

From: Brad Luck
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 11:13 AM
To: Allyson Vile <avile@ESSEX.ORG>
Cc: Evan Teich <eteich@essex.org>; Marguerite Ladd <mladd@ESSEX.ORG>
Subject: EJRP & EPR Future

Hi Ally-

I believe you are on vacation this week.

I wanted to start to lay this groundwork for discussion next week.

Next week is the time that we need to start planning for the fall brochure.

The writing on the wall is pretty clear to me at the moment: EJRP and EPR are going to remain two separate departments in the future.

The Trustees voted 3-2 in favor of asking the Selectboard to share rec long-term. The Selectboard countered with a motion to share rec for the short-term. I wasn't privy to their executive session discussion, but this expression of a lack of desire to discuss shared rec for the long-term, indicates to me either 1) status quo in being separate departments for the foreseeable future or 2) if the City of Essex Junction forms, we will be two separate departments. Additionally, the Trustees are getting community feedback to keep rec separate.

While I personally and professionally do not concur with all of the above, I appreciate that I am not in charge and do not control the destiny of recreation and parks services in Essex.

Seeing as there is not a viable path forward to becoming one department, I do not see any value in co-location. In my mind, co-location was a means to an end of becoming one. We were laying the groundwork with alignment and consolidation. In my opinion, we were pioneers and a model for other departments. Over the last 22 months, we gave it our best. It wasn't/hasn't been easy, but we all trudged through for the betterment of the community. Now that end is no longer, and thus the means should correctly pivot and change course as well. As we are starting a new fiscal year, and soon planning the next brochure, I am recommending that co-location cease at the end of this summer.

If we are not going to become one, there is zero value in co-location. And, there is zero value in prolonging separation of our departments. It only creates a longer period of asking ourselves who does what and for whom. If there is not a future of shared budgets, leadership, and oversight, operating out of one office is not viable. Based on current political undertones, I think it is highly likely that the Trustees and/or Village community will ask the SB for rent if co-location continues. I think it will be messy at best. We can avoid these difficult conversations and decisions by proactively eliminating co-location.

My best and most honest recommendation is that EPR find a new home at Memorial Hall. I believe that you have a significant amount of money in your impact fees account. With no renovations, I believe that building could house EPR starting August 23. However, there are upgrades and layout changes that could be made to improve the functionality of the space as a modern recreation office and multi-purpose space. I believe that with the right layout, you could gain not only a recreation office, but a multi-purpose space for you all to house programming. This probably would come at the cost of discontinuing the Town's relationship with the Players, but maybe not - depending on what you do with the space and how you envision use. I would argue that the Town (and potentially future Town without the Village) would be better served with a permanent home for recreation vs. avoiding a fallout and the political repercussions of losing the Players. But, this is all my two cents.

As a final thought, management has asked the two of us to meet with a mediator to improve our relationship. From what I can gather, you are not happy about the way things work. It seems perfectly fitting for EPR to end co-location, and stop these challenges. Our path forward does not need to entail a mediated agreement of operating norms and relationship addressing if we don't live in the same building. We can simply be two department heads. We can work with each other as deemed appropriate, and be respectful, cordial, and helpful. But we don't have to figure out how to share an office and staff.

Thanks for your time and consideration of all of this.

I will send a meeting invite for next week to discuss in person.

-Brad