

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION NEWS

"In the whole world, there is only one Essex Junction"

Issue No. 35

March 2012

Annual Meeting: Let's Keep the Tradition Alive

Many Vermont communities are debating whether to keep the tradition of approving their budgets by voice vote on Town Meeting Day.

Annual meeting attendance appears to be in decline around the state, which means that the most important decisions communities make each year are in the hands of a shrinking number of voters.

Participation has been steady in Essex Junction, but the numbers are still low. There are 7098 registered voters in Essex Junction, but 171 showed up for the annual meeting last year. That means our community budget was approved by 2.4% of the voters. Those figures are about average for Essex Junction over the last five years.

Some people point to the low turnout as a reason for switching the budget vote to an Australian (paper) ballot. The Village already uses Australian balloting for deciding elections to the Board of Trustees and other Village offices. It's been suggested that the Village could still hold an "informational" annual meeting, but all the voting,

their reasoning and, perhaps, persuade others. People are encouraged to ask questions, no matter how basic or complex, so they can make informed decisions.

The Trustees believe that this lively interchange plays a vital role in local democracy, and should be preserved. However, if attendance gets too low, the arguments in favor of keeping the traditional annual meeting with a voice vote on the budget might become unsupportable.

But Village officials also understand that attendance is declining for a reason. People are busy; parents with young children need child care; annual meeting process can be slow or confusing.

This year, Village officials have worked with a special citizen committee to try to find ways to make annual meeting more accessible and convenient. A printed program will give an executive summary of the budget and the legislative voting process. Speakers will strive to keep presentations brief and concise. Free dinner and child care will be provided.

Besides listening to the voice of the voters on the budget, Village officials will describe the new connecting road being planned to expand the downtown. They will preview the exciting "Heart and Soul" community planning process that will get under way later this year. They will briefly update the audience about important renovation efforts at the wastewater treatment plant and the Amtrak station. Audience input and questions on all these items will be encouraged.

So please plan to attend the Village annual meeting on April 4. Dinner starts at 6 pm and the meeting starts at 7 pm.

***Come for the food, the neighborly chat,
and the lively debate. But most of all,
come to help preserve this important
Village tradition.***

Village Annual Meeting

Wednesday, April 4 at 7 pm at
the Essex High School Auditorium.
Community Supper starts at 6 PM
On Site Child Care Available

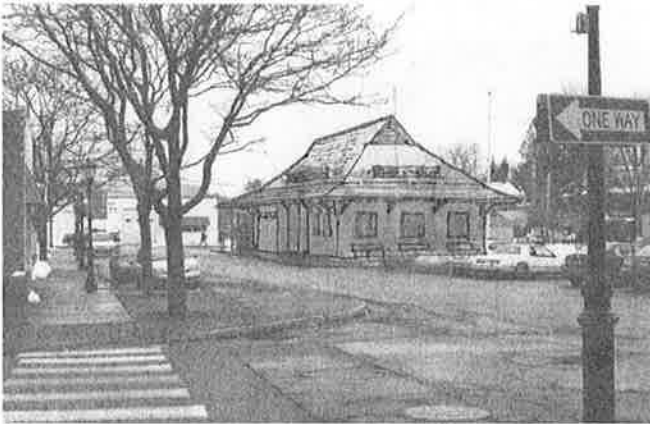
including for the budget, would take place in a voting booth on another day.

The Village Trustees have resisted this change for two reasons. First, if a budget is rejected, the Trustees would not know why. Was it too much money or something else? If the budget needs to be trimmed, which services or items should be cut?

Second, and more important, annual meeting provides a forum for citizens to debate the budget. Those who support it, or oppose it, can explain

Village and Community Partner with UVM to Renovate Amtrak Station

Senior engineering students at the University of Vermont have selected the Essex Junction Amtrak station as their Capstone Project for 2012. The Capstone design program requires students to spend their final semester working with local communities on a selected engineering project. Village consulting engineer Rick Hamlin and Village resident Tim Dall, a structural engineer with DuBois & King, have volunteered to work with the students on the project, along with local



One of several conceptual drawings of possible changes to the exterior of the Amtrak station on Railroad Ave. The drawings were used to elicit comments from participants at a public forum on Saturday, February 18, 2012 to gather input for UVM engineering students working on plans to upgrade the station. See Village website for more information and updates.

architects, Liza Kilcoyne and John Alden.

The project will bring the Village one step closer to the longstanding plan of improving the building and adjacent grounds to make it more attractive and accessible. The Essex Amtrak station is the most heavily used train station in Vermont, but it has also become a focal point for community improvements efforts because of the crime and loitering that the station attracts.

At the Village's encouragement, NECR/RA obtained federal funding last year to install security cameras at the station, and police have since reported a significant drop in loitering and suspicious behavior. Community members who live near the station have volunteered many hours of time working with Village and train station staff to reduce litter and graffiti at the station. They have also organized activities at the station and

Railroad Avenue area to increase community awareness and involvement in the downtown. They, along with the engineers and architects, will be providing guidance and input to the UVM Capstone students.

When the Capstone project is completed in late Spring of 2012, the Village will work with Amtrak and other agencies to find funds to implement the improvements. Besides improving the appearance of the building and grounds, the redesign will also focus on making the station more accessible to people with disabilities.

The Trustees will update the community on the efforts to improve the station at the Annual Village Meeting.

Vermont Legislature Considers Village's Crescent Connector Project

The Vermont Legislature is in the process of approving funding for Village's Crescent Connector Project. If approved, the project could begin as early as summer of 2013.

The Crescent Connector, a new roadway originally designed by Village Development Director Robin Pierce, provides an alternative route around Five Corners, linking Park Street with Main Street (Route 15). If built, the new road will improve traffic flow in the Village core. It will also improve access to the commercial property behind the Lincoln Inn for economic development.

Between May and November of 2011, the Village staff worked with state and regional transportation agencies to fast-track the project through the planning process, as part of Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin's "Circ Alternative" program, which seeks to find alternative ways of improving traffic in Chittenden County without building the controversial Circumferential Highway. Gov. Shumlin presented the project to the legislature in January.

The Trustees will provide an overview of the Crescent Connector Project at the Village Annual Meeting on April 4.



Get Instant Updates of Village Announcements and News

Essex Junction recently rebuilt its website, and Village staff updates it almost daily to post meeting announcements, road closures, upcoming events and other local news. The website has an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) link on it that notifies users any time a new piece of information is posted on the site. If you click the orange RSS button on the bottom right side of the Village website home page, you will be taken to another page that asks for your email address. By entering your address, you will get an email notice any time the Village website is updated. The email will also give you the content of the update without having to navigate to the Village Website.

Town Contributes to Purchase of New Ladder Truck

Village President George Tyler and Essex Town Select Board Chair Linda Myers shake hands after signing an agreement to have Essex Town contribute \$200,000 towards the purchase of a new 100-foot ladder truck for the Village Fire Department. The total cost of the truck is \$850,000. The agreement also reaffirms the commitment between the Village and Town fire departments to come to each other's assistance when called. The new truck is needed to replace the Village's 75-foot ladder truck which is beyond its 20-year operational life, and which is too small to service some of the larger buildings that have been constructed in the Village and Town in recent years.

Brownell Library has a Facebook Page -"Like" us so you'll find out what's going on instantly. Find us at www.facebook.com/brownelllibrary

Reading Buddies at Brownell Library: Students in Gr. K-5 will get one-on-one reading time with 8th Grade Volunteers from A.D. Lawton's Team Alchemy Citizenship Project. Sessions will run on Wednesday & Thursday afternoons from 3:45-4:45pm, from March to May. Limited spaces, so sign your kids up now at 878-6956.

Water Quality and Stormwater info at:
www.smartwaterways.org
www.ccstreamteam.org

JOIN FRONT PORCH FORUM

If you haven't already, sign up for your neighborhood's e-newsletter today. Hear from your clearly identified nearby neighbors and post messages yourself. No fees, no spam, all local. It won't overflow your inbox. There are 9 neighborhoods in Essex Junction which have their own forums: Brickyard, Countryside, Expo West, Fairview Farms, Hiawatha, Indian Acres, Lincoln, Maple and South Junction.

After months of FPF, people often report feeling more connected to their neighbors, more tuned in to local goings on and more a part of their community. You'll see postings looking for a contractor, a lost pet, organizing a group yard sale, etc. Check it out at frontporchforum.com. Online conversations help neighbors connect and build community.

FY 13 PROPOSED BUDGET

	FY10	FY11	FY11	FY12	FY13
GENERAL FUND REVENUES	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Proposed Budget
Unrestricted Fund Balance	0	0	0	34,587	35,000
Property Taxes	2,189,037	2,384,826	2,385,584	2,519,354	2,666,989
State for Pilot & Current Use	2,418	2,000	2,628	2,000	2,000
IBM Subsidy	242,211	181,664	181,667	121,123	60,578
Penalties/Interest Delinq. Taxes	7,437	7,000	7,671	7,000	7,000
License & Zoning Fees	32,753	30,000	29,158	32,000	30,000
Service Fee - Water	99,420	107,588	107,588	112,993	110,169
Service Fee - WWTP	49,710	53,794	53,794	56,497	55,085
Service Fee - Sanitation	99,420	107,588	107,588	112,993	110,169
State District Court Fines	1,844	2,000	1,952	2,000	2,000
State Highway Aid	98,785	95,000	109,292	95,000	100,000
EJSD Tax Collection Fee	45,456	50,486	45,943	47,000	47,000
Lincoln Hall Rentals	288	289	288	289	0
Parking Space Fees	0	0	0	0	4,800
Miscellaneous Fire Receipts	4,807	20	5	20	0
Block Party Donations	0	0	0	0	1,500
Miscellaneous Street Receipts	3,631	4,500	3,320	3,000	3,000
Miscellaneous Library Receipts	614	600	453	600	450
Essex Town Contribution to Library	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Interest Earnings	1,188	1,000	1,164	1,000	1,000
Miscellaneous Grants	63,202	0	9,112	0	0
CVE Noise Violation Fine	1,283	0	0	0	0
Misc. Receipts	9,203	7,500	9,208	6,000	4,600
TOTALS	\$2,967,707	\$3,050,855	\$3,071,415	\$3,168,456	\$3,256,340
EXPENDITURES					
GENERAL GOVERNMENT:					
Administration	531,318	567,731	581,640	594,352	600,386
Transfers & Misc Expenditures	459,982	455,911	455,911	556,412	596,412
Grant & Unanticipated Expenditures	62,584	0	23,017	0	0
Fire Department	242,262	254,769	255,362	262,326	270,189
Library	597,083	607,703	603,565	640,328	655,585
Lincoln Hall	35,025	44,005	38,345	51,084	38,053
Planning Department	205,698	233,612	206,388	240,452	244,352
Economic/Community Development	19,422	77,860	50,316	57,689	67,018
Street Department	748,661	809,264	814,017	765,813	784,345
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$2,902,035	\$3,050,855	\$3,028,561	\$3,168,456	\$3,256,340

WARNING
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 4 & 10, 2012

The legal voters of the Village of Essex Junction are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Essex Community Educational Center on Educational Drive in the Village of Essex Junction on Wednesday, April 4, 2012 at 7:00 PM to act upon any of the following articles not involving voting by Australian ballot, said meeting to be adjourned to reconvene at the Essex Community Educational Center, on Tuesday, April 10, 2012 to vote for Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot, said voting by Australian ballot to begin at 7 AM and close at 7PM.

ARTICLE 1. Shall the voters act upon the report of the auditor?

ARTICLE 2. Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$3,256,340 for fiscal year July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013, \$2,666,989 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?

ARTICLE 3. Shall the Village authorize the transfer of all funds above \$100,000 in the Land Acquisition Fund, estimated to be approximately \$320,000, to the Capital Program Fund?

ARTICLE 4. Shall the Village authorize the Trustees to use up to \$25,000 of the remaining balance of the Land Acquisition Fund for the purchase of property?

ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters approve holding the 2013 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 3, 2013 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 to vote for the Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot?

ARTICLE 6. To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the meeting?

- Presentations about the Crescent Connector project, the Heart and Soul program, and the Amtrak station upgrade process are expected.
- A question about whether to request the Vermont Legislature to release health care finance data in September 2012 is expected.

BALLOT QUESTIONS

ARTICLE 7. To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one year term); two Village Trustees (three year terms); one Library Trustees (five year term)?

Dated this 28th day of February, 2012

Attest:
Susan McNamara-Hill, Village Clerk

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
By: George A. Tyler, Village President
Daniel S. Kerin, Vice President
John J. Lajza, Trustee
Lori A. Houghton, Trustee
Mary L. Morris, Trustee

Board Wants to Spend Down Land Acquisition Fund

The Village Trustees want to use \$320,000 of the approximately \$420,000 in Village's Land Acquisition Fund (LAF) to repair streets and sidewalks. The Fund was originally set up as a reserve of cash for the Trustees to purchase land for a park, municipal building or some other purpose. Each year the Village Trustees transfers money from the Village's General Fund budget to the LAF. During the years shortly after it was created, the Village was still receiving Machinery and Equipment tax revenues from IBM, and the LAF grew quickly. But as the M&E revenues from IBM were phased out, contributions to the LAF dwindled. In recent years the Trustees have sharply reduced the amount transferred into the LAF from the General Fund to help reduce the tax burden on Village residents. As a result, the LAF has stagnated, and the Trustees believe that any desirable properties that might come on to the market in the Village would likely cost substantially more than \$420,000.

Rather than having the money sit in the LAF indefinitely, the Trustees will be asking Village voters to allow them to transfer \$320,000 of it to the Village's Capital Reserve, where it could be used for street, sidewalk, and other infrastructure repairs. The Village will be convening a special committee later this year to help prioritize infrastructure expenditures.

The Trustees are also asking voters to allow them to spend up to \$25,000 of the remaining funds in the LAF as a deposit for a land purchase, without voter approval. Presently, the Trustees must obtain voter approval during the Annual Meeting or at a special meeting before transferring money out of the fund. The Trustees believe that the delay involved in warning and holding a special meeting could severely constrain their ability to compete with other buyers if a desirable property came onto the market.

The Trustees will discuss their proposal for the LAF in greater detail at the Village Annual Meeting.

Important Dates for Village Residents

March 15, 2012

April 4, 2012

April 10, 2012

May 25, 2012

May 26, 2012

May 31, 2012

June 1, 2012

July 4, 2012

July 21, 2012

Dec. 5, 2012

Second Installment of Property Taxes Due

Community Supper, 6 pm, Essex High School Cafeteria

Annual Meeting, 7 pm, Essex High School Auditorium

Village residents ballot voting 7 am-7 pm, EHS

Memorial Day Service at First Congregational Church, 8 pm,
followed by candlelight vigil at Veterans Memorial Park

Memorial Day Parade, 10 am

Water/sewer bills due (mailed April 27th)

Five Corners Farmers Market Opens

4th of July Celebration with Fireworks at Maple St. Park

11th Annual Block Party, Railroad Avenue, 4-9 pm

Tree Lighting & Train Hop, Five Corners, 6-8 pm

Community Supper Before Annual Meeting, April 4 at 6:00 PM

Please join your neighbors and friends for the Community Supper on Wednesday, April 4, 2012 at 6 PM in the Essex High School cafeteria. The lasagna supper is free - but we ask that you bring a dessert to share. The supper is followed by the Village Annual Meeting in the auditorium at 7 PM. Please join us for both!

2011 Annual Report

The 2011 Village Annual Report will be available at the Annual Meeting or may be picked up at the Village office or the Brownell Library after March 20th. It will be also on-line at www.essexjunction.org. The FY 11 Audit Report is also available on the Village website or at the Village office.

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION

2 Lincoln Street

Essex Junction, Vermont 05452-3154



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