

Town of Readsboro BCA Response to LAB Redistricting

In response to the letter from the State of Vermont Office of Legislative Council dated January 20, 2022, regarding the 2022 Reapportionment (Redistricting) and after review of the maps produced by the LAB and presented as LAB "Final" dated 11/23/2021 and LAB "Alternate" plan dated 1-19-2022, we the members of the Readsboro BCA provide the following feedback. For Readsboro, neither of these maps represent what we believe would be a reasonable or even functional solution for representation, based on commonalities with our neighboring towns. Specifically, we considered the following:

School District and Education – Readsboro, Stamford and Searsburg are all part of the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union which also includes Twin Valley Unified Union School District (Whitingham and Wilmington) and Halifax schools. Pownal, Woodford and Bennington are not. We regularly share resources and ideas among the WSWSU member towns. Our towns children have the option of attending Twin Valley High School or High schools in North Adams, MA. So many of them attend High School with children from Stamford, Whitingham, Wilmington and Halifax.

Healthcare – Readsboro residents use Healthcare facilities in Wilmington, Bennington, Brattleboro and across the state line in North Adams/Williamstown and Pittsfield. Folks are not likely to travel to Pownal.

Fire service/Mutual Aid – Readsboro provides and receives mutual aid from Whitingham and Stamford for Fire and Rescue services. We (and Wilmington) also provide Fire service coverage for Searsburg which has no Fire Department of their own. Our role in the Mutual Aid system also extends to Halifax Wilmington, Marlboro, Dover, and Woodford but not Pownal or Bennington normally.

Road Access, Maintenance and Commuting – VT AOT garage is in Readsboro which covers plowing and maintenance for Route 100/Route 8 through Stamford and Readsboro, Route 8 through Readsboro and Searsburg, Route 100 through Readsboro and Whitingham and Route 112 through Whitingham and Halifax. The State Highways mentioned here also link these towns directly and it's common for Readsboro residents to travel on those routes through Stamford, Searsburg and Whitingham for daily work commutes, shopping, appointments, etc. Folks routinely travel the Route 100 and Route 8 corridors which cover our current district end to end. Geographically Readsboro and Stamford are separated from Pownal by a mountain ridge with no Class 1,2 or 3 roads connecting Pownal to the other two towns. You must drive through Bennington or Massachusetts to get there. In other words, "you can't get there from here".

Commerce and Services – while Readsboro does offer limited options for shopping and services in town, most residents travel to Wilmington, Bennington, or North Adams MA. to do shopping and for pharmacies, hardware and automotive supplies or services. Again, as mentioned above, the routes in those directions are well traveled State Highways. The preferred destinations for employment are either along the Deerfield Valley or Northern Berkshire County in MA. with some making the trek "over the mountain" east or west to Brattleboro or Bennington.

Recreation – Readsboro recreational activities shared with its neighbor towns include The Catamount trail (Whitingham, Wilmington and Searsburg), ATV trails (Whitingham, Stamford/Pownal and Woodford) Snowmobile trails (Whitingham, Wilmington, Halifax, Searsburg and Woodford), Deerfield River/Harriman Reservoir for fishing, kayaking, swimming (Readsboro, Whitingham, Wilmington).

Other Infrastructure – CUD membership - Readsboro, along with Stamford, Searsburg Whitingham and the rest of our current Windham-Bennington district towns are part of the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District known as “DVFiber” which is in the process of designing and building a Fiber Optic Network to serve all its member towns. Pownal, Woodford and Bennington are not included in the DVCUD.

Postal Service – Readsboro is the hub post office for Stamford and Readsboro share resources (employees) with Whitingham.

For these reasons we believe our current Windham-Bennington district realizes more of these commonalities and meets more of the established criteria of contiguity, compactness, community interest as having common political, social and economic interest than either of the proposed LAB maps/districts.

If after final review and assessment by the House Committee on Government Operations, that it is determined that the Windham-Bennington District must be changed, we would propose the following as an alternate District to be considered; The Towns of Readsboro, Stamford, Searsburg and Woodford from Bennington County and the towns of Whitingham and Halifax from Windham County. These are the towns that we share most with and have the most in common with the total population of 4220, well in the range that the State has established of 4287. We are all rural “hill” towns with common values and demographics, as we also listed in the criteria above, as well as share many of the same issues and problems, such as road maintenance, small schools sharing resources/part time teachers, churches sharing priest/ministers and its buildings, and an overall shared history gives all these towns a sense of common ground and social cohesion that may be considered in turbulent times.

Thank you for considering our feedback and allowing our input to be heard.

Respectfully

Readsboro Board of Civil Authority