

Testimony to House Government Operations Committee re: Apportionment

Weston Vermont Board of Civil Authority

January 28, 2022

My name is Wayne Granquist. I am the chair of the Weston Board of Civil Authority, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify on the matter of reapportionment of proposed district MSR-4, which would combine Weston with Andover, Ludlow and Plymouth, and the proposed New -WDH- WDR, which would combine Weston with Andover, Londonderry and Jamaica.

Our BCA has carefully considered these proposals. We would reject MSR-4 and propose a different version of New-WDH-WDR.

We propose a district that combines Weston with Londonderry, Landgrove, Winhall and Stratton. That population meets the criterion of the Vermont Constitution, affording equality of representation with a total population of 4,341 -- within 1 tenth of 1 percent of the ideal population of 4,287. Our proposal maintains the traditional ties among these towns and meets the policies of Title 17 section 1903 – the recognition and maintenance of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties and common interests.

Let me take these criteria one at a time.

1. **Geography:** Weston's orientation is to the south. The towns of Landgrove, Weston, Londonderry, Winhall and Stratton form a coherent and cohesive district with common boundaries and a connecting road network. On the other hand, Ludlow is separated from Weston by Terrible Mountain, which forms a formidable barrier to traffic on Route 100 between the towns – especially in winter. Plymouth is even farther up Route 100 and has no connection with Weston.
2. **Social interaction:** Weston's social ties are primarily with Londonderry, Landgrove, Winhall and Stratton. Our health care is delivered by the Mountain Valley Medical Clinic in Londonderry which serves all five towns. Our first responders are from the Londonderry Rescue Squad which also serves all five towns. The Weston Rod and Gun Club, Garden Club and Women's Club draw from Weston, Landgrove and Londonderry – there is little if any social interaction with Ludlow, Plymouth or Jamaica.
3. **Trade:** Londonderry, just south of and adjacent to Weston on Route 100, has a shopping center, grocery store, butcher shop, delicatessens, restaurants, liquor store and gas stations. It is the central retail center hub for Weston and the mountain towns. There is little or no trading relationship between Weston and Ludlow. Weston people shop in Londonderry or travel to Rutland. They rarely shop in Ludlow and do not trade with Plymouth or Jamaica.
4. **Political ties:** Education ties together the five towns in our proposed district. Weston, Londonderry, Landgrove, Winhall and Stratton are school choice towns, and the majority of secondary students attend Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester. Weston, Landgrove and Londonderry are closely allied in The Flood Brook Union School, which serves as the elementary school for the three towns. Weston, Landgrove, Londonderry and Winhall are members of the Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union.

Ludlow and Plymouth have no education ties to our proposed district – both are in the Two Rivers Supervisory Union. With the closing of Black River Middle and High School in Ludlow, Ludlow students can attend Mill River High in North Clarendon, Green Mountain High in Chester or the independent Expeditionary School in the former Black River school building in Ludlow. Plymouth secondary students are served by Woodstock Union High School. Jamaica students attend Leland and Gray High School in Townshend.

Other Weston political ties include joint governance with Londonderry and Landgrove of the Londonderry Recycling Center and Transfer Station. Weston is also part of the Windham Regional Planning Commission, together with Londonderry, Winhall, and Stratton. Weston is also served by the economic development efforts of the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, which also serves the mountain towns of Londonderry, Stratton, and Winhall. Neither of these organizations include Ludlow or Plymouth.

In summary, there are no political ties between Weston and Ludlow or Plymouth.

5. **Common interests:** Weston is a mountain resort/vacation town. Almost half of Weston's residences are second homes (271 out of 565, per the 2010 census). Second homes are a common interest that unites the Towns of our proposed district. 42% of Londonderry's housing units fall into the second home category; 78% of Winhall's, 93% of Stratton's and about half of Landgrove's.

This prevalence of second/seasonal homes in the towns of the mountain resort region means the people of the towns have a strong interest in outdoor recreation. Seasonal home construction, renovation, maintenance and service are the backbone of the area economy, as is retail trade (e.g. the Vermont Country Store) and the hospitality industry.

I hope that my testimony has demonstrated that a House District comprised of Weston, Londonderry, Landgrove, Winhall and Stratton makes sense in that it represents– to quote again the statute – a unity of "patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties and common interests."

Thank you for your attention – I'll be glad to answer questions.