



WESTFORD NEWSLETTER

September 2015

Westford Town Office

1713 Vermont Route 128, Westford, Vermont 05494

Phone (802)878-4587 • Fax (802)879-6503

www.westfordvt.us

Act 148 Mandatory Recycling & Trash Disposal

Please read the information sheet in this newsletter on implementing Act 148.

School Merger Vote - Important Dates

- **Voter Registration Deadline, October 28th (Wednesday)** – 5:00 p.m. deadline to submit an application for addition to the voter checklist, or to file a written notice of intent to apply for those who are not eligible to register to vote but will be by November 3rd. Applications are available at the Town Office or on the Secretary of State's website (<https://www.sec.state.vt.us/elections/voters/registration.aspx>).
- **Absentee Ballot Deadline, November 2nd (Monday)** – 5:00 p.m. deadline. Last day a voter, or an authorized person on behalf of a voter, may request an absentee ballot. Call (878-4587) or email (townclerk@westfordvt.us) the town office to request an absentee ballot. Please allow sufficient time if you want the ballot mailed to you. Ballots will be mailed as soon as they become available.
- **November 3rd (Tuesday)** – Voting will take place at the Westford School in the gym. Polls will be open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

If you have any questions concerning the voting process, please contact the town office at 878-4587 or townclerk@westfordvt.us.

Westford Senior Luncheon

Golly, it's September already. The senior meals will start back on the second Monday each month with this one being on September 14th. There are so many seniors in this town and only a small percentage is taking part in this community get together. I would like to see us grow again this year. Many say they have been thinking about it, well now is the time to give it a try. It's only a couple of hours and you will have a nice meal (all homemade by the volunteers) and a place to catch up with others whether they are neighbors, old friends, or a brand new friend. Remember, it's Sept. 14th at noon at the Red Brick Meeting House. I would, also, like to thank all the volunteers that put this together every month. The seniors appreciate it and I appreciate working with all of you. Hope to see you on the 14th. Carol Howrigan, President

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the October Newsletter is 12:00 noon on Monday, September 28th.

Town Office Summer Hours

The Town Office is open Monday–Thursday, 8:30am – 4:30pm and Friday, 8:30am – 1:00pm.

The Town Office will be closed the following days:

- Monday, September 7th for Labor Day.
- Monday, September 21st to allow personnel to attend a conference.

Regular hours resume after Labor Day. The office will be open 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday.

September Recycling Pickup

There are 5 Wednesdays in September, which means there is **NO** recycle pick up on Wednesday, September 30th. This means there will be 2 weeks in between your last pickup in September and your first pickup in October. Please note your calendar.

Town of Westford Solid Waste & Recycling – Implementing Act 148

Under Act 148, recycling is mandatory and to incentivize recycling the law requires unit-based pricing for trash disposal. This means that you may recycle an unlimited amount of recyclable materials during twice per month recycling pickup. You will, however, be charged extra for exceeding the maximum amount of trash that may be put out each week.

When will the new system be implemented?

September 2, 2015

What materials are subject to the extra fee?

Under Act 148, trash that you put in plastic bags for disposal is subject to the extra fee. The intent of Act 148 is to try to increase recycling of paper, plastic, etc. that can be taken out of the waste stream, so people will be charged extra for trash overages of this type.

What is NOT subject to the extra fee?

Under Act 148, neither recyclable materials nor large/bulky items are subject to the extra fee. No new items have been added to the list of what Gauthier Trucking is contracted to pickup at curbside. Some large/bulky items which will still be serviced at the curbside include: mattresses, couches, and furniture. Items that Gauthier Trucking cannot take curbside will continue to include: any appliances - stoves, refrigerators, washers, dryers, large metal items or any electronic equipment - TV's, computers, etc. Please call the Town office or Gauthier's Trucking with specific questions.

What is the weekly amount of trash that may be disposed without incurring an extra fee?

One 64-gallon garbage can/cart (24" wide, 32" deep, 42" high) or equivalent...a common large garbage bag size is 32 gallons, so two, 32-gallon bags.



64-Gallon Can/Cart



32-Gallon Bags

What is the fee for extra trash?

\$3.00 per 32-gallon bag. So, you may dispose 64 gallons each week without additional charge, then for each 32 gallons you will be charged \$3.00. Remember, there is no charge for unlimited recycling or disposal of large/bulky items.

Do I need to buy new garbage cans?

No, you do not need to buy new garbage cans. Keep putting your trash out as you always have done it...trash bags, empty grain bags, Hannaford's bags, etc. within a garbage can or just the bags alone.

Who will send me a bill and when will I be billed?

During weekly waste pickups, Gauthier Trucking will record trash in excess of 64 gallons per week and they will direct bill each home with overages. Gauthier intends to send out bills on a quarterly basis.

The Selectboard would like to thank Westford residents for your cooperation in implementing Act 148. The law is well intentioned...to increase recycling and reduce the rate at which landfills are filled. While we're sure there will be hurdles to overcome, let's work together. Please let us know if you have questions by contacting the Town office or feel free to ask questions directly to Selectboard members.

Aggregated, Multi-Family Pickup

For people who live on a road with aggregated trash from multiple homes at the end of the road, the Town will provide you with stickers to place on trash bags/cans. These stickers will identify your address, so Gauthier Trucking can identify which trash bags/cans belong to you.

Apartments

For people who live in an apartment, the Town will provide the landlord with stickers to place on trash bags/cans. *Landlords will be responsible for providing tenants with the stickers unless the landlord notifies the Town to make other arrangements.*

If you use trash cans, place a sticker on each of the cans. If your trash fits into your trash cans, then you do NOT need to put stickers on the trash bags that are inside the cans. You must put stickers on all bags that that are not placed in trash cans.

**You should receive your stickers within a few days of this mailing.
When you run low on stickers, please contact the Town Office to get additional stickers at no cost to you.**

Single Family Pickup

You will NOT receive stickers and you do NOT need to put stickers on trash bags or cans if your trash is the only trash at the end of your driveway. Gauthier Trucking will direct-bill you for trash overages.

Contact Information

For questions on trash pickup, please contact

Westford Town Office
878-4587
townclerk@westfordvt.us

OR

Gauthier Trucking
879-4020
www.gauthiertruckingvt.com

WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

http://westfordpubliclibrary.org

(802) 878-5639

westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com

1717 VERMONT ROUTE 128, WESTFORD VT 05494



The Westford Public Library will be hosting a CVA A Tai Chi 1 Session starting Monday, September 14.

The class will be Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:15-Noon.

The class will last 8 weeks.

There is a limit of 12 people, so please sign up ASAP with Bree at the Library. (878-5639 or westford-publiclibrary@gmail.com)

This is the CVA A Tai Chi 1 class - perfect for beginners or those who regularly practice. The class is FREE and open to anyone 50 years or older. Tai Chi is low impact and a good way to work on your balance. Comfortable clothes are all you need.

VELI Training for Grandparents!

Wed. Sept. 23 7-9pm

Space is limited to 10 people.

FREE TOYS & BOOKS!



VELI (the old "Mother Goose") is hosting a training to get grandparents up to speed on what kids are reading and doing at school these days. Especially geared toward grandparents who care for grandchildren, but good for all. We will learn about new authors, new math techniques and vocabulary and send you home with some great stuff! Register at the Library ASAP.

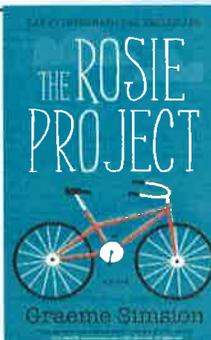
Library Hours

Wednesday:	1-7pm
Thursday:	10am-7pm
Friday:	1-7pm
Saturday:	10am-2pm

Adult Book Group Restarting!!!

Wed. Oct. 21 7-8pm

Pick up your books now at the front desk! PLEASE Join us - we NEED new people! We will be reading The Rosie Project, a fun,



quirky novel about a scientist experimenting with his love life. (There's already a sequel out and talk of a movie)

PJ STORYTIME IS BACK!

Wed. Sept. 30, 6:30-7:30pm

Theme: Fall

Wear your PJs and come listen to stories and do a craft. Great for those who have aged out of morning storytime or who are in school during the day.



Early Literacy Storytime :Birth to Pre-School Every Thursday at 11am No registration required!

9/3/15: Theme: I Love Letters! "M"

9/17/15: Theme: Fall/Autumn

9/10/15: Theme: Bears

9/24/15: Theme: Leaves

Storytime consists of several stories around a theme, as well as a theme-based craft. All ages and levels of attention are encouraged to come. Don't worry if they fidget - they are still getting a lot out of it!

The WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY provides access to materials, technology, reference services and programs to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the Westford community.

WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

<http://westfordpubliclibrary.org>

(802) 878-5639 ♦ westfordpubliclibrary@gmail.com

September Library Events

September 9 - Trustees Meeting 7-9pm

September 14 - BBF Playgroup begins

September 14 - CVAA Tai Chi begins

September 23 - VELI Training for Grandparents who care for Children 7-9pm (registration required - contact Bree)

September 25 - Coloring for Adults 7-8pm

September 30 - PJ Storytime 6:30-7:30pm
Theme: Fall

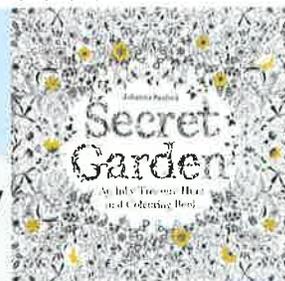
Remember to come pick up your book group book! Adult book group restarts 10/21 7-9pm with The Rosie Project

Playgroup every Monday 9:30am
Tai Chi every Mon&Wed 11:15am
Storytime every Thursday 11am

Coloring For Adults
Friday, Sept. 25
7-8pm

Coloring for Adults?
YES!

Coloring is a great way to relax, unwind, and have fun being creative. We will color out of Johanna Basford's award winning adult coloring book. Coffee and Tea provided, or bring your own. Colored pencils will be pre-sharpened. Experience the Zen of coloring!



Crazy 8's Math Club!!!

Weekly Starting in October

Runs 8 Weeks

FREE - Snack included.

Space is limited - sign up to get a spot.

Grades K-2 - Wednesdays (10/7)

Grades 3-5 - Thursdays (10/8)

Bus transport provided from school, pickup at Library 4:30-5:00pm

Crazy 8s is an afterschool Math Club sponsored by Bedtime Math. There will be two clubs: grades K-2 and 3-5. This is a FUN, exciting enrichment opportunity. Clubs will be led by fantastic moderators and follow an action packed curriculum.

More information will be given to those who sign up. Your child needs to be able to attend all classes - best behavior expected.

MATH WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!

More info sent home from school.



Building Bright
FUTURES

Playgroup resumes at the Westford Public Library on Monday, Sept. 14 9:30-11:00am. All are welcome. Playgroup follows the school schedule. No school = no playgroup. Contact Janice for more information. Janice@tfish.net

The Library is **not accepting** donations of books, audiobooks, and DVDs at this time for our annual Fourth of July Book Sale. We will begin accepting donations again in the late winter/early spring. Thank you to community for all your wonderful support!

The WESTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY provides access to materials, technology, reference services and programs to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the Westford community.



**Thank you for a
SUPER Summer
Reading Program!**

**The readers of
Westford sure kept
the Library busy this
Summer - here's how
the Summer played
out:**



**Children Registered:
103**

**Certificates Awarded: 103
Number of Books Read: 4049**

**Number of Children's Programs: 30
Number of Participants: 916
Number of Young Adult Programs: 5
Number of Young Adult Participants: 44**

**We even had 19 adults participate in our Adult
Summer Reading Program!**

Great job, Westford!

**THANK YOU to: Jenny Cady, Deb Hazel, Trish Indoe,
Martha Heath, MC Baker, Danielle Vierling, Cpl. Dave
Dewey and the other K9 officers, Sweet Clover
Market, VT Dept. of Libraries, Westford Library Board,
Westford Fire Department, J. Hutchins, Inc.,
Skateland, Metro Rock, Buttered Noodles, and
City Market.**

**And to all the parents
who helped read all
those books!**



Westford School Board Notes

The Westford School Board sends a warm welcome to all our students, families, and staff as they start their school year. We wish you a year filled with a passion for learning, a sense of accomplishment and mastery, and the knowledge that you are part of a strong community.

School Board Vacancy:

The School Board is still seeking candidates to fill the slot vacated by Scott Cooledge. The board is required to appoint someone to serve out the remainder of Scott's term (March 2016). Meetings are generally the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Board members are expected to participate on several committees. On average the monthly time commitment is 10-12 hours. The budget season is November to January and involves extra meetings. The school is a reflection of our entire community and we hope to draw on that diversity and expertise. Please consider serving. Anyone interested in joining the board please contact Mark Drapa at madrapa@ccsuvt.org.

Regional Education District Study:

Over the last several months, we've been sharing updates related to the Regional Education District (RED) study of forming a district with Essex Town and Essex Junction. Martha Heath and Heidi Coppola have served as Westford's representatives on the 18 member study committee. This committee has been meeting since March to learn more about how the school districts operate and what opportunities could be improved and efficiencies found if the school districts were merged.

Thank you to our communities for responding with such great questions and feedback regarding the proposal to create a Unified School District for Essex Junction, Essex Town, and Westford. We heard from nearly 700 residents! So first of all, thank you. And, we hear you – and we want to share what we have learned over the last three months of study, and address your questions.

In response to your questions, The RED Committee has created a list of questions and answers that were shared in the July Newsletter <http://westfordvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2015-July-Newsletter.pdf> and that are also available on the CCSU website RED Blog <https://redstudy.wordpress.com/>. To further respond to your questions, over the last two months, the committee has addressed these questions in depth through the Essex Reporter and on the blog. To ensure that Westford residents are also accessing this information, we wanted to share these responses in the newsletter as well.

COMMUNITY FORUM TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED RED: Thursday, September 17th, 7 p.m. Westford School Please attend and bring your questions

In addition, the RED committee is setting up a series of community forums which are being scheduled for September and October. **The first community forum for Westford is scheduled for Thursday, September 17th at 7 p.m. at the Westford School.** And additional community forum will be scheduled in October, as soon as details are settled, the information will be publicized. **We encourage Westford residents to attend these forums.**

As always, if you have further questions, feel free to contact a Regional Education District Study Committee member or your local school board members.

What is a Regional Education District?

A Regional Education District (RED) is one type of Unified School District (USD) created by the voluntary merger of multiple districts into a unified district providing education at all grade levels (pre-K through 12). Under new legislation in 2015 ([Act 46](#)), communities that vote to merge into a unified district by June 30, 2016 are eligible for additional incentives. The RED Study Committee is examining the full range of available unified district structures and timetables to see what makes the most sense for our community at this time. Read more about REDs and Vermont's [Act 153](#) and [Act 156](#) at the Agency of Education (AOE) website.

What is the process for deciding whether to unify our districts?

The RED Study Committee must study and prepare a report that address several subjects, including the grades to be operated, debt, transitioning of responsibilities, and the organization of the new school board. All Committee meetings are open, and public comment is invited. The Committee is interested in the input of all community members—students, parents, taxpayers, and educators.

If the Committee recommends unification, the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) would have to approve the recommendation prior to submission to the voters. Finally, the voters in each of the three towns would vote on the proposal

What happens if the districts decide not to unify this time?

New legislation (Act 46) requires all districts in Vermont that do not already meet the AOE's desired characteristics (size and uniform education of all students in each grade pre-K to 12) to explore unification. If we do not merge voluntarily, our towns would need to conduct a self-study and make a case for why the current systems serve students better than a unified district. The school boards would also be required to meet with other boards and discuss collaboration. The AOE would then decide whether to mandate a merger in 2019.

Governance and community in a unified school district (Originally published in The Essex Reporter, July 29, 2015)

Do you love your local schools? If so, you have a lot in common with other community members in Essex Junction, Essex Town and Westford. Many survey respondents had questions about the future of their local schools under a unified district.

Will any schools be opened or closed if we merge districts? What will this do to class sizes?

Some residents have expressed concerns that by merging our school districts, we would create a "mega-district," but our towns have less than 4,000 students total, and that number has declined over recent years. While we love our schools, we also spend more to support them than many other places that also offer high education quality, mostly due to declining enrollment. Research shows that districts with fewer than 2,000 pupils (like each of our districts currently) have higher per-pupil costs, while districts educating 2,000-4,000 pupils can balance costs to the taxpayer and offer more educational opportunities without overwhelming the capacity of the board and administration. (For a recap of the research, please see the paper "When Is Small Too Small?" linked from the "Related Documents" page of the RED website — www.redstudy.wordpress.com.)

The student-to-teacher ratios in each of our schools are currently in line with state guidelines. Therefore, there is no plan to close any schools. In addition, the proposed Articles of Agreement specifically state that no school can be closed for at least four years. While declining enrollment is a current challenge for the Westford School, the total number of students in Westford still places it as a "mid-sized" Vermont school. Your local school will still be there for your community!

Furthermore, it is quite easy for Essex High School, which has experienced an approximately 25 percent reduction in students over the last decade, to absorb additional students from Westford or other municipalities. But each of the elementary and middle schools has enough students that their population could not easily be absorbed into the other schools. There is also no plan to construct any new schools. A unified school board might decide to use the increased efficiency and resources of a unified district to explore new placement options, but doing so would involve rearranging the use of current buildings rather than new construction. (Regardless, any new construction would need to be approved separately by voters.)

Because there is no plan to open or close any schools, class sizes should remain stable in a unified district. After the merger, board members and parents would be free to explore grades K-8 school choice or redistricting as options to spread the student population more equably among schools. This would lessen the need to alter staffing from year to year.

In a unified district, there will be many fewer school board members. Will the workload be manageable for them?

How will I have input?

Much of the workload for school board members is set by the state on a district-level basis. For instance, every school board must conduct an annual audit. Therefore, if our towns operate fewer districts, there will be less work of this kind to be done. (The board also will not need to conduct inter-district business, such as CCSU billing Westford for services provided.) There will be a smaller number of board members serving the same number of students and families, but the building-level administrators, such as principals, with whom much family contact occurs, will remain unchanged. The smaller number of board members should mean that it is easier to find candidates for the school board and conduct competitive campaigns, so that your vote will have a real impact on the ideas, vision and direction of school board policy.

Many things about the new district will work just as they always have; for instance, PTO being organized at the school level, parents being encouraged to volunteer in their local school, school property being available for use by community groups, and the work of the school board being guided by state legislation and the will of local voters. The new school board, which would be elected by all of the three communities' voters on the date of the ballot to determine whether unification should occur, will simply be able to accomplish at once things that now have to occur as many as three times in parallel (for instance, setting up procedures for access to universal preschool for 3-to-5-year-olds as stipulated in Act 166) before they are final, due to having four separate boards.

Each community would elect members to the new school board based on the percentage they make up of the total unified district population. Essex Town and Essex Junction would each have four seats and Westford would have two seats sharing one vote, with representation adjusted according to each federal census. As with any public board, it is the responsibility of school board members to listen carefully and actively to ensure that the best interests of all children and residents in the district are being met. To date, the separate boards have enjoyed a strong working relationship and shared decision making across numerous policy issues that impact each of our communities as well as on the existing joint board. Since our three communities already share governance through the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union (for Essex Junction and Westford) and U#46 (for the high school), there is a long and respectful history of collaboration and joint decision making.

It is important to remember that every community resident may still attend board meetings and have their voice and concerns or ideas heard at any time. At present, with declining enrollment, filling the existing board seats across multiple school boards is challenging for our communities. The new school board would ensure strong governance while also allowing numerous opportunities at the local level for community engagement.

How will school choice work? What school will my child attend?

Limited school choice is available to all Vermont students under Act 77. A high school student can apply for a slot at a different high school through a lottery. No tuition changes hands, which is different from the current system in Westford, where grades 9-12 have full school choice. Westford students may choose any high school, but the taxpayers pay tuition, which varies from school to school. Current Westford high-schoolers attending schools other than Essex High School would be grandfathered under a unified district, but younger students would participate in the Act 77 school choice process. However, it is important to know that lottery slots available under Act 77 (allowing students to attend another public high school instead of Essex High) are currently underutilized due to Essex High's strong student outcomes. As a result, it appears that even if Westford students continued to select other high schools at the same rate as in recent years (roughly 30 percent of Westford students), sufficient lottery slots might be available for the foreseeable future to those students seeking school choice.

Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, the board of a unified district would have the option to allow some school choice within the district in grades pre-K-8. For instance, they might allow an Essex student to apply to attend Westford, or they might set up different learning themes at Founders and Fleming. Redistricting would also be an option at that time, to respond to changes in population distribution and make the most efficient use of available spaces and staffing. However, again, these decisions would not involve the closing of any existing schools.

Questions about details

Some details of the unification process are set, and others would be the responsibility of a new board. For instance, we know the necessary timeline for unification, since that is set by the state: a vote in November 2015 would allow a new board time to get organized before taking over operation of the unified district in July, 2017. Part of that organizational process will involve determining the dates for future budget votes, the location of administrative offices, etc. Other decisions will be made by the superintendent of the new district, such as snow days, just as those decisions are currently made (in duplicate) by the Essex Town superintendent and the CCSU superintendent. The board and administration will be working to smooth out any friction between policies, rather than trying to remake everything from scratch.

Busing and Transportation in a Unified School District (Originally published in The Essex Reporter, July 15, 2015):

Transportation was the most frequently mentioned topic in the recent survey about school district unification. Some respondents love the “walking district” feel of Essex Junction, while others worry about traffic congestion from the many parents who drive their children to school. Westford residents asked about busing for high school students.

Should voters approve school district consolidation in early November, the newly elected school board would have the final say, and Article 5 of the proposed Articles of Agreement (which can be read in its entirety at <http://redstudy.wordpress.com>) emphasizes that it will be one of the new board’s top priorities. The board of a new district would be required by law to consider issues like equal access to education and the state of local roads. The new school board would not be required to offer exactly the same services in all three towns if local needs differ. No one would be required to ride a bus. If your child currently walks, bikes or is driven to school, this would continue if that is your preference.

While it’s possible that things would continue just as they are, it is also possible that we would see increased transportation offerings, as well as route changes for efficiency. Currently, expanding transportation to serve more people would unavoidably mean a tax increase and a contractual increase with the busing company. However, merger grants and incentives are intended to help unified districts transition to provide better and more equitable opportunities to students. According to estimates, expanding the Town’s current bus services to all Westford and EJ students (for example) would cost \$371,482 in the first two years of a new district and \$192,498 (adjusting for inflation) in later years, after state transportation aid kicks in. This will be more than offset by savings in other areas.

How the Merger Could Affect Education for Our Students (Originally published in the Essex Reporter, August 12th):

This week we are answering questions regarding how a merger could affect education for our students. This topic is of the utmost importance to our communities, families, students and school employees. We would like to assure the citizens of Essex Town, Essex Junction and Westford that the Regional Education Study Committee was only willing to move forward with the articles of agreement if the educational commitment to students remained a top priority.

The first question is related to what the educational improvements would be following a merger. While most of the final decisions will be made by the newly elected school board and superintendent, it is the intent of the committee and your current school boards that we continue focusing on the things that we know work in our schools today. Any changes to the educational programs in the future will need to be aligned with what our newly formed district, and our three communities, value about education and what we want our children to know and be able to do as they prepare for the next stages of their lives. A common vision and mission statement will be developed along with a set of common standards that demonstrate student growth over time.

Working together through a potential merger will take administrative planning that will create common systems that provide focus, community engagement, internal collaboration among employees, and organizational efficiency. It is important that there be a competent and effective district leadership team, school board and Superintendent, who can take ownership and lead the district through the merger. A very well thought out plan will have to be designed based on the needs of all our students at a cost that our three communities can support.

Given the student enrollment projections in the future, it appears that the population in Essex Junction, Essex Town, and Westford will not change drastically. All of our schools are at capacity regarding the amount of students they can accommodate. However, overcrowding is unlikely to happen based on the current number of students in each of the nine buildings. Flexibility in the use of buildings and classrooms will be based on capacity and the needs of students in a

given area. Teachers and staff transfers are possible when it makes sense for students, programs and staff growth. For example, a half-time Spanish teacher at Essex Middle School may also be able to work half time at the high school since there would be one labor contract. This eliminates multiple contracts and creates a full-time position, which enhances the applicant pool. By unifying the three districts, the professional learning community (leadership, teachers, and support staff) will become more diverse, allowing for greater and richer exchange and sharing of resources, ideas and successes. What does that mean for our kids? A high performing professional learning community offering educational alignment and shared expertise, and providing greater consistency and equity of opportunity for all student.

One final question asks how a merger will affect educational support services such as special education and intervention services, PLP's, extended summer programming, and pre-K. There are many ways that the educational support services would benefit from a larger, unified school district. Our schools would be able to work together, pooling resources through common professional development, increased expertise and specialization of staff, and shared programming to create continuity across a pre-K through 12 system with no district boundaries. Potential benefits for these students would be an improved transition from middle school to high school and beyond, and consistency in education and programs offered. Another important benefit of a merged district would be the ability of the district as a whole to track progress for all students from pre-K-12. The current system allows for tracking data K-8 in each district (Essex Junction, Essex, and Westford) then 9-12 at EHS/CTE. One district would allow for informed decision-making around programming, progress monitoring, and professional development needs.

Community engagement and conversation leading up to the November vote is critical to ensure that our communities are informed and able to make their decisions. Education is everyone's business, and in the end, the merger really is about the journey of all of our students pre-K through grade 12 and beyond.

Thanks for reading!

We wish everyone a happy and successful start to the new school year!

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Phinney
Martha Heath
Andre Roy
Mark Drapa

Westford Has Much To Gain From School District Unification

By Brendan Kinney

On November 3, voters in Westford will join their neighbors in Essex Town and Essex Junction to consider forming a unified school district. While our communities have entertained this question in the past, the opportunities today are quite different.

Many of the benefits described below would apply to residents of all three communities. But there are specific aspects of the proposal that were designed to protect and preserve those things that Westford residents told us were important to their community.

Lower and More Stable Property Tax Rates

Thanks to the incentives offered through Act 46, if voters approve a unified school district they can enjoy reductions to their property tax rates: 10 cents lower in the first year of a unified school district, 8 cents in the second, 6 cents in the third, 4 cents in the fourth, and 2 cents in the fifth year after unification.

One school budget would be established with one equalized school tax rate assessed in all three communities. However, our education funding system is complicated by the need to apply a common level of appraisal to the equalized tax rate.

This could mean that actual tax rates could differ depending on each community's appraisals as they relate to the state-determined full appraisal value. Income sensitivity rates would be the same in all three communities as they are not affected by appraised values. In prior years, tax rates varied greatly between our communities resulting in "winners" and "losers" under a merger. Today our tax rates only vary by one or two cents, so everyone wins under a unified district structure.

In addition, based on recent legislation, Westford will lose hold-harmless protection beginning in FY18 which will lead to a much lower pupil count and higher tax rate. This impact is greatly reduced under a merger since the tax rate will be calculated on the combined number of students in a unified district, and Essex Junction/Essex Town enjoy stable enrollment. Without merger Westford would lose its hold harmless protection from declining enrollment. According to an analysis done by CCSU's CFO, if that protection *had not been in place* for the FY16 budget, the tax rate would have been \$1.599 instead of \$1.527. If a merged district had been in place in its first year in FY16, the tax rate would have been \$1.445. Being part of a unified school district would provide Westford taxpayers with significant savings and help to preserve the quality of the Westford school.

Of course, lower property taxes are music to everyone's ears, but the additional benefit is that over time, a unified school district will result in cost savings and other financial efficiencies that can help stabilize tax rates into the future.

Greater and Enhanced Opportunities for Students

Although the benefits of a unified preK-12 curriculum will take time to be realized, a unified school district will be able to offer consistent educational opportunities for students in all of our schools, including Westford. A unified district could expand educational options for students (e.g. sharing equipment, technology and staff, flexibility in building use). Thanks to the benefits of scale and by tapping into the expertise of teachers and school leaders across a unified district, we can improve student outcomes and opportunities.

Preservation of an Excellent Educational Resource

Westford residents have many reasons to be proud of their school. One of the goals of a unified school district is to not just preserve everything that the community has worked hard to achieve, but to build upon it. A unified school district can better leverage the resources of a shared educational enterprise, reducing the pressure of ever-increasing costs so that the vitality of local schools can be maintained.

The financial situation in Westford is unique relative to Essex Junction and Essex Town. While the FY16 school budget for Westford is lower than its FY09 budget, declining enrollment and its effect on tax rates is causing school taxes to *increase* at an alarming rate. Without merger, it is likely that the quality of the education available to Westford's students will be compromised as taxpayers will be unlikely to support budgets that maintain programs due to the resulting tax increases. However, being part of a unified school district would change the situation dramatically and for the better.

Controlling Our Own Destiny

Act 46 requires all districts in Vermont that do not already meet the AOE's desired characteristics (size and uniform education of all students in each grade pre-K to 12) to explore unification. If we do not merge voluntarily, our towns would need to conduct a self-study and make a case for why the current systems serve students *better than* a unified district. The school boards would also be required to meet with other boards and discuss collaboration. The AOE would then decide whether to mandate a merger in 2019.

To realize the full benefits of a unified district, all three communities would need to vote "yes" on Nov. 3. Members of the study committee wholeheartedly want Westford to be part of this unified district, but a "no" vote by Westford residents would not prevent Essex Town and Essex Junction from forming a regional education district.

So, what are the implications of a "no" vote by Westford residents?

- Taxpayers would not be eligible for the property tax incentives being offered by the state. Tax rates could continue to fluctuate unpredictably, jeopardizing high quality standards.
- The Westford School would not realize the benefits of scale and efficiency that could be possible in a unified district, limiting the possibility of expanded or enhanced learning opportunities for students.

- If Westford rejects the proposal outright, the State Board of Education could assign the Westford School to another district or supervisory union.

Special Considerations

As the Study Committee developed its proposal to form a unified school district, it took great pains to address specific concerns of the Westford community. They include:

School Choice

Westford students graduating from Grade 8 currently have school choice. So as not to disrupt the experience of those students, the Committee included a provision in the proposal that would “grandfather” school choice for Westford students until 2020. After that date, Westford students would matriculate to the Essex High School (Westford students would have the same access as other EHS students to possible choice under Act 77).

School Closures

No schools would be subject to closure as a result of this proposal. In fact, the proposal includes language that for at least four years no action would be taken to close any school buildings in a unified district.

School Property

However, in the event of any future school closures or reconfiguration, Westford would have the ability to take ownership of property for continued recreational and educational use.

As you can see, the landscape of school district consolidation has changed considerably since the last time we debated this question. Also, the Committee, which included Westford residents Heidi Coppola and Martha Heath, worked diligently to address specific concerns of the Westford community.

The question is the same, but the benefits of creating a unified school district are significantly different this time around. In the end, we’ll be better together!

A series of public forums are being planned for Westford, Essex Town, and Essex Junction in the September and October. We’ll also continue to address frequently asked questions through articles like this one. Finally, all of the information and resources that the Committee considered in developed this proposal can be found on its website, <http://redstudy.wordpress.com>.

Brendan Kinney is the chair of the Essex-Westford Regional Education Study Committee.

Shape the Future of Our Schools!

Essex Junction, Essex Town and Westford Voters:

Attend an Upcoming Community Forum About Unification

After months of study, a committee of 20 citizens of Essex Junction, Essex Town and Westford have **unanimously** proposed creating a **unified** school district among our three communities. A unified school district is a wise choice because it will enable greater educational opportunities for our students at a lower administrative cost, help **stabilize property** tax rates over time, and preserve our great schools.

As a community member, you will have the opportunity to vote on school district unification and elect members of the new school board.

Please come to a community forum to learn more and discuss this important proposal with your neighbors!

DETAILS: Forums are scheduled for:

Sept. 16, 7:00 pm, Essex Elementary School

Sept. 17, 7:00 pm, Westford Elementary School

Sept. 20, 4:00 pm, Essex High School

STAY TUNED: More forums coming up in October!

A group of silhouettes of people of various ages and ethnicities standing together and holding a long white banner. The banner is the central focus of the lower half of the poster.

Vote on November 3rd!

For more information visit <http://redstudy.wordpress.com>

MISSION STATEMENT

September 2015

The Westford Recreation Department was created to provide recreational, educational, athletic, cultural, and entertainment activities to all Westford residents and neighbors. We strive to offer programs for a wide variety of ages, abilities and interests. We depend on community input, support and volunteers to make these programs successful.

Coordinator's Corner-

THANK YOU to our wonderful summer camp instructors and coaches! We had a great year with summer camp attendance, at all three week-long camps, our week long soccer camp and our summer soccer program for Pre-K- Grade 2. Thank you Sarah Stein, Rebecca Gwozdz, Joe Aiken, Heidi Rabtoy, Danielle Trudeau, Lori Miller and Glenn Minor!!! Your time this summer was appreciated by our kids and community! Any questions, or ideas for future programming, please contact me at 338-8235 or WestfordVTRec@gmail.com.
Yours in Recreation~ Heather Armata

Our Next Committee Meeting is September 8th. Please let us know if you would like to attend, and we will put you on the agenda! Thanks!



FALL SOCCER SIGN UP!!!!

Pre-K/K group. Practices are held on Saturday mornings from 9-10am. First practice is August 29th. Fee is \$25/player and includes a t-shirt. Registration due by August 25th.



Grades 1/2 Co-ed Soccer- Practices and games will still fall on Saturday mornings, between 9-10am (game times TBD). First practice is August 29th. Registration fee is \$30/player, which includes a t-shirt and is due by August 25th.

Grade 3/4 Co-ed Soccer- Practices are Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:30-7:00pm and Saturdays from 9-10am (will most likely have games or jamborees on Saturdays). First practice is Thursday, August 27th. Registration Fee is \$35/player and due by August 25th.

Maximum family cost of \$80 for Fall Soccer. Scholarships available. Contact Heather at 338-8235 or email WestfordVTRec@gmail.com.



ZUMBA FITNESS update!

Heather Sanders will be starting this class back up on October 6th at the RBMH. See you soon!!!

YOGA with Cat- Cat Earisman, E-RYT will be returning this fall to teach Flow Yoga at the RBMH on **THURSDAY** evenings. We'll post on FB and FPF when we have a confirmed start date.



Sangha Yoga with Anne
Tuesday evenings from 7-8:00pm

join Anne Whitney at the Red Brick Meeting House for some restorative and/or flow yoga. \$12/class.



Call 802-598-6299 or email aeorellana@yahoo.com with any questions. All ages and abilities welcome!!

Integral YOGA w/Tiffany Start off your new year with yoga!

Every **WEDNESDAY** evening, now from 6:30-8pm at the Red Brick Meeting House. \$13 drop-in fee; \$100 for 10-class punch card. Contact Tiffany at tiff-shannon@gmail.com. Watch Front Porch Forum for updates/cancellations.



Recreation Department Committee Members

Heather Armata, Coordinator	338-8235	Danielle Vierling	871-9404
Maureen Carpenter	893-5096	Noel Boutin	878-3632
Martha Bennett	878-9269	Meredith Irish	373-9980
Greg Baker	324-5537	Email: WestfordVTRec@gmail.com	

Fall Sport are HERE!!!! Keep yourself moving!!!

**The 4th Annual Great Pumpkin 5K Run/Walk
& 1K Fun Run**

- *Date: Sunday, October 11, 2015
- *Time: 1K Fun Run Starts at 9:30am. Registration opens at 9:00am.
5K Run/Walk Starts at 10:00am. Registration opens at 9:00am.
- *Where: Westford Town Common, off Rte. 128
- *Fee: \$10/Adults
\$3/Children up to age 17, or bring 2 non-perishable food items to donate to the Westford Food Shelf and your registration is Free!
- *Registration: You can drop off, or mail your registration ahead of time to the Town Office.,Attn. Westford Rec Dept., 1713 VT. Rte. 128, Westford, VT 05494. Or, you can register the morning of the event. Make checks payable to WRD.
- *Prizes: Awarded for the Top Male, Female, Under 18 Runners, & Top 3 Walkers.
- *The race is open to all towns!
- *Volunteers are needed for timers, food table, results board; please email WestfordVTRec@gmail.com or call 338-8235. Thanks and see you there!



WESTFORD RECREATION DEPARTMENT – REGISTRATION FORM

NAME (Parents) _____

ADDRESS _____ TOWN _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS (only to be used for WRD mailings) _____

HOME PHONE _____ CELL/WORK PHONE _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PHONE _____

DOCTOR'S NAME _____ PHONE _____

Please list **medical conditions**, physical limitations, allergies, or restrictions WRD should be aware of:

NAME	PROGRAM	GRADE	T-SHIRT SIZE	FEE
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

TOTAL: _____

How did you hear about this program? Please circle: Front Porch Forum Town Newsletter

Parent/Neighbor Westford Elementary School VTGrandpa.com Rec Dept. Member Other _____

*****Please contact a Recreation Department member if your financial situation is preventing you from signing yourself, or your child, up for a program. Scholarships are available.*****

RELEASE/WAVIER AGREEMENT:
 I am fully aware of the inherent risk, and give my consent for the above named applicant(s) to participate in the program(s) listed above. I hold harmless the Town of Westford, Westford School, their employees, elected officials, and/or any volunteers or instructors from any and all liability from any injury, claim, costs or loss of services which may be incurred by me, or us, or our minor children on account of participation in said program(s). Permission is hereby granted for me or us, or my child(ren) to receive emergency treatment if needed and I authorize the attending physician to administer any needed medical attention. Furthermore, I certify that I, or we, or my child(ren) are in good health and that there are no limitations to my/our participation except in writing above. I have read this document carefully and sign it voluntarily with full knowledge of its significance.

Signature _____ Date _____

**Send registration with check payable to:
 WESTFORD RECREATION DEPARTMENT
 Town of Westford, 1713 VT Rt.128, Westford, VT 05494**

HEAR IT FIRST ON THE FRONT PORCH FORUM

If you have not joined the Westford Front Porch Forum, please consider doing so. Everyone is invited to participate and it's free! This is a great way to connect with neighbors and the community.

Check it out at www.FrontPorchForum.com!

This community service is brought to you by Burlington residents Michael and Valerie Wood-Lewis.

NOTICE Westford Town Democratic Caucus Monday September 21 - 7pm at Town Offices.

The purpose of this meeting is to elect officers for Westford Democratic Committee. Any registered voter who does not participate in the town committee of another political party is welcome to attend.

Chris O'Donnell, Chair, Westford Town Democratic Party

Cod4477@yahoo.com.

578-7510

NOTICE REPUBLICAN TOWN CAUCUS

All Republican voters of the Town of Westford, County of Chittenden are hereby notified, in accordance with 17 V.S.A §2303, to meet in caucus on Thursday, September 17, 2015 at the Westford Town Office at 6:30pm.

The Agenda for this Caucus is as follows:

- I. Election of Town Committee
- II. Election of Officers by the Town Committee
- III. Election of County Committee Members
- IV. New Business

Caroline Brown, Party Town Chair

UNITED CHURCH OF WESTFORD RESUMES IN SEPTEMBER!!!

Sunday Services resume September 13th at 8:30 am.

We are an Open and Affirming community church where ALL are welcome!

Note: We are continuing our schedule of 2 services per month, the 1st and 2nd Sundays at 8:30am.

Rev. Katherine Arthaud is available for phone calls, visits, weddings, baptisms, funerals etc.
Call 802-233-8639 if you would like to speak with her for any reason. (email: karthaud@aol.com)