



Proportional Voting for the Essex Town Council

Turnout, Competition, Consensus & Voter Choice

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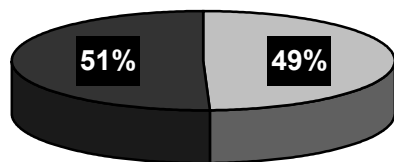
The Town of Essex has a crisis of representation. Merger talks between Town and Village are a chance to fix it.

- Candidates ran **unopposed** in at least 40 percent of the last ten Selectboard races.
- **Turnout** was in the **single digits**, except when elections coincided with Presidential primaries.
- **No member** of the Selectboard is a resident of the Village.

Why? The winner-take-all system discourages competition and turnout because everyone knows who the winners will be. Ballots cast for losers are “wasted.” Time spent running is “wasted.”

Under a winner-take-all system, a group that represents just over 50 percent of the vote wins all the seats. That’s what’s happening in Essex. That’s why Village voters don’t hold even one seat.

What it takes to win under winner-take-all

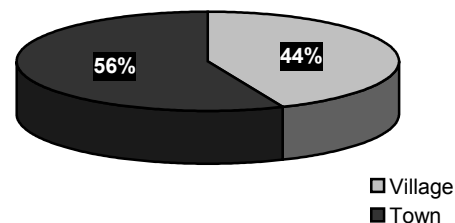


The Town represents 56 percent of voters, so it sweeps the Selectboard at every election.

Town of Essex voters are confident of a win. Village voters know they’ll lose.

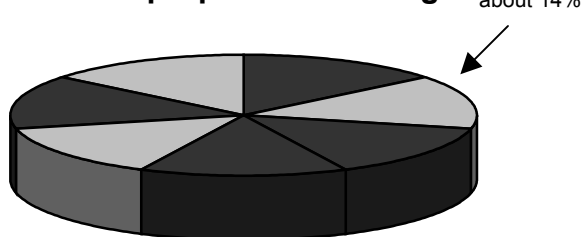
As a result, people don’t run. People don’t vote. People don’t compromise.

Town and Village voter populations



Today’s merger talks are an historic opportunity to break the cycle of mistrust and civic disengagement. By switching to a **proportional voting** method, Essex could ensure that after the merger, voters in both the Town and Village would receive their **fair share of representation**.

What it takes to win one seat under proportional voting



The proposed Town Council will have seven members. If it is elected under proportional voting, a candidate only needs about 14 percent of the vote to win a seat.

With 56 percent of the vote, Town residents would claim a four-seat majority. With 44 percent, Village residents would win a three-seat minority – proportional to their share of the population.

A vote cast for a Village candidate won’t be “wasted” anymore. Town residents will have to come out to support their candidates. **Turnout** will increase. Because Village residents have a shot at winning, **competition** will increase. And because the council majority will share power with a significant minority, local government will be more likely to reach for **consensus**.

For more information: www.fairvote.org/essex

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