

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES  
April 2, 2008**

Moderator Steve Eustis welcomed the assemblage to the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction. Village President, Larry Yandow, led the assemblage in the Pledge of Alliance. Thanks were extended to the Essex Junction Technical Center culinary students for the delicious community dinner preceding the meeting. Gary Moreau, Director of Music at Albert D. Lawton School along with the ADL Select Chorus sang the National Anthem. President Yandow introduced members of the Board of Trustees (Tim Jerman, Peter Gustafson, John Lajza, Deb Billado) and members of the Village administration in attendance (Village Manager, Dave Crawford; Village Clerk, Susan McNamara-Hill; Village Accountant, Lauren Morrisseau; Village Development Director, Jeff Arango; Public Works Supervisor, Rick Jones; Water Quality Supervisor, Jim Jutras; Village Attorney, Dave Barra; Essex Junction Fire Chief, Chris Gaboriault; Brownell Library Director, Penny Pillsbury; Brownell Library Board Chairwoman, Christine Packard; Marianne Riordan, Recording Secretary).

**RECOGNITIONS**

Tim Jerman was presented with a plaque in recognition of seven years of service and dedication to the Village of Essex Junction as a member of the Board of Trustees from 2001-2008. Tim Jerman will continue to represent the Village of Essex Junction in the State House of Representatives.

Rep. Peter Hunt was recognized for his hard work in the legislature and as a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Moderator Eustis called the meeting to order at 7:25 p.m. and explained the procedure to be followed.

**ARTICLE 1: Shall the voters act upon the report of the auditor?**

**MOTION** by George Boucher, **SECOND** by Marla Durham, to approve Article 1 as read.

**DISCUSSION:** None.

**VOTING:** unanimous; motion carried. Article 1 is adopted.

**ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters approve the annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$2,768,954 for fiscal year July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 of which \$2,086,843 is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?**

**MOTION** by Chuck Barry, **SECOND** by Marla Durham, to Article 2 as read.

**DISCUSSION:** The Village Manager gave a presentation on the budget, reviewing revenues and expenditures, tax rate, expenditure for taxes, water and sewer for an average household in the village. This year the amount to be raised by taxes was lowered by conservative expense increases (no new services, applying a 1% inflation rate), using the Retirement Forfeiture Account Fund for a one-time reduction in retirement costs (\$25,000), using

\$70,000 of the FY07 surplus, and increasing enterprise fund reimbursement to the General Fund for administrative services. Winter maintenance and snow removal were over-budget this past year, but there was a savings in salary and benefits for the Village Manager position. Money was authorized for fire station improvements. The net result is a level budget with less of a surplus. Next year's budget will have to absorb repayment to the retirement fund, the decrease in the IBM subsidy, increases in wages and insurance as well as utilities and fuel, and the purchase of a ladder truck for the Fire Department. Also, there will be less fund balance available to reduce the tax rate. Marla Durham expressed concern about the funds available for legal services, especially if the Village must pursue matters of tax equity with the Town of Essex through the legal system. There was further discussion of increasing the budget for legal expenses. Trustee John Lajza stated it is the voters' prerogative to add money to the budget. The money will flow into next year's budget if not used. Trustee Lajza noted there is a two cent tax increase built into next year's budget; Dave Crawford calculated the increase next year is closer to three cents on the tax rate. John Keene cautioned against changing the budget in five minutes that was worked on by the Board of Trustees for the past six months. Paul Hyde spoke in support of reacting to the IBM subsidy decrease by decreasing spending rather than building the loss into the budget. Marge Sheppard felt taxpayers should not pay now for catastrophic events that may or may not occur, but rather should pay for them when they occur. Trustee Jerman gave a brief update on the tax credit to taxpayers from the CLA that will likely occur in September, 2008. Garret Langlois urged the Trustee to move forward on the agreement with CVE and not keep real tax money from the budget.

**CALL THE QUESTION** by Claire Wilcox, **SECOND** by Clint Russell. Debate ceased. **VOTING ON CALL THE QUESTION:** majority of ayes; motion carried.  
**VOTING ON ARTICLE 2:** unanimous; motion carried. Article 2 is adopted.

**ARTICLE 3:** Shall the voters approve holding the 2009 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 1, 2009 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 14, 2009 to vote for the village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot?

**MOTION** by Garret Langlois, **SECOND** by George Tyler, to approve Article 3 as read.

**DISCUSSION:** George Tyler spoke in support of holding the village annual meeting together with the town and school annual meetings if possible. The article as stated combines the Australian balloting for the village and school district.

**CALL THE QUESTION** by Chuck Barry, **SECOND** by Ray Weed. Debate ceased.  
**VOTING ON CALL THE QUESTION:** majority of ayes; motion carried.  
**VOTING:** unanimous; motion carried. Article 3 is adopted.

**ARTICLE 4:** To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the meeting.

Presentation by Champlain Valley Exposition (CVE)

Matt Stevens, CVE Board of Directors, gave a brief history of events held at the fairgrounds over the years. CVE was founded in 1922 (first location was Towers Road then the fairgrounds on Route 15) and has held the annual fair at the fairgrounds every year except a few years during World War II. CVE has an operating budget of \$5.5 million and 17 full time employees. Over 400 staff and volunteers are added during fair week and other events. CVE is governed by a 15-member volunteer Board of Directors. CVE's mission is to serve the people through education, agriculture, commerce, and entertainment. Events held at the fairgrounds each year are an important part of economic development in the community. CVE is a non-profit organization with no payment to shareholders. The organization must raise revenues to support programs and facilities. The property appraisal is \$10 million. CVE is aware of the concern about sound levels and is reviewing the ordinance. CVE adds value to the community and paid over \$100,000 in fees, permits, and services in 2007. CVE allows use of the grounds, facilities, and equipment by area fire departments for training exercises and by other organizations for events, such as Veteran's Day, Block Party, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Halloween Party, Memorial Day Parade staging area, storage of Essex Rescue equipment, high school graduation, snow storage, and an emergency evacuation site. The fairground provides a park-like setting for people to use for walking, biking, cross-country skiing, and other activities. Estimated value of these provisions is \$30,000. CVE also paid \$12,850 toward the Pearl Street Revitalization Study in 2006 (Senator Leahy used the study as a catalyst to secure federal funding for the Route 15 corridor improvements), and \$10,000 to the RKG economic study, \$5,000 to Memorial Park, \$450,000 for the connector road from Route 15 to Route 2A at the request of the Board of Trustees to alleviate traffic on Pearl Street, \$5.5 million for the Miller Complex, \$580,000 for RV improvements at the fairgrounds, and \$2 million for storm water and facilities upgrades. CVE offered to contribute up to \$100,000 paid over eight years as part of the local match for the Pearl Street revitalization project. The Village Trustees and CVE Board of Directors will continue to meet on a regular basis.

Village Manager, Dave Crawford, affirmed discussions with CVE have been frank and open. Points of agreement and disagreement have been defined. There will be further discussion of an entrance fee option, sales tax concept, mutually beneficial projects, and defining support of the Pearl Street project.

Elaine Sopchak, Sycamore Lane, spoke in support of CVE as an excellent and essential part of the community. Ms. Sopchak suggested an entertainment tax be charged for non-agricultural events at the fairgrounds which are occurring more frequently than agricultural events and put a burden of traffic and noise on the village. Dave Grimm, CVE General Manager, stated CVE, like many fairgrounds around the country, is holding special events to support the overall mission of the exposition and the annual fair. Without the additional events there would not be a quality fair each year which is the greatest resource to the community.

Garret Langlois, village resident, stated a more even-handed analysis is needed. CVE does provide certain recreational services and that completes their mission. CVE does provide economical improvements, and that is good business to bring them more revenue. CVE is a

non-profit, but their willingness to pay taxes raises more questions than just being a good neighbor.

Linda Costello, Williams Street, said she does not object to the fairgrounds and the events, but does feel it is time for CVE to recognize they are a business and need to help out the village. Essex Junction cannot afford having IBM and CVE not paying full taxes. The offered contribution to Pearl Street is appreciated, but the village needs a more regular contribution to help with the budget.

George Boucher, Main Street, recalled the negative impact on gasoline sales at his gas station next to the fairgrounds during fair week. Mr. Boucher pointed out the village does not have hotels or restaurants where people at the fair go to spend money. People go to places out of the village.

Chuck Lloyd, village resident since 1981, noted the attitude of CVE was not “user friendly” relative to plowing and maintaining the sidewalk in front of the fairgrounds on Pearl Street. Also, the percentage of farm exposition is minimal at the fairgrounds. Mr. Lloyd said CVE has not paid its freight to the community and the matter should be thoroughly explored.

#### Burned Building in Brownell Block

Norm Faunce, village resident, urged the Village Administration to have a role in removing the burned building on Railroad Avenue which is an eyesore to the community. Dave Crawford assured the matter is grinding through the zoning process following which legal action can be taken if necessary.

#### Roundabout

John Keene asked if there is any way to curtail further consideration of a roundabout/rotary in the village once and for all. Dave Crawford assured the Trustees will continue to communicate their position against a roundabout to VTrans.

#### Thanks and Appreciation

Marla Durham thanked the Village Advancement Committee for the work that was done. George Tyler was thanked for his work on the website.

Angie Chapple-Sokol thanked and commended the Board of Trustees and village staff for working hard on behalf of the villagers. The budget was fully supported by the people in attendance. Ms. Chapple-Sokol mentioned the Brownell Library Five Year Plan which will provide more specific direction for the future.

State Representative Tim Jerman commended the Village President and staff for stepping up when the village temporarily did not have a Village Manager. Village President Larry Yandow confirmed Essex Junction is the place to live, work and play.

#### Announcements

Candidates for Village Trustee (two vacancies) – Peter Gustafson, George Tyler, Bill Kalanges, Steve Atwood.

Candidates for Library Trustee (two vacancies) – Nicole Yandow, Michael Goodrich.

Candidate for Moderator - Steve Eustis.

Candidates for Fire Department positions – Chris Gaboriault, Ray Weed, John Rowell.

Adjournment

**MOTION by Bill Bickford, SECOND by George Boucher, to adjourn the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m. Voting by Australian ballot will take place on April 3, 2008 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Albert D. Lawton School.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by M. E. Riordan, Recording Secretary.*