

House Government Operations Committee

February 3, 2022

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback during the decennial redistricting process. As you know the Essex BCA met on November 3, 2021 to discuss your first tentative redistricting proposal with which we did not agree. We then sent a letter in return with our proposal.

The Essex BCA then met again on January 31, to review your new, second proposal. The following are the results of this meeting.

1. We feel our districts should conform with our Essex Westford Unified School District.
2. We would like to keep our three current districts, with two Representatives each.
3. In keeping with the school district outline we would no longer need to include Colchester or Milton in our Districts. We share very little common interest with these two towns.
4. Essex 's legislative districts are in an area that has experienced significant population growth since the last redistricting process, and that additional gains are projected in the decade ahead.
5. We want to create districts that ensure the greatest possible representation. We believe this to be in the best option to ensure the needs of Essex Junction, Essex Town and Westford voters through the next decade.
6. As you may or may not know the Village of Essex Junction is in the process of seeking a new charter to become a city. The Village BCA at this time would like to keep all or as many as possible of their residents in the same district.
7. In drawing boundaries, the Essex BCA recommends the new legislative districts retain the core of the existing districts as much as possible. In other words we would recommend any changes that need to be made be contiguous. We would recommend that urban and suburban areas remain aligned as well as the rural areas be aligned with the rural areas. In other words in looking at your new proposed maps:
 - A. When moving voters from 8-2 to 8-1 look at the Athens Drive-Taft street area as well as Autumn Pond Way (Thasha Lane) and Old Colchester Road. There is currently a part of Pearl Street that exists in 8-1.T
 - B. Ten years ago we split the rural areas/roads in Essex Town to give voters to the 8-3 District. To avoid confusion for voters and to stick with keeping rural with rural we would recommend putting all the rural roads back in District 8-3. Which would then allow them to retain enough voters for a second Representative.
 - C. Leave Village properties within in the Village boundaries. Countryside and the Brickyard area contain the majority of their active, vocal and concerned citizens.

In closing we would like to remind the committee of the guidance provided by 17VSA 1906b:

1. Preservation of existing political subdivision lines: The proposed districts fracture existing Essex Junction-Essex Town lines and joins together two separate EWSD districts.
2. Recognition and maintenance of patterns of geography, social-interaction, trade, political ties and common interests: The two main portions of the proposed districts have no social connection in terms of pedestrian accessibility, nor do they have coherent political ties.
3. Use of compact and contiguous territory: the entirety of the two population centers of the proposed district are only contiguous in terms of geographic proximity: a major state highway imposes an absolute and perpetual barrier to any physical continuity between the two neighborhoods.
4. Incumbencies: This proposal would fracture existing incumbencies for state representatives.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our thoughts and concerns today.

Dawn Hill-Fleury, Chair
Essex Town Board of Civil Authority