

TOWN OF ESSEX
SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 25, 2021

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Patrick Murray, Vice Chair; Vince Franco; Dawn Hill-Fleury.

PLANNING COMMISSION: Dustin Bruso, Chair; Joshua Knox, Vice-Chair; John Mangan, Clerk; John Alden, Alternate; Tom Furland; David Raphael; Jonathan Schumacher.

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Gregory Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Owiso Makuku, Interim Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner; Deana Stoneback, Administrative Assistant.

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Bernegger, Barb Chapin, Diane Clemens, Annie Cooper, Patty Davis, Tracey Delphia, Paula Duke, John Egan, Deb Ehler Holland, Michael Hoey-Lukakis, Bob Klinefelter, Gregory Lyon, Nick Martin, Paul O'Leary, Roseanne Prestipino, Ken Signorello, Steven Shaw, Liz Subin, Irene Wrenner, Lorraine Zaloom, Sharon Zukowski, Jack _____

1. CALL TO ORDER

Elaine Haney called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:34 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

Deputy Manager Greg Duggan requested the following agenda additions:

- 5c: Consider ratification and reaffirmation of decision made February 3, 2020 to extend contract of Unified Manager.
- 7d: Minutes from the December 21, 2020 Selectboard meeting.
- 8b: An executive session may be necessary to discuss the employment of a public official.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed 4-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Patty Davis said that she believes that biodiversity and sustainability are important to the future of our community and volunteered to assist with future initiatives.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion with Planning Commission: Essex Town Center (ETC) Next plan (Update to 1991 Town Center Master Plan)

Owiso Makuku, Interim Community Development Director, and Darren Schibler, Town Planner, began with a presentation on the work that went into developing this plan. The process began in 2017, and included focus groups, committee work, and open houses. The initiative encompassed the most public input the Community Development Department has ever had in the planning process. The main goals of the ETC Next plan include making the Essex Town Center more connected as well as more oriented to bike and pedestrian needs. There is a desire to enhance commercial offerings and offer more diverse housing options. Ms. Makuku said that the Community Development Department did not take a "cookie-cutter" approach and instead honored the differences between areas in the Town Center. She also emphasized the importance of infill development in keeping costs down and improving the area. Mr. Schibler discussed some of the environmental concerns in the area. Further work will be done to make zoning bylaws compatible with this plan, should it be approved.

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Ms. Haney opened the discussion to the Selectboard. She thanked staff for their hard work and said that the plan is a vision that is long overdue. Mr. Franco echoed this sentiment. Mr. Murray said that he was appreciative of the focus on housing issues as well as green infrastructure. Ms. Hill-Fleury said that she is concerned about the status of the wetlands in Essex Center and asked if any developers have been involved with the construction of this plan. Mr. Schibler said that Peter Edelmann, the owner of the Essex Experience, has been involved. Ms. Haney said that the Essex Westford School District is interested in learning more about growth trends in the community and asked if this initiative has produced any information on these trends. Mr. Schibler said that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission is still predicting sustained growth in Chittenden County, although household size is estimated to decrease. Ms. Makuku said that the demographics in the community have changed since the plan was originally created in 1991. She also said that the Town is required to notify the School District if more than ten residential units are approved. Ms. Haney asked for more details on how this document will relate to the area near the Essex Experience. Mr. Brusio said that more details will be provided as this document is incorporated into zoning regulations. Specifics are purposefully left out of these documents, as it is a vision to drive the next few decades of development.

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- Ms. Haney opened the floor to public input.
- Ms. Davis said that we should try to make Essex a community that millennials are attracted to, by increasing walkability and offering a diverse variety of services.
 - Mr. Klinefelter said that he is a civil engineer and has lived on Londonderry Lane for ten years. He said that the plan is well-done, and that it is important to prioritize bike/pedestrian issues. He also suggested using old rail beds for pedestrian trails.
 - Ms. Zaloom asked about health equity for those who live on VT Route 15, noting that there is a lot of pollution and noise in the area. Ms. Makuku said that when development is addressed, we can think about requiring safeguards against light and sound. Ms. Haney said that the Selectboard intends to address a sound ordinance at some point.
 - Ms. Cooper said that, as a member of the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee and the Economic Development Commission, she is excited about the collaborative nature of this plan.
 - Mr. Egan said that he is happy to see this plan move so quickly to implementation. He also suggested against high-rise buildings as they would ruin the aesthetics of the area.
 - Ms. Zukowski raised her concern about the plan's goal to increase residential density, as she does not believe that we have the infrastructure for this. She also suggested changing the Conservation Committee to a Commission so that they would have the power to apply for grants.
 - Ms. Davis said that there are regulations to prevent any buildings from blocking Mount Mansfield or Camels Hump.
 - Ms. Delphia encouraged a continual focus on multi-modal transportation.

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Mr. Murray exited the meeting at 7:57 p.m., as planned.

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6. CONSENT ITEMS

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DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO to approve the Consent

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Agenda:

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- a. Approve minutes: December 21, 2020; February 1, 2021; February 16, 2021

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The motion passed 3-0.

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8. READING FILE

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a. Board member comments:

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- Mr. Teich reminded the community that the Town meeting on Monday is virtual only. The meeting has been changed from Microsoft Teams to Zoom due to meeting size limitation. Representative Peter Welch will also be present at the meeting.

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- Ms. Haney granted Ms. Cooper permission to ask additional questions. She asked if the meeting will be filmed via Town Meeting Television, if the public has been notified about the change to the Zoom platform, and if there would be a phone number to call in with questions. All were answered in the affirmative.

- b. Email Charles Cole re: Family
- c. Upcoming meeting schedule

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the HR Director and Deputy Manager. Motion passed 3-0.

VINCE FRANCO made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the employment of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the HR Director and Deputy Manager. Motion passed 3-0 at 8:13 p.m.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to exit executive session. Motion passed 3-0 at 8:30 p.m.

VINCE FRANCO made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to ratify and reaffirm the decisions made in executive session to extend the contract of the Unified Manager Evan Teich with the Town of Essex and The Village of Essex Junction from February 26, 2021 to February 25, 2022, to authorize a \$3,000 bonus to be paid on February 26, 2020, to authorize a 3% pay increase to be effective February 26, 2020, and to amend the language in Section 3. E of the Unified Manager's contract to require 180 days (six months) notice of non-renewal, made at the joint meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard and the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees on February 3, 2020. Motion passed 3-0.

9. ADJOURN

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to adjourn. Motion passed 3-0 at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2021

(See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

Vince Franco, Clerk, Selectboard