

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 9, 2008**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Deb Billado, George Tyler, Peter Gustafson, John Lajza.
(Larry Yandow was absent.)
ADMINISTRATION: Dave Crawford, Village Manager.

I. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

In the absence of Larry Yandow, Trustee Billado called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by George Tyler, to go into Executive Session to discuss legal issues with the Village Attorney, and to invite the Village Manager to attend. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Board entered Executive Session at 6:32 p.m.

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by John Lajza, to adjourn Executive Session and convene the regular meeting. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

Executive Session was adjourned and the regular meeting convened at 7:40 p.m.

III. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no changes to the agenda.

IV. GUESTS/PRESENTATIONS

1. Update and Discussion of New Business Group

Elaine Sopchak and Michelle Ottaviano updated the Board on the status of the New Business Group. Several meetings with local business owners have been held to identify the perception people have of the village and what needs to be done to help make Essex Junction a destination point. Delays due to Five Corners and lack of parking are commonly held perceptions. Also, many people feel the only reason to come to Essex Junction is to attend a function at the fairgrounds. There is need to educate consumers to shop locally. Local businesses are greatly concerned about potential impact by the new Lowe's Home Center. More of a liaison between the businesses and local government is desired. The group's proposal is to establish a task force with up to 12 people to contact businesses and services in the community and raise awareness of what the local business group is doing to promote the village and address the issues that were identified at the meetings with business owners. Radio ads have been developed to promote Essex Junction as a great place to shop. The ads will be played on Eagle Country from 12/4/08 through 12/24/08. A full page ad featuring businesses in the village will be printed in *Seven Days* and the *Essex Reporter*. Businesses will pool their money for the ad. The goal is to brand the village and create the image of the village as a destination with

quality shops (“Destination Essex Junction”). Other advertising suggestions include an ad on the side of a CCTA bus. Businesses/services will have equal opportunity to buy into the advertising. Additional initiatives include guest speakers (Ron Redmond, Church Street Marketplace, is scheduled), surveying residents on what is desired in the downtown area for businesses/services, and inviting all businesses to additional focus groups. Further ideas are greening up the downtown area with planters, re-establishing a farmers market, getting more businesses involved in the annual village block party, and ensuring the Memorial Day Parade remains in the village (the parade is the largest in the state). The group needs 100% of the Board’s support (vocal, in print, and financial). Seed money will be sought from local businesses. George Tyler mentioned the village website is available for use by the group. Deb Billado urged identifying unique elements in the community and making sure the businesses are a part of the whole process. John Lajza spoke in support of one focus being the library as an information center. The library can more broadly advertise special events that are to occur.

Elaine Sopchak commented there is about an 18 month window for the volunteers to carry on the work of the group after which the program should be handed over to be managed by a consultant or a part-time employee on Village staff (perhaps in the Planning Dept.). Dave Crawford calculated the cost for the next six months of activities for the group is between \$4,000 and \$7,000. There are Community Development funds in the budget, but choices will have to be made for the best use of the funds.

Dave Crawford will contact the National Guard about involvement in the Memorial Day Parade.

2. Comments from Public on Items not on Agenda
There were no comments from the public.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion/Action on Local Option Tax

Dave Crawford reviewed an estimated \$800,000 will be raised through a local option tax. The agreement with the Town of Essex is for a 50/50 share of revenues for the life of the tax. The tax will broaden the tax base for the community and relieve pressure on the property tax because every dollar collected in sales tax is less to be raised by property taxes. There will be a ballot item for public vote on the local option tax at the March, 2009 Annual Town Meeting. Several public information meetings will be held in January and February.

John Lajza credited the Essex Selectboard in recognizing the Village also has the ability to institute a local option tax, but will not do so because that would put a burden on local businesses (to have both municipalities enact the tax). Local businesses will not be at a disadvantage by the tax since all surrounding communities already have a local option tax. The revenues from the tax will be shared by both municipalities.

MOTION by Deb Billado, SECOND by George Tyler, to accept the Local Option Tax Intermunicipal Agreement between the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex

Junction as of 12/9/08 and to authorize the Village Manager to sign on behalf of the Village of Essex Junction. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

George Tyler commented the action by the Trustees means the Board supports moving forward with the tax, but ultimately the community will decide the matter.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Review/Adopt 2009 Legislative Priorities

Dave Crawford explained the rationale for reclassifying Route 15 in the village to a Class 1 highway (to move forward with portions of the Pearl Street improvements, specifically the lane configurations). Key legislators have been contacted to help pass the necessary legislation as soon as possible. John Lajza observed Route 15 is the gateway to Essex Junction and it is easier to improve the gateway and control traffic if the road is under the Village's jurisdiction. George Tyler suggested the letters from Sen. Mazza and Rep. Westman be forwarded to the Village's state representatives.

Dave Crawford suggested two additional items for the list of legislative priorities:

- Statement in support of continued funding of Amtrak service.
- Statement regarding interest in the development of the state property on West Street as part of the Pearl Street initiative, and perhaps including a menu of viable options for consideration..

VII. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Meeting Schedule

- Budget Work Session on 12/18/08 at 8 a.m. followed by Executive Session
- January 13, 2009 Regular Meeting
- January 27, 2009 Regular Meeting

2. Railroad

Village resident, John Booth, volunteered time to brief staff on railroad issues.

3. CCMPO Circumferential Highway Update Meeting

Robin Pierce will attend meetings with VTrans regarding the circ highway on issues discussed at the staff level. The Village wants to be more proactive in unifying activities done jointly with other communities (i.e. getting community representatives together to present a unified front). John Lajza suggested contacting planners and managers of the surrounding communities to discuss how to join together and emphasize the need for the circumferential highway in a unified manner.

4. Annual Report

Ideas were presented for the cover and dedication of the Annual Report. The Board will give the matter some consideration.

5. Newsletter

The village newsletter will be out the end of February and include information on the local option tax and budget.

6. Minutes

Meeting minutes are posted on the website as drafts. Any changes to the minutes by the Board are noted in the next set of minutes.

VIII. TRUSTEES COMMENTS/CONCERNS**1. Channel 17 Holiday Party**

The Trustees and staff are invited to the Channel 17 Holiday Party on 12/18/08.

IX. CONSENT AGENDA & READING FILE

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by Deb Billado, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- 1. Approval of warrants**
- 2. Reading list acceptance (letters/communications)**
 - **Budget Day schedule 12/18/08**
 - **CCMPO Transportation Advisory Committee agenda & minutes**
 - **Letter to Agency of Natural Resources re: West Street site**
 - **Letter to VTrans re: Route 15 right-of-way**

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by John Lajza, SECOND by George Tyler, to go into Executive Session to discuss legal and/or personnel matters, and to invite the Village Manager to attend.

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Board entered Executive Session at 9 p.m.

MOTION by John Lajza, SECOND by Peter Gustafson, to adjourn Executive Session. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

Executive Session was adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by George Tyler, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

RScty: M.E.Riordan