

# AGREEMENT TO FORM A REC DISTRICT



# Goals of Tonight

- Overview of process
- Present contents of Agreement
- Request feedback on Agreement
  - ▣ Feedback evaluated by RGSC on 8/10, 6:30p.m., ADL

# This is Just the Beginning....

- Many questions to be answered
  - ▣ Four months until the vote
- Will work to provide information prior to vote
  - ▣ Public forums this fall
  - ▣ Will develop a budget this fall
    - No reason to expect significant increases in recreation spending due to forming district
- Developing Agreement is first step
  - ▣ Framework/big picture now

# A Brief Overview

- Like Village/Town government & schools, the Recreation District will...
  - ▣ Have same checks and balances
  - ▣ Be governed & regulated by 5-member elected board
    - Will be directly accountable to the voters
    - Will have regularly scheduled public meetings
    - Will be required to follow all open meeting & transparency laws
  - ▣ Budget voted on by Australian ballot by community annually (like schools)
  - ▣ Finances will be independently audited each year
  - ▣ Bonds must be approved by voters

# Our Recreation Departments

- We have 2 great recreation departments!
- Essex Parks & Recreation
  - Operated by Town of Essex
  - \$1.32M operating budget
  - \$61K capital budget
  - \$728K tax support
  - 4 FTE's
  - 18 parks & facilities
- Essex Junction Recreation & Parks
  - Operated by Essex Junction School District
  - \$2.24M operating budget
  - \$109K capital budget
  - \$745K tax support
  - 12 FTE's
  - 3 parks & facilities

# Who Are We?

## Recreation Governance Study Committee (RGSC)

### Board Representation

- Max Levy – Selectboard
- Lori Houghton – Village Trustees
- Michael Smith – Prudential Committee
- Jason DiRosa – Prudential Committee

### Community Representation

- Erika Baldasaro – Village
- Betzi Bilodeau – Town (o.v.)
- Raj Chawla – Village
- Theresa Fletcher – Town (o.v.)
- Kim Maiberger – Village
- Christine Packard – Town (o.v.)

# How Did We Get Here?

- 2013-present: Spirit of collaboration, consolidation, unification
- Nov 2015: Communities voted to consolidate school districts
- Feb 2016: Selectboard & Trustees agree to form joint municipal survey committee to study recreation
- Mar 2016: Committee identified
- Apr 2016: Committee begins to meet

# Committee Goals

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- Maintain or enhance quality
- Explore all avenues
- Engage the community
- Affordability in mind, fiscally responsible
- Consensus by mid June

# Summary of Work

- 12 meetings April 5 – August 10
  - ▣ Publicly warned, held in public places, minutes taken & posted
  - ▣ Public opportunity to speak & participate
- Informational video
- Info on web & in community
- Community survey
- Evaluated 7 governance options

# Union Municipal (Rec) District Option Selected

A new municipal entity created to perform a governmental service, activity, or undertaking

- Statute allows two municipalities to form a municipal district
- District will be an independent municipality
- Governed by 5-member elected Board
- Budget voted by Australian ballot

# Why This Option?

- Unites rec under one umbrella
- One budget, voted by community
- Independent budget
- Increased transparency
- Greater oversight
- Reduced complexities
- Equal starting ground
- Community decision
- Eliminate redundancies
- Potential for cost savings
- Long-term stability
- One-stop shopping
- Equity in community
- Ability to “house” other initiatives
- In line with recent consolidation efforts

# The Agreement

- 1<sup>st</sup> step in forming District is to write Agreement
  - ▣ This is what voters are saying yes or no to enter into
- Task of the study committee (by statute)
- Agreement developed on statutory requirements in 24 VSA § 4862:
  - ▣ Duration
  - ▣ Organization
  - ▣ Purposes
  - ▣ Selection of officers
  - ▣ Means of establishing a budget
  - ▣ Terminating/amending the Agreement
  - ▣ Withdrawing from the District

# Name

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- Essex Community Parks & Recreation

# Purpose

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- Provide diverse year-round high quality & affordable recreational opportunities for all age groups
- Maintain variety of public recreation facilities & community spaces
- Create affordable & accessible opportunities for physical activity
- Maintain aesthetic beauty of parks & open spaces
- Provide health, fitness, quality of life & well-being

# Composition

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- Board of Directors consisting of five (5) elected members
- Serve three (3) year, staggered terms
- File a petition with signatures from 30 voters to be on ballot
- Reside in Essex

# Selection of Directors

## □ Initial Board

### ▣ Appointed:

- 1 member by Selectboard (2 yr)
- 1 member by Trustees (2yr)

### ▣ Elected (by all):

- 1 member from Village (3 yr)
- 1 member from Town outside Village (3 yr)
- 1 member at large (1 yr)

## □ Subsequent Boards

### ▣ Elected (by all):

- Members at large (3 yr terms)
  - April 2018 – 1 member
  - April 2019 – 2 members
  - April 2020 – 2 members

# Budget & Tax Rate

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- Annually presented to Board
- Board holds public hearing
- Board reviews and approves
- Australian ballot by voters in April

# Financials

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- Board must annually conduct an independent audit of finances
- May borrow money (with voter approval)
- May establish a sinking fund (for retirement of debt)
- May establish a capital reserve fund (for public improvements)

# Withdrawal of a Municipality

- Requires a community wide vote
- Cannot happen for first three years
- Cannot happen if District votes to bond for improvements (per statute)

# Addition of a Community

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- Board of District must vote yes
- Voters of District must vote yes
- Voters of the community wanting to join must vote yes

# Dissolution of the District

- In first 3 years:
  - ▣ Approved by Selectboard, Trustees & District Board
    - AND
  - ▣ Approved by voters of District at special meeting
- Year 4 and beyond:
  - ▣ Vote by Board of District
    - AND
  - ▣ Majority of voters of District at special meeting

# Amending the District Agreement

- Petition by five percent of the voters
  - OR
- Affirmative vote by the Board
  - AND
- Majority of voters at special meeting

# Developing a Charter

- Plan for new Board to develop Charter for District
- Charter will have to be adopted by:
  - ▣ Board
  - ▣ Voters of District
  - ▣ Legislature
- Preserve District in event of merger
- More easily allow District to bond for debt
- Make amendments more challenging to accomplish

# Community Support

- UU School Board resolution commitment to spirit of cooperation (8-1)
- CCSU Superintendent stands ready to support
- Municipal Manager stands ready to support
- PC prepared to continue pre-k at Park Street School (5-0)
- PC supports forming Union Municipal District (5-0)
- Trustees support creation of Union Municipal District (5-0)
- Selectboard supports concept of Union Municipal District pending further details (4-1)

# Timeline & the Vote

- Default option if no action
- November vote sought, but impossible
- March vote next best choice but...
  - ▣ Too short of transition period
  - ▣ Town, Village, & school budgets already developed to include recreation
- December special meeting vote identified
  - ▣ Allows maximum transition time
  - ▣ Allows boards to develop budgets knowing outcome of vote
  - ▣ Only one transition

# Important Dates

October 8, 2016	Petitions available for candidates for Rec District Board
November 7, 2016	Petitions due for candidates for Rec District Board
November 2016	Selectboard (11/7) & Trustees (11/8) warn special meeting
November 23, 2016	Absentee ballots available
December 13, 2016	Agreement is submitted to voters & election of Rec District Board
January 2017	Rec District Board takes seats, begins holding meetings
April 11, 2017	Rec District budget vote
July 1, 2017	Rec District commences

# Next Steps

- Aug 4: Public hearing on Agreement (6:30p.m., EMS, 60 Founders Rd)
- Aug 10: RGSC reviews feedback, considers changes, adopts final agreement (6:30p.m., ADL, 104 Maple Street)
- Aug-Oct: Transition Team prepares operational details
- Aug-Dec: Information & outreach
- Dec 13: Both communities vote on whether or not to join the District
  - ▣ Each community must vote “yes” by majority
  - ▣ Village voters may vote on question for Village and for Town



Questions, Comments, Suggestions