

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
TRUSTEE MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, June 22, 2021

TRUSTEES: Andrew Brown, President; Raj Chawla, Vice-President; Dan Kerin; Amber Thibeault; George Tyler

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Recreation & Parks Director; Sarah Macy, Finance Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Philip Batalion, Danielle Brown, Bob Burrows, Marcus Certa, Andy Champagne, Kevin Collins, Annie Cooper, Erin Dickinson, Maureen Gillard, Micah Hagan, Elaine Haney, Tamara Jaques, Deb McAdoo, Ken Signorello, Gabrielle Smith, Margaret Smith, Mike Sullivan, Doub Wilson, Irene Wrenner, Annie, RM, Susanna

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the meeting of the Village Trustees to order at 6:38 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

Mr. Teich requested to add the motion from last night's Selectboard executive session which authorized the Selectboard Chair to communicate with the Trustees President re: the Town being open to sharing Police in the long-term and is open to discussing how sharing of Parks & Recreation, Clerk/Treasurer, Finance, Assessor, and IT may work in the short-term to item 5a.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to amend the agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Work Session on Essex Junction Independence Initiative

Mr. Luck said that the Board will be reviewing the draft charter, organizational chart, and discuss the potential of consolidated services. An executive session may be required to discuss contracts with the Town of Essex. In public comment, Ms. Gabrielle Smith asked for clarification on how the Recreation Departments came to be intertwined beyond colocation. She said that she is not necessarily voicing a concern, but that she would like additional information. This will be discussed later in the meeting.

Mr. Luck brought the draft charter on the screen, and highlighted questions from the Board, legal counsel, and members of the public. He noted that he will be going quickly over the minor changes and focusing more on the significant changes. The Board discussed increasing the size of the City's Board to seven, however decided that keeping the number at five would be more efficient. This is something that the new Board could change later if they desired to. The Board also decided that it would not make sense to have ward representation due to the small geographic area of Essex Junction. Mr. Brown expressed a concern with a line regarding declaring a Board member "incapable." Ms. Thibeault said that this was only

49 referring to a member being incapable of attending meetings. The Board discussed their desire to have
50 Board compensation voted on as a part of the municipal budget, rather than its own line item. Mr. Chawla
51 noted that other communities in Vermont offer significantly higher compensation to Board members,
52 which could allow for more varied demographics to serve. The Board decided to require only one public
53 hearing to change an ordinance, with the knowledge that more than one could always be held. The City of
54 Essex Junction will either have an employee hired to serve as the Assessor or will contract with a firm to
55 do such. The Selectboard has also indicated interest in sharing Assessor services, which the Trustees
56 indicated some interest in learning more about.

57
58 The Board moved onto discussing the Transitional Provisions. Mr. Brown said that this will be one of the
59 last things that will be finalized due to ongoing conversations with the Town of Essex. Ms. Thibeault said
60 that she was concerned with Village Attorney Claudine Safar's comments regarding the need to reassign all
61 contracts involving the Village of Essex Junction to the City of Essex Junction, as it would be impossible
62 to know each one in existence. Mr. Teich said that the intent of this is that all contracts that the Village of
63 Essex Junction will now be the responsibility of the City of Essex Junction, and will be dealt with
64 individually as needed. All existing ordinances will be converted to the City of Essex Junction, and the
65 Trustees will be Board members of the new City. Additional discussion on shared services will occur after
66 discussion with the Selectboard, including a limit on how many years this would take place. Mr. Tyler said
67 that he believes that the Village Center District will automatically become a Downtown Improvement
68 District should the transition occur.

69
70 The Board moved onto discussing the Organizational Chart. Mr. Luck said that he asked Human
71 Resources (HR) Director Mr. Sabatano if it would be a conflict of interest to have the HR Director and
72 Assistant Manager be the same person, he stated that he did not believe that it would be. Mr. Luck said
73 that Town Clerk Ms. McNamara-Hill said that she does not think that a transitional period would be
74 desirable for the Clerk's office and asked if the Clerk position would be elected or appointed. Mr. Brown
75 said that it would be better to have this office appointed and apolitical, and the rest of the Board agreed.
76 Mr. Luck said that Finance Director Ms. Macy has said that a transition plan of 5-7 years would be optimal.
77 Mr. Luck brought forth the idea of sharing Recreation services and noted that this has been the first time in
78 this process that the Boards have seen negative comments. He said that due to the larger size of Essex
79 Junction Recreation & Parks (EJRP), it would make sense for Essex Parks & Recreation to become a part
80 of EJRP. The Selectboard has indicated that they are willing to share this service in the transitional period,
81 but not on an ongoing basis. Mr. Luck said that, if this is the case, it would be better to cut ties sooner
82 rather than later. Mr. Tyler said that he is concerned about losing some of the senior services currently
83 available, and that the Town has historically been responsible for the senior bus while the Village has run
84 the senior center. The Boards indicated interest in some type of reciprocity agreement between the
85 communities to ensure that these services remain.

86
87 It does not appear that it would be possible to share IT services, and Mr. Luck has met with several IT
88 contractors to learn more about their services. There was some discussion about housing IT services at the
89 Recreation building or Wastewater treatment facility. The Board also discussed adding an additional staff
90 person to the Community Development Department, in order to facilitate a rental registry and work on
91 enforcement. Mr. Tyler said that Stormwater may need to become an independent department sometime
92 soon, due to changing state regulations.

93
94 Regarding the earlier question about colocation, Mr. Luck said that staff saw opportunities for efficiencies
95 and changed the roles of staff in order to provide better services. These changes can all be undone. Mr.
96 Teich said that some of these changes were the result of position vacancies or other circumstances, such as

97 the YMCA no longer being able to provide after care at Town schools. Ms. Ladd said that a member of the
98 public has requested to remind the Board that there is a public hearing scheduled for 8 PM, and that it is
99 after this time. Mr. Luck also asked the Boards if work should be done to determine what would happen
100 should separation not receive a favorable vote. The Board decided to discuss this at a future meeting.
101
102

103 **6. PUBLIC HEARING**

104 **a. Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Utility Rates**

105 Finance Director Ms. Macy said that the FY2022 rates are proposed to increase by 2.88% or \$15.67 per
106 year for the average residential user (120 gallons per day). She spoke about the methodology to calculate
107 rates for water, sewer, and sanitation. She noted an anomaly in the established formula that would produce
108 a decreasing rate, but she recommended that the sewer rates be kept level for FY2022 instead of decreasing
109 them for the year. She said that if the downward trend continues, then the Village will reevaluate its rate
110 development methodology. She provided an overview of how the Village utility rates are calculated. She
111 noted that water rates had the largest increase of the three categories, partly due to a \$50,000 increase in
112 transfer to Capital Reserve and increases to employee benefit costs. In addition, Global Foundries pays a
113 special large user rate, which is 13% of the water operating budget and a portion of the unaccounted-for
114 water. The Village will also be setting the Wastewater Treatment Wholesale Rate, which is charged to
115 haulers who bring their waste directly to the plant.
116

117 In Public Comment, Annie Cooper expressed her surprise that the Trustees were asked to rush into this
118 public hearing and appreciated the work that was being done thus far. Mr. Brown closed the public hearing
119 at 8:20 PM.
120

121 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

122 **b. Interview and consider reappointment of Philip Batalion to the Village Planning Commission**

123 Mr. Brown asked Mr. Batalion for his opinions on what has gone well and what has been a struggle during
124 his time on the commission. Mr. Batalion said his first year was strange due to COVID, however the
125 Planning Commission has been working on the Land Development Code (LDC) updates since January of
126 2021 and that he has learned a lot during this process. He hopes to see the Crescent Connector come to
127 fruition in the next few years. He also indicated his support for additional housing in the Village. Mr.
128 Chawla asked if the LDC process has been getting much resident input. Mr. Batalion said that resident
129 input has been minimal and suggested holding meetings at varied times to facilitate this. Mr. Chawla
130 suggested that the Essex Reporter interview a few Planning Commissioners to get the general public more
131 interested in the process. Mr. Tyler indicated his support for increased design control on the trunk roads
132 into the Village.
133

134 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT to reappoint Philip Batalion to**
135 **the Planning Commission for a three-year term to expire June 30, 2024. Motion passed 5-0.**
136

137 **c. Interview and consider reappointment of Micah Hagan to the Village Bike/Walk Advisory**
138 **Committee**

139 Mr. Brown asked Mr. Hagan for his opinions on what has gone well and what has been a struggle during
140 his time on the committee. Mr. Hagan indicated that the proliferation of crosswalk beacons in the Village
141 has been a positive change, but that the Committee has struggled with turnover in the past year. He would
142 like to see more money spent on infrastructure improvements, as well as collecting additional data to
143 justify the addition of bike and pedestrian amenities in specific areas. Mr. Hagan noted that the BWAC
144 had recently met with the Planning Commission and that it was a productive meeting. Mr. Chawla

145 encouraged all Village Boards to hold joint meetings to learn about one another and see how they can work
146 together.
147

148 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA to reappoint Micah Hagan to the**
149 **Bike/Walk Advisory Committee for a three-year term to expire June 30, 2024. Motion passed 5-0.**
150

151 **d. Consider approval of Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Utility Rates**

152 Mr. Tyler how the large user rate compares to previous years. Ms. Macy said that this year's increase is
153 quite small.
154

155 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to adopt the FY2022 Utility rates as**
156 **presented. Motion passed 5-0.**
157

158 **7. CONSENT ITEMS**

159 **Motion by AMBER THIBEAULT, second by DAN KERIN to approve the consent agenda. Motion**
160 **passed 5-0.**

161 **a. Consider approval of Structure Grant Award – Brickyard Rd culvert replacement design**

162 **b. Consider approval of Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid Program letter of intent**

163 **c. Consider approval of updated Community Development fees**

164 **d. Approve minutes: June 8, 2021, June 15, 2021 - Joint**

165 **e. Check Warrants: #17255 – 6/11/21; #17256 – 6/18/21**
166

167 **8. READING FILE**

168 **a. Board member comments:** Mr. Kerin said that the Crescent Connector is planned to begin construction
169 in the next year. Mr. Tyler suggested installing a large tent in the Village-owned space behind the Firebird
170 in order to make the space more comfortable in the summer months. Mr. Teich said that he will investigate
171 this. Mr. Teich recently attended the opening of the new Vermont Federal Credit Union and said that they
172 are excited to be a part of the community.

173 **b. Letter from James Jutras re: GMWEA (Green Mountain Water Environment Association)**
174 **Operator of the Year**

175 **c. Memo from Robin Pierce re: Village Center Development Update**

176 **d. Email from Elijah Massey re: Resignation from Bike/Walk Advisory Committee**

177 **e. Email from Tom Weaver re: Resignation from Zoning Board of Adjustment**

178 **f. Email from Andy Champagne re: Separation**

179 **g. Memo from Dennis Lutz et al. re: Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Fiscal Year**
180 **2022 Unified Planning Grants**

181 **h. Email from David Nistico re: Resignation from Planning Commission**

182 **i. Upcoming meeting schedule**
183

184 **9. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

185 ~~a. *An executive session may be needed to discuss negotiation of contracts and agreements with the Town~~
186 ~~of Essex~~

187 ~~b. **An executive session may be requested to discuss the appointments of public officials~~
188

189 **10. ADJOURN**

190 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:47**
191 **p.m.**
192

**VILLAGE TRUSTEES
(DRAFT)**

June 22, 2021

193 Respectfully Submitted,
194 Darby Mayville
195 Recording Secretary
196
197