

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 11, 2009**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Larry Yandow (Village President); George Tyler, Peter Gustafson, John Lajza. (Deb Billado was absent.)

ADMINISTRATION: Dave Crawford, Village Manager.

I. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Village President, Larry Yandow, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no changes to the agenda.

III. GUESTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

There were no comments from the public at this time.

2. Presentation by Craig Butkus of Essex Rescue regarding Paramedics Program

Craig Butkus mentioned the current training of members of Essex Rescue (EMT Basic and Intermediate levels) which serves District 3 (Essex, Essex Junction, Underhill, Jericho, Westford). Excellent advanced life support is provided now, said Mr. Butkus, but research has shown there is need for paramedics with advanced education/training to provide interventions and medicines on scene. Fletcher Allen Health Care is in support of the paramedics program. Essex Rescue is seeking support from the District 3 communities to move to this next level of care which is still in the planning stage. Federal grants are being sought to upgrade equipment and training. Essex Rescue is a self-funded organization and is fortunate to have paramedic level members on board already. These individuals personally pursued and maintain their certification. Paramedics will not replace the EMT Basic or Intermediate members. The public is invited to visit the Essex Rescue facility by the high school for more information. Craig Butkus mentioned Essex Junction firefighters provide medical first response to rescue calls which is a critical part of the success of the program and will continue.

Larry Yandow mentioned the great care he received from Essex Rescue when he had need for the ambulance service. The Trustees on behalf of the community expressed appreciation for the services provided by Essex Rescue.

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by John Lajza, to approve and accept the resolution of support to move forward with the paramedics program as proposed by Essex Rescue.

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Board signed the resolution.

3. Update by Elaine Sopchak on the Village Marketing Committee

Dave Crawford reported there is \$11,000 remaining in the committee's budget. Decision is needed as to the best use of the funds. There are many ideas, some of which warrant further exploration. Elaine Sopchak briefly reviewed the work to date by the committee. Focus groups with local businesses were held and radio ads were run to promote the village and the businesses as destination sites. Local businesses tripled the village's financial contribution for the ads. Meetings with businesses revealed most business owners are too busy to participate or see no need to change their approach. Some are struggling to stay in business. Marketing is an ongoing expense for businesses and typically the first to be reduced in tough times, said Ms. Sopchak. Many of the business owners recalled previous promotional initiatives by the village, and were in support of some of the cost being borne by the marketing committee. Ms. Sopchak stated asking a business to stay open is an added expense. People need to come downtown so the businesses will have a reason to stay open.

Ideas to help with marketing the village and businesses in the village include hiring a marketing intern from Community College of Vermont for 10 hours a week to continue contacting businesses and working on marketing projects in the village. A database of meeting space or available window space for artwork or historic displays should be built. The idea is to do low budget, high interest activities to get people downtown. It is suggested \$3,000 of the \$11,000 remaining in the budget be used for radio ads and the remainder (\$8,000) be used to hire an intern for 10 hours of work per week. The intern should be a mature individual with a marketing education familiar with Chittenden County and ideally Essex Junction. The job will provide the 'experience' portion of the intern's education. The intern will be managed by the Village Manager with input from Elaine Sopchak.

Dave Crawford said staff is presently trying to ascertain the vacancy space in the village and is reviewing past economic development and marketing studies that have been conducted in the village. A critical mass is needed of retail businesses with interest in having a sidewalk sale to get people to the downtown area, said Mr. Crawford, but in the village there are many professional service type businesses such as banks, lawyers, and doctor offices. Ideas on how to get businesses interested and involved are needed. One suggestion is to offer a stimulus or incentive of some sort. Elaine Sopchak mentioned the viable businesses in the village are destination shops (Bridle Shop, Yankee Pride, Triple Loop). Peter Gustafson mentioned co-op funds for advertisements where a business pays 50% of an ad if a certain amount of information is stated in the ad. Larry Yandow suggested larger enterprises (IBM, CVE) offer their expertise to smaller businesses or perhaps there could be a toy shop specializing in model trains located in the train station. George Tyler spoke in support of approaching business owners on a mutually beneficial arrangement and finding a creative way to work with a business to ensure there is an occupant in any empty space. There could be a link on the village webpage to a list of all restaurants/businesses in the community. Front Porch Forum could also be utilized. Elaine Sopchak stated a cooperative marketing effort with CVE should be pursued. CVE offered the village marketing committee a free booth at up to eight events at the fairgrounds, but area businesses did not take advantage of the opportunity by providing coupons or flyers for display.

Sawyer Joecks reported on his findings from review of the March 2002 study for redevelopment of the Five Corners area. The study mentioned expanding parking in the downtown area, making the area more pedestrian friendly, and easing sign restrictions. Locating a hotel by Five Corners

was also encouraged. John Lajza suggested assessing the recommendations that are in place. Sawyer Joecks will compile information on existing business conditions in the village, continue review of past reports, and contact business owners to discuss making their space more inviting. An update will be provided to the Board in the fall.

The consensus of the Board is to support the marketing suggestions and use of the budget for advertisements (\$3,000) and hiring an intern for 10 hours a week (\$8,000) to continue the effort.

4. Presentation by Fire Chief Chris Gaboriault on Status of Ladder Truck Replacement
Chris Gaboriault reported the aerial truck is 18 years old at this point in time. Recommended replacement is at 20 years. The planning process for replacement of the truck is approximately two years. Chief Gaboriault requested confirmation of the commitment by the Trustees to pursue funding for the truck. Dave Crawford added if it is confirmed the truck will be replaced then money (\$10,000) will not be spent on bodywork on the truck over the next two years. There are three areas for possible funding including the local options tax, a dedicated tax with a sunset date to fund the truck (raise \$1 million over five years), and joint funding from the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex (both fire departments serve the village and town). The town and village fire departments need a resource like the ladder truck, but there is no need for each department to have the same truck. The mutual aid response arrangement between the village and town was briefly explained. The village responds with the ladder truck and the town responds with an engine company. The ladder truck is heavily used (nearly 500 calls per year). The ladder truck responds to 25% of all the calls received by the fire department. Chris Gaboriault explained an aerial device is not just for tall buildings, but for house fires as well because the construction will not hold a firefighter on the roof in a fire. The firefighter needs to be on the aerial truck.

Dave Crawford noted joint response by two fire departments is a unique relationship that should be cherished. Positive remarks about the quality of volunteers and service provided by the fire department were expressed.

Chris Gaboriault reiterated his request for a commitment from the Board to find a way to fund replacement of the aerial device in order to be able to begin the replacement planning in the third quarter of the year. John Lajza pointed out if a bond is needed, voter approval and support will be needed. Dave Crawford said other options are a local options tax or borrowing without a bond issue. Peter Gustafson pointed out from 2003 to the present there has been \$25,500 spent on repairs on the truck and \$10,000 is anticipated to be spent on bodywork in the next two years so the need for a new truck is obvious.

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Peter Gustafson, to grant approval for the Essex Junction Fire Department to move forward with the planning stage of replacing the ladder truck, and further, the Board of Trustees and Village Administration will move forward in seeking a funding apparatus. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. Update on Central St./Railroad Ave. Revitalization

George Tyler reported the forum on revitalization of Railroad Avenue and Central Street facilitated by Essex Community Justice Center in June was attended by 70 people and generated over 350 comments. A steering committee was formed and comments/recommendations were categorized into four general areas: community activities to draw people to the area, landscape improvements, improvement to the train station, and activities that can occur around the train station. Resources identified included the village government, recreation department, Brownell Library, teen center, volunteer organizations, and church groups. The steering committee will meet with the leadership of each organization and review the list of comments to identify areas of mutual interest.

George Tyler said he and Elaine Sopchak will meet with the Brownell Library and CHIPS teen center. Mr. Tyler will also review the recommendations and identify low cost, high impact ideas that seem feasible and draft a plan with the Village Manager with the focus on the Railroad Avenue and Central Street area. The emphasis from the forum is that people want to see the downtown area improved.

2. Pearl Street Streetscape and Paving Projects

Dave Crawford reported the \$2.6 million earmark for the work on Pearl Street in front of CVE is moving forward. The Village Engineer and CVE have been working on a plan to handle events at the fairgrounds with the lane reconfiguration. More signage has been added by the West Street Extension intersection where the road changes to a three lane configuration. Once Route 15 is under the Village's jurisdiction and following studies the best traffic light duration and speed limit transition for the road will be determined. The next link to focus on is from CVE to Five Corners. VTrans Right-of-Way Division is expected to send the title to Pearl Street by October, 2009 so the earmarked portion of the project can go to bid in the spring. Work is being done now on the portion of the road owned by the Village. The issue associated with the earmark has been cleared up with Sen. Leahy's Office. Sen. Leahy and/or his staff have been invited to visit the Five Corners redevelopment project area.

George Tyler commented the road project is based on the CCMPO study of Route 15. Dave Crawford confirmed CCMPO reviews and prioritizes all transportation projects handled by VTrans.

Trustee Tyler asked about traffic delays or an increase in traffic bottlenecks on Pearl Street. Mr. Crawford said the speed limit will be reduced and enforced. The center lane will be a turn lane only, and this will be enforced. Drivers must become familiar with the new configuration and speed limit. Traffic volumes are not expected to change. The bottleneck already exists. The lane configuration will help control the 'raceway' in front of CVE. Drivers are encouraged to take the circ highway (2-89) for faster travel time around Five Corners. George Tyler calculated for the half mile from West Street Extension to the lane convergence in front of the fairgrounds there is a 24 second difference between traveling at 45 mph versus 25 mph. The perception is that there is a delay, but ultimately it is a matter of the order of cars being juggled (ultimately due to the traffic lights). John Lajza interjected the goal is to keep the public as safe as possible even if that means a slightly longer travel time. Larry Yandow mentioned rescue vehicles will still be able to get through with the lane configuration provided cars move to the far right of the pavement.

Peter Gustafson said complaints from residents on West Street about increased traffic and traffic speed are being addressed by the police (radar and enforcement of the Stop sign). Dave Crawford confirmed enforcement has been increased. The police found there is not nearly the number of violations of the Stop sign that was anticipated. In addition to enforcement of the posted speed limit the crosswalks are being made more visible and flags are being attached to the Stop signs. The concerns of the residents have been heard. There are changes to the road and people need to adjust. Travel time will be slower when the area becomes a construction zone. Information on the project will continue to be communicated to the public, assured Mr. Crawford. The Trustees meeting agenda has been revised to include more information on topics to better inform the public.

Matt Ryan with the *Burlington Free Press* was commended for the August 6th article on making Pearl Street safer.

3. Recovery Act Application

Dave Crawford reported all is in place to have expenditures reimbursed.

4. Railroad Upgrade Project

Dave Crawford reported the project has received good press, citing a recent editorial by Mike Coates and other stories in the *Burlington Free Press*. Resolutions of support continue to be secured from area towns (Milton, Georgia), CVE, and legislators.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Health Insurance Committee

Larry Yandow and John Lajza (George Tyler is the alternate) along with the Village Manager and Finance Director will review health insurance options and develop a proposal for Board review. Larry Yandow noted the issue of municipal employees getting better health insurance coverage than the average worker at taxpayer expense is a national issue.

2. Champlain Valley Fair Day Proclamation

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by George Tyler, to sign the proclamation of CVE's 88th anniversary and August 29, 2009 as Champlain Valley Fair Day. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Board signed the proclamation.

VI. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Meeting Schedule

- August 25 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- Sept. 8 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- Sept. 22 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- Oct. 13 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- Oct. 27 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- Nov. 10 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- Nov. 24 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting (Thanksgiving week)
- Dec. 8 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting

- Dec. 22 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting

2. CVE Noise Committee

The CVE Noise Committee reviewed the noise reports. There are peaks higher than the allowable limit that qualify as an ‘incident’. These will be compared to complaints that were received to see if there is a match. Discussion is ongoing with the police regarding how to handle complaints for monitored, waived, and non-monitored events. There is a working list of events to be monitored and waived.

3. Haz-Mat Trailer

The Fire Chief was authorized to reassign the haz-mat trailer.

4. Audit Report on Grants

Recommended corrective actions in the audit report will be done.

5. LCRCC Business After Hours

The August 20th LCRCC Business After Hours will be held at Alexander’s Pub at the Lincoln Inn with food from the Belted Cow.

6. Waiver for Outdoor Fireworks on 9/13/09

A waiver was granted for a private party to have outdoor fireworks on 9/13/09 which will conclude by 8 p.m. A notice about the fireworks will be published in the local newspaper.

7. School Right-of-way by Park Street School

The School Dept. is looking for a financial contribution to cover the cost to pave the right-of-way which has been liberally used for years by businesses in the area of the Park Street School.

8. Countryside Development Landscaped Island

Staff is working with the Countryside homeowners association regarding maintenance of trees and grass on the landscaped island at the entrance to the development.

9. Land Application of Sludge

Permits for land application of sludge are moving forward.

10. Speed Limit on Main Street

Study of reducing the speed limit to 25 mph on Main Street and Pearl Street will be done.

11. Park Street Traffic Lights

Coordinating the traffic lights at Five Corners with the traffic lights on Park Street will be included in next year’s budget. The timing of the lights at Five Corners is being studied.

12. Agenda Items for Joint Meeting with Town Selectboard

A list of agenda items for the next joint meeting with the Town Selectboard needs to be drafted.

VII. TRUSTEES COMMENTS/CONCERNS

There were no comments from the Board.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA & READING FILE

MOTION by John Lajza, SECOND by George Tyler, to approve the consent agenda as presented below:

- 1. Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting (7/28/09)**
- 2. Approve Warrants**
- 3. Approve Policy on Water and Sewer Tap-On Fees**
- 4. Noise Waiver for Fireworks at CVE on 9/13/09**
- 4. Reading List Acceptance (Letters & Communications)**
 - **Memo re: FY10 tax rates from Susan McNamara-hill**
 - **LCRCC August Newsletter re: Lincoln Inn & Belted Cow Bistro and Business After Hours 8/20/09**
 - **Letter from Sen. Bernard Sanders**
 - **Letter from CVE General Manager, David Grimm**

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by George Tyler, that the Board of Trustees go into Executive Session to consider legal matters, contract negotiations and personnel matters, and potential budget changes related to personnel issues where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the Village at a substantial disadvantage, and to permit staff (i.e. Village Manager and intern, Sawyer Joecks) to be present for the session.

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 and the regular meeting reconvened at 9:19 p.m.

X. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

RScty: M.E.Riordan