

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION NEWS

“In the whole world, there is only one Essex Junction.”

Issue No. 30

November 2007

STATE OF THE VILLAGE

The Essex Junction Village Trustees want to reassure residents that we are working on renewed economic stability and vitality. While acknowledging dramatic tax increases due almost entirely to the recent drop in IBM's appraised value, we will do everything we can to ensure that livability and affordability issues are addressed locally.

You have heard much lately about the Village's relationship with the Champlain Valley Exposition. Discussions with CVE administrators around greater support for the village have been on and off for years. Obviously, the current loss of revenue has added urgency to those discussions. The Trustees have approached the CVE as long-term partners who share joint interest in a healthy host community. We believe the CVE recognizes its obligations to support municipal services regardless of its tax status and will agree to new financial arrangements fair to everyone. The recent agreement between UVM and the City of Burlington is an outstanding example of a win-win partnership agreement which could be duplicated here. We will have more to report on the progress of the meetings in the near future.

The Trustees also want to remind taxpayers that part of our property tax problem originates in Montpelier, particularly this year the inequity in the formula used to calculate the village schools Common Level of Appraisal, or CLA. We have asked Representative Tim Jerman, also a Trustee, and Rep. Peter Hunt to aggressively pursue all avenues of tax legislation and/or reform that would be in the best interest of the Village. They will be introducing a bill with the other Essex representatives to correct the 2007 CLA problem to provide some tax relief in the Village. We will also be supporting legislative efforts to reduce the residential education property tax to zero so that property tax revenues can be used for their original intended purpose, which is supporting municipal services.

Further, the Trustees are:

- Revisiting strategies to deal with tax fairness issues in paying for both village and town municipal services. A perfect current example of this is a look at the fire departments. Both need almost identical new expensive fire trucks. Village taxpayers will pay for all of the village purchase, and nearly half again for the Town purchase. It is this kind of ongoing tax inequity that threatens the vitality of the village; taxes have gone up enough without double-billing!
- Studying new initiatives for economic development and looking at past project submittals for possible new innovative solutions to remove roadblocks/delays.
- Revisiting the Village's spending and income practices and policies to see if improvements can be made.
- Reviewing serious budget cuts to reduce spending at the municipal level.
- Looking at new revenue sources employed by surrounding municipalities such as sales, meals and entertainment taxes.

On a positive note, the Trustees are moving forward with the Essex Junction Redevelopment Project. The Village received a \$1.5 million federal grant for downtown streetscape improvements. The work is scheduled to start in the spring and will further enhance the improvements that have already been done on Railroad Ave. and Main Street. We also want to thank you for your excellent response to the Village Advancement Committee survey. The results are included here and you may be assured that the Trustees will take a very close look at the wishes and comments of the Village citizens.

There is no denying that these are tough financial times for residents with so much of the tax burden being shifted from commercial to residential taxpayers. But this is still a strong and proud community, and we will work through the current challenges and continue to be the best place to “live, work and play”.

Village Advance Committee - Survey Results

(1,263 surveys returned - 31% return rate. Highest percentage is in bold.)

Village -Town Relations

1. Many of Vermont's historic village governments have been dissolved in favor of larger town municipal governments. I believe Essex Junction's village government should continue, and that the village community should resist efforts to dissolve the Village of Essex Junction government.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
35%	27%	19%	19%

2. The Trustees should take no further action on separation or merger, and should continue with the present Village-Town relationship, in which Village residents continue to pay taxes to the Village and Town.

<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
4%	5%	25%	66%

3. The Trustees should seek a tax adjustment so that Village residents stop paying taxes to the Town for services that the Village provides for itself and which the Town does not provide within the Village.

<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
68%	25%	4%	3%

4. The Trustees should petition the Vermont Legislature to allow the Village of Essex Junction to become a completely independent community from Essex Town. Residents in each community would then only pay for services provided by their individual governments.

<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
46%	22%	18%	14%

5. The Trustees should work with the Essex Town government to develop another plan for merging the Village and Town into a single community with an equalized tax rate.

<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
31%	21%	22%	26%

Municipal Services

6. I am satisfied with the quality of maintenance of Village roads, sidewalks, bike paths, and parks.

<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
30%	60%	8%	2%

7. I am satisfied with the quality of Village water and sewer services.

Strongly Agree
36%

Agree
60%

Disagree
3%

Strongly Disagree
1%

8. I am satisfied with the quality of Village administrative services (Village office, planning and zoning).

Strongly Agree
24%

Agree
63%

Disagree
10%

Strongly Disagree
3%

9. I am satisfied with the quality of the Brownell Library.

Strongly Agree
46%

Agree
52%

Disagree
2%

Strongly Disagree
0%

10. I am satisfied with the quality of the Village Recreation Department.

Strongly Agree
34%

Agree
60%

Disagree
4%

Strongly Disagree
2%

Quality of Life, Taxes, and Development

11. To sustain its historical, small community character, the Village should have a design control plan for guiding commercial development.

Strongly Agree
31%

Agree
57%

Disagree
10%

Strongly Disagree
2%

12. The Village should promote mixed use development (residential and business) in all commercial areas of the Village.

Strongly Agree
19%

Agree
60%

Disagree
18%

Strongly Disagree
3%

13. The Village Trustees should continue to support completion of the Circumferential Highway and actively oppose any other transportation initiatives for the Route 2A corridor, including a roundabout at Five Corners.

Strongly Agree
66%

Agree
22%

Disagree
8%

Strongly Disagree
4%

14. The Village government should adopt a one percent sales tax within the Village.

Strongly Agree
12%

Agree
26%

Disagree
37%

Strongly Disagree
25%

15. The Village government should adopt an entertainment tax within the Village.

Strongly Agree
22%

Agree
33%

Disagree
30%

Strongly Disagree
15%

16. The Village school district should be merged with the Westford and Essex school districts to form a unified union school district (the vote is on November 6, 2007).

Strongly Agree
24%

Agree
37%

Disagree
20%

Strongly Disagree
19%

17. The Essex Police, fire departments, and local governments should make a renewed effort to publicize public safety and emergency response plans.

Strongly Agree
18%

Agree
67%

Disagree
13%

Strongly Disagree
2%

Access to Local Government

18. I would pay closer attention to local government issues if it was more convenient to do so.

Strongly Agree
16%

Agree
57%

Disagree
25%

Strongly Disagree
2%

19. I would like to have a better understanding of the boundaries and lines of authority of the Village, Town, and school governments.

Strongly Agree
26%

Agree
60%

Disagree
11%

Strongly Disagree
3%

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS SURVEY!

**Hundreds of Village households have joined free
FrontPorchForum.com... have you?**

Water quality info at www.smartwaterways.org

IMPORTANT – PLEASE NOTE

SIGNS IN RIGHT-OF-WAY

Signs of any kind are not allowed in the Village right-of-way or municipal property (Lincoln Hall, Veterans Memorial Park) without the permission of the Trustees. Please refrain from putting signs on street corners and greenbelts, as they will be removed by the Public Works department. For sale signs are only allowed on the property for sale. Thank you for your cooperation.

BURNING IS BANNED IN THE VILLAGE

In accordance with the Village of Essex Junction Municipal Code, Chapter 13, Regulation of Public Nuisance: "Burning brush, trash or debris is not allowed in the Village of Essex Junction. Cooking or outdoor fireplaces are allowed with proper fuels to include charcoal, firewood, liquid propane or natural gas." There is no charge at the CSWD drop off center on Route 2A for tree limbs and brush, up to 3 cubic yards.



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION

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