

Report of the Gray Secession Committee – **Concerned Citizens’ Response**
Prepared by Jennifer A. Wilson and Douglas C. Wilson – 140 Gore Road, Gray, ME
March 21, 2017

Administrative Matters

<i>Objection to lack of notice of "Report of the Gray Secession Committee" - Posted on town web site 03/15/2017 (no debate or discussion needed, would just like to have the minutes reflect my objection).</i>

<i>Discussion on any Conflict of Interest for municipal officer?</i>
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<i>Request financial statements from the Gray Secession Committee for the year ended 12/31/16 and month ended 02/28/17? Also would like a list of donors, donor mail addresses, and amount donated please.</i>
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<u>I. Introduction and Background</u>
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In accordance with the Constitution of Maine, Article 1, Section 2, citizens of the State have a right to alter, reform or totally change government when their <u>safety and happiness</u> require it. <u>Key words safety and happiness require it.</u>

In accordance with Title 30-A, Chapter 113, Subchapter 2, Section 2171-C, attendees at the public hearing <u>shall discuss potential solutions other than secession.</u>

<u>III. Geography, History, & Population</u>

Can the Secession Committee offer a definition of "Identity Crisis?" What factual information does the Secession Committee have to support that residents claim to have an "Identity Crisis?" Did the Secession Committee conduct a survey or some other process? Can the Secession Committee please provide documentation to support the survey or activity that helped the Secession Committee reach this conclusion?

I (Doug Wilson) was intrigued by the number of non-resident households in the secession area. Approximately 54% (191 of 352) are non-resident households. These households would have a primary resident household in some other community. Could this be cause for a major part of the confusion and cause of this "Identity Crisis?" Does the Secession Committee have any information on the percentage of non-resident households that claimed to have an "Identity Crisis" compared to the resident households that claimed to have an "Identity Crisis?"
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<u>IV. Problems Leading to Secession - 1. Geographical Separation</u>
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How is my safety and happiness enhanced as a Raymond resident when residents in the secession area do their shopping, business or banking in Raymond or Windham?
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The Raymond rural route for U.S.P.S. actually comes out of the Windham post office. It is believed that there are Federal Laws which allow post offices to ignore city and town boundaries and serve the customers from the post office that is closest from a geographical location perspective. The West Gray situation is the norm with the U.S.P.S. and customers will see similar situations throughout the state and the country. This arrangement reduces the travel necessary for residents in the secession territory to conduct mail services. Why does the secession committee feel this arrangement is detrimental to our safety and happiness?

The Secession Committee makes the statement that most residents feel connected to the community of Raymond, not Gray. Can the Secession Committee elaborate on what actions they took to draw

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this conclusion? Can the Secession Committee offer a percentage of the residents who claimed that they feel this way? Can the Secession Committee separate the results from the resident and non-resident households?
The Secession Committee states that residents drive approximately 28-30 miles and 50-60 minutes round trip to get to the town area where the town hall, public library, transfer station and schools are located. Isn't it true that many of the town hall services (i.e., car registration, dog licenses, absentee ballots) can be conducted on-line or through the mail? Isn't it true that residents of Gray can obtain library cards at the Raymond Village Library? Regarding trash removal services, the Committee noted that the Town of Raymond provides weekly curbside pickup of trash and recyclable materials provided roads are navigable for the truck; otherwise, trash receptacles are placed in a central location easily accessible for residents to dispose of their trash and recyclables. Given the current condition of the private section of Gore Road in Raymond, what is the Committee's expectation of how long the curbside pickup will continue? Where are the trash receptacles centrally located? Are the receptacles sufficient in size to accommodate the additional trash and recyclables and how often are they emptied? Is the area around the receptacles capable of handling a line of vehicles disposing of their trash and recyclables? The Committee further states that bulky waste drop-off facilities are available in Casco and Portland. Isn't it true that the number of miles from the secession territory to the Casco facility is only a couple miles less than to the Gray facility? How is our safety and happiness enhanced by having to potentially travel to two different locations to dispose of my trash?
<u>IV. Problems leading to Secession - 2. Long Travel Times for Elementary and Middle School Children on the bus and for after school activities</u>
How many children attend school in the secession area? Please break this down by elementary school age, middle school age, and high school age. Has the Secession Committee determined the impact on the various schools in MSAD15 and RSU14 as a result of reduced and increased student population, respectively?
How many resident households that have children in the secession area raised the long travel times as a matter of concern?
It is important to understand that with regard to the schools, we are not making a Gray to Raymond comparison. We are making an MSAD15 to RSU14 comparison. While the commute for the RSU14 schools appears to be favorable, there are many unknowns about the strategic plans for MSAD15 to address geographic configuration of schools. It should also be noted that the long-term plans of RSU14 should be known and considered. The Secession Committee should provide some level of understanding as to how the future plans for each of the school districts will benefit and challenge the secession area in the future.
Should secession efforts be successful, do you know if MSAD15 will allow existing students the choice to remain in the MSAD15 school system through graduation if they so choose? If MSAD15 is not going to permit this, how does the Committee view this as it relates to the happiness of these students and their families?
Have the parents that expressed concerns with the long travel times considered a new law established in October, 2013 - Title 20-A, Chapter 5205, Subsection 6 - Transfer Students - The "Superintendents' Agreement?" We understand that this relatively new law allows children to get placed in other school systems for unique reasons such as being bullied, medical issues, and long bus

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rides. Have these concerned parents approached MSAD15 to request this and been denied by either Superintendents and/or the Department of Education?
Have the Superintendents of both MSAD15 and RSU14 reviewed and been offered opportunity to comment on the documents presented by the Secession Committee? If so, can the Secession Committee share their responses with us? If not, why?
The RSU14 proposed bus route suggests that it was proposed by RSU14. Is this a Secession Committee proposal or an actual proposal offered by RSU14 leaders?
We understand that RSU14 picks up students at the corner of Dolimount Road and Gore Road. We believe the bus does not go any further down Gore Road because it is a private road. The proposal offered by the Secession Committee appears to indicate that for the AM route, the bus will cross Deer Acres Road and come up Gore Road. Has this route been agreed upon by RSU14? We would be surprised if they have because we believe that RSU14 has a very firm policy regarding the crossing of private roads with a school bus. Later in their report, the Secession Committee notes that the Town of Raymond does not provide snow plowing on private roads and that they are looking at options for snow plowing. What provisions are being considered by the Secession Committee in the event the party providing the snow plowing services is unable to plow these roads in time for the school bus to pass? Furthermore, should RSU14 not travel on the private roads and require students to be picked up at the corner of Gore Road and Dolimount Road, what provisions are being considered by the Secession Committee to address the safety of students walking up the hill to the pick-up location or cars likely congregating at the pick-up location on rainy or cold weather days?
Why is the Committee's report on long travel times to school limited to elementary and middle school students? Based on the RSU14 website, it appears that RSU14 High School students in the Raymond section of Gore Road are picked up at 5:53 am at the corner of Dolimount Road and Gore Road. They change buses at the ball fields on Mill Street and arrive at the High School at 7:00 am. Classes don't start until 7:25 am. The MSAD15 middle/high school bus passes 140 Gore Road at 6:35 am. How does a 5:53 am pickup time improve the quality of life and happiness of these students and their families? Regarding the RSU14 bus routes for 2016-2017, the website also indicates that Freshman and Senior students will transfer to one bus while Sophomore and Junior students will transfer to another. Given the Committee's focus on long travel times and research, can the Committee please elaborate?
The Committee stated it is burdensome and difficult for families to travel back and forth for after school activities. It should be noted that RSU14 high school students have the choice of attending one of seven high schools. The three closest high schools include Poland High School, Windham High School and Gray-New Gloucester High School. According to MapQuest, Poland High School and GNG High School are 22 minutes from 140 Gore Road, while Windham High School is 20 minutes from 140 Gore Road. How is attendance of a high school student at one of these other schools less burdensome on their family?
While not ideal in time or route, isn't it true that Gray-New Gloucester provides an activity bus for Middle and High School students which leaves the middle and high schools at approximately 4:30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays and has stops at various intersections on Gore Road, Deer Acres Road, Lyons Point Road and Northern Oaks Road? Isn't also true that RSU14 provides a late bus as well; however, that bus leaves the middle and high schools earlier and its closest stop for Raymond residents is at the Raymond Shopping plaza at 1233 Roosevelt Trail (i.e., shopping plaza with U.S. Post

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Office)? Given the more restrictive bus schedule of RSU14, what is the Committee's position on the safety and happiness of the students and their families who wish to utilize the activity bus?

The Committee stated prospective home buyers with school age children view our area and the extensive travel to school as a negative. Please provide supporting information which demonstrates the impact on house sales, including lost sales, increased lengths of time to sell over average and lower sales prices attributable to this issue. On the flip side, if the Committee members believe this issue deflates the housing prices in the area, didn't they benefit from the lower housing prices when they purchased?

IV. Problems Leading to Secession - 3. Our Fire and Rescue Services are Provided by Raymond and have been for around 50 years. Our health and safety is best served by Raymond

How is the mutual aid agreement between the towns of Raymond and Gray for fire and rescue services detrimental to my safety and happiness? Given the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services to both the towns of Raymond and Gray, how is my safety and happiness negatively impacted? If I require fire, rescue or law enforcement services and my safety and happiness are at risk due to poor response times, isn't that the fault of the town of Raymond, the town the Committee is requesting we secede to?

It is stated that Raymond takes care of us, not Gray. What is the town of Raymond doing to fix the private section of Gore Road in Raymond? Isn't it true that, regardless of the driver to do so, the town of Gray recently took the private section of Gore Road in Gray by eminent domain and is developing a plan to upgrade the road to town standards and maintain it going forward. The Committee stated that the hazardous conditions on Gore Road are a public safety issue. Absent movement by the town of Raymond, the residents in Raymond along the private section of Gore Road or any other party that might be willing to step up, aren't the hazardous conditions going to continue beyond the secession effort? Furthermore, isn't it fair to assume that should the secession effort succeed, that the town of Gray will not invest in upgrading and maintaining the private section of Gore Road in Gray? Please explain how this enhances my safety and happiness as it relates to the hazardous conditions on Gore Road.

Should we secede, we will lose the plowing service over the private section of roads that is currently provided by Gray. Much like the issue for school buses, what provisions are being considered by the Committee in the event the party providing the snow plowing services is unable to plow these roads in time for the fire, rescue and law enforcement vehicles to pass?

IV. Problems Leading to Secession - 4. Residents in our area are less likely or able to participate in volunteerism, community events, visits to the library, park and recreational activities, and all that the town of Gray offers

Can the Secession Committee provide a list of residents who have claimed that they would serve on a committee or board if the commute was shorter? How much weight should be placed on residents' perceived inability to participate given 54% of households in the secession territory belong to non-residents?

I (Doug Wilson) have volunteered for numerous committees and boards since moving to Gray in 1993: I have served or volunteered for the following:

- Gray Parks and Rec volunteer parent assistant soccer coach (1 season)

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<p>IV. Problems Leading to Secession - 4. Residents in our area are less likely or able to participate in volunteerism, community events, visits to the library, park and recreational activities, and all that the town of Gray offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little League Softball assistant coach (3 seasons) • Patriot Soccer Club Soccer Coach and Board Member (2 years) • GNG Athletic Boosters Club (4 years) • Gray Community Endowment - Treasurer (6 years) • Gray Zoning Board of Appeals (1 year) <p>In addition, I have served for organizations outside of Gray:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evergreen Credit Union (10 years). Served as Chairman of the Board (2 of the 10 years) • Project Management Institute - Maine Chapter - Director at Large (1 year) <p>I have never viewed the distance to travel for any of the positions to be a problem. I understood that to be a known fact when we purchased our home.</p>
<p>The Secession Committee stated that the geographical separation and distance makes it challenging for residents in our area to serve on committees and boards involving community, school and town government. Isn't it fair to assume that a significant amount of volunteer time for residents with school-age children is centered around school activities. If that is the case, won't parents wishing to volunteer for high school activities in RSU14 face the same distance challenges that they already face?</p>
<p>Can the Secession Committee define "vital sense of community" and offer the actual percentage of residents that stated this as a concern? Can the Secession Committee please support the statement with facts and documentation to show how the Secession Committee arrived at this conclusion? How many people that the Secession Committee surveyed were non-resident households versus resident households?</p>
<p>Has the Secession Committee compared the quality of the Gray Parks and Rec programs to the Raymond Parks and Rec programs?</p>
<p>The Secession Committee indicated family life could be enriched by giving back to the common good in the town that the residents in the secession territory really feel connected to. The Committee also states that one of the committee members is a local EMT and firefighter for the Town of Raymond. Isn't this an example where a resident of another town is able to volunteer in the community in which he/she feels connected without the need to secede?</p>
<p>The Secession Committee states that their efforts to address in and around the territory have been met with indifference and sometimes resistance or hostility. They then specifically note the repeated efforts to address Gore Road issue with the Town Council. I personally lead the initiative to bring the residents and the Town Council together to resolve the matter through eminent domain. I expended over 250 hours of my personal time over a two-year period. During the effort, I never witnessed indifference, resistance or hostility on the part of the Gray Town Council or Town Leadership. Town Council and Town Leadership were reasonably responsive to my request and required factual information from me to support the claims I made. I would ask the Secession Committee to clarify the extent of effort made by those that attempted to address the road matter and what tangible, factual documentation was provided to the town council to support their arguments? In my effort to address the Gore Road situation, I have been consistently met with indifference and resistance on the part of the Little Sebago Lodges, Inc. and representative for the Town of Raymond. Specifically, I have requested on at least three different occasions the opportunity attend a Little Sebago Lodges, Inc. Board meeting and told that the Board does not want to hear my concerns. Little Sebago Lodges</p>

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IV. Problems Leading to Secession - 4. Residents in our area are less likely or able to participate in volunteerism, community events, visits to the library, park and recreational activities, and all that the town of Gray offers

president has agreed to attend a meeting to discuss road options with the impacted stakeholders only if she is afforded the opportunity present all aspects of the secession to the group. We respectfully declined her offer. I have requested historical documents from the Little Sebago Lodges, Inc. to understand the history around their decision deflect responsibility for maintenance and repair of the private section of Gore Road. My multiple request met opposition and no documentation was ever provided to me. I have reached out to Town of Raymond officials. I was told that Raymond Board of Selectmen has no desire to work with stakeholders to address the private section of Gore Road in Raymond at this time. The Town of Raymond Board of Selectmen are waiting to see what happens with the secession and do not view the condition of the road their problem.

Can the Secession Committee explain why they have promoted the secession effort during the petition process and in the local newspapers as a means to address the Gore Road situation and increasing property taxes, however the report provided by the Secession Committee offers no solution to the private section of Gore Road in Raymond and makes no mention of any ways to decrease property tax base in Gray?

VII. Impact on Property Taxes

The Secession Committee discusses the impact on property taxes in the towns of Raymond and Gray should the secession effort succeed. Has the Committee identified the value of any other revenue sources to the towns (i.e., excise tax, cable franchise fees, etc.)? As part of the secession effort, isn't the secession territory required to set forth a proposal on how to address division of assets and liabilities in the secession territory? If so, please outline that proposal and how it will impact the other taxpayers in the two towns.

VIII. Impact on Trash Disposal and Snowplowing

The Committee stated the annual cost for snow plowing services which would need to be transferred from the town of Gray to subcontractors is projected to be between \$150-\$200 per property owner. Does the Committee feel that a reasonable alternative to the use of these funds would be for road association dues to upgrade and repair the private section of Gore Road in Raymond? If not, why?