

February 14, 2022
Vermont General Assembly
Office of Legislative Counsel
Attn: Reapportionment
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: Town of Waltham, VT – Addison – 3 District

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the initial district plan described in H.589. The Waltham BCA recommends that the Town of Waltham remain in the ADDISON – 3 District, and the existing ADDISON-3 District remain unchanged. The Waltham BCA strongly opposes the redistricting changes to create an ADDISON-5 District, per the LAB Alternate Map.

As outlined in our testimony to the House Committee on Government Operations on February 1, 2022, it is our position that the proposed changes are not consistent with the standards and policies the LAB is required to follow. Which is:

1. Preservation of existing political subdivision lines
2. Recognition and maintenance of patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties, and common interests
3. Use of compact and contiguous territory.

The ADDISON-3 District includes the municipalities of Vergennes, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Waltham, and Addison in their entirety, with a two-member representative district. We offer the following information in consideration of why Waltham should remain in the existing ADDISON-3 District.

The current ADDISON-3 District preserves the political subdivisions of the five municipalities involved. Although the idea of smaller districts consisting of a single representative may seem to provide equity statewide, the proposed ADDISON-5 District separates Waltham from those existing political subdivision lines and our immediate community, and further divides the surrounding communities. The Waltham BCA does not understand the basis or reason for this separation.

The current ADDISON-3 District recognizes that the five-town community has been politically, socially, and geographically intertwined for the past 234 years.

- The City of Vergennes is bordered by the towns of Ferrisburgh, Panton and Waltham. It was established as a city in 1788, the only City in Vermont not to have been first chartered as a town. Residents of New Haven, Panton and Ferrisburgh, the three bordering towns at the time, agreed to give up a portion of their land to establish a separate community for a central district of commerce. Eight years after Vergennes was established, Waltham, which was part of New Haven when Vergennes was established, was provided with 1,200 acres of the northwest portion of New Haven by a special act of the General Assembly in 1796.

- The residents of Waltham, as do the residents of Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Addison, utilize Vergennes as a center for work, shopping, dining, and socializing, which directly aligns with the standard of “patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties, and common interests”. Examples are as follows:
 - One community – consisting of parents, friends, neighbors
 - Venues like the Vergennes Opera House, major restaurants, and retail are all utilized by the surrounding community
 - The Bixby Library, another great resource in Vergennes, of which Waltham donates in excess of \$10,000 annually, list only the websites of 5 towns in the current district on the library’s website resource page:

[Addison Town website](#)

[Ferrisburgh Town website](#)

[Panton Town website](#)

[Waltham Town website](#)

[Vergennes City website](#)

- Vergennes Area Rescue serves the City of Vergennes as well as the towns of Addison, Panton, Waltham, Ferrisburgh.
- Vergennes Fire Department is the sole provider of fire protection for Panton and Waltham and serves the southwest end of Ferrisburgh.
- Vergennes Panton Water District provides water to the north end of Waltham.
- The current 5 town district community is very involved in Vergennes by-pass - “addressing the issue of through truck traffic in downtown Vergennes,” VTRANS and their consultants have reached out to the community, specifically the towns in the current ADDISON-3 District, for input to help inform the final Purpose and Need Statement to help reduce the impact of large truck traffic on Route 22A and downtown Vergennes.
- Mutual aid between Panton, Vergennes, and Waltham – plowing, road repair, equipment support, etc. has been something that the community does on a regular basis, and probably has been doing for the last 234 years since the establishment of the Vergennes community.
- Vergennes Police provide back up to VT State Police in Waltham.
- Even Waltham’s Zip Code is shared with Vergennes, as we rely on Vergennes for our US Postal Services.

Most importantly is the school system, which is the heart of any community. The five towns that make up the ADDISON-3 District, Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Waltham, and the City of Vergennes comprise the Addison Northwest School District. The Elementary and High school are both located in Vergennes. Many of the decisions we make as a representative district are inherently related to the decisions we

make as a school district. Each town elects board members to represent their town as part of the Addison Northwest Supervisory Union. Any proposed change would severely fracture that relationship.

Finally, the proposed district is counter to the standards of a compact and contiguous territory. The proposed ADDISON-5 District creates a sprawling territory stretching from Monkton to New Haven to Waltham. It takes about 25 minutes to get from Waltham's town hall to Monkton's town hall. It is 5 minutes from Waltham's Town Hall to the Vergennes Town Hall.

In summary, The Waltham BCA is opposed to the creation of an ADDISON-5 District. We have discussed the proposed district with the BCAs of our current five-town community, and all agree that the proposed elimination of the ADDISON-3 District is harmful to our communities and violates statutory requirements regarding reapportionment criteria.

The Waltham BCA unanimously and strongly recommends that our five-town, two-member legislative district remains intact.

Sincerely,

Waltham BCA