

**SELECTBOARD & TRUSTEES
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
DRAFT JOINT MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021**

SELECTBOARD: Andy Watts, Chair; Susan Cook; Tracey Delphia; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Patrick Murray

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Essex Junction Recreation & Parks Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Rupesh Asher, Bob Burrows, Kevin Collins, Annie Cooper, Patty Davis, Erin Dickinson, Karen Dolan, Essex Distorter, Essex ReTorter, Gina Halpin Barret, Gabriel Handy, Noah Lafoso, Alison Levy, Max Levy, Rachel Lizotte, Deb McAdoo, Timothy Miller, Mary Post, Roseanne Prestipino, Mark Redmond (Essex Housing Commission), Claudine Safar, Angel Segarra, Kristen Shamis, Ken Signorello, Margaret Smith, Mia Watson (Essex Housing Commission), Joe P., MT, Tim

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Watts called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order for the Joint meeting with the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees at 6:30 PM.

Mr. Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees to order for the Joint meeting with the Essex Selectboard at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

No changes, no approval needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Mr. Watts explained that this is the time during the meeting for members of the public to speak on items not included in tonight's agenda. He encouraged the public to be civil, brief, use appropriate language, refrain from personal attacks, and address comments to either the Selectboard Chair or Village President.

- Mr. Handy said that he is a developer who built and manages a senior housing complex on Park Street. He requested that the Board take down signage near the property that bans parking past midnight. Mr. Brown said he needed to better understand the issue before responding or taking action.
- Ms. Post's asked about the status of candidates who had applied to be on the Memorial Hall Committee. Mr. Watts and Mr. Teich said that the Selectboard planned to discuss the future of the Memorial Hall Committee during the budget season.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Interview and potential appointment: Rupesh Asher for Housing Commission

47 Mr. Watts said that he would not be participating in any discussions or decisions regarding the Housing
48 Commission since a close friend of his is up for appointment. Mr. Murray will be serving as chair for the
49 next four agenda items.
50

51 Mr. Asher said that he is a pharmacist and has lived in Essex for over twenty years. He would like to join
52 the Commission to give back and serve the community. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked what he felt is the biggest
53 concern regarding housing in Essex. Mr. Asher said that he believes that the housing shortage is very
54 concerning. Mr. Brown asked Mr. Asher what he would like to accomplish should he be appointed to the
55 Commission. Mr. Asher said that he would like to reduce the housing crunch and increase affordable
56 housing in the community. Mr. Tyler asked if Mr. Asher was familiar with what other communities are
57 doing regarding affordable housing initiatives. Mr. Asher indicated that he was not but suggested using
58 partnerships with non-profits to work towards increasing affordable housing. Mr. Kerin asked if there
59 were any other volunteer opportunities that Mr. Asher was interested in. Mr. Asher indicated his interest
60 in serving the community in another capacity that interests him, should he not be selected for this position.
61

62 **b. Interview and potential appointment: Alison Levy for Housing Commission**

63 Ms. Levy said that she has lived in the community for over twenty-five years and has recently retired from
64 her teaching position at Essex Middle School. She has volunteered for Voices for Inclusion Essex &
65 Westford as well as for Habitat for Humanity. As a teacher, she has seen the demographics in Essex
66 change over the years and said that there are many struggling families in the community. Ms. Delphia
67 asked Ms. Levy what she felt the top three housing concerns for Essex are. Ms. Levy spoke about
68 inclusionary zoning, county-wide partnerships, intentional interconnection between employers and
69 residents and increasing the long-term supply of affordable housing. Mr. Brown asked Ms. Levy what she
70 would like to accomplish should she be appointed to the Commission. Ms. Levy said that she would like
71 to see inclusionary zoning established, county-wide partnerships, and intentional interconnection between
72 employers and residents. Mr. Tyler asked if Ms. Levy was familiar with what other communities are
73 doing regarding affordable housing initiatives. Ms. Levy spoke of work in South Burlington and
74 Burlington regarding inclusionary zoning.
75

76 **c. Interview and potential appointment: Ta-Tanisha Redditta for Housing Commission**

77 Ms. Redditta was not present.
78

79 **d. Interview and potential appointment: Elizabeth White for Housing Commission**

80 Ms. White was not present.
81

82 **e. Presentation and potential action on inclusionary zoning**

83 Ms. Watson and Mr. Redmond introduced themselves and said that they will be introducing the concept of
84 inclusionary zoning and how it might apply to Essex. Ms. Watson said that households should pay no
85 more than 30% of their income to housing costs, however 33% of residents in Essex pay more than that.
86 Many households are paying more than half of their income on housing costs. Many renters do not earn
87 enough to afford housing in Essex. The demand for housing in Essex is growing, and housing prices have
88 increased about 10% since the pandemic. Demand is exceeding supply. Inclusionary zoning incentivizes
89 developers to rent or sell at a below-market rate. With inclusionary zoning, a certain percent of the
90 housing units constructed must be considered affordable. Inclusionary zoning could apply to the entire
91 community or a section of the community. Research has shown that inclusionary zoning does not reduce
92 development if there is sufficient demand for housing in the area. Should the Boards be amenable to this
93 idea, additional research will be conducted, a plan will be created, public outreach will be conducted, and
94 a draft ordinance will be created.

95
96 Mr. Kerin indicated his support for the idea but said that it is also important to consider why people do not
97 have the money to purchase housing in the community. Ms. Watson that wages are no longer keeping
98 pace with the housing costs. Mr. Kerin said that density brings larger buildings, and this is something that
99 residents have been reluctant to support. Ms. Watson said that increased density can bring environmental
100 and economic benefits. Ms. Cook asked if the Commission spoke with other communities in the area who
101 have established inclusionary zoning. Ms. Watson said that her discussions with and reading on other
102 communities have shown that it is important to make sure that there are no loopholes in the policies. Mr.
103 Redmond said that South Burlington is similar to Essex, and their policy could be a good template for
104 Essex. Ms. Cook asked if developers will be involved in the process of creating inclusionary zoning. Ms.
105 Watson answered affirmatively and said that she did not want to make this process too burdensome. Mr.
106 Brown encouraged inclusionary zoning to consider homeownership as well as rental needs. Ms. Watson
107 indicated support for this idea and said that other communities in the area have policies that apply to
108 homeowners as well. Mr. Tyler said that tax stabilization has been very successful in encouraging
109 affordable housing in the Village. He said that the Vermont Neighborhood Program, of which the Village
110 is a part of, exempts developers from Act 250 review. Ms. Delphia said that she used to sit on the South
111 Burlington Planning Commission and said that she strongly supports working with developers on this
112 process. Mr. Chawla asked for information regarding the timeframe of this project. Ms. Watson said
113 roughly a year is expected to generate a draft. Mr. Watts said that the executive director of the Chittenden
114 County Regional Planning Commission had recently spoken to the Selectboard and spoke of the “missing
115 middle [class]” that was in need of housing. Ms. Watson said that middle-income residents can benefit
116 from inclusionary zoning. Mr. Kerin indicated his support for increasing accessory apartments and other
117 home sharing arrangements. In public input, Ms. Davis said that communities in New Hampshire have
118 made restrictions on sub-leases (i.e., Airbnb) in affordable housing. The Selectboard and Trustees
119 indicated support for continued research on inclusionary zoning.
120

121 **f. Discussion and potential action on tentative agreements about shared services between Town of**
122 **Essex and independent City of Essex Junction**

123 Mr. Watts said that new documentation had been presented to the Selectboard yesterday that was not
124 included in the packet and asked if the Selectboard would be interested in discussing these today. Ms.
125 Delphia, Ms. Cook and Mr. Murray said that they have not reviewed these documents. Mr. Watts said that
126 some of the documentation received seems to be inconsistent. Mr. Brown said that he is confused by this
127 decision, as the new documents that were sent out today are Selectboard edits and comments. Mr. Watts
128 said that he is also concerned that the public has not had access to these documents. Mr. Brown suggested
129 reviewing the document that consolidated edits, knowing that future opportunities for public input are
130 available. Mr. Chawla indicated his support for this and said that he is concerned that something similar
131 may happen next week. Mr. Tyler encouraged the Trustees to respect the Selectboard’s decision. Ms.
132 Cook suggested that these documents be discussed at next week’s joint meeting. Mr. Brown asked what
133 new information the Selectboard believes is included in this packet and Mr. Watts said that input from
134 legal counsel was not included in prior editions. Ms. Delphia said she has three different editions of the
135 same document, all with different changes. Ms. Cook asked what is driving the urgency in this review.
136 Mr. Brown said that each of these contracts and MOUs will help to clarify how the City of Essex Junction
137 will function and not having them approved could create confusion for voters. Mr. Watts said that it was
138 hoped that the review of these documents would have been done much earlier, and Mr. Murray said that
139 the Selectboard appreciates the Trustees’ patience in this review and said that the Selectboard has the
140 responsibility to conduct timely review of these materials. Mr. Luck said the Selectboard has not provided
141 any comments on the Police Services or Right of First Refusal document and suggested discussing these
142 documents tonight. Mr. Watts said that, due to the confusion as well as other timing issues, the

143 Selectboard has not had sufficient time to discuss these documents in Executive Session. Mr. Duggan said
144 that updated documents will be available in next week's packet. Mr. Brown said that he would appreciate
145 seeing how the Boards could avoid this situation from happening in the future so that this process can
146 continue to move forward.

147

148 **g. Discussion of personnel**

149 This was discussed during Executive Session.

150

151 **6. READING FILE**

152 **a. Board member comments:** None.

153 **b. List of Boards/Committees/Commission openings**

154 **c. News Alert: Essex is Among the Top Safest Cities in Vermont, According to SafeWise [2021**
155 **report]**

156 **d. Update on shared priorities from June strategic planning session**

157 **e. Upcoming meeting schedule**

158

159 **7. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

160 ~~**a. An executive session may be requested to discuss the appointments of public officials**~~

161 ~~**b. An executive session may be needed to discuss negotiation of contracts and agreements between**~~
162 ~~**the Town of Essex and Village/City of Essex Junction**~~

163 **c. An executive session may be requested to discuss the employment of public employees**

164

165 **DAWN HILL_FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, that the Selectboard**
166 **enter into executive session to discuss the employment of public employees in accordance with 1**
167 **V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the Trustees, Village Attorney, Town Attorney, Unified**
168 **Manager and Deputy Manager. Motion passed 5-0.**

169

170 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN that the Trustees enter into executive**
171 **session to discuss the employment of public employees in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section**
172 **313(a)(3), to include the Selectboard, Village Attorney, Town Attorney, Unified Manager and**
173 **Deputy Manager. Motion passed 5-0.**

174

175 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to exit executive session. Motion passed**
176 **5-0 at 9:24 PM.**

177

178 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to exit executive session.**
179 **Motion passed 5-0 at 9:25 PM.**

180

181 **8. ADJOURN**

182 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, for the Trustees to adjourn. Motion**
183 **passed 5-0 at 9:25 PM.**

184

185 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by SUE COOK, for the Selectboard to adjourn.**
186 **Motion passed 5-0 at 9:26 PM.**

187

188 Respectfully Submitted,
189 Darby Mayville
190 Recording Secretary