

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION NEWS

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

Issue No. 33

March 2010

Annual Meeting Highlights

Full slate of items awaits Village voters at the Essex Junction Annual Meeting on April 7 at Essex High School.

FY11 Proposed Budget

The trustees are proposing a \$3,050,855 budget for FY11, which represents a 3.5 percent increase over the FY10 budget. Voters reduced last year's proposed budget by \$117,000. In the previous year, the trustees kept the budget increase to less than one percent to offset a big increase in local school taxes. After two consecutive years of budget reductions, Village capital reserve funds are reaching critically low levels, which is part of the reason the trustees felt compelled to recommend a 3.5% increase this year. Declining revenues from IBM and the need to provide some funds for economic development and improvements to the downtown also contributed to the increase.

Downtown Revitalization

Over 120 Village residents attended a community forum in February at Essex High School. The theme of the forum was "All Aboard for Downtown Essex Junction" and the goal was to develop a shared community vision for reinvigorating the Village downtown, with particular attention paid to the Railroad Avenue/Main Street area. People explored ideas such as rebuilding the existing Amtrak station, creating new green spaces in the downtown, marketing Village businesses, improving traffic flow, and developing activities that will bring more people to the downtown, such as a farmers market. The intention was to provide guidance to Village officials and the trustees on economic and community development within the downtown. An overview of the forum and summary of the results will be presented at the annual meeting.

Local Option Tax

The trustees are proposing a 1% retail sales, alcohol, and meals & rooms tax. Sales at the Champlain Valley Exposition, IBM, and local businesses would be subject to the tax. Money generated from the tax would only be used to fund infrastructure repairs and capital costs. Last year, town voters rejected an Essex Town select board proposal for a similar tax. However, at the Village annual meeting, and subsequent to the meeting, many Village residents expressed support for the tax, as an alternative to increases in property taxes. Some voters indicated that they had opposed the select board's tax proposal because they did not have enough information about it. In response, the trustees formed a special ad hoc committee and hired a professional economist to study all details of the tax. After several months of analysis it was concluded that the tax would generate about \$350,000 annually for the Village, and that about 75% of the revenue would originate from outside the Village. Sales of automobiles, motorcycles, food, medicines, and other essential items would not be taxed. The committee also discussed the impacts of the tax with officials in Williston and South Burlington. Both those communities

adopted a local sales tax many years ago. Based on those results, the trustees agreed unanimously to put the question to the voters at this year's annual meeting. The issue will be decided by voice vote.

Land Acquisition Fund

The Village government established a land acquisition fund in 1997. The purpose of the fund is to allow the Village government to purchase property for sale that might have some strategic value to the Village community. This year, when the Village government and the Town government were negotiating with the state to purchase the tree farm on Old Colchester Road, some consideration was given to using the fund for that purchase. It was subsequently decided to have the Town purchase the property with the Village as a co-owner. However, the episode indicated some vagueness about the appropriate use of the land acquisition fund. Specifically, do the trustees need prior voter approval at a regular or special Village meeting to use the fund for a land purchase? To resolve that issue, the trustees have placed the question on the ballot for this year's annual meeting. It will be decided by voice vote.

Election of Village Fire Chief

Essex Junction has traditionally elected its fire chief at large. Any Village resident, regardless of prior experience or training, could place his or her name on the ballot and, possibly, become chief of the Essex Junction Fire Department. This year, the Village fire chief and other senior officers of the fire department urged the trustees to consider amending this policy. They noted that running a modern fire department and emergency response team for a community of 9000 people requires a high degree of training and experience. They suggested that the chief should become an appointed position, by the village manager, based on recommendations from within the department and with the approval of the Village trustees. It was also noted that in a contested election for fire chief, it was not clear how Village voters would determine which candidate had the best technical training and experience for the job. Changing the way the fire chief is elected will require an amendment to the Village charter. The question will be decided by Australian (written) balloting after the annual meeting on April 13.

State Shifts Stormwater Costs to Village and Town

Under new state guidelines, Essex Junction and Essex Town are facing significant cost increases for protecting Indian Brook and Sunderland Brook from stormwater pollution.

Federal law mandates that storm drainage in stormwater impaired waterways must control flow volume and pollutants discharged to these streams. States are responsible for complying with the law, but have some discretion in how they work with local communities to implement it. Traditionally, the VT Agency of Natural Resources has taken the lead in designing clean up plans and borne much of the expense.

But in February 2010, the state adopted stricter guidelines for cleaning up the rivers and streams that run through the densely developed areas of Chittenden County. Indian Brook and Sunderland Brook, both of which run through the Village and Town, were included on the list.

The new guidelines also say that local communities, not the state, are responsible for implementing the cleanup plans. And although the state is demanding tougher standards, it is offering local communities little or no money to help pay for the planning and implementation of those standards.

Fortunately, in recent years the Village and Town have made significant efforts to control runoff into Indian Brook and Sunderland Brook. However, Village and Town officials are still concerned that the cost of complying with the new guidelines could run into hundreds of thousands of dollars. More information will become available later this year as Village and Town public works staffs gain a better understanding of the impact of the new regulations.

FY 11 PROPOSED BUDGET

GENERAL FUND REVENUES

| | FY09 Budget | FY09 Actual | FY10 Budget | FY10 Estimated | FY11 Proposed |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Unrestricted Fund Balance | 70,000 | 70,000 | 59,000 | 59,000 | 0 |
| Property Taxes | 2,086,843 | 2,084,653 | 2,184,894 | 2,184,537 | 2,384,826 |
| State for Pilot & Current Use | 1,800 | 5,611 | 1,200 | 2,418 | 2,000 |
| IBM Subsidy | 302,755 | 302,755 | 242,211 | 242,211 | 181,664 |
| Penalties/Interest Delinq. Taxes | 5,000 | 7,267 | 6,000 | 6,000 | 7,000 |
| License & Zoning Fees | 25,000 | 34,899 | 32,000 | 32,000 | 30,000 |
| Service Fee - Water | 42,000 | 42,000 | 99,420 | 99,420 | 107,588 |
| Service Fee - WWTP | 24,500 | 24,500 | 49,710 | 49,710 | 53,794 |
| Service Fee - Sanitation | 15,000 | 15,000 | 99,420 | 99,420 | 107,588 |
| State District Court Fines | 5,000 | 946 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 2,000 |
| State Highway Aid | 98,000 | 95,624 | 90,000 | 97,820 | 95,000 |
| EJSD Tax Collection Fee | 48,499 | 40,799 | 48,184 | 48,184 | 50,486 |
| Lincoln Hall Rentals | 427 | 462 | 140 | 288 | 289 |
| Miscellaneous Fire Receipts | 30 | 0 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Miscellaneous Street Receipts | 6,000 | 5,319 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 4,500 |
| Miscellaneous Library Receipts | 600 | 604 | 300 | 300 | 600 |
| Essex Town Contribution to Library | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| Interest Earnings | 15,000 | 4,229 | 5,000 | 850 | 1,000 |
| Miscellaneous Grants | 0 | 4,624 | 0 | 59,713 | 0 |
| CVE Noise Violation Fine | 0 | 11,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Misc. Receipts | 7,500 | 5,505 | 7,500 | 7,500 | 7,500 |
| | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== |
| TOTALS | \$2,768,954 | \$2,770,797 | \$2,946,999 | \$3,011,391 | \$3,050,855 |
| | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== |

GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY

| | FY09 Budget | FY09 Actual | FY10 Budget | FY10 Estimated | FY11 Proposed Budget |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| GENERAL GOVERNMENT: | | | | | |
| Administration | 471,013 | 468,855 | 521,215 | 548,676 | 567,731 |
| Transfers & Misc Expenditures | 470,940 | 470,940 | 459,982 | 459,982 | 455,911 |
| Library | 585,181 | 580,695 | 605,878 | 598,334 | 607,703 |
| Lincoln Hall | 43,174 | 45,275 | 44,084 | 43,102 | 44,005 |
| Planning Department | 210,886 | 196,297 | 237,270 | 230,718 | 233,612 |
| Economic Development | 20,000 | 10,436 | 36,000 | 36,000 | 77,860 |
| Street Department | 734,955 | 791,791 | 794,585 | 785,428 | 809,264 |
| Fire Department | 232,805 | 251,276 | 247,985 | 247,986 | 254,769 |
| Grant & Unanticipated Exp | 0 | 35,406 | 0 | 59,713 | 0 |
| | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== |
| GENERAL FUND TOTAL | \$2,768,953 | \$2,850,971 | \$2,946,999 | \$3,009,939 | \$3,050,855 |
| | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== | ===== |

Important Dates for Village Residents

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <u>March 23, 2010</u> | Local Option Tax Information Meeting, Lincoln Hall, 6:30 Public Hearing on Charter Changes |
| <u>April 7, 2010</u> | Village Community Supper, 6 PM, Essex High School Village of Essex Junction Annual Meeting , 7 PM, E.H.S. |
| <u>April 13, 2010</u> | Village residents vote 7 AM-7 PM, E.H.S. |
| <u>May 28, 2010</u> | Memorial Service and Candlelight Vigil, First Congregational Church, 8 PM |
| <u>May 29, 2010</u> | Memorial Day Parade, 10 AM |
| <u>June 1, 2010</u> | Water/sewer bills due (mailed April 30 th) |
| <u>July 17, 2010</u> | Block Party & Street Dance, Railroad Avenue, 4-9 PM |

COMMUNITY SUPPER PRIOR TO VILLAGE ANNUAL MEETING - APRIL 7

Please join your neighbors and friends for the 7th Annual Community Supper on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 at 6 PM in the Essex High School cafeteria. The supper is free - but we ask that you bring a dessert to share. The lasagna supper will be prepared by the Center for Technology culinary students as part of a community service project, and will be followed by the Village Annual Meeting in the auditorium at 7 PM. Please join us!

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
2 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, Vermont 05452-3685



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WARNING
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 7 & 13, 2010

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 7, 2010 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 in the gymnasium of said school, on Tuesday, April 13, 2010 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 \$3,050,855 for fiscal year July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011, \$2,384,826 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?

ARTICLE 3. Shall the Village assess a 1% local option tax for sales, meals, rooms and alcoholic beverages, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Section 138?

ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters authorize the Board of Trustees to expend funds in the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund as established at the 1997 Annual Meeting, without requiring prior voter approval?

ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters approve holding the 2011 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 6, 2011 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 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?

BALLOT QUESTIONS

ARTICLE 7. To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one year term); one Village Trustee (three year term); one Library Trustee (five year term), Chief Engineer Fire Department (two year term), First Assistant Engineer Fire Department (two year term), Second Assistant Engineer, Fire Department (two year term)?

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters approve the following amendments to the Charter: (new language is underlined, language to be deleted is in brackets [])

Section 2.09. Appointments.

a) ...

b) The Trustees' approval shall be required for the manager's annual appointments of a Village Treasurer/Tax Collector, Village Clerk, Village Attorney, Village Fire Chief and Village Engineering Consultant. Residents of the Village or a member of the Fire Department who resides in the Town of Essex shall be eligible to hold the office of Village Fire Chief.

Section 2.10. Adoption of Ordinances. Ordinances shall be adopted in accordance with state law.

**ARTICLE III
OTHER ELECTED OFFICERS**

~~**[Section 3.01. Fire Department.]** There shall be a Chief Engineer, and a 1st and a 2nd Assistant Engineer of the Fire Department elected to two year terms by the voters at the Annual Meeting. Residents of the Village or a member of the Fire Department who resides in the Town of Essex shall be eligible to hold the office of Engineer. These engineers shall establish policy for the operation of the Fire Department, except that they shall be required to follow all financial and personnel policies adopted by the Village Trustees.]~~

Section 3.01 [3.02]. Library Trustees. ...

Dated this 2nd day of March, 2010

Board of Trustees

Lawrence C. Yandow, Jr.
Deborah A. Billado

George A. Tyler

John J. Lajza, Jr.
Peter B. Gustafson

Attest: Susan McNamara-Hill, Village Clerk