supported the location of the new government being  
259 at Lincoln Hall. Mr. Nye stated that as a Selectboard member, he had also stated that he supported  
260 the location being at Lincoln Hall. However, Mr. Nye was concerned with setting the standards and  
261 the requirements so tight that the new government would fail in some people's minds or fail at the  
262 election ballot when they were trying to pass the merger vote. He suggested voting on Ms.  
263 Wrenner's motion and then if it did not pass, he suggested discussing a different motion.

264

265 Ms. Billado, in regards to Ms. Myers proposal, stated that if the Task Force deferred this decision to  
266 an unknown Town Council, which begin their administration in June of 2008, and Mr. Safford  
267 clarified the date to be July 1, 2008, then construction would not begin until the first quarter of  
268 2009. Mr. Lajza did not think it could be done without a bond. Mr. Safford commented that the  
269 process included facilities planning, then a bond, then a vote on the bond, then putting the project  
270 out for a bid, before anything could begin happening. Ms. Billado suggested that the process could  
271 occur perhaps the second quarter of 2009, and Mr. Lajza stated he thought it would not begin until  
272 2010. Ms. Billado asked by deferring this issue to the new Town Council, were they deferring what  
273 was defined a year ago as a critical need for another five years? She stated that she was confused  
274 why there would not be support for Mr. Lajza's proposal because the Town needed new office space  
275 ten years ago, with a critical space need a year ago and wondered why members would support  
276 construction being deferred for another five years. Ms. Myers responded by saying that when  
277 Essex considered the need for space as critical, they considered it critical for the Town of Essex

278 staff. In a merged community the need for space could possibly double in staff size and therefore,  
279 she felt it was imperative to determine the needs of the merged community first before making any  
280 decisions. She stated that Essex had survived for ten years, imagined that it could probably survive  
281 for a few more years, even with the current critical needs. However, Ms. Myers strongly supported  
282 the decision should be made at the administrative level at that time and should include a  
283 comprehensive plan for an entire merged government. Ms. Billado confirmed that if the Task Force  
284 deferred this issue to the new government, the administration, who were already severely cramped  
285 in their current space, would be asked to remain in those cramped conditions for another five years.  
286 She argued that the voters needed to know the location of the new government offices when they  
287 went to the polls to vote on this merger. She would support Mr. Lajza's suggestion to vote on Ms.  
288 Wrenner's motion and then proceed from there. Mr. Overton suggested that the vote might be a 5-5  
289 tie. Mr. Sweeney confirmed that a tie would mean that the motion failed because it needed a  
290 majority in order to pass. Mr. Mertens felt that was a point of order and clarification to the process  
291 and asked Ms. Billado if she was done with her comments and Ms. Billado agreed.

292

293 Mr. Sweeney expressed that he liked Ms. Wrenner's motion and was not concerned with the  
294 delayed process, but was concerned that there should be a plan to address the needs for the entire  
295 merged community. He clarified that he did not recommend moving the Public Works vehicles to  
296 Lincoln Hall and knew that the Department locations, including the libraries would remain the  
297 same. However, he did not know whether the Recreation Department could all fit in the Village  
298 Recreation Department space. He agreed with Ms. Myers that there should be a plan for the entire  
299 community and commented that whatever decision the Task Force made would not prevent the  
300 Selectman and Trustees as a Transition Committee to start on this work when their term began. He  
301 added it would be under the purview of the Transition Committee to begin the work that was  
302 proposed by Mr. Lajza's motion, but that the Task Force could only make a recommendation. He  
303 stated that he was reluctant to present a document that may hamper a consensus between the  
304 Selectman and Trustees about how to proceed with the development of the location of a merged  
305 government.

306

307 Mr. Mertens agreed with the sentiment expressed in Ms. Wrenner's motion and he agreed to the  
308 points the motion addressed, but he also had respect for Mr. Lajza's wish to add some practical  
309 input to the motion. Mr. Mertens explained that the practical input was the recognition of the  
310 potential delay in the construction phase to a significant point in time, which was similar to the  
311 remarks given by Ms. Billado. He felt this was an important point to consider along with Mr.  
312 Sweeney's concern that the Task Force did not want to make a decision today for the future needs  
313 of the entire government. At the same time, he did not support Mr. Sweeney's opinion of Mr.  
314 Lajza's motion. He clarified that Mr. Lajza's motion used the language "administrative seat" and  
315 suggested the addition of "Clerk/Treasurer, etc." may not be needed and instead he suggested that  
316 the language return to being more vague to allow the flexibility that Mr. Nye suggested and  
317 therefore use "administrative seat" only. He stated that he thought it was important that the  
318 community had some clear direction as to the opinion's from the members about this issue but that  
319 there was value in being a bit more definitive on the aspects of Ms. Wrenner's motion. Mr. Mertens  
320 hoped that an appropriate amendment could be developed from the core motion to help the Task  
321 Force reach consensus and stated that if the amendment was more vague than what he suggested, he  
322 would still be comfortable with it. He was in favor of Mr. Lajza's proposal to begin construction  
323 and felt his approach was well intentioned and that it was a smart action to take. However, he noted

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 14, 2005

324 that if that action created too much commitment and gave too much direction to the Transition  
325 Committee, he did not think it was necessary. At the same time, he believed that there should be a  
326 firm resolution and commitment to the 5 Corners Area and Downtown as the seat of government in  
327 order to continue the growth and prosperity of that area. He also believed that there needed to be  
328 some mindfulness to the needs of the new administrative leaders that would want facilities to use.  
329 Therefore, he felt positive about a potential blend of the two motions. Mr. Mertens concluded that  
330 at least three members were in favor of taking a vote on Ms. Wrenner's vote and asked if members  
331 agreed. He asked if Ms. Wrenner would state the motion again.

332

333 Mr. Lajza added that he felt that the identification of the location of the seat of government would  
334 be very necessary to have a successful vote of the merger issue. Mr. Overton added that he was  
335 going to vote in favor of Ms. Wrenner's motion because he supported the core meaning of the  
336 motion. He hoped, however that the vote ended in a tie because there were some elements of Mr.  
337 Lajza's proposal that were excellent, especially his first paragraph and wanted to address some  
338 concerns in the second paragraph. Mr. Overton suspected that the vote would be a tie and would  
339 give rise to another motion. Ms. Myers stated that many motions could be made if he wanted, until  
340 the Task Force reached consensus. Mr. Overton clarified that he supported taking a vote on Ms.  
341 Wrenner's motion instead of trying to merge the two at that point because the wording was very  
342 different. Mr. Nye stated that the Task Force was a Committee with the charge to make  
343 recommendations to the Selectboard and the Trustees, who would approve the document before  
344 taking the proposal to the voters. He stated that there were issues discussed among the Task Force  
345 members that may or may not be argued at another level of review. He asked Ms. Billado and Mr.  
346 Lajza, who were members of the Village Trustees, where they ranked this issue in priority versus  
347 the issue of districts and the name of the merged community. It was important to him to understand  
348 the priorities of the Village. Mr. Lajza referred to the original stance in December and January by  
349 the Trustees that the 1999 Charter remain unchanged with the addition that Lincoln Hall would be  
350 the administrative seat of government. Mr. Nye confirmed that the issue of the location of the seat  
351 of government was high on the list of priorities. Mr. Lajza confirmed that it was his number one  
352 priority. Mr. Nye stated that he was not trying to put Mr. Lajza on the spot, but wanted to know  
353 where he stood as other issues would be discussed in the future. Mr. Lajza wanted to explain that he  
354 thought his proposal was the logical step to take and that the language he used left the decision  
355 ultimately up to the electorate. He was strongly in favor of recognizing that Lincoln Hall was an  
356 historical building and offered a way for the community to work in a solution to this issue using  
357 their existing resources and then to expand as needed. Mr. Lajza shared his vision that when the  
358 need arose for a full time Fire Department, there would be a need for a safety department, which he  
359 felt should be located along the Circumferential highway so it could service anyplace in the Town  
360 as quickly as possible. He stated that Lincoln Hall should be the core area for the administrative  
361 session, but the other elements of the government could be at satellite locations where needed. In  
362 regards to the Recreation Department, Mr. Lajza thought there was a beautiful facility on Sand Hill  
363 Road, which needed an office, Recreation Department or satellite due to the high volume of use. He  
364 stated that the Village Recreation Department was the other satellite in a merged community and  
365 did not support relocating either facility, in the Town or the Village, because they were accessible  
366 to the users in their respective areas. The issue of how to merge the departments would need to be  
367 addressed to help them meet the needs of the community over the years without a huge initial cost  
368 to the taxpayer. Mr. Lajza did not disagree with Mr. Sweeney, but felt an inventory of available  
369 buildings should be developed and the locations be made logically without adding new buildings.

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 14, 2005

370 Mr. Lajza, in regards to last nights' meeting at the Fairgrounds, was impressed with the conference  
371 room and commented that it was a tax-free entity, with services from the community and was in  
372 favor of using the facility in the future. He felt facilities such as the conference room at the  
373 Fairgrounds was an example of the kind of inventory the Task Force needed to take. Mr. Mertens  
374 asked if Mr. Nye received an answer to his question, and Mr. Nye asked for Ms. Billado's response.  
375

376 Ms. Billado stated that for the past several months the Task Force has met, she has tried to play the  
377 role of a taxpayer from the community at-large as opposed to someone with a special interest. She  
378 asked herself what she would be looking for when she went to the polls to vote on this merger. She  
379 stated that she would be looking at the financial impact to the community at large, the location of  
380 the government offices, the name of the community and the make-up of the new government. In the  
381 role of a taxpayer, Ms. Billado stated that she could not imagine herself going to the polls and  
382 voting on a less-than-complete document that did not inform her of the location of the government  
383 offices. She did not think the taxpayers should be brought to the polls to vote on a document that  
384 would not meet their expectations of potential changes. She reminded the Task Force that if they  
385 recommended Lincoln Hall as the seat of government for the new community, that recommendation  
386 would not be final because of unforeseen issues which may cause the new Council to choose a  
387 different direction. However, she felt that the community needed a sense of direction on this issue  
388 and was not in favor of deferring it to the new Town Council. She felt that the new Town Council  
389 would want to be located in an adequate facility and would probably not want to be in the midst of  
390 determining a location and conducting construction for that new location as they would have plenty  
391 of other business to address.  
392

393 Ms. Myers stated that Ms. Billado and Mr. Lajza had referred to voters knowing the location of the  
394 seat of government before going to the polls. She noted that the last paragraph of Ms. Wrenner's  
395 motion said "the Merger Task Force recommends that the municipal facilities of the merged  
396 community be located in the 5 Corners area, if possible." Ms. Myers then referred to the last  
397 paragraph of the Task Force's charge, which stated, "The final product will be presented to the  
398 Selectboard and Trustees for review and possible modification and presentation to the voters of the  
399 Town of Essex including those in the Village of Essex Junction." Ms. Myers pointed out that Ms.  
400 Wrenner's motion gave some direction to the Selectboard and the Trustees who were then going to  
401 make changes to reach consensus before approval to the voters and that it was the Boards who had  
402 the final agreement, not the Task Force. She reminded members that the plan of merger from the  
403 Task Force did not go to the voters, but to the Selectboard and Trustees for "review and possible  
404 modification". She stated that at that point in time, which was prior to the vote and the start of the  
405 Transition Committee, the Selectboard and the Trustees would review the plan, modify it and then  
406 put it to the voters. Ms. Myers read the first part of the Task Force's  
407 charge that stated, "The Ad Hoc Task Force's purpose was to recommend to the Selectboard and the  
408 Trustees..." and pointed out that Ms. Wrenner's motion clearly states that the Task Force  
409 recommends that the Transition Committee meet in Lincoln Hall, the Task Force recommends the  
410 new Town Council define the new building and the Task Force recommends if at all possible, that  
411 the seat of government, be at 5 corners. She stated that the voters would vote yes or no after  
412 hearing all the information and explanations about the plan of merger prior to the vote, but that it  
413 would be the Selectboard and the Trustees' charge to present the plan to the community not the  
414 Task Force. If the Boards developed a plan that included naming the 5 corners as the seat of  
415 government, then she felt the people of this community would recognize it as part of what they

416 were recommending for a merged community. The job of the Task Force was to build the  
417 framework, present the idea to the Trustees and Selectboard members and state that the Task Force  
418 highly recommended that the seat of government be located at the 5 Corners if at all possible and  
419 then it would be in the hands of the Boards. Ms. Myers stated that by adding Mr. Lajza's proposal to  
420 Ms. Wrenner's motion, the Task Force was over-stepping the bounds of their charge, because the  
421 people who were going to make the recommendations for this community for the vote were the  
422 Trustees and the Selectboard acting in concert. She was in favor of Ms. Wrenner's motion, which  
423 deemed 5 Corners as the choice of location for the seat of government and did not feel that motion  
424 was incomplete.

425

426 Mr. Sweeney suggested they take a vote. Mr. Mertens referred the members to Ms. Wrenner's e-  
427 mail or the minutes to review the motion and asked if the e-mail was the correct motion, and Ms.  
428 Wrenner agreed.

429

430 **IRENE WRENNER MOVED AND RENE BLANCHARD SECONDED A MOTION THAT**  
431 **THE MERGER TASK FORC RECOMMEND AS PART OF THEMERGER PLAN THAT**  
432 **ALL MEETINGS OF THE MERGER TRANSITION COMMITTEE TAKE PLACE IN**  
433 **LINCOLN HALL, THAT THE NEW TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE MERGED**  
434 **COMMUNITY WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFINING THE PLAN FOR THE**  
435 **MUNICIPAL BUILDING OR BUILDINGS THAT WOULD MEET THE NEEDS OF THAT**  
436 **MERGED COMMUNITY AND THAT THE MERGER TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS**  
437 **THAT THESE FACILITEIS WOULD BE LOCATED AT THEFIVE CORNERS ARE IF**  
438 **POSSIBLE.**

439

440 **THE MOTION FAILED 5-5 (Ms. Billado, Mr. Lajza, Mr. Mertens, Mr. Boucher and Mr.**  
441 **Blanchard opposed.)**

442

443 **AL OVERTON MOVED AND JOHN LAZJA SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE TASK**  
444 **FORCE RECOMMENDS IN THE TRANSITIONAL SECTION OF THE PLAN OF**  
445 **MERGER THAT LINCOLN HALL (2 LINCOLN STREET) SERVE AS THE**  
446 **ADMINISTRATIVE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT TO INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED**  
447 **TO, THE CLERK/TREASURER'S OFFICE, THE TOWN MANAGER'S OFFICE AND**  
448 **OFFICE OF ZONING AND PLANNING, UNLESS OTHERWISE APPROVED BY THE**  
449 **ELECTORATE. IF THE ELECTORATE DOES NOT APROVE THE FINANCING TO**  
450 **RENOVATE LINCOLN HALL FOR THE PURPOSE OR SERVING AS THE**  
451 **ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE TOWN OF ESSEX JUNCTION, THEN EVERY**  
452 **REASONABLE EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO LOCATE THE ADMINISTRATIVE SEAT**  
453 **OF GOVERNMENT IN THE FIVE CORNERS AREA IN ORDER TO HELP MAINTAIN**  
454 **ITS VITALITY.**

455

456 **IF THE ELECTORATE APPROVES THE MERGER, THE TASK FORCE**  
457 **RECOMMENDS THE TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEE PREPARE A MORE DETAILED**  
458 **PLAN WITH COST ESTIMATES FOR THE RENOVATION OF LINCOLN HALL. UPON**  
459 **APPROVAL OF THE PLAN OF MERGER BY THE VERMONT GENERAL ASSEMBLY,**  
460 **THE TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD WILL SEEK TOWN-WIDE VOTER**  
461 **APPROVAL FOR FINANCING RENOVATIONS TO LINCOLN HALL IN A TIMELY**

462 **MANNER IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES TO BE READY**  
463 **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THERAFTER.**

464

465 During the motion, Mr. Overton expressed that the last four or five words of the first paragraph did  
466 not need to be included, and Mr. Mertens questioned whether “TO INCLUDE, BUT NOT  
467 LIMITED TO, ETC.” needed to be included as well, and Ms. Myers agreed. In addition at the end  
468 of the motion, Ms. Myers stated it should read, “AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER.” Mr.  
469 Overton argued that it stated the same thing at the beginning of the sentence when it read, “When  
470 the General Assembly approved, the Town Selectboard...” and Ms. Myers agreed.

471

472 Mr. Overton wanted to address the motion and members reminded him he needed a second to the  
473 motion and Mr. Lajza obliged. Mr. Mertens asked if anyone wanted to hear the motion again or if  
474 they needed clarification.

475

476 Mr. Overton agreed that the Task Force was only making recommendations and expected many  
477 changes in their recommendations. He reminded members of the importance of the structure itself  
478 of the Charter. He felt his motion anticipated that other parts of the government would be located  
479 in varying places. Mr. Overton, in regards to the second paragraph of his motion, argued that after  
480 the approval, he felt that it made sense for the Transitional Committee to assess whether Lincoln  
481 Hall was viable. He stated that Mr. James had expressed a concern about the possibility of  
482 outrageous costs for renovation and he felt part of the motion addressed this when it stated, “Upon  
483 approval of the Vermont General Assembly and only then, the Town of Essex Selectboard, would  
484 seek Town-wide voter approval for financing renovations to Lincoln Hall in a timely manner”,  
485 which he felt would take about anywhere from six months to a year. He believed that the wording  
486 in Mr. Lajza's proposal and his motion did not impose any of these actions on to the Selectboard  
487 and that they had the power to reject the proposal if they chose. Mr. Overton reminded the members  
488 that the Boards asked the Task Force to give them a plan, a transition plan and although he  
489 understood the difference of opinion between the Selectboard and the Trustees in the past, he felt  
490 this Task Force should make a strong effort to bridge the gaps and make a joint presentation to be  
491 approved or not by the Boards. He felt his motion provided logical steps for the process, but did  
492 presume that Lincoln Hall should be the seat of administrative government, which he supported as  
493 having been a resident in both the Village and Town.

494

495 Mr. Mertens asked for further discussion and asked Mr. Lajza if he had any further comments. Mr.  
496 Lajza felt Mr. Overton had addressed the argument well and stated that the few minor adjustments  
497 were acceptable to him. He expressed that in his motion, he tried to provide a logical path for how  
498 to achieve the goal of providing the seat of government at Lincoln Hall. He suspected that the  
499 second paragraph was a bit controversial, which he had discussed with Ms. Wrenner previous to  
500 that night, but wanted to express his opinion of what he would like to see happen. He added that he  
501 strongly felt that when the voters went to the polls, they would know the recommendations from the  
502 Task Force with the necessary changes from the Boards. Mr. Boucher stated that he supported the  
503 voters knowing the location of the seat of government before the voters went to the polls and that  
504 they would vote accordingly. Mr. Blanchard agreed with Mr. Overton's changes because it did not  
505 change the essence of Mr. Lajza's opinion, which he supported.

506

507 Ms. Myers offered an amendment to Mr. Overton's motion. Ms. Myers asked Mr. Overton if in his

508 original motion it stated, "recommended to include" and Mr. Overton agreed. Ms. Myers wanted to  
509 strike "to include, but not be limited to, the Clerk/Treasurer's Office, the Town Manager's Office  
510 and Office of Zoning and Planning" which would eliminate the specifics, but address the seat of  
511 government. Mr. Overton confirmed the wording to be deleted, and Ms. Myers agreed. Included in  
512 her motion was to strike "in order to help maintain its vitality.", which she felt was not necessary to  
513 include. Ms. Myers, in regards to the second paragraph of Mr. Overton's motion, stated that she  
514 only changed the order of the wording so that it said the same thing, but assured that the approval  
515 from the General Assembly needed to occur before any action was taken by the Transition  
516 Committee. Mr. Overton supported this amendment to his motion.

517

518 **LINDA MYERS MOVED AND IRENE WRENNER SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE**  
519 **TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS INCLUDING IN THE TRANSITIONAL SECTION OF**  
520 **THE PLAN OF MERGER THAT LINCOLN HALL (2 LINCOLN STREET) SERVE AS**  
521 **THE ADMINISTRATIVE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT. IF THE ELECTORATE DOES NOT**  
522 **APPROVE THE FINANCING TO RENOVATE LINCOLN HALL FOR THE PURPOSE OF**  
523 **SERVING AS THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE TOWN OF ESSEX**  
524 **JUNCTION, THEN EVERY REASONABLE EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO LOCATE THE**  
525 **ADMINISTRATIVE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT IN THE FIVE CORNERS AREA.**

526

527 **IF THE ELECTORATE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVES THE MERGER, WE**  
528 **RECOMMEND THE TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEE PREPARE A MORE DETAILED**  
529 **PLAN WITH COST ESTIMATES FOR THE RENOVATION OF LINCOLN HALL. AT**  
530 **THAT TIME, THE TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD WILL SEEK TOWN-WIDE**  
531 **APPROVAL FOR FINANCING RENOVATIONS TO LINCOLN HALL IN A TIMELY**  
532 **MANNER IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES TO BE READY**  
533 **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THERAFTER.**

534

535 Mr. Lajza supported the cost estimate being done prior to the Vermont General Assembly approval  
536 to gain some time, if it was not an additional expense. Mr. Mertens asked Mr. Safford if past cost  
537 estimates were readily available. Mr. Safford said those cost estimates were very rough estimates.  
538 Mr. Mertens understood that it had to be a new estimate. Ms. Myers highly objected to anyone  
539 providing the Task Force with cost estimates as she thought the Transition Committee should  
540 follow the correct procedure that included RFPs. Mr. Overton pointed out that there was only one  
541 change on his amended motion, which was the timing of when to begin the assessment for  
542 renovations to Lincoln Hall until after the approval from the Town and Village and agreed with this  
543 change. Mr. Overton discussed with Ms. Myers the possibility of the approval from the legislature  
544 in February of 2007 and suggested that the Transition Committee appoint a Committee of known  
545 builders such as Mr. Marcotte to begin a plan for renovation. Ms. Myers opposed this idea and  
546 stated that if they were going to begin a plan to renovate Lincoln Hall, she stated it needed to follow  
547 the correct procedure of advertising, which included RFPs. Mr. Mertens clarified that Mr. Overton  
548 was not speaking of doing anything differently than what Ms. Myers described, and Ms. Myers  
549 disagreed. Mr. Overton suggested that some ideas be discussed. Mr. Mertens clarified to Ms.  
550 Myers that the only difference in the motions was that in Mr. Overton's motion, the process for  
551 beginning renovations began after the Town-Wide vote occurred and in her motion, the process  
552 would begin after the Vermont General Assembly approval.

553

554 Mr. Overton supported Ms. Myers amendment but wondered if the process should be started earlier  
555 as he suggested. Mr. Overton assured members that he did not intend to alter the motion. Mr. Lajza  
556 stated that he was in favor of beginning the process 30 days after the merger vote was approved,  
557 and Ms. Myers stated that the Task Force had to wait until 30 days after the vote, and Mr. Lajza  
558 stated, because someone could petition for another vote. Ms. Myers felt very certain that the  
559 legislature would look favorably upon the work done by both communities to merge and that once  
560 approved by the voters, the process would begin quickly. Mr. Odit, from the perspective of drafting  
561 language for the Charter, was in agreement with Ms. Myer's motion because technically until the  
562 effective date of the Charter and after it was approved, there was no Transition Committee. Mr.  
563 Overton asked for Mr. Odit to repeat what he said and Mr. Odit stated that until the Charter was  
564 passed by General Assembly, there was technically no Transition Committee, however, the  
565 Selectboard and Trustees could meet after it was passed, but before it was effective, to begin the  
566 process. However, the Transition Committee would not be technically in existence.

567

568 Mr. Mertens stated that there was a motion from Ms. Myers, and he asked Ms. Billado if she had  
569 any comments. Ms. Billado agreed with Mr. Overton and Ms. Myers and asked if the motion,  
570 particularly the second paragraph, could be read one more time, and Mr. Mertens agreed. Mr.  
571 Mertens asked if Mr. Sweeney had any comments to add. Mr. Sweeney clarified that the discussion  
572 was on Ms. Myer's motion and did not think any discussion was necessary. He added that the only  
573 comment he had was that the wording in Mr. Overton's original motion was faulty based on Mr.  
574 Odit's information that the Transitional Committee could only exist after the effective date of the  
575 legislation, which was what he felt Ms. Myers addressed. Mr. Overton and Mr. Mertens agreed.  
576 Mr. Nye was in favor of Mr. Overton's motion and the addition of the correct procedure from Ms.  
577 Myers. Mr. Mertens asked Ms. Myers to repeat her motion.

578

579 **LINDA MYERS MOVED AND IRENE WRENNER SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE**  
580 **TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS INCLUDING IN THE TRANSITIONAL SECTION OF**  
581 **THE PLAN OF MERGER THAT LINCOLN HALL (2 LINCOLN STREET) SERVE AS**  
582 **THE ADMINISTRATIVE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT. IF THE ELECTORATE DOES NOT**  
583 **APPROVE THE FINANCING TO RENOVATE LINCOLN HALL FOR THE PURPOSE OF**  
584 **SERVING AS THE AMDMINSTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE TOWN OF ESSEX**  
585 **JUNCTION, THEN EVERY REASONABLE EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO LOCATE THE**  
586 **ADMINISTRATIE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT IN THE FIVE CORNERS AREA.**

587

588 **IF THE ELECTORATE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVES THE MERGER, WE**  
589 **RECOMMEND THE TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEE PREPARE A MORE DETAILED**  
590 **PLAN WITH COST ESTIMATES FOR THE RENOVATION OF LINCOLN HALL. AT**  
591 **THAT TIME, THE TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD WILL SEEK TOWN-WIDE**  
592 **APPROVAL FOR FINANCING RENOVATIONS TO LINCOLN HALL IN A TIMELY**  
593 **MANNER IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES TO BE READY**  
594 **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THERAFTER.**

595

596 Mr. Blanchard asked Ms. Myers why she wanted to remove the wording, "to include but not limited  
597 to, the Clerk/Treasurer's Office, the Town Manager's Office and Office of Zoning and Planning."  
598 Ms. Myers responded that she felt that once the detailed work was begun for cost estimates, she did  
599 not think they wanted to lock in specifics because the Task Force's charge was recommendations.

600 She referred to Mr. Sweeney's comment about specific individual items and felt the Transition  
601 Committee should determine the specifics. She was concerned with having some flexibility in the  
602 motion in case it was determined that more space was needed, such as an assembly room. Ms.  
603 Myers explained that when the idea for the new Town Offices was being developed in the center,  
604 they included an assembly room for 100 people in the plan, which she clarified with Mr. Scheidel.  
605 She felt the it was not the job of the Task Force to determine the needs for a merged community,  
606 but that her motion gave the Transition Committee the opportunity to assess those needs,  
607 particularly the needs for office space for the seat of government.

608

609 Mr. Blanchard argued that the entire plan of merger was just only a recommendation and the two  
610 Boards would determine whether they approved it or not or whether they wanted to change it. Ms.  
611 Myers liked the broad-brush approach of saying administrative offices, which she felt did not  
612 narrow the meaning and gave some flexibility to the Transition Committee. Mr. Overton stated to  
613 Mr. Blanchard that he accepted Ms. Myer's friendly support for this motion and agreed that if they  
614 started to define "administrative offices" that it could present some future problems. Mr. Blanchard  
615 stated that he supported the motion with the inclusion of the original specifics for "administrative  
616 offices" by Mr. Lajza. Mr. Mertens asked if there were any further comments before taking a vote  
617 on Ms. Myer's motion which was an amendment to Mr. Overton's motion, and there were none.

618

619 **THE MOTION PASSED 8-2. (Mr. Boucher and Mr. Blanchard opposed)**

620

621 Mr. Mertens stated that the Task Force would take a vote on Mr. Overton's motion, and Ms. Myers  
622 included, as amended, and Mr. Mertens agreed and said, unless there were other amendments to  
623 Mr. Overton's motion. There were none.

624

625 **THE MOTION PASSED 8-2. (Mr. Boucher and Mr. Blanchard opposed)**

626

627 Mr. Mertens complimented Mr. Lajza for his ideas and comments and reassured Mr. Blanchard and  
628 Mr. Boucher that he felt there was a lot of discussion that defined the meaning of administrative  
629 seat that provided a lot of clarity to the Task Force's opinion on this issue.

630

631 **Discussion on Elected or Appointed Members**

632

633 Mr. Mertens began to move the discussion to the Transitional Provisions section in the Charter.  
634 Mr. Sweeney suggested finishing the discussion on the elected verses appointed members of the  
635 district issue, which would help the staff work more clearly on the wording for the Plan.

636

637 **MR. NYE MOVED AND AL OVERTON SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE AD HOC**  
638 **COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THAT THE VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES**  
639 **WOULD APPOINT TWO MEMBERS AND THE TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD**  
640 **WOULD APPOINT TWO MEMBERS. ONE MEMBER WOULD BE FOR ONE YEAR**  
641 **AND ONE MEMBER WOULD BE FOR TWO YEARS AND THAT AT THE TOWN**  
642 **MEETING FOLLOWING THE START OF THE NEW COMMUNITY, IN REGARDS TO**  
643 **THE PERSONS THAT HAD BEEN APPOINTED FOR ONE YEAR, THOSE POSITIONS**  
644 **WOULD BE UP FOR ELECTION FROM WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE VILLAGE**  
645 **OF ESSEX JUNCTION AND THE TOWN OF ESSEX OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE.**

646 **FURTHER, THAT ONE TERM OF THREE YEARS WOULD BE FILLED VIA AN AT-**  
647 **LARGE ELECTION AND THAT A TERM OF THREE YEARS WOULD BE FILLED VIA**  
648 **AN ELECTION FROM THE VILLAGE AND THAT A TERM OF THREE YEARS**  
649 **WOULD BE FILLED VIA AN ELECTION FROM THE TOWN OF ESSEX OUTSIDE THE**  
650 **VILLAGE. COMMENCING WITH THE SECOND ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
651 **FOLLOWING THE START OF THE NEW COMMUNITY, ALL COUNCIL SEATS WILL**  
652 **BE FILLED THROUGH AN AT-LARGE ELECTION.**

653

654 Mr. Overton clarified that for the third year, at-large would commence across the board. Mr.  
655 Sweeney explained that at the last meeting, the members agreed that for the first year, the three  
656 representatives would be from each community, the Town and the Village, and were defined as a  
657 one-year term, a two-year term and a three-year term and asked which two of those was Mr. Nye  
658 recommending be appointed? Mr. Nye replied, the one-year term and the two-year term. Mr. Nye  
659 confirmed that the three-year term was the one elected by the elective, and Mr. Sweeney  
660 understood. Mr. Sweeney stated that the members had also agreed that the one-year term when  
661 expired, would be mandated to be elected one from the Town and one from the Village, and Mr.  
662 Nye agreed. Mr. Overton said he was confused with the third year. Mr. Sweeney clarified that the  
663 first year would be appointed and then the second year would be elected to that three-year term, but  
664 it guaranteed representation of one from the Town and one from the Village. Mr. Sweeney asked if  
665 Mr. Nye could clarify his motion to specify which terms of those three would be appointed. Mr.  
666 Overton felt it would happen naturally. Mr. Nye explained that he would amend his motion that the  
667 Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard would appoint two  
668 members. One member would be for one year and one member would be for two years and that at  
669 the succeeding Town Meeting after the start of the new community, in regards to the person that  
670 had been appointed for one year, that position would be up for election from within the confines of  
671 the Village and from the confines of the Town outside the Village, and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr.  
672 Mertens confirmed it for a three-year term, and Mr. Nye agreed. Mr. Overton asked for clarification  
673 on the third year. Mr. Nye stated that in the third year, there would be three people elected and they  
674 would all be elected at-large from the complete community, and Mr. Overton agreed. Mr. Overton  
675 concluded that some of the people that were elected from the Town and Village, specifically, would  
676 continue to serve until 2011. Mr. Mertens confirmed that in 2012, all members would be elected  
677 100% at-large, and Mr. Overton agreed. Mr. Mertens asked if Mr. Odit had a visual aide to help  
678 describe this process. Mr. Odit stated he understood the discussion and the motion and would adopt  
679 it accordingly. Mr. Mertens asked if anyone needed any clarification on the discussion. Mr.  
680 Sweeney concluded that at the last meeting, a motion was made to define the districts, but it was  
681 not decided whether the members would be elected or appointed, which was now addressed by Mr.  
682 Nye. Mr. Mertens asked if there was any further discussion and there was none.

683

684 **THE MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

685

686 **Discussion of Future Agenda Items**

687

688 Mr. Mertens complimented the members for reaching consensus and moved the meeting to a close.  
689 Mr. Nye stated that he would not be present at the next two meetings as he would be in Germany as  
690 a referee for a Biathlon and he had to attend a meeting of the solid waste district. Mr. Mertens  
691 congratulated Mr. Nye and asked if there was any other business. He asked if members had the

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 14, 2005

692 response from the libraries and whether they wanted to discuss it at that point in time. Mr. Overton  
693 stated that he had many comments to make, and Ms. Myers asked if they could put it on the Agenda  
694 for next week, and Mr. Mertens agreed. Mr. Mertens noted that the discussion of the Transitional  
695 Section of the Charter would also be on the Agenda next week. Mr. Mertens asked if Mr. Safford  
696 had heard from Mr. Dan Overton from the Prudential Committee. Mr. Safford had not heard from  
697 him definitively, but if this changed, he would inform the Chairs and add it to the Agenda. Mr.  
698 Sweeney confirmed with Mr. Safford that he understood that the Task Force was inviting Mr. Dan  
699 Overton to speak about the status of the Unification Study Committee, and Mr. Safford agreed. Mr.  
700 Overton suggested a written memo would suffice. Mr. Sweeney wondered about the progress that  
701 the Unification Study Committee had made. Mr. Safford asked whether he should confirm with Mr.  
702 Dan Overton about whether he could attend the meeting next week or suggest he present a memo to  
703 the Task Force. Mr. Sweeney clarified that he would prefer an up-date, but if Mr. Dan Overton  
704 could not be present, then perhaps the Task Force would discuss it without that information. Mr.  
705 Overton suggested asking for a written memo from Mr. Dan Overton if he could not be present. Mr.  
706 Sweeney understood that Mr. Dan Overton had been commissioning some activities as a part of the  
707 School Merger Committee and wanted to know more information. Mr. Nye felt the Task Force  
708 already had four hours of presentation from Mr. Dan Overton and the Recreation Departments and  
709 that he already made his decision on this issue. Mr. Sweeney stated that he wanted to provide Mr.  
710 Dan Overton one last opportunity to explain the recent activities by the School Merger Committee.  
711 In regards to the School Unification process, Mr. Nye stated that he felt the direction from the  
712 Board would be not to spend money on consulting services since he felt members knew how they  
713 would vote on the recreation issue. Mr. Sweeney felt that the Task Force could have that discussion  
714 as well. Mr. Sweeney suggested that a visit from Mr. Overton, the library memo and the remainder  
715 of the Transitional Section of the Charter be placed on the Agenda for next week. Mr. Mertens  
716 expressed that this process had not been easy and said that he would be proud of the final product  
717 the Task Force presented even though it was only a recommendation. He stated that he truly hoped  
718 that the Selectboard and the Trustees would view the final product with the strongest possible  
719 support in accepting the product and not making severe changes to it. He hoped that the work that  
720 the Task Force had done would be properly incorporated and utilized to its full extent.

721  
722 Mr. Mertens opened the discussion to the public.

### Public Input-General Comments

724  
725  
726 Mr. Lloyd, in regards to the discussion on the location of the seat of government, was pleased with  
727 the members for working together on an acceptable solution and reaching a majority vote on that  
728 issue.

729  
730 **ALAN NYE MOVED AND RENE BLANCHARD SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN**  
731 **AT 8:55 P.M.**

732  
733 **THE MOTION PASSED 10-0.**

734  
735 **Respectfully submitted,**  
736 **Saramichelle Stultz**

**MERGER TASK FORCE**

**December 14, 2005**

737

738 *Saramichelle Stultz*

739 Recording Secretary

740

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

742 MEETING)

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

**MERGER TASK FORCE  
ESSEX/ESSEX JUNCTION  
MEETING MINUTES  
December 21, 2005**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Hugh Sweeney, Chair, Hans Mertens, Linda Myers, Irene Wrenner, Rene Blanchard, George Boucher, John Lajza, Al Overton.

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Bob Marcotte, Dave Willey, Dan Overton, Kent ,

**BUSINESS AGENDA**

**Public Input on Agenda Items**

There was no public input on the Agenda Items.

**Approve Minutes of December 14, 2005 with the following corrections:**

**Line 83: Replace “member” with “members”. Line 219: Replace “the” with “their”. Line 349: After “unchanged” add “with the addition that Lincoln Hall would be the administrative seat of government.” Line 357: After “a” add “full time”. Line 427: Add “IRENE WRENNER MOVED AND RENE BLANCHARD SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE MERGER TASK FORCE RECOMMEND AS PART OF THE MERGER PLAN THAT ALL MEETINGS OF THE MERGER TRANSITION COMMITTEE TAKE PLACE IN LINCOLN HALL, THAT THE NEW TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE MERGED COMMUNITY WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFINING THE PLAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING OR BUILDINGS THAT WOULD MEET THE NEEDS OF THAT MERGED COMMUNITY AND THAT THE MERGER TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THAT THESE FACILITIES WOULD BE LOCATED AT THE FIVE CORNERS AREA IF POSSIBLE.” Line 629: After “STRIKE” add “.” Strike “AND THAT”. Line 630: Strike “IN REGARDS TO”. Line 631: STRIKE “THOSE POSITIONS”. Line 647: Replace “elective” with “voters”.**

**THE MOTION PASSED 8-0.**

Mr. Blanchard asked if there would be a time when the Task Force would stop referring to the two districts as the Village Inside the Village and The Town Outside of the Village. Mr. Lajza replied, in 2009. Mr. Sweeney asked whether he was referring to elections. Mr. Overton reminded the Task Force they had discussed the districts being District (1) and District (2) or District (a) and District (b). Mr. Blanchard wondered if that discussion was on the Task Force's Agenda in the near future. Mr. Sweeney believed that the Task Force needed to finish editing the language of the Charter to agree with the motions that recently had been passed before addressing Mr. Blanchard's concern. Mr. Lajza stated that after 2010, all elections were at-large. Mr. Blanchard clarified that he was not

48 debating the schedule of the elections, but was wondering when the terminology for the two  
49 districts would be simplified.

50

51 **Discussion With Kent Booraem Regarding Recreation Structure**

52

53 Mr. Sweeney explained to Mr. Booraem, the Chair of the School Unification Study Committee and  
54 Mr. Willey, who was also from the Unification Committee, that the Task Force had heard about  
55 some ideas being created by the Unification Committee about a merged Recreation and wanted an  
56 update that might be helpful in the Task Force's deliberations. Mr. Booraem understood and  
57 explained that the Unification Committee had 12 articles that they needed to address, with a time  
58 line of one year. Mr. Sweeney noted that the Unification Committee had already been meeting for a  
59 year and Mr. Booraem agreed. He stated that his Committee adopted another time line that targeted  
60 a vote for next November. However, he noted that for his Committee to reach consensus for all 12  
61 articles, he felt that, realistically, the vote might be in the following spring. He commented that  
62 Recreation had been a challenging issue, but not an immediate priority for his Committee. He stated  
63 that the Task Force had been forthcoming in asking for input about the Recreation topic, and Mr.  
64 Dan Overton had been diligent in helping the Unification Committee take the Recreation Topic into  
65 consideration as a sooner priority. He informed the Task Force that the Unification Committee had  
66 a meeting at the Town of Essex on December 13, 2005 with the intent to brainstorm new ideas for  
67 Recreation. Those present at that meeting were Mr. Booraem, Mr. Proulx, Mr. Scheidel, Mr.  
68 Deweese, Mr. Donahue and Mr. Berry. One member asked about Mr. Proulx. Mr. Booraem stated  
69 that Mr. Proulx was the former superintendent in Essex nine years ago, was acting as a consultant  
70 in this process and worked as a facilitator at that meeting. Mr. Booraem asked if the Task Force  
71 had received any information about an introduction to a Parks and Recreation District and members  
72 replied, no. He discussed that Ms. Remy, from Mr. Deweese's office, which was the  
73 Superintendent's office, researched other Recreation options. She developed a document on the  
74 introduction to a Parks and Recreation District. He stated that both towns were pleased with their  
75 current Recreation Departments' structures and that in the Village, he understood that there was  
76 concern that the Recreation may be returned to the Trustees. He stated that because it was an  
77 important issue for the constituents, the Unification Committee should consider all options.

78

79 Mr. Booraem explained that the Recreation District option, which was discussed during the  
80 December 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, was presented to the Unification Committee by Mr. Willey and Mr.  
81 Booraem, and the Unification Committee agreed it should be considered. Mr. Booraem requested  
82 that two members from the Task Force join two members from the Unification Committee to  
83 consider this specific option in developing a plan for Recreation. He stated that the Unification  
84 Committee was ready to prioritize this topic if two members from the Task Force were willing to  
85 assist them in a joint recommendation about the specific topic of a Recreation District. Mr.  
86 Sweeney clarified with Mr. Booraem that there would be two people from the Unification  
87 Committee and two people from the Task Force working together to decide whether a Recreation  
88 District would be successful. Mr. Sweeney asked for a time frame for this meeting. Mr. Willey  
89 suggested a couple of meetings would be enough to develop a plan or recommendation. Mr.  
90 Mertens asked if there was a charge for the subgroup. Mr. Willey explained that he had a  
91 presentation for the Task Force that evening to help determine whether the Task Force was willing  
92 and able to participate in a subgroup committee.

93

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 21, 2005

94 Mr. Willey introduced his presentation by commenting that the Unification Study Committee had to  
95 address the Recreation Issue because the Village Recreation Department was under the purview of  
96 the Prudential Committee. He explained that the Recreation Issue had been discussed several times  
97 and there was an obvious difference of opinions on his Committee. He stated that both communities  
98 favor their Recreation Department's structure and both were successful departments. He noted that  
99 if the communities merged, it would be difficult to have a merged municipal government and a  
100 merged unified school district with two different types of recreation structures. Mr. Willey stated  
101 that he had experience with entities that had a Recreation Department District and had suggested  
102 this option to the Unification Committee as a option. He presented this option to the Merger  
103 Committee that night to view this issue in a neutral unique way. He informed the Task Force that  
104 the Unification Committee had not approved his idea of a separate Parks and Recreation District.  
105 He explained that with this option there would be three districts- the school district, which would  
106 manage the school functions, a municipal government, which would manage the municipal issues  
107 through the manager and a Parks and Recreation District, which would have its own Board elected  
108 by the voters, a director and Parks and Recreation employees. He stated that this structure has  
109 worked well in the Midwest and in the South. Mr. Willey did not think the Unification Committee  
110 members would ever reach a consensus for either of the two current Recreation Department  
111 structures and therefore, he was in favor of third option, with input from the Task Force, to explore  
112 it as a possible solution. Mr. Sweeney asked if the Recreation District would have a separate tax  
113 district, and Mr. Willey agreed. Mr. Willey, in reference to a Recreation District option, felt that the  
114 only concern with this idea was that the fact that School Unification included the Town of  
115 Westford, which was not part of the merged communities of Essex and Essex Junction. He  
116 suggested, with voter approval, that the Recreation District could include Westford.

117

118 Mr. Booraem stated that the charge for the subgroup would be to review this specific proposal to  
119 see whether it provided an opportunity for a successful solution. Mr. Blanchard asked whether the  
120 Recreation District would include all of the Town and the Village, and Mr. Willey agreed and  
121 added that it would also include Westford. Mr. Boucher asked what cost the Recreation District  
122 would incur, with management, etc. Mr. Willey pointed out that there were two directors at the  
123 present time. Mr. Boucher understood, but stated that one of the goals with a merger was to lower  
124 costs to the taxpayers. Mr. Sweeney was concerned about the financial aspects of a separate  
125 Recreation District. He felt that if Recreation was under the purview of the municipal government  
126 or a school district, the financial expertise was readily available and wondered how that would be  
127 available in a Recreation District. Mr. Booraem expressed that he and Mr. Willey were presenting  
128 just an idea to the Task Force for discussion. Mr. Sweeney asked what the advantages were in a  
129 Recreation District. Mr. Willey felt it would be a good compromise since they could not reach  
130 consensus about either one of the two current systems. He informed the Task Force that Illinois had  
131 hundreds of Recreation Districts and had an example of a pamphlet for the Illinois Parks and  
132 Recreation District that explained financial procedures and Board procedures, etc. One advantage  
133 Mr. Willey stated was that the District would have employees with Parks and Recreation expertise.  
134 Mr. Sweeney asked about the size of the Recreation District. Mr. Willey responded that the  
135 districts range from 7,500 people up to 50,000 people. Mr. Sweeney clarified that the Recreation  
136 Districts were generally municipalities, and Mr. Willey disagreed. He stated that in the Town and  
137 Village, there was a combined population of 20,000 people but that in the Recreation Districts, the  
138 population ranged from 7,500 to 50,000 people.

139

140 Mr. Overton explained to the members that Mr. Willey and his brother owned a company that dealt  
141 extensively with recreation facilities, districts, military bases and assumed that members had this  
142 knowledge of Mr. Willey's experience in this area. He summarized Mr. Willey's and Mr. Booraem's  
143 request to be that two members from the Task Force join with two members of the Unification  
144 Committee to have a preliminary exploration of the Recreation District option for about two weeks  
145 or so. He was in favor of appointing two members from the Task Force to join them as he felt it  
146 would not be a waste of time to explore this option.

147

148 **AL OVERTON MOVED A MOTION TO APPOINT TWO MEMBERS FROM THE TASK**  
149 **FORCE TO JOIN TWO MEMBERS FROM THE UNIFICATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
150 **TO EXPLORE A RECREATION DISTRICT OPTION.**

151

152 At that time there was not a second to the motion and discussion continued. At the same time, Mr.  
153 Overton felt it was slightly outside the Task Force's mandate, but deferred that opinion to current  
154 legislative members, Mr. Lajza and Ms. Myers. Mr. Lajza suggested that one of the members at-  
155 large participate in the subgroup, and Mr. Overton agreed. Mr. Overton felt they should have  
156 permission from the Trustees and Selectboard to spend the volunteer time. Mr. Lajza felt that if the  
157 Task Force had a mandate that included adding any discussion that was related to the merger, along  
158 with being acceptable from the members, then it was allowed. Mr. Overton stated that he was  
159 comfortable pursuing this topic under a subgroup as long as the Trustees and the Selectboard were  
160 informed. He added that he should not participate due to the confusion of his name with Mr. Dan  
161 Overton. Mr. Blanchard asked Mr. Willey and Mr. Booraem if they needed a decision from the  
162 Task Force that night. Mr. Booraem stated that they were ready to commit time to work on this  
163 issue when they received approval from the Task Force. Mr. Willey stated that, having attended  
164 many of the Task Force meetings, he knew the members wanted a recommendation, but that  
165 unfortunately, the Unification Committee had never come close to developing a recommendation.  
166 Therefore, Mr. Willey felt that the Recreation District offered a way for the two Committees to  
167 work together and possibly develop a joint recommendation or, at the very least, to learn more  
168 about Parks and Recreation.

169

170 Mr. Mertens clarified the charge of the subgroup as exploring only the option of a separate  
171 Recreation district rather than exploring the pros and cons of the Town and the Village Recreation  
172 systems, and Mr. Booraem agreed. Mr. Booraem stated that the charge was to develop something  
173 unique and possibly enhance the Recreation program in the community. Mr. Mertens suggested  
174 that sometimes in reaching for consensus, the result was the least common denominator, which was  
175 sometimes not the optimal solution, but an idea that everybody dislikes enough to support. He was  
176 uncomfortable with limiting the discussion to just the Recreation District option and would be more  
177 in favor of meeting with them if they opened the charge to Schools, District and Town. Mr.  
178 Mertens felt that since a decision could not be made at the School level, it should not limit the  
179 discussion of all the options at the Task Force level. He asked if Mr. Booraem and Mr. Willey  
180 would be flexible enough to expand the topics in the charge. Mr. Booraem agreed that the  
181 Unification Committee would be very comfortable with looking at all of the options suggested by  
182 Mr. Mertens because they were just as interested as the Task Force members in reaching a  
183 consensus. Mr. Willey stated that he was also in agreement to working out a solution to a difficult  
184 issue that was slowing down the progress of Unification and Merger. Mr. Overton reminded the  
185 Chair that he had made a motion, and Mr. Sweeney understood, but stated that he wanted to

186 continue the discussion. Mr. Sweeney was concerned that by exploring a Recreation District, other  
187 departments such as Fire and Library might make the same request. Mr. Sweeney asked, if the Task  
188 Force create a subgroup for discussing options such as a Recreation District, then why shouldn't  
189 they do the same for the other departments? Mr. Booraem stated that the Parks and Recreation issue  
190 would be solved if they all worked together because ultimately, they were all going to be  
191 accountable to the voters, who were very involved with Parks and Recreation. He understood MR.  
192 Sweeney's concern and stated that he and Mr. Willey were present that night to get approval for a  
193 subgroup discussion. Mr. Mertens clarified that Mr. Overton's motion was in favor of the Task  
194 Force participating in this subgroup and asked if Mr. Overton would accept an amendment to  
195 participate and expand the charge to consider (a), (b) or (c) options, and Mr. Overton agreed and  
196 stated that he would second that motion.

197

198 **AL OVERTON MOVED AND HANS MERTENS SECONDED A MOTION TO APPOINT**  
199 **TWO MEMBERS FROM THE TASK FORCE TO JOIN TWO MEMBERS FROM THE**  
200 **UNIFICATION STUDY COMMITTEE TO EXPLORE THREE OPTIONS. A) A**  
201 **RECREATION DEPARTMENT UNDER A SCHOOL DISTRICT, B) A RECREATION**  
202 **DEPARTMENT UNDER A MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT, C) A RECREATION**  
203 **DEPARTMENT UNDER A RECREATION DISTRICT.**

204

205 Mr. Overton was in favor of a subgroup having a discussion for a few weeks and did not think it  
206 would present any problems. He did not anticipate that a solution would be developed, but that  
207 additional information may be gathered and perhaps a conclusion from the subgroup that could help  
208 the Task Force in their deliberations. He reminded the members that the information from the  
209 subgroup would not bind the Task Force to accept a decision, but instead was an opportunity to  
210 study it further with a Committee that has already looked at this issue extensively. Mr. Mertens  
211 stated that the Unification Study Committee had no obligation either of taking the recommendation  
212 of the subgroup. Mr. Willey did not think the Unification Committee had any authority on this  
213 matter, but that it was the authority of the Selectboard and the Trustees, and Mr. Mertens  
214 understood. Mr. Lajza agreed with Mr. Sweeney's concern. Mr. Overton asked for clarification. Mr.  
215 Lajza clarified that he was concerned that the Fire and Library would want a district as well,  
216 resulting in loss of control over any departments and competition between departments for the  
217 limited resources in the community. Ms. Myers agreed with Mr. Sweeney, Mr. Lajza and Mr.  
218 Overton. She felt that would be harmless for a small subgroup to explore the options and gather  
219 additional information to help in making a decision and stated that sometimes a study could be  
220 worthwhile. Ms. Myers stated that in the beginning of the discussion about a Recreation District,  
221 she was not supportive of the idea, having come from a mid-western state and having some  
222 knowledge of Recreation Districts. At the same time, Ms. Myers supported a short, four to five-  
223 week study because the Task Force would not come to any conclusion in that period of time  
224 anyway and she felt the information that the subgroup gathered might prove helpful in their  
225 deliberations. Mr. Lajza suggested calling the subgroup a fact-finding group, and Ms. Myers  
226 agreed. Mr. Boucher suggested that Ms. Myers volunteer to be on the fact-finding group, and Ms.  
227 Myers stated she could not attend other meetings based on her upcoming schedule. She stated that  
228 she had two names to nominate, but understood there was a motion on the table at the current time,  
229 and Mr. Sweeney agreed. Mr. Booraem hoped that from the study group, a solution would be  
230 developed to help reach a consensus among the Committees. Ms. Myers stated that the Task Force  
231 would at least listen to a presentation from the fact-finding group. Mr. Mertens stated that the issue

232 was very important to all the members and that the information from the fact-finding group would  
233 be very helpful as there were many questions about the Recreation District option. Mr. Sweeney  
234 asked if there was any further discussion before taking a vote on Mr. Overton's motion. Mr. Lajza  
235 asked for clarification on the motion. Mr. Sweeney explained that there was a motion to create an  
236 Ad Hoc Committee and for the Task Force to appoint two members to be on this Committee and  
237 that there was an accepted amendment to include three options, a) managed by the municipal  
238 government, b) managed by the schools, c) managed through a District option. Mr. Boucher asked  
239 if the fact-finding group would meet two times, and members disagreed. Mr. Overton and Ms.  
240 Myers felt the meetings would take a longer period of time such as five weeks or so. Mr. Mertens  
241 asked for a time frame from Mr. Booraem and Mr. Willey. Mr. Sweeney reminded Mr. Mertens that  
242 he expanded the charge, which would take longer to discuss, and Mr. Mertens understood. Mr.  
243 Sweeney asked if there was any further discussion and there was none.

244

245 **THE MOTION PASSED 8-0.**

246

247 **LINDA MYERS MOVED AND AL OVERTON SECONDED A MOTION TO NOMINATE**  
248 **IRENE WRENNER AND RENE BLANCHARD TO BE THE TWO APPOINTED**  
249 **MEMBERS FROM THE TASK FORCE TO SERVE ON THE FACT-FINDING**  
250 **COMMITTEE.**

251

252 Mr. Blanchard appreciated the nomination, but respectfully declined. Mr. Overton suggested Mr.  
253 Mertens. Mr. Mertens was comfortable in participating, but was willing to have another member  
254 participate if he/she wished. Mr. Overton nominated Mr. Mertens to replace Mr. Blanchard.

255

256 **LINDA MYERS MOVED AND AL OVERTON SECONDED A MOTION TO NOMINATE**  
257 **IRENE WRENNER AND HANS MERTENS TO BE THE TWO APPOINTED MEMBERS**  
258 **FROM THE TASK FORCE TO SERVE ON THE FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE.**

259

260 **Discuss Latest Input From Library Trustees**

261

262 Mr. Sweeney pointed out a recent memo from Ms. Evans, the Chair of the Essex Free Trustees and  
263 Ms. Packard, the Chair of the Brownell Library Trustees, to be discussed. Mr. Sweeney suggested  
264 reviewing the memo by each question. He began with Question 1. **Should Trustees be appointed**  
265 **or elected?** Mr. Sweeney summarized that the Library Directors felt there should be both, half  
266 elected and half appointed members. Mr. Overton suggested the most significant part of the answer  
267 was that they wanted to dissolve the permanent Brownell Board, and Ms. Myers agreed. Mr.  
268 Overton explained that to accomplish this was easier said than done and was the decision of the  
269 Village Trustees. Mr. Sweeney reminded Mr. Overton that the Task Force was only making a  
270 recommendation and if members agreed, the Task Force could make this recommendation. Mr.  
271 Sweeney understood that there were legal issues to this process, but that the Task Force could  
272 present their opinion and make a recommendation. He suggested presenting two situations, one  
273 being if the permanent Board could not be dissolved, then the recommendation would be one way.  
274 If the permanent Board could be dissolved, then the recommendation would be another way. Mr.  
275 Mertens understood the legal ramifications of dissolving the permanent Board, but questioned the  
276 second sentence in question 1., which stated, "In order to maintain the benefits..." and wanted  
277 clarification from the Library Directors about the perceived benefits as he did not see a clear

278 understanding of any benefits. Ms. Myers suggested that the Library Directors were stating both  
279 their opinions as to the benefits of having elected members and the benefits to having appointed  
280 members. However, Ms. Myers stated that the Task Force did not have to agree that those were  
281 benefits and could decide whether they were benefits or not. She suggested that the Library  
282 Directors could not decide between all appointed or all elected so they developed this solution. Mr.  
283 Mertens stated that he saw the word “benefits” as justification for keeping it half elected, half  
284 appointed and wanted an explanation of the benefits, so he could understand their recommendation.  
285 With Ms. Myers explanation, Mr. Mertens stated that the Library Director's recommendation was  
286 not meaningful to him. Mr. Blanchard commented that the Library Directors were speaking from  
287 their own experiences of either having elected or appointed members and could not recommend  
288 something they did not know about. Mr. Boucher wondered about the number of members, ten  
289 versus five, on the Board and how that would affect the control of the decision-making for the  
290 management. Ms. Myers asked Mr. Safford if the Brownell Trustees answered to the Village  
291 Trustees and the Village Manager? Mr. Safford stated that by Charter, the Brownell Trustees were  
292 supposed to follow the Financial and Personnel Policy of the Village Trustees, but that the reality  
293 with elected members was that they were accountable to the voters. Ms. Myers asked about the  
294 budget. Mr. Safford stated that the reality was that sometimes the relationship with the library was  
295 uncertain because the roles were unclear. Over time, through many discussions, Mr. Safford felt  
296 that the relationship had strengthened as the roles and responsibilities of the staff had been refined.  
297 He explained that in the Charter at the present time, the Library managed the Library Policy and the  
298 Village Trustees managed the Financial and Personnel policies. Through many discussions, the  
299 boundaries had been created and the result was that the Manager appoints the librarian with the  
300 advice of the Library Trustees and the Village Trustees. Ms. Pillsbury, as the Department Head,  
301 presents a budget to him and he presents it to the Trustees for then voter approval. Mr. Safford  
302 informed the Task Force that Ms. Pillsbury, in the past, has received input from the Library  
303 Trustees who had a Budget Committee. Therefore, there was an elected Library Board, along with a  
304 Department Head, which presents a budget for his consideration. He then presents that budget to the  
305 Village Trustees. Ms. Myers asked if the Five permanent members participated in developing the  
306 budget. Mr. Safford stated that the permanent Board members and other elected Board members  
307 act in concert on all matters. She asked if there were some permanent members who were also on  
308 the Budget Committee, and Mr. Safford could not say definitively as it changed from year to year.  
309  
310 Mr. Mertens felt that the Library Directors had put in a lot of effort in their responses, but suggested  
311 that the Managers, in their review of the departments, include in their recommendation some  
312 additional input about the library issues from the Manager's viewpoint. He was concerned about  
313 asking the libraries to further explain their positions as he did not think he would get an answer and  
314 instead suggested that the Manager's input might be a more effective way of solidifying the library  
315 issues. Mr. Safford stated that the Managers could certainly provide input on how the Managers  
316 would effectively organize departments and that depending on the Task Force could go into  
317 whatever detail they wished at this stage. He felt that a recommendation of whether the members of  
318 the Library Board should be elected or appointed was beyond the purview of the Managers, but he  
319 was willing to give his feedback. He suggested that having elected members created the potential  
320 for conflicting policies. He was in favor of the development of clear, consistent policies for an  
321 organizational structure at the staff level and at the elected Board level. Mr. Scheidel stated that this  
322 part in the conversation had uncovered one of the chief cultural differences between appointed  
323 versus elected and the differences in the policy making, the budget and the service delivery. The

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 21, 2005

324 Managers felt very comfortable with staff as long as there was clear understanding of policy and the  
325 level of service. Mr. Scheidel stated that the Managers could not articulate the benefits of both an  
326 elected and appointed body because they were directly working with them. He explained that in the  
327 Town, the relationship between the Manager and the library was seamless largely because of who  
328 was appointed and who did the appointing. His relationship with the librarian and the Board was  
329 budgetary and that the librarian managed the library well without problems.

330

331 Ms. Myers stated that she had some serious issues with considering half an elected Board and half  
332 an appointed Board. She felt it had to be one or the other. Ms. Myers asked whether the permanent  
333 Board was elected or appointed, and members responded that they were self-appointed. She was  
334 concerned with having a split library Board in a merged library system because the other decision  
335 would be where the members would be elected or appointed from. Given the fact that the Town  
336 was appointed and the Village was elected, Ms. Myers asked, in a merged community, would it  
337 remain the same? She felt the Task Force should make the decision regardless of the Library  
338 Directors' recommendations. Mr. Lajza supported Ms. Myers position. He stated that the Task  
339 Force agreed to a Manager/Council government, which had a clear way of identifying responsibility  
340 and a clear process in personnel policy measures and budgets. Therefore, if there were other elected  
341 Boards, there would be conflicts between the Manager and the elected officials. He was not sure  
342 how resolution would occur with a difference of opinion and was uncomfortable with that notion.  
343 He commented that entire societies had moved away from elected positions because of competition  
344 for community resources and conflicts within the policy making and he would like to avoid this.  
345 Ms. Myers, in regards to the Fire Department, stated that they currently had one appointed and one  
346 elected chief, but that the chiefs were able to decide on one appointed chief for the merged  
347 community. She was in favor of having appointed members because it would end the conflict of  
348 having to be responsible for an elected Board and a Manager. Mr. Lajza felt it was a conflict to  
349 have to answer to an elected Board and the Manager, and Ms. Myers agreed. Mr. Boucher stated  
350 that ten years ago, the elected leadership at the time was very difficult to manage until it dissipated.  
351 There was conflict all the time between the Town and Village Fire leadership who did not agree.  
352 Finally, it was resolved when the management was changed. He felt this was an example of how  
353 difficult it can be with elected officials and noted that he did not know how Mr. Safford handled  
354 that relationship with the library. Mr. Safford commented that they had an excellent library, but  
355 there was no question there was a power differential at the staff level, which did not go unnoticed  
356 by the other Department Heads and their employees. He stated that when there was one department  
357 with an elected Board it made for a very different dynamic when the legislative Body set policies  
358 and expected compliance with budgetary goals, etc. For example, if elected Fire Chief disagreed on  
359 a policy, then it was difficult for the Manager to carry out the legislative mandates. Mr. Scheidel  
360 stated that if a Council/Manager style government was agreed upon for the Town of Essex Junction,  
361 then it would be inconsistent to have any kind of elected intermediaries between the Council, the  
362 Manager and the Departments. Mr. Safford suggested that the members consider the Manager's  
363 comments and recommended having a delineation of roles to the degree that was possible with  
364 resulting language in the Charter that stated, in the case of a conflict of opinion, there would be a  
365 decision based on policy that would be resolved without stalemate.

366

367 Mr. Boucher felt this was the time to correct this structural problem. Ms. Myers stated that the  
368 library issue was one of the areas that the Task Force needed to solve in a merged community  
369 whether one group liked it or not, but that the Task Force needed to make the decision. Mr.

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 21, 2005

370 Blanchard agreed with Mr. Boucher that this was an opportunity that he wished he had as a Trustee  
371 to make change. He agreed that people who ran for office had a different demeanor about  
372 themselves when they won versus people who were appointed. He explained that voters felt a sense  
373 of ownership to the winning candidates which developed a constituency for the elected officials,  
374 which he felt would cause conflict. Mr. Lajza stated that the greatest argument against an elected  
375 and appointed Library Board would be the inconsistency, which would blur the line of  
376 responsibility and offer a tremendous possibility for stalemate, which he felt should all be  
377 considered.

378

379 Ms. Myers asked Mr. Sweeney whether the Task Force was prepared to vote on these issues or to  
380 set it on the Agenda for a different night. Mr. Sweeney felt the Task Force needed to take a  
381 position on these issues and not ask the Managers to address them. Ms. Myers asked if a vote  
382 should occur that night. Mr. Sweeney reminded members that there were two members not present  
383 at the meeting and that there was an option to vote that night or put it on a future agenda, along with  
384 the Fire Department issue. Ms. Myers hesitated on making motions that night because it had not  
385 been officially put on the Agenda and although she was prepared to make a motion, she felt it  
386 would serve the Task Force and the community better if they chose a date for a final discussion for  
387 the library merger, fire department merger, etc. Mr. Sweeney felt the Trustees Chairs may also  
388 want to be present during those final discussions. Mr. Blanchard was in favor of discussing as much  
389 as possible, within the time constraint, the other library questions, but not to vote on it that night.  
390 Ms. Myers stated that she was very much in favor of an appointed Library Board. Mr. Sweeney was  
391 in favor of Mr. Blanchard's suggestion to have brief discussion of as many of the questions as  
392 possible. Mr. Mertens asked where the decision for the appointed or elected Library Board  
393 belonged in the Plan of Merger. Mr. Safford stated that by being silent, it was state law and  
394 automatically created an appointed Board. However, the language in the Charter could simply state  
395 that there would be an appointed Library Board with "x" number of members.

396

397 Ms. Myers commented the number of members was the next question to be addressed. Mr. Safford  
398 suggested that language in the Charter could state that there would be an appointed ten member  
399 Library Board. He recommended carrying over the Village Charter language at a minimum and  
400 further delineating the roles such as, "The Library Trustees shall establish policy for the operation  
401 of the Library and the libraries shall be required to follow all financial and personnel policies  
402 adopted by the Town Council." He suggested that the Task Force further define those  
403 responsibilities and delineate that the library policies shall not conflict with the Town Council, if  
404 the Task Force wanted a harmonious relationship between the library and the Town Council in the  
405 future. He was strongly in favor of providing clarity of roles as creating a successful working  
406 relationship. Mr. Mertens asked the Managers, with the guidance of the Task Force, if they would  
407 create language similar to Mr. Safford's suggestion that would act as a draft for discussion. Mr.  
408 Sweeney argued that the Task Force needed to make a decision first. Mr. Safford stated that he was  
409 making the assumption that there was an appointed Board. Mr. Sweeney stated that first they had to  
410 make a decision then they could give direction to the Managers to create the necessary language.  
411 Ms. Myers added that she also felt that the permanent Board should be dissolved, and Mr.  
412 Blanchard agreed. Mr. Lajza supported Ms. Myers opinion, but stated that if that could not happen,  
413 the Task Force needed to be very specific as to the roles and responsibilities. Ms. Myers clarified  
414 that Mr. Lajza was referring to the physical plan and he agreed that there should be a sharp outline  
415 of the responsibilities and who ultimately was in charge of each responsibility. Mr. Boucher noted

416 this action would be controversial, and Mr. Lajza agreed, but stated that this was part of the  
417 responsibility of how to improve the department in a merged community. Mr. Boucher was in  
418 agreement with having appointed members on the Library Board and dissolving the permanent  
419 members. Mr. Sweeney agreed with Mr. Lajza in that having an elected Board in the  
420 Council/Manager-style organization for the new community would provide inconsistency and  
421 conflict, which would make the job of running the community more difficult. He also agreed with  
422 Mr. Boucher to abolish the permanent Board if possible and was in favor of an appointed Library  
423 Board. He recommended outlining a proposal for two different paths. One path would be to  
424 recommend the abolishment of the permanent Brownell Board and appoint a Board. He then asked  
425 members what the other path would be if they could not dissolve the permanent Board.

426  
427 Mr. Overton agreed with having appointed members, but if the permanent Brownell Board was not  
428 dissolved, then there would be five appointed, then five self-appointed. Ms. Myers disagreed  
429 because if they could not dissolve the permanent Board, then there would have to be at least six  
430 appointed. Mr. Sweeney stated that if they all agreed, they would make a preferred  
431 recommendation, but if that was not legally possible, then the Task Force needed to create a second  
432 recommendation. Mr. Scheidel asked what would take precedence, a permanent Board or the  
433 language in a Charter adopted by the state legislature and signed by the Governor to law that  
434 excluded it? Mr. Overton stated that a deed of trust would take precedence and that the state could  
435 not abdicate that. He noted that if the Council wanted to dissolve the permanent Board, they could  
436 petition to get that done. Mr. Mertens understood the logic of Ms. Myer's recommendation of  
437 having six appointed members if the permanent Board could not be dissolved, but asked if the five  
438 permanent Board members had specific responsibilities and rights reserved to them that would  
439 cause conflict. Mr. Overton explained that the permanent Board exercised all the functions of the  
440 other library Board members and would continue to do that one way or the other. Mr. Lajza stated  
441 that the Task Force needed to create a line of responsibility because it was unclear, and Ms. Myers  
442 agreed to this action if they could not dissolve the Board. Mr. Lajza felt they needed a specific  
443 delineation of roles for clarification, regardless of the Board being dissolved. Ms. Myers argued  
444 that if the Board was dissolved, then the whole issue would disappear and the members would be  
445 appointed. Mr. Safford suggested that if there was a permanent Board, they may want to be clear in  
446 the Charter as to the role of the library Trustees versus the role of the legislative body. Mr. Sweeney  
447 commented that at that time, the Task Force would welcome assistance from the Managers to draft  
448 language for that purpose. Mr. Scheidel confirmed that the language would only include the level  
449 of hierarchy as to who reports to who and the budget. Mr. Mertens added that it would also include  
450 the number of members, etc.

451  
452 In regards to the number of members on the Library Board, Mr. Overton was in favor of 11, and  
453 Ms. Wrenner agreed. One member felt 11 was a big Board, and Ms. Myers agreed. Mr. Overton  
454 understood that the reason Ms. Myers suggested 11 was that it was an odd number to help break a  
455 tie if five permanent Board members remained on the Board. Mr. Mertens commented that the  
456 Library Board was was not an executive Board but a working Board that provided labor for the  
457 library, which at times could cause conflict. He was comfortable with 11 volunteers, and Ms.  
458 Wrenner agreed. He was convinced from the two library Board Directors that they were in favor of  
459 11, which he agreed with but wanted to be sure the Task Force considered the point made by the  
460 Managers that in a Council/Manager style government, there needed to be consistency and without  
461 that, there would be problems. Ms. Myers suggested that the discussion was moving to the second

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 21, 2005

462 question. Mr. Sweeney asked for comments on question one or two and stated that he did not have  
463 any problem with 11 members and recalled that the Directors had originally asked for 16 members.  
464 Mr. Safford asked whether the Task Force wanted draft language that stated if the permanent Board  
465 was dissolved, the Library Board would be reduced to six members. Ms. Myers felt it should be 11  
466 either way and clarified that if the permanent Board remained, then there would be six appointed  
467 members and if the permanent Board was dissolved, there would be 11 appointed members. Mr.  
468 Blanchard asked if the appointed members would be from certain districts and members disagreed.  
469 Mr. Lajza felt that in terms of the community, the libraries would be very much a continuing  
470 function. He stated that the Brownell Board had prestige in the Town. Ms. Myers felt the  
471 appointing of members would be similar to other Boards and the positions would be advertised in  
472 the same manner as other Boards. Mr. Sweeney stated that he had some friends that were library  
473 directors with large Boards because a lot of these volunteers did a lot of needed work for the  
474 library, which was probably the reason why the Directors initially wanted 16 members on the  
475 Board. He confirmed that there were five members on the Library Board in the Town, and Mr.  
476 Scheidel agreed. Mr. Sweeney was in favor of a larger Board for a library Board, and Ms. Myers  
477 was in agreement. She felt that the volunteers who were serving on both Boards right now would  
478 put in their application to be appointed members, and Mr. Lajza and Ms. Myers agreed that there  
479 would be many interested and willing people to be on the Library Board for the Town of Essex  
480 Junction. Mr. Mertens, based on the memo, asked whether the Library Directors had any more  
481 information about the permanent Board being dissolved, and members disagreed. Mr. Overton  
482 summarized that most of the members seem to be in agreement of having 11 appointed members  
483 and dissolving the permanent Board. Mr. Sweeney asked if there were any other discussion on these  
484 items and felt that Mr. Overton summarized the discussion thus far.

485

486 Ms. Myers felt there was no discussion on question 4. because she felt that the fact of the matter  
487 was that the Directors did not anticipate a savings on a merged library in the beginning. Mr.  
488 Sweeney felt there should be savings even though during their presentation, the Directors were not  
489 able to identify any savings. He suggested that there were areas that could provide a savings, and  
490 Mr. Blanchard agreed. Mr. Scheidel stated that if the policy directives were going to implemented  
491 by 11 people, there may be some lost active members of the Library Boards who did the fund  
492 raising that provided resources that the budget did not have to pay for. He was wondering if there  
493 was a way to figure that cost for each of the libraries. He understood from Ms. Pillsbury and Ms.  
494 Packard, the fund raising was a substantial amount of money for the library funds. He pointed out  
495 that while there may not be savings, there also may be lost revenue depending on how it was  
496 ultimately structured and recommended that the Managers make an attempt to ask and answer that  
497 question as there was an expense and revenue side of a budget that could not be ignored. Mr.  
498 Mertens asked why there would be lost revenue? Mr. Scheidel stated that members may be  
499 disgruntled in losing their permanency and that those members were active in helping bring  
500 financial resources to the library that allowed the librarian to purchase items for the library that the  
501 Town otherwise would. Mr. Mertens pointed out that the Directors had already reached a  
502 conclusion to eliminate the permanent Board. Mr. Scheidel understood, but, in being cautious,  
503 stated that there would still be a consequence to this action. Mr. Mertens reminded members that  
504 the Managers would be presenting an operating budget that would include costs of a merged library  
505 system. Mr. Safford stated that in January, the Managers would make a presentation of a merged  
506 budget and the resulting tax rate for the Town and the Village. At that point, they would need to  
507 know from the Task Force what other information they wanted as far as an operating budget,

508 organizational chart or a physical plan. He wondered if that kind of detail should be deferred to the  
509 Transitional Committee in preparing the first budget for the Council. He added that the Task Force  
510 would have to tell the Managers what assumptions they were assuming in order to reduce that  
511 budget. He stated that the reality was that unless the Task Force was willing to eliminate service  
512 areas, there was not a large sum of savings in a merged community and, in fact, might even be an  
513 increase in spending initially. He suggested the members give some consideration to how much the  
514 Task Force wanted to pursue at this point in time with so many unknowns. Mr. Lajza stated that  
515 having attended meetings at the Town and being on the Trustees, he felt both municipalities had  
516 been frugal and he did not see more opportunities for savings in the future. Ms. Myers stated that  
517 the public would disagree, but added that the public also did not know how much time was spent in  
518 analyzing every line item on the budget. She agreed with Mr. Lajza that both municipalities had  
519 been very frugal and were faced with the fact that every year they were losing a large sum of money  
520 from IBM. At the same time, the municipalities were faced with keeping taxes stable with a  
521 reduced revenue of \$100,000 and a grand list that was not increasing. Mr. Scheidel stated that he  
522 and Mr. Safford would present the real cost of the budget in their presentation.

523

524 Mr. Sweeney asked if members understood the recommendation in question number 2 as it stated,  
525 “We are recommending that the number of Board members be determined by the new joint library  
526 bylaws once the voting districts are established.” Ms. Myers did not know if the Library Districts  
527 realized that, in the end, there would not be voting districts, but one at-large community. Mr.  
528 Sweeney wanted to understand what voting districts had to do with the question, and Ms. Myers did  
529 not know and also stated that she did not know anything about library by-laws. Mr. Safford  
530 explained that the Library Directors were assuming that they would be doing a lot of decision-  
531 making after the merger. He suggested that if members were to be elected or appointed, it would be  
532 necessary to clearly delineate the roles in the Charter, and members agreed. Mr. Sweeney was still  
533 confused about the reference to the new joint library by-laws. Mr. Safford explained that the  
534 Brownell Library had a set of by-laws they operated under currently and he did not think it was  
535 anything legal or binding, but rather a set of policies for them to conduct business. Mr. Overton  
536 stated that the Library Directors were wrong in suggesting that the new bylaws would mandate the  
537 number of Board members, and members agreed.

538

539 Mr. Overton asked Mr. Safford if the permanent Board members discussed this memo with the  
540 Brownell Trustees before voting on it. Mr. Safford assumed they did, but would check on that  
541 information for him. Mr. Mertens raised a concern that the Library Directors had an assumption that  
542 there would be an implementation of pay and funding equity for the two libraries. He stated that  
543 the Task Force discussed keeping the budget constant and perhaps reducing it, but asked if it was  
544 mandatory that there be funding equity, which he felt would not mean raises, but in fact salary  
545 reductions. He suggested a comparative number so that they could research if Essex libraries were  
546 at an average pay level or above or below, so they could conclude the right salary. Mr. Scheidel  
547 stated that there were full and part-time employees at each library at different pay scales and that  
548 there were also union members in the library whose pay was adjusted through the contract  
549 negotiations. He believed that there were some differences, and in a merged library, those who  
550 found themselves still employed would want to at least make what they were making before even if  
551 there was a break-even proposition. He thought that in order to move forward, there would have to  
552 be a classification and pay study and some real serious discussion about the value of the positions.  
553 He suggested this process may result in new job descriptions, which he had understood Mr. Safford

554 was considering doing in the near future. He recommended that the Town participate in a joint  
555 review of the job descriptions with the Village and a pay scale evaluation to determine the value of  
556 a position in this market and in the entire county. Mr. Safford suggested that Mr. Mertens and Mr.  
557 Scheidel wanted to “benchmark” this information from other municipalities. He stated that the  
558 reality was that the service value was based on what the community decided in a given year  
559 depending on its values and its available resources. Therefore, he felt it was relative to what people  
560 wanted to invest in as opposed to the cost comparisons or the cost of lending a book. He  
561 commented that budgets were so unique to a community in a given year, and he cautioned them  
562 about basing their understanding on cost comparisons rather than what the people in the community  
563 wanted. However, there were library statistics through the Vermont Department of Libraries that  
564 could show the per capita costs for libraries and books circulated, etc. Mr. Scheidel stated that the  
565 difference between the Town library budget and the Village current budget was \$11,000. Mr.  
566 Sweeney asked if that was just base pay, and Mr. Scheidel agreed. Members confirmed the  
567 difference was \$11,000. Mr. Safford added that there may be reasons for the difference and that the  
568 Town and Village may have to reconcile their paying classification systems. Mr. Boucher clarified  
569 that the Village Library was a regional library not a community library and covered surrounding  
570 areas. Mr. Safford confirmed that the Village, along with the Town library, was part of the  
571 interlibrary loan program, where anyone, except for Burlington, in the region of participating  
572 libraries could access books on loan. He stated that there were pros and cons and that the Brownell  
573 had a large draw, which other than the tax to operate it, had benefits because people invested in it  
574 and visitors were drawn into the downtown. Mr. Boucher asked if it was beneficial to the taxpayers  
575 to the Village to participate in the interlibrary loan program and wondered if it impacted the Village  
576 library operations financially. Mr. Safford responded that Burlington charged fees, and he felt it  
577 was under the purview of a future legislative body to discuss that at some point to see if there were  
578 other ways to raise revenues and the resulting consequences. Ms. Myers stated that both libraries  
579 were in the Regional library lending program, which was a program for borrowing books from  
580 various participating libraries in the surrounding Towns in order for citizens to get the book of their  
581 choice. She stated that their library cards could be used at every library in the area. Mr. Mertens  
582 commented that if he asked for a book from Brownell or Essex Free and it happened to be on the  
583 shelf in Burlington, it could be sent and would not cost anything, whereas if he went to Burlington  
584 to check out the book, he would have to pay for it, similar to the Washington County area in  
585 Vermont.

586

587 Mr. Sweeney asked if there was further discussion on the library questions and if not, the Chairs  
588 would schedule the final discussion on the Libraries for a meeting in January. Mr. Safford asked if  
589 the Task Force wanted any library presentation from the Managers. Mr. Sweeney stated that it  
590 would be more useful for the Task Force to make the policy decision and then ask the Managers for  
591 the language to implement the policy. He noted that in the next month, there were many meetings  
592 for the budget for both the Town and Village staff and was trying to minimize the work the Task  
593 Force generated for them. Mr. Boucher stated that by placing it on the Agenda, the public would be  
594 aware of the final discussion for the library, and Mr. Sweeney agreed that they could advertise it  
595 and invite the Library Directors to the meeting. Mr. Mertens did not disagree, but thought it would  
596 be most productive to have some language to refer to before the discussion. However, he  
597 recognized that there were some time constraints and was comfortable with the current decision.  
598 Mr. Sweeney clarified that what the Task Force had discussed was that they would vote on these  
599 issues such as appointed versus elected, the number of members, dissolving the permanent Board,

## MERGER TASK FORCE

December 21, 2005

600 etc. and once those decisions were made, the Task Force could ask for the language to implement  
601 those decisions. Mr. Scheidel asked about the legal ramifications to the decision, and Mr. Sweeney  
602 confirmed that the Task Force should decide on two paths- one recommendation being to dissolve  
603 the permanent Board and the other recommendation including the permanent members if it could  
604 not be dissolved. Mr. Safford suggested seeking clarification with Ms. Packard in regards to the  
605 permanent Board being dissolved if the merger took place. Mr. Sweeney understood that the Task  
606 Force only made a recommendation and that he understood that it was in the purview of the  
607 Trustees and the Selectboard to dissolve the permanent Library Board at any time. Mr. Overton  
608 summarized that assuming that the permanent Board was in place or dissolved, then the Task force  
609 would take either of those positions. Mr. Safford stated that it could be put in the Charter that two  
610 different paths would be taken however, if the permanent Board was ever dissolved, this should be  
611 the constitution of the Board.

612

613 Mr. Sweeney reminded the members that at the last meeting, they wanted to have a very high level  
614 review of the tax rate for the merged community. Mr. Sweeney stated that for the next meeting, the  
615 Agenda would include the Charter review, the tax rate discussion and asked if there was any other  
616 issues to add. Mr. Mertens felt they should also have a similar discussion about the Fire  
617 Departments that they had for the Libraries. Mr. Scheidel asked when the Task Force wanted the  
618 libraries to return in January. Mr. Sweeney suggested a couple of weeks after they return in  
619 January, but was not definitive about the time. He informed the members that he had received a  
620 phone call from the Burlington Free Press who was writing about year-end stories of each town in  
621 the area. He spoke with Victoria Welsh and she told him that she viewed this merger story as one of  
622 the major stories for the community. He answered questions about the progress of the merger  
623 discussions. Ms. Myers stated that on January 18, she had been invited to judge a Civics  
624 Competition, which would be the third year for her, and because she would really like to participate  
625 in the judging, she would not be present that night for a merger meeting. Mr. Sweeney reminded  
626 Mr. Overton that he had mentioned being out of town for an extended period of time and asked  
627 what the dates were. Mr. Overton confirmed this information and said he would have to speak to  
628 the Selectboard about this. He stated that he would be out of town from February, March and the  
629 first week in April. Mr. Mertens asked if he was out continuously, and Mr. Overton agreed and  
630 stated that the Selectboard may want him to resign. Mr. Sweeney opened the discussion to Public  
631 Input.

632

### **Public Input-General Comments**

634

635 Mr. Marcotte agreed with the Task Force that the Library Board members should be all appointed  
636 members. He stated that he was in favor of having the Recreation Department be separate from the  
637 school and instead, under the purview of the municipal government.

638

639 **JOHN LAJZA MOVED AND RENE BLANCHARD SECONDED A MOTION TO**  
640 **ADJOURN AT 8:57 P.M.**

641

642 **THE MOTION PASSED 8-0.**

643

644

645 **Respectfully submitted,**

646 **Saramichelle Stultz**

647

648 *Saramichelle Stultz*

649 Recording Secretary

650

651

652

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

654 MEETING)

655

656

657

658

659

660

661

662

663

664

665

666

667

668

669

670

671

672

673

674

675

676

677

678

679

680

681

682

683

684

685

686

687

688

689

690

691

**MERGER TASK FORCE**

**December 21, 2005**

692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714