



Woodstock, Vermont *The Shire Town of Windsor County*

TOWN - VILLAGE MANAGER GOVERNMENT

Town Hall • P.O. Box 488 • Woodstock, Vermont 05091 • 802/457-3456

To: Ms. Donna Sweaney, Chair, House Government Operations Committee
From: Philip B. Swanson, Municipal Manager Woodstock Town and Village
Re: H.249 - An act relating to intermunicipal services and the authority to create a regional council of governments
Date: January 20, 2016

I am writing to offer my thoughts regarding H. 249, and I thank you for accepting this letter into testimony.

My personal opinion is that Vermont Law currently allows the creation of Councils of Government in Title 24 Chapter 121 and therefore a law which allows a Regional Planning Commission to become a Council of Government is not necessary. If municipal governments wanted to create a Council of Government, they would have done so already using the tools available to them. If the citizens of these towns wanted to be a part of a Council of Government they would have pressed their Legislative Bodies to create one.

The mechanisms laid out in H. 249 to convert a Regional Planning Commission to a Council of Government creates a back door method of creating a Council of Government that may not have the support of the constituency - or a Council of Government would already have been formed.

I do not object to the concept of Councils of Government. I object to this method of creating them.

For those towns that want to work together to deliver services cooperatively, Vermont law allows municipalities to work together to provide services.

Woodstock Village and Woodstock Town are both incorporated governments and have an Inter-municipal Government Contract for providing police services among the two entities.

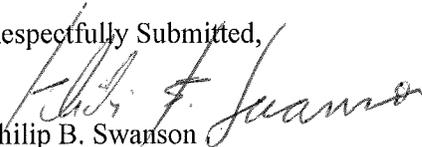
Woodstock Town provides dispatch services to the towns of Bridgewater and Pomfret for a fee. We also provide ambulance services to area towns, also for a fee.

Woodstock Fire Department belongs to two mutual aid organizations.

H.249 proposes to allow a Council of Government be created by a 60% vote of its Board of Directors and a 60% vote of the Legislative Bodies of its member towns. That is not a very difficult bar to reach, for such a dramatic change to Local Government.

I urge you to think about the ramifications that a change as envisioned by H. 246 would have on local government in Vermont.

Respectfully Submitted,


Philip B. Swanson

